



Son-rise in Africa Newsletter

ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR WORLD EVANGELISM
CHURCH PLANTING THROUGH THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Here's a Word in Season from Earl

Most have read (with a measure of envy) about people finding items of great value in the most unlikely spots: the giant diamond that was purchased for mere pennies at an open market, the rare stamp that was picked up at a garage sale, the original painting purchased at a pawn shop are a few examples. Although some of these finds are unexpected surprises, they are often the result of a keen eye in recognizing that "there is more than meets the eye".

This holds true regarding the Christmas story as well. For many, the story stops with the cute child in the manger, yet like the diamond in the square, there is more here than meets the eye. The wise men, with discerning eyes, saw the King of Kings, one worthy of royal gifts and reverent worship: "On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh." (Matthew 2:11 NIV). This child was the sovereign Lord of Glory whose dominion is from everlasting to everlasting, and whose kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34). Later, Simeon saw with equally discerning eyes far more than a cute baby, he said: "my eyes have seen Your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32 NIV). Simeon understood that the child was God's provision for the salvation of mankind, the expression of God's loving care. Determined before the foundation of the world, the child was destined to be the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

With every measurement that makes things uniquely priceless, the babe in the manger surpasses all. In rarity, He is the Only Begotten Son; in antiquity, He is the Beginning and the End-the One from before time; in beauty, He is the lily of the valley, the fairest of ten thousand, the bright and morning star. The child in the manger was the one for whom countless numbers of faithful followers of the living God in ages past longingly looked. And now that He has come, all can look upon the texts of Holy Script and see with discerning eyes, and believing hearts.

Paul realized the importance of discerning vision when he prayed: "asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope of his calling," (Ephesians 1:17-18). There is great value in the Christmas message, eternal value worthy of more than a passing seasonal glance. Do not let the pricelessness of the Christmas Child pass you by.

Ministry Update...

November was taken up by a teaching trip to West Africa. The first two weeks were spent in Ghana teaching Hermeneutics (the science of interpreting scripture) to 6 students in the Bible College and 12 students in the Bible Institute. The study proved a real challenge for the national men who were working in English as a second language. I was able to complete only 25% of the material. I plan to take up the study when I return to Ghana again in January. The importance of this course was evident during the Sundays I shared the Word at several village churches where most people had no Bible and many were illiterate. This means that the believers are completely dependant upon leadership for Bible teaching.

A trip to Togo followed the Ghana teaching. I was sure we would be in trouble because the travel team looked to me to be the French translator!!! At least I was able to tell the border guard at Togo that we could not speak French and he would have to speak English "siv-ou-play!" The trip to the Blind Centre was uneventful (other than the road being dusty and rough) until we arrived in Kpalime?. The road was blocked about 1/4 mile from the centre because of some festival so we had to take a detour through a foot path with Wilson's van. This would not have been so interesting except that the traffic from the other end was using the same footpath for their vehicles! One African lady was trying to do about 60 kph through the

bush with her car - she nearly smacked us but Wilson's expert driving through 5 foot high grass saved the day. We arrived without incident but had several close calls.

I stayed with Gib and Marilyn Dickenson while in Togo. The first few days were taken up by the curriculum meeting. There were 5 pastors and 4 missionaries present. We worked through a formula for arriving at purpose statements for the Institute and then discussed educational standards etc. for accreditation. It was a good time with lots accomplished even though Dave Totman and I could not speak French! I was invited to spend Wed. at the Togo Field Leaders Meeting. It was an all day affair at the hospital (8:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.) The meeting helped me get a better picture of all the labours that are going on in Togo by ABWE. Thursday was the U.S. thanksgiving. Both Ghana and Togo teams were present at the hospital guest house for the big meal. There must have been over 70 people jammed into the room to eat dinner and then have a Thanksgiving service and farewell to the Neufeld's. Later, we enjoyed a lively baseball game until supper.

The return to Ghana on Friday was followed by a very enlightening Ghana field team meeting Monday morning, immediately after which I returned to Accra to undertake the long trip home. I arrived home on Wednesday, November 30 to a refreshing light snow and seasonable temperatures, in contrast to the 30+ C temperature I left behind in Africa.

Kathi's Notes... Although we had snow while Earl was away it didn't stay, so I didn't have to wrestle with the snow blower. Instead, I had to run the generator when the hydro went off following wind storms. Not a big problem, as Earl has left explicit instructions for me. He also left the task of contacting churches for meetings in 2006 to me. Although I was able to add dates to our 2006 schedule with supporting churches, I only had conversations with new contacts. Many churches are struggling with finances and are maxed-out with missions. I will simply have to trust the Lord to bring us to new churches in His time and not be concerned about an empty-looking calendar. We were not able to access our financial information during a turn-over from the American to the Canadian office. So it was a pleasant surprise to learn recently that Bethel Baptist Church in Orillia has taken on support for us and we are thankful for their continued interest in our ministry. Things are going well for me at Muskoka Christian School; we are busy preparing a Christmas musical concert to present at a retirement home and to school families. As the snow falls steadily today, preparing the scene for a white Christmas, I look forward to the time with our family during this season of celebration. David will soon be home from Pensacola Christian College and Michele's family will be with us during school break. Teresa's little family is in Bracebridge and we already enjoy their frequent visits. The Lord has given me pleasure and contentment in my delightful family; it will be wonderful to hear their voices fill the house again! And now I must go and help Earl put the Christmas lights up outdoors!

Please pray with us...

1. ***For good health.*** Earl has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and will undergo surgery in February. Please pray for wisdom as the surgery options are reviewed and for success toward complete cure.
2. ***For the remainder of our support.*** We are presently at 84% of committed support. Please pray that the Lord would raise up the additional prayer and financial partners for this ministry.
3. ***For wisdom in preparing studies and designing curriculum as the West African Baptist Bible College and Seminary is in the process of being founded.*** In late January Earl is joining a strategy team in Ghana to develop a plan for establishing this needed school to address training in 5 West African countries. Please pray that the team is united in thought, passion, wisdom and God's strength.

Present Itinerary:

January 19 – Feb 11 – WABS meeting and teaching in Africa.

February 16 – surgery for Earl.