

FABULE FAQ's

The Country and People

Isn't South Africa well-off? Why do you work there? Is South Africa poor?

With a fairly higher GDP than most African countries, South Africa is known for its beauty, political stability and development potential. However it also has the highest HIV rate in the world. Its crime rate is the 3rd worst in the world, and youth unemployment (18-35 year olds with a high school diploma or higher) stands around 75%. Most troubling, and a primary factor in such negative statistics is the fact that 70% of township children grow up without knowledge or presence of a father. Called in 1996 and 2001 respectively, Gabriel and I work in South Africa because we believe God can transform broken communities through healthy families, healthy missional churches, and viable and community-led development initiatives. We plant churches and develop local Christian leaders to make a positive impact on their families and communities.

Where is South Africa? What is the country like?

South Africa is an actual country (not a region) and is located at the southern tip of the continent. The country can best be described as DIVERSE, with 12 national languages, a variety of indigenous tribes, landscapes that range from tropical to desert to African grasslands, and settlements ranging from mud huts to glass city high-rises.

What is South Africa like after apartheid?

Since its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has changed parties, institutions and economy to try to reverse the political, sociological and economic effects of apartheid. Race relations are outwardly tolerant, but debates about social programs for the underprivileged, the growing black middle class, and perceived as well as real discrimination toward the former privileged races and classes occur frequently in parliamentary debate, radio-talk shows, church home-groups, classrooms, and boardrooms. What seems to affect everyone in the new South Africa is the increasing gap between rich and poor, the explosion of youth unemployment, and crime and corruption.

What about crime?

Crime is high in South Africa especially in the cities of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Petty theft, housebreaking, and car theft are extremely prevalent and we have personally experienced all three. Random violence is rare but drug/gang-related violence and domestic abuse is sadly high in townships. After 4 break-ins in 3 years, we have placed additional bars on our windows and are looking into increasing our budget to pay for a security company services.

What are the people like? What is a typical day for them?

Many township residents live with multi-generation extended families in small government- builtbrick homes or informal houses made of wood, insulation, and metal sheeting. Those who work support the rest of the extended family (cousins, aunts, nieces, nephews, grandparents) including infants, students, unemployed adults, and the elderly. Most homes are female-headed. A typical day might comprise of getting up early to catch public transport to the city, or going to school. Those who stay at home due to health or unemployment, do household chores, look after the children, and access government grants, clinics, and social services for family needs. There is a prevalent pub/drinking culture for both young and older adult males and shebeens are busy every day of the week. Binge drinking, domestic abuse, and community crime spike during the weekends. Our ministry provides small-groups, prayer nights/family nights/men's group, and youth groups as alternatives to these activities.

Our Family and Daily Life

How did you meet, fall in love and marry?

We met in a YWAM missions base in Cape Town. It was not love at first sight, but after an outreach trip we became good friends. At first the idea of cross-cultural marriage never even crossed our minds, but we kept in touch long-distance hoping to meet up the following year. Deb admired his integrity, caring, and Christian walk. Gabriel admired her wisdom, sense of humor, and Biblical knowledge (we had debates ☺). In the meantime Gabriel was asked to start a church in an informal settlement called Green Park, which was the birth of our township ministry today! Reunited in Cape Town, we courted, met both families, got engaged and prepared emotionally and practically for the wedding (we loved our pre-marital counseling!). The immigration officer was so shocked to hear our intentions of returning to Africa to serve broken communities, that he prayed for us right there in the airport. In 2004 we were married in Virginia and returned to Cape Town to continue our township ministry.

What is it like to live far from your families? How often do you see them?

It is challenging to live far away from our families. In the beginning our in newly-wed life, being away from home was a great adventure. As we had kids, and our family members had kids, we felt the loss of being away from grandparents, new spouses and new kids in both Nigeria and the USA. Grandparents Kory come to SA at least once a year, and we've seen Grandparents Fabule every 2 years.

Do you live more 'African' or more 'Western' style?

