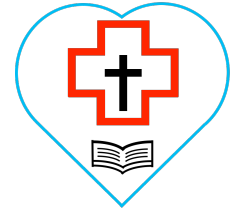


First Quarter Overview



A Busy Start To The Year

Greetings to all, we are already well into the year, and I am busier than last year. One of the joys of my work is the counseling I get to do with the younger people. Eswatini has the highest rate of HIV and cervical cancer in the world. And it's directly due to sex before marriage. The girls come to me complaining of womb pain or lower abdominal pain. I take a history and examine them and while doing this I strike up a conversation with them. I ask them if they are a Christian and nearly always, they will say yes. Then I ask which church they go to. I will ask if they have a Bible and if they read it.

Many will reply that they read it sometimes. I immediately challenge them by telling them God's word is like food they need every day. Then I ask them what God thinks when he sees you having sex when you are not married. Does it make him happy? Their answer nearly always is, no it doesn't make him happy. The girls drop their heads and smile as they are saying this. I tell them they are correct; they understand about God. Then I say, if you know what he thinks and you keep on doing it, what hope is there for your relationship with God? I am going to pray for you and your boyfriend or girlfriend. And I tell them I am going to ask God to help them sit down and talk about this important matter so they can come up with a plan to behave in a way that pleases God.

I have never had complaints from any of those I have counseled along these lines. The reason is simple – the Swazis believe. They are not atheists. Appealing to them like this is accepted. This gives me a superb opportunity to share Gods desires and purposes for their lives. Being a medical doctor with this avenue is a great gift from God.

Let me tell you a bit about our work with cervical cancer. To overcome this disease every woman in the country needs to be screened and if positive she needs to be treated or referred. The problem is huge as at present only 1 in 8 women are being screened. We begin in the towns as this is where more are reachable. Annette has been working hard on this. She has set up a unit to screen all women who visit the clinic.

Every female, whether bringing a child for treatment or bringing an elderly relative or attending for a personal illness, is asked if they have been tested recently and if not, they are offered a test. In the four months to end of February 2026 we screened 1151 women compared to 357 in the previous four months. Much of the increase was among women who were being screened for the first time.

Bob & Annette Whitaker