

5 things

*I learned
from growing up
in Africa
...about living a
balanced life*

BY TIMBERLY WHITFIELD,
HOST OF HALLMARK CHANNEL'S *NEW MORNING*

Slow down. Or as people in Africa say, “*Pole pole.*” Life there is at a different pace. You feel it the instant you step off the plane. There’s a calmness. I felt it when my parents, United Methodist missionaries, moved our family from the U.S. to Tanzania when I was six. Now I’m a busy working mom, and I have to remind myself, *Pole pole.* Slow down. We all need those little Sabbaths during the day.

Count your blessings. We have so much as Americans...possessions, conveniences and opportunities. Our African friends didn’t have much but they weren’t constantly wanting more. They were happy. I don’t take what I have for granted either.

If you understand the earth, the earth will understand you. That Kiswahili proverb reflects the African respect for the earth. There we carried drinking water from the village well. We filtered rainwater for showers. We had electricity for only three hours a day. It’s an environmentally conscious lifestyle that I try to practice here. We recycle and reuse everything we can. And I still take three-minute showers!



No one is a stranger. When I was a teenager, my parents took me to visit a leper colony in Nigeria. I was scared. Rightly, I thought, as a man missing both legs walked over on his hands and greeted us. He smiled and introduced himself. We started talking. Soon I forgot about his legs, his disease. I just saw a person I was happy to know. By our third visit, I knew everyone in the village.

Go with the flow. When things don’t go our way here, we get bent out of shape. In Africa people are more accepting. Maybe it comes from living more at the whims of nature. I try to handle the unexpected with their mellow attitude: *Okay, things happen. No problem. Move on.*

See Timberly on *New Morning* every weekday at 7 am (Eastern and Pacific). ♦