Because of our missions/ex-pat background, we live multi-culturally! We live in a western-style house in a middle-class suburb adjacent to a fairly notorious township. We dress in western clothes, except on special occasions. We eat American food like burgers and pizza, but we also eat African food like beans, pumpkin stew and maize meal porridge. South Africa was once a British colony so tea time, marmite, and Wheat-a-bix are staples here. We communicate with others in English and speak it at home as well (with a bit of Gabriel's native Yoruba also). Most people we work with speak English but some of our LSFM church services are translated into isiXhosa.

What are your daily lives like?

Our work-week is similar to most families who work from home. From M-F, we are up early to take the kids to school. After school drop off, Gabriel has various ministry and missions meetings, while Deb tackles home and ministry admin. She is in the car the rest of the day getting the kids from school and attending Jonathan's multi-hour therapy sessions. See below about our request for Mission Nannies. In addition to work-meetings, Gabriel will travel to the township in the evenings to attend or oversee our local community churches. He also travels during the year to visit our ministries in Zambia and East London. Weekends are a bit different. We take our day off on Wednesday and try to have a family day most Saturdays. Sunday is the busiest day of the week and we attend LSFM church in the townships. We leave at 9 and get back around 4 or 5. We have cereal Sunday dinner!

Do you ever face discrimination because of your race(s)?

Thankfully we have never faced ministry, business, or legal discrimination based on our race or bi-racial family. We occasionally get a few gawking stares or a frown or two, but mostly people are just curious about how we foreigners came to meet, live, marry and have kids in South Africa.

You mentioned Jonathan is on the Spectrum? How does that affect your lives there?

Yes, Jonathan has been placed on the autism spectrum and the majority of his impairments relate to his language delays and sensory issues. We are so blessed that South Africa has therapists and educators that can address Jonathan's needs. Many African nations do not have such services. Because Jonathan can do most daily activities

himself (eat, dress, bathroom, shower, brush teeth, clean up toys), his ASD has lower impact on our home-family life. We go the store, school, church, and playground and kid-friendly restaurants. Where our family is heavily impacted is in finances, time, and emotional energy needed to maintain our commitment towards Jonathan's interventions and yet balancing Joseph's and Jonathan's education. We have applied to an organization called Mission Nannies to request a volunteer to help with the transport and at-home support.

Ministry, Missions, and Money

How do you financially support yourselves?

We raise our support through financial contributions, monthly giving, and donated items or services.

You live in Africa, isn't the cost of living cheap there?

Not necessarily. The price of produce and property is cheaper here, but milk is about \$8/gallon and gas is running about \$5/gallon. Inflation rates are projected to reach almost 7% (USA is at 1%). The cost of gas, electricity, and telecommunications is some of the highest in the world. Cars, computers, and technology usually cost twice as much as in the US. A strong dollar exchange can help offset these costs, but even with a favorable exchange rate, the cost of living in Africa is much higher than many expect.

What is LSFM?

LSFM is short for Living Spring Faith Ministries. You can find out more about the organization on our website www.lsfminternational.org. We started and currently lead this African ministry. Its goal is to achieve holistic township transformation through church planting and community development. LSFM-USA is a US registered 501c3 which receives donations on our behalf.

What is YWAM?

YWAM stands for Youth With A Mission, a non-denominational Christian Missions movement which encourages missionaries from all walks of life to know God and make Him known. Founded by Loren Cunningham in the 1960's, YWAM serves in close to 900 locations in 150 countries. Each staff member of YWAM from a base leader to an administrator works on a 100% volunteer basis. Most YWAM missionaries raise their support through donations. You can go to www.ywam.org to find out more about YWAM.

What is township transformation?

Townships were apartheid-based shanty-towns designed to both isolate inhabitants from white society and discourage long-term planning and investment. Although the current government is addressing the social and infrastructural challenges, we believe that the real transformation of townships begins with the inner-man. As broken people are healed by the love of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and equipped by the wisdom and Truth from the scriptures, people, families, and communities can be transformed. Easy to say, hard to achieve, but to this we are called!