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Dear Friends,

“Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.” Attributed in many a sermon to Francis of Assisi yet it’s not his quotation. Francis apparently preached verbally using fiery words in up to five villages a day from either a box, bale of straw, or steps. (thegospelcoalition.org – Glenn Stanton) In a similar vein another phrase shows up in churches and fits nicely on a church’s roadside sign. “Deeds not creeds.” Our beliefs are very important and should motivate loving actions. Thus, it’s both with creeds and with deeds, neither should be minimized, that Christians seek to impact this fallen world. Although balancing the two may be difficult for us. The first chapter of James says, “faith without works is dead.”

John Kanz’s, presently the Principal of Vanimo Secondary (9th – 12th), told Eric and Penny how God has worked in his life through the years. (I have no memory of my part in the following story – DH)

“The late 1980’s and early 1990’s when I was teaching in Ambunti, Doug saved my life, During that time, Doug was a good friend. He was often doing things for us, like helping us with school projects with the PIM tractor. But yes, he really did save my life,” said John.

“I contracted typhoid and malaria at the same time. The diarrhea and high fever weakened me so badly I couldn’t even walk. Of course, in those days we didn’t have cell phones, but somehow Doug found out, drove out with the PIM car, loaded me in and took me from our house out at the high school to the clinic on the other side of the airstrip.”

Heather (his wife) sat beside John’s bed as the doctor started working on him, but he could not find a vein. All of them had collapsed because he was so dehydrated. John’s wife noticed that his legs were turning cold, a sign his body was starting to shut down.

John Kanz continued, “The doctor (Moses Kapus) went into his office without saying anything to us and was gone for a little while. When he came back, he picked up my wrist and searched again for a vein. He found one! And my wife saw him mouth the words, ‘Thank you, God.’ He was able to insert an IV and start giving me fluids and medication.”

“Later the doctor told us he went into his office and prayed, ‘God, if you have any further work for this man, help me find a vein.’ And it seems God did have more work for me.” He smiled.

“There are some other things that happened to me that aren’t so fun,” John Kanz confessed. “Do you want me to tell those things too? Yes, maybe they will help someone else,” he said.

To summarize his story: John and Heather experienced marital strife, financial challenges, opposition from Departmental politics and policies yet through prayer and soul searching with thankfulness have seen God marvelously work in their lives. In 2016, John was promoted to principal and one of the first things he did was invite pastors to lead Religious Instruction classes. The school’s academic rating has improved under John’s leadership.

Each of us has impact either for good or bad on those around us, whether we realize it or not. “Only what’s done for Christ will last.” (Charles Studd)

In His Grace, Douglas Heidema

