

## Chapter 4

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”—Romans 10:15*

After five years, Jay, Gremma’s grandson, felt more at home among the Soloma people of East Africa. He didn’t always like how they lived, but he loved them because Jesus did. Jay and his family had survived the first years of culture shock and could now function in the two languages of the Soloma people, Swahili and Soloma. Jay and his wife, Ann, could mostly decipher how to behave in the market, in the neighborhood, and in the villages nearby. Soloma culture felt closer to home, but it was still a long way from Iowa.

Jay and Ann loved international food, a taste acquired as Iowa State Cyclones in Ames. Friday night dates helped the two Iowans broaden their palates beyond casseroles and Jell-O salads. The cilantro and hot peppers of Tex-Mex brought smiles to their faces, shocked taste buds accustomed to cream of mushroom soup and Velveeta cheese. Thai curries overwhelmed their senses, bringing laughter to their lips chased by several glasses of water. A Do-Biz monster cookie ended the meal well, the sugar bringing relief to their burning lips, still tingling a bit, now ready for a first kiss on the steps of Friley Hall.

Two weeks after graduation, a wedding and a hog roast brought many “Iowegians” to the family farm. Swedish and Danish family members showered the couple with gifts and prayers. The gifts went into storage because God had answered the family prayers of blessing by sending the newlyweds to Africa. God had called them and made their feet beautiful to bring good news to many.

Now, Jay and Ann and their two young sons lived in a culture that valued one spice —salt—and plenty of oil. Jay fondly remembered his first visit to a Soloma home, where he met his good friend Keeja.

“Welcome to the table—*Karibu mezani*,” Keeja said in Swahili. Jay responded with “*Asante*,” the appropriate Swahili response of thanks. He joined Keeja in chairs woven from local vines near a simple table under a shade tree. Keeja’s wife arrived with a pitcher of water to pour over the hands of the two men and then to pray aloud for the meal.

She returned into their home made of cement block and roofed with metal sheets to retrieve a platter and a bowl. The bowl contained steaming food, which began as diced tomatoes and onions stewed with a handful of salt and a generous slather of cooking oil. After these were boiled into submission, she added pigweed (a local green in East Africa but removed from bean

fields back in Eagle Pond). The platter carried the daily bread, *ugali*, a stiff porridge made of corn flour and boiling water.

“Have you eaten *ugali* before?” Keeja asked Jay.

“I have a few times,” Jay said. “But I am still trying to get the hang of it.”

“OK,” Keejabegan instructing. “Grab a small bit of *ugali* with your right hand. Blow on it if it is still hot, make it into a little ball, and push in an indentation with your thumb. Now it is ready for dipping into the stew. When you pop it into your mouth,” he admonished, “be careful not to lick your fingers too much since those same fingers will return to the community *ugali* and stew for the next bite.”

Keeja explained things well to the new missionary, so Jay often returned to Keeja’s home with questions and for fellowship. Since Keeja followed the ways of Jesus, Jay learned much about the Soloma people, engaged with the gospel but still unreached. As an unreached people, some Soloma people followed Jesus, but the numbers were too small to establish a healthy foundation for church growth. The work was underway, and Jay and Ann were in East Africa to help establish gospel churches and then move out of the way for national pastors to lead by faith in Jesus.

However, in some villages not far away, the Jaro people kept their doors closed to missionaries, remaining unengaged. The Jaro stubbornly held onto the old ways of power. Politicians from the capital cities of East Africa drove their Mercedes onto dusty roads to negotiate with Jaro witch doctors, gladly paying to bring curses upon their political rivals.

Satan’s influence was strong among the Jaro people. Lies had become deeply embedded into the culture and the hearts of its people.

Gremma stood in the gap, interceding for the Jaro people. But at that moment, one of their best prayer warriors lay prostrate on her living room floor.