

Gowins' Ghana Updates

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Perspectives

Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the increase. He who plants and he who waters are one..." 1 Corinthians 3:6-8

Approaching the end of our work here in West Africa fills us with memories and hope. We are grateful for the opportunities which have been provided for us and anxious to find out what God has in store for us in our tomorrows. As our growing family anticipates our return, we have five grandchildren who have all been born while we were serving here and one grandbaby on the way. We anticipate a wonderful homecoming.

First, the Memories

Numbers are an extremely poor device for measuring the spiritual impact of any ministry. We do NOT know what actually occurs in the soul, neither do we understand the eternal impact our efforts produce. Nevertheless, numbers are one poor tool to assist us in our frail attempt to measure success. With that in mind, we rejoice that we have been able to communicate Christ through the Word and the "JESUS" Film. In the Volta and Upper West Regions, upwards of four thousand people have responded positively to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have baptized over three hundred. God enabled our team to plant five churches and witness the construction of three buildings. We have treated over six thousand people with a variety of medical issues. Our literacy classes have enabled people who had NO education to read their own language, thereby enabling them to read the Scriptures. We have made many friends and a lifetime of warm memories.

Second, the Hope

The future rests solely in the hands of our Redeemer; yet as we have planted seeds in remote areas which had no Christian witness, we are confident that God has begun a good work and is able to retain it. We have three committed pastors who are quite capable of carrying on the work when we leave. One of the three, Pastor Sammy, I have known since my first visit to Ghana in 2006. He is a man with a gentle spirit but vibrant zeal for the cause of Christ. He is a wise man with the experience and savvy to carry the mantle quite capably after we Americans are long gone. There is much work to be done after Ruth Ann and I leave. Who better to do the work than the indigenous people themselves? Praise God for His goodness!

A Story to Illustrate

When Lizzie was 16, her father died, and her uncles thought she needed to be married. An old man wanted her as an additional wife, so he spoke to the uncles, and the process for her dowry (purchase) was initiated. A childhood friend by the name of Jonas overheard what was going on and told Lizzie. They devised a plan that they hoped would allow her to escape. On a market day when everyone in the family was gone, she went to her great-grandma. After many tears



and persuasive pleading, Lizzie received seven cedis—just enough to hop an old rickety bus to the distant city of Kumasi. Jonas helped her scurry to the bus, and off she went with no money and no known contacts to the huge city.

Upon approaching the looming city, this village girl prayed as best she knew how. She was not a Christian but believed there was a God out there that might hear her frantic plea.

At the sprawling bus station, the frightened, slender wisp of a girl saw a familiar face. A woman walked by with food stuff on her head, selling to the arriving passengers. To Lizzie's amazement, this woman was a distant relative she had not seen in years. The woman gave Lizzie a home and work, and she also invited Lizzie to come to church with her. The pastor of the church was so impressed with Lizzie's wonderful attitude and work ethic he recommended her to a Methodist missionary family to look after their children.



In time that Methodist family (John and Bess Russell) moved to the Upper West Region to live; there Lizzie learned English and the local dialect. Most importantly, she discovered Jesus Christ. When Ruth Ann and I moved here, we soon met that Methodist family and the jovial, enthusiastic Miss Elizabeth. We all became good friends. When the Russells returned to the States, Ruth Ann invited Miss Lizzie to come work for her. Let me tell you that “Lizzie machines” are better than Maytags and far friendlier. In addition, Lizzie has been an apprentice, learning how to weave cloth on an African hand loom. Her brilliant material is beautiful, and her work quite proficient.

Lizzie has been a dear companion to Ruthie, who has taught her to read and do arithmetic. Lizzie has gone to the villages and been an invaluable help in teaching Sunday school. She speaks four languages fluently, so there is no one in our villages she cannot communicate well to.

One day last month Lizzie and I were driving along in the lorry, and I asked her to tell me more about her life story. She did. As she narrated the story, she was reminded of Jonas and how he had helped her. We talked about him, and I was surprised to hear he has been communicating with her on the phone for some time now. In fact, he is in love with her and has been since childhood. He has asked her to be his wife on several occasions. He lives thirteen hours south of us, and they have only seen each other a few moments on three occasions since that day long ago when he put her on the bus. Two days after our conversation in the lorry, Lizzie scurried from her apartment next door to our living room where she announced she had responded positively to Jonas' most recent proposal. That was the first time I saw Ruth Ann do the equivalent of an African dance. 😊 I believe God will do great things in the lives of this young couple.

Now, let me ask you a question --- who gets the credit for Lizzie? Who will get the reward in heaven for all that “fruit” she will produce? Will it be her auntie who gave her a job in Kumasi, the pastor who with confidence connected her with the missionary, the Methodist missionaries, Ruth Ann, Lizzie's church folk she adores, or others? Who?

Paul gave us the correct perspective in the third chapter of I Corinthians, didn't he? It is God who deserves all the credit. Ruth Ann and I have done some planting and some watering here. Yet when we return to the States we will rejoice because we have had opportunity to witness a bit of what God is doing in people's lives here for His Kingdom. Ruth Ann and I are just fellow workmen with you in this harvest. We hope you rejoice with us because you who have prayed and you who have given to the work are also fellow laborers in this ministry. **For that, we thank you!**

By His grace and for His glory,

Jere and Ruth Ann