

March 17th, 2009

Dear Ministry Partners,

Greetings from Congo. We are in the middle of our Reunion and Graduation festivities at the mission station. We will be meeting to encourage over 350 former graduates, present Laban students, and two graduating classes from the Women's Literacy Center. The scholarships you have given are helping so much to provide this week of refreshment for these deserving servants of God. Thank you. Classes run daily from 8 to 5, followed by a Christian film each evening. The meetings take place at the Bible Institute with an overflow of people sitting on window ledges or wherever else they can find room.

We were pleasantly surprised last weekend to see Mawala, a man who walked 225 Kilometers from Masamanimba in 2004, after he heard Radio Glory and was saved out of a cult called "The Black Church". True to its name, it is full of darkness and demonism and claims that Jesus is for white people only. He once participated in witchcraft and the worship of demonic spirits. As he sat across from us in our living room, he shared his amazing story of conversion. He is now radiant with new life and is evangelizing in that same village that was so steeped in despair, fear, and hopelessness.

Evangelism reports from villages all over reveal the amazing work of the Gospel. In Kulumpia, many young people have been pursuing wealth through diamond exports. Most return worse off than when they left. However, upon their return many accepted Christ and gave open testimony to their changed lives. At Sala, the village witch doctor manipulated and fooled the people by doling out cheap trinkets and speaking untruths. But, upon hearing the gospel, nearly 200 people accepted Christ after which they threw the witch doctor out.

The witch doctor at Nstene Bidiba claimed that our dead elders are our gods. "Our grandfathers are our gods, and there are many." No true shepherd is there to lead the Badinga tribe. They were taught that Jesus did not just die for the white man, and many turned their hearts. In fact, so many received Christ, Pastor Mbuku said there was no way of counting them. They walked for miles to hear the Gospel and slept outside on the ground so they wouldn't miss anything. They followed our team to their tents and told Pastor Mbuku, "You are the evangelist. Here are your people. Minister to them." The problem was the lines never ended, and at 3 a.m. each night he had to tell them he was too tired to preach any longer. So our pastors caught a little shuteye and started all over again at dawn the next day, dealing with hundreds of lost people.

When they showed the *Jesus Film*, the women screamed and pounded the ground, begging Mbuku to stop showing the sufferings Christ endured. He told them, "No, it's good for you to see what Christ paid to save you. Calm your hearts. Watch the movie, and allow others to see for themselves so they can be saved as well." When the evangelistic team left this place, the villagers chanted, "The road to darkness in our village has become the road to light."

Graduation took place Sunday; 3000 attended. The long procession entered the church in perfect cadence and marched all the way from the back of the church to the front. First in line were the 2008 Women's Literacy Center grads (none of the schools held ceremonies last year because of Audrey and Luke's death). Then came the 2007 Women's Literacy grads. Following them were the 2008 Laban Bible Institute grads, and behind them entered the hundreds of grads from previous years from Laban Bible Institute. Four and a half hours later, we made our way up the hill to have dinner with the leaders of Laban Congo. Thank God the temperature was in the 70's.

This full week will end on Saturday, and early Sunday morning we leave for Iwungu for three days of evangelism in that area where our second Bible institute is located. Starting tomorrow Jim will be teaching Philemon on radio glory, and I will be teaching Malachi, a book I have grown to love over the last two years. Our time here has been wonderfully rich and meaningful. Without your prayers and financial backing, we could not do what we do, including employing 100 national staff here.

We must tell you that right now gasoline and diesel fuel are at an all time low. We cannot remember when the price was lower. A few months ago, we were paying \$365 for a 55-gallon drum, but just this week it dropped to only \$200 for diesel and \$202 for gasoline. Please pray that we can stock up on several barrels for the hospital project so that we can continue to gather our own stones and sand in the big truck for making bricks. Fuel is also used for radio broadcasting via a diesel generator, and diesel and gasoline are needed for the work here plus diesel fuel for continuing our evangelistic outreaches. God forbid that evangelism ever lose its heartbeat at Laban. That is our core along with training nationals to train their own people in the powerful, living, breathing Word of God.

God bless you all for joining hands with us. The sea of faces here thank you from the bottom of their hearts for Radio Glory, the Bible schools, evangelism, the future hospital project, and the Women's Literacy Center. Riches untold await you.

Servants of His Majesty,

Jim and Nancy Smith