

NEWSLETTER

Jim and Carolyn Driscoll

Missionaries - Ghana, West Africa



I awoke in a cheap hotel overlooking Biriwa, a small fishing village about 15 miles from Cape Coast, the capital of the central region of Ghana. I have played out this same scenario dozens of times in my three years in Ghana. I showered, shaved, stepped outside to a thatch roofed gazebo where I would have my complimentary breakfast of tea, plain omelet, toast and jam. I'm thinking cheese would be nice on the omelet.

The view is a spectacular contrast to the senses. The beautiful blue sky with a few billowy clouds drops down to the horizon where it meets the medium blue ocean with white capped waves. As my eyes move further down to the point at which you would see the waves breaking there are the rusted metal rooftops of hundreds of dilapidated shanty houses. They are so close together that they form one continuous

image of rust. As I was absorbed in thoughts of the misery present in this little village my mind is jarred from these thoughts by the voices of Joseph Crentsil and his cousin Emmanuel. We are to plan our last day of my three day trip to settle some issues with the elders of the village on a land purchase for an ECM office and a church structure for a church plant in Biriwa.

We laid out our remaining activities which amounted to about three hours in the morning. While I finished my breakfast Joseph talked about a lot of difficulties he and Emmanuel had faced and related how God had intervened in their lives. As I finished eating Joseph asked Emmanuel to tell me about his grandfather.

Not to belabor the long background he gave of his childhood, the climax of his story was that his grandfather is the fetish priest for the village. He poured

the libations, and performed the sacrifices for the whole village.

Emmanuel asked me if I would share the gospel with his grandfather on one of my visits. Emmanuel had received Christ about two years ago and he longed for his grandfather to receive Christ. I said, "Why not this afternoon?" We prayed for God's direction and for the Spirit's work in his grandfather. I warned Emmanuel that there would be one of three responses and he needed to rest in the Lord in whatever the response would be. The first response could be that he would get angry and demand we leave. The second could be that he would want to have time to consider what we have said. And lastly, and the best response possible, he would be moved by the Spirit to receive Christ. We prayed at precisely 7:30 am. Please remember that time, as later in this story, it has relevance.

It was 1:00 pm when we completed our other duties and lunch and made our way to Emmanuel's grandfather's house. They said he had gone down to the shore to watch the men mend nets so they sent a boy to bring him.

When he came to his house he was accompanied by his best friend. His friend is a 73 year old elder and he is 65 years old. He spoke in Fante the local language, "You have come, we are here, what is your mission?" I replied, "My mission is to tell you about Almighty God, the Creator of all things."

His reply back to me after looking over to his friend and mumbling something to him, was somewhat of a surprise to me, "We are here and we are ready to hear and are thankful that you have come to tell us of this God?" He then proceeded to get down on his knees with his face on the floor showing me how he prayed to the God that made him when it was something really bad happening in his life. Otherwise, he prayed to the shrine idols.

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Since he was an idol worshipper I told him that the creator God had given us a Book to tell us about Himself, that this book is called the Bible. He said He did not know that about this book. I explained that the Bible tells us that God is an all powerful God, an all knowing God, an all wise God, a just God, a righteous God and a God of love, mercy and grace. Then I told him that the Bible also says that God is a jealous God. I asked him if he knew what jealous means. He said, "Oh, yes and explained it to me".

God then led me to a passage in Isaiah 44 that speaks of a man cutting a log and taking a third to build a fire to warm himself, then from another third he would cook his meal, and from the third part he would carve it and bow down to worship it. He followed what I was describing as if he himself had done just that.

I asked him how he thought God would feel about that man's worship of something that he himself had made with his own hands. His eyes got very large and he said, "Why, He would be very angry and jealous for dishonoring Him that way!" I asked, "well is that not what you do when you make idols with your hands." He said, "yes, yes!"

I then explained to him that God knew that man would fall away from Him so he devised a way to redeem us or buy us back from our slavery to sin. I explained the gospel and that we must receive Christ as our savior. In short they both prayed to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. As soon as they prayed Emmanuel's grandfather looked over to Emmanuel and said, "I must go to the shrine and tell them that I can no longer be a part of the shrine because I do not want to make my God jealous."

That encounter was one of the high marks of my life. Seeing God transform a man steeped in idol worship and sacrifices coming so readily to Christ showed me how God had prepared the way for us. He had prepared the soil to receive the seed. I have no doubt that this was God's directing us and at the same time was preparing them for the gospel. To Him be the glory.

