

*From Margie Wright, the parent of two USP alumni*

One thing that comes to mind regarding the Uganda Studies Program is this: what kinds of questions are we asking of ourselves, of God, of our young adult children? Of course “will my child be safe?” is a natural question for a responsible parent to ask, and rightly so. We want to know, for example, if the cars we all drive are safe—do they pass certain safety requirements? The roads we all drive—are they safe; safely engineered? The answers to these questions can be answered in the affirmative in our country, but only up to a point. The car manufacturers don’t make cars that you can’t get hurt in. The state highway department can construct safe roads, but they cannot guarantee anything. I suppose you can see where I am going with this. So—is it safe? The USP has been well-thought out by responsible adults in both Uganda and in the U.S. They will not take crazy risks with your child’s safety. They are like safe highways and safe cars.

There are some other questions that may be helpful to ask—of yourself, of your child, of God. Regarding your child: what are you hoping for? What are you asking of God regarding this semester? For yourself—how do you feel about the answers your child is giving? Do I personally believe my child is mature enough to travel to a foreign country, and obey the directives given them for their safety? Is he/she ready to be humble, and to give honor and respect to those whose culture and ways of doing things is very different from their own? Do they believe God is calling them to this? Do you think so, too? How much have I given my child’s life to God, grateful for the privilege of bringing her up? How engaged am I in the process of letting him go-- to serve God as a young adult, whatever that may look like? How much have I grasped that God loves my child even more than I do?

When the first of our children was getting ready to go to the USP, I did take careful notice of how safe it looked, and my heart did begin to rest easier when I saw the careful attention that had been taken regarding safety issues. When, however I saw some of the books they would be reading, and got an idea of what he would be learning about, I began to become really excited for him. I have got to say, when both our son (some years back) and our daughter (quite recently) came back, they did return as changed people. They had grown in humility, in knowledge of and respect for the work of God in other people, and maturity. They had also come to have a much broader perspective on life than they previously had.

Was it scary for me to let them go to Africa? Yes. Am I glad they went? Absolutely, yes!

To take a thought from one of our family’s favorite children’s books: they went to faraway places, and they made friends that would stay in their hearts forever. I am so glad they had that privilege.

Margie Wright