

February, 2009

Dear Friends,

Some men of faith come to mind today while preparing to leave for Congo. Our delayed departure will now take place on February 13. Because we have been blessed with the provision of a thousand solar-powered, fix-tuned radios, we need a little more time to make sure they go with us. Anticipation and excitement are felt as we contemplate seeing some of Christ's greatest servants, who happened to have been born in a land so foreign to us and so impoverished, we can't imagine what they must endure to pay the price of remaining faithful to the end. The men in our minds' eyes are warriors whom you will meet some day in eternity future, when we no longer see things through a glass darkly but we shall know even as we are known, when the unseen things upon which we are admonished to set our eyes on will become visible, and when the tables of obscurity are turned for them, and they are honored and rewarded beyond their imaginations. "The last shall be first. . . "

One of the most rewarding experiences we have in Congo is to host the reunion of our Bible institute graduates. Many pastor in very remote locations. They labor for no more return than the clothes on their backs and the joy of the Lord that spills over in their lives because they consider it such an honor to be called His servant.

For the most part, they will never live in any grander splendor than a mud hut with a thatched roof. They will eat the same boring luku (wallpaper paste) and saka saka (spinach, known by some Americans as yucka yucka) day in and day out, perhaps own one or two pair of shoes—many just flip flops—lose an average of at least two children and perhaps a wife, "sail" through life on no more than \$200 a year, not be able to afford razors to shave their faces or deodorant to make them smell better after enduring the tropical African sun, dare to hope to own a couple of decent suits in which to preach, suffer from worms, dysentery, and malaria on a regular basis, and walk almost everywhere they go.

Oh, but don't feel too sorry for them. They are filled with the joy of the Lord. They willingly walk 50 miles to share that joy they find in Christ. They LOVE preaching the Gospel. They smile quickly. They praise God openly. They actually love bragging on Him. They are multilingual. They have an unquenchable thirst for the Word of God and a artesian well of faith. They are crazy enough to leave their families for 3 years to attend Laban Bible Institute, and that means for some the unthinkable act in our culture of walking over 200 miles one way every fall, Christmas vacation, Easter vacation, and summer, a total of 800 miles each school year. That's quite a price to pay to become skilled in God's Word, don't you think?

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Well, we would like to do something for them that we could not do in 2007, the last time we were in Congo. WE WANT TO HOLD ANOTHER REUNION. This

is what that will look like. News of the upcoming reunion will be broadcast on Radio Glory. Word will spread like wildfire. Up to 300 graduates will walk to Nkara on a Saturday because the reunion will start on a Monday, and they will need to rest a little after their commonly walked 50 or more miles. We will need to feed them 3 meals a day. They will with great thanksgiving receive a pencil, pen, and a spiral notebook because everything that comes out of the conference speakers' mouths will be written in longhand. Laundry soap for their clothes must be provided as well as a bar of soap for bathing. They will sleep on bangis or straw mats, but the mats must be purchased by us. They will be lavished with rich Bible expositional teaching from 8 a.m. to into the evening hours. Historical and religious documentaries will be shown to their weary eyes throughout the week that will be like entertainment for them because they have absolutely no access to television or VCR's in Congo. Their hearts will testify about the work they carry on in their villages, cities, and towns where they minister. Sorrows, praises, trials, joys, and heartaches will be shared, and they will encourage each other in the Lord. At the end of the week, each pastor will receive \$5 to \$10 depending on funding and walk all the way home unless we have enough fuel on the mission to give them a lift for at least part of their journey.

In order to give our men this week of refreshment and teaching, further training, honing of their skills, ministry to their souls and lifting up of their hearts, it will require an average of \$35 per pastor. If 200 pastors show up, that is a total of \$7,000. What conference in America offers so much for so little? If you could see their worn out faces when they arrive so in need of encouragement and then compare their jubilant countenance at the end of the week, you would readily see how much value this week will have been to them.

Will you please pray that this reunion will become a reality? Are you willing to provide a scholarship for 10 or 20 of these noble soldiers of the cross. Ten men can be taken care of for \$350, and 20 for \$700. Some of these men pastor as many as 6 churches, walking to each one to minister. Most people in the bush don't even own a bicycle. Help us give them this cup of water in Jesus' Name!

P. S. Save the date APRIL 30, 2009 for a fresh update from Congo. More to come.

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