On a follow-up visit three weeks later, when I went into his house he did

not sit on the stool of authority, a visible sign to me that he really has changed. He told Joseph to tell me that before I said anything he wanted to say something. I agreed and he began, "Three weeks ago my friend and I were at the beach and I looked at my friend and said, you know we don't have porridge for breakfast, nor do we have money to buy porridge and we are hungry." His friend agreed. "And our children have left us and the village and we have nobody to care for us." He replied, "You are right." The old priest said, "you know, our gods have not served us well. Perhaps we should try to find the true God that will see our needs, hear our prayers and speak to us." "It was later that afternoon," he said, "that the boy came down to fetch us and you told us that you came to tell us about Almighty God. We both knew that God had sent you to us to tell us about Him. I asked him about what time it was when he and his friend had this conversation. He said it was between 7:00 and 8:00 am when the boats come in from fishing.

I have been witnessing for over forty years and never have I been more aware that God had worked in us to pray for what He was doing in these men's lives at that moment. The beauty of all of this is to see that we are but a conduit of the truth of God's Word. God is calling out His sheep and the wonder of it all is that God has ordained that we be a part of what He is doing. "so then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17 NKJV.

A few weeks later we went to the village to show the Jesus film. Kobema Abbam, the priest and Kojo Obosu his old friend wanted to share their testimony before the whole village and the elders then show the Jesus film introducing the village to the one to whom they had placed their faith.

That night they shared their testimonies we started the video. At about the halfway point the video stopped. The dvd was defective and the second half did not exist. I taught through the rest of the story telling them that the miracles they had seen in the first half authenticated that Jesus was

the Son of God and went on to share the rest of the story of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension. We invited them to receive Christ as their savior and about 130 responded.

They pleaded for us to come back to show the rest of the film. I promised to come back the next week. The first night that we returned we could not get the sound to work at all. We told the villagers that we would get another system and show it the next night. The next night with an entirely different system we could not get the sound to work. Kobena stood up and told the villagers that Satan did not want them to see the rest of the video but that I would come back the next week to show it. A week later I went back and we were able to show the complete video. At the invitation about 120 people prayed to receive Christ.

Since then about 17 of the 24 elders have come to Christ in a meeting where they called Kobena in to ask him about his new God.

As the Lord continues to work through Kobena and his friend I can't help but give God praise for the way that he orchestrates His redemptive plan in those He is calling out of darkness into His glorious light. I truly am in awe of Him and how he works, often in spite of our ignorance, our selfishness and often even our total disregard for what is going on around us. We are so blessed to be in His service where nearly daily we see His hand at work in bringing His lost sheep home.

Further update: Kobena fell sick and had no money to pay doctors expenses. I instructed Joseph Crentsil, my translator in the Central Region, to take him to the hospital and I would provide funds for the visit. The doctors had told Joseph that Kobena would die if they didn't operate on his jaw. Notice the picture on page 1. I assumed that the swelling on the right side of his face was a birth defect since it had been there for the three years since I first met him. All his lower jaw was abscessed. All lower teeth were removed then after a week on heavy antibiotics they did the second surgery to scrape the jawbone to remove abscesses in the bone. The third

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surgery is to occur the week after Christmas and will be to remove any residual abscess in the facial bones close to the jaw. I had taken monies I was reserving for my possible back surgery.

I want to thank Lee and Carl Lane and Phyllis Fauntleroy who, having heard of the situation sent funds to cover all the medical expenses I had incurred for Kobena's care. All of us were concerned that if Kobena died shortly after receiving Christ it would greatly impair the furtherance of the gospel there in Biriwa by people blaming his death on leaving the gods he had worshipped.

2011 - A year of tremendous blessing

When I look back at this year I cannot believe the year is nearly gone. During the year we have moved the classrooms from verandas and the activity center into the unfinished first floor of the new school building. At least now when it rains the kids are able to continue classes. We are far from finishing the school building and need about another \$150 - 200,000 to complete the project, however since we do have the floor done for the second floor it acts as a roof for the downstairs. We had to turn students away this year due to classroom constraints and now have a total of 186 children from nursery to eighth grade. We will add ninth grade next year. We will probably never have a high school since Ghanaian High Schools are very highly specialized for different curriculums. Our students would not compete well in college if we had a general curriculum and they wanted to go to a college specifically requiring strong math and science or business and accounting subjects.

Our first girl to complete junior high school, Bernice Dogby is now in high school about six miles from the home. She is boarding with our Education Director's family and is preparing her own food every morning and evening. Bernice seems to be very happy in this new phase of growing up.

We have been privileged to assist about another 30 women with

minor children to keep them off the streets by providing minor capital funding of their start-up selling businesses. These thirty mothers average between three and four kids and with your help we have been able to assist them to assure they don't become trapped in streets of Accra.

We have finally gotten a clear deed to land that will be used to build the church structure in Biriwa. ECM has helped to secure the land and have it cleared for building. ECM will be building a small structure for a Central Region office and resource room. Behind this structure we will be building a covered structure that will allow for about two hundred people to attend church and be out of the sun and weather. Both of these structures will be started as soon as building permits are approved.

We have added eight kids this year to the home and are so blessed to now be a part of their lives. There are four sets of siblings. Two of the children lost their mother and the father works construction and must travel anywhere his work takes him so he cannot care for the children. Another two who are twins were brought to us by nuns who had rescued them eleven years ago from ritual abuse after their mother died at their birth and their father had turned them over to a fetish priest at one day old to perform a ritual to cleanse the village of the bad oman. In those villages twins who are first born are a bad oman and the mother dying was a double bad oman. Another two, a brother and sister lost their mother and nobody knows where their father is. The last two had a mother who was formally a Trokosi slave and when the father learned of this he began abusing the whole family. He had beaten his former wife to death and then had family pay money to get him out of prison. He has now vowed to kill all this family and the police cannot locate him after he disappeared when his family posted his bail before a trial for beating the family nearly to death.

It is needless to say that these children are suffering terribly from the aftermath of their former circumstances. I am reminded of the encounter I had with a high level social welfare worker

in Accra, the capital city. We were there to renew our license to operate the children's home. She was ranting on how just a few short years ago there were only a few children's homes and now the government is concerned that there are so many. I told her that the problem has been here for years, but now there are some concerned people who are trying to help these lost and forgotten children. She looked me in the eyes and sternly said, "Well you can't save them all!" I replied, "No, but we can save one at a time." Now I can say, "No, but we can save two at a time."

It never ceases to amaze me that though we work through the department of welfare on all these cases their officials sitting in their offices in the capital want to criminalize those who are here to help. They seem to think that we are creating the problem not that we are attempting to assist with the problem.

On a positive note, the Muslim mother of one of our girls at the home, who's name is Fazia, came to take her for a visit with her family. I talked to the mother about concerns I have in Fazia perhaps being forced to marry someone against her wishes by her family on one of these visits. She assured Pastor Sammy and I that she would never do that since it is against the law in Ghana. We proceeded to talk to her about Christ. I had to explain to her that Christians don't worship three Gods, but one God who exists in three persons. I used humans as an example since we are made in God's image. She agreed that she had a body, soul and spirit and that all three were her yet they were distinctly different. I then explained that God too, existed at three distinct person the Father, Son and Spirit. She said that on her way to the home she was bemoaning the fact that she had lost a job preparing a Ghanaian dish and selling in on the streets. She thought to herself that perhaps she had spoken against God and this is the reason I lost my job. She connected this earlier thought to what we were saying with, "I have argued many many times against Jesus Christ being God."

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Perhaps that is why I lost my job.” She proceeded to confess Christ as her Savior. Hallelujah!

Christmas is just around the corner and Carolyn is extremely busy trying to stretch every dollar to provide needed clothing and personal items for all the kids. They go through clothes really fast. Carolyn says that part of the problem is that many of the clothes here are very cheap China made items and the other is that hand washing the clothes is harder on them than machine washing. Yes, all the children from about 9 and up hand wash their own clothes.

We thank all of you, our supporters, for making another year possible for us to be here in Ghana. Without your prayers and support there would be no possible way for us to be here serving the people of Ghana. I know many of you are sacrificing from your own families to provide for our needs. We continually thank God for you. Also thank all of you who are praying for us.

Please join with us in praying for the following:

- 1) Kwabena the former priest for complete healing
- 2) Pray for me, Jim. I have problems with by entire lower back. The MRI showed that I had done very much damage to my back through heavy lifting. The doctors here do not want to do surgery. They say that half the people who have surgery end up worse off than before the surgery. I'll be bringing the MRI, Cat scan and x-rays with me when I return to the states to get a second opinion. Pray for healing.
- 3) Carolyn to have the strength and stamina to get through her very busy days. Especially during the holidays when we will be having many guest visiting.
- 4) Several children here at the home who have medical problems: Osmanu - hip dislocated, Felicia - residual paralysis from stroke due to sickle cell anemia, Paul - serious sickle cell anemia with frequent

relapses requiring hospitalization, and Peter - formally at Haven of Hope, HIV.

- 5) New children at Haven of Hope to adjust to their new environment.
- 6) School building funding. Up to \$200,000 could be needed to complete the project.
- 7) School bus - We are now making four trips in the van to pick up school children. Once the new school building is complete we anticipate a rapid expansion of the student population.
- 8) Perseverance in our continuing to share the gospel with all who will listen (and some who won't).
- 9) Spiritual growth for the Fazia's mother who came to Christ.
- 10) Pray for John and Lorella Rouster, founders and international co-directors of ECM. Lorella just left after a month stay and I could tell that carries a heavy burden for the entire ministry.
- 11) Wisdom for Carolyn and I as we are having to counsel with so many teenagers who are just starting to experience a "liking" for the opposite sex. Pray that God will give us the proper words to explain to them that much of this is normal and that we would be able to teach them Biblical principles of relationships.
- 12) Please pray for us as we have to share with several children whose mothers were on the street have died and pray that the children will be comforted in this time of loss.
- 13) Pray for my sister Barbara who just lost her husband of almost 50 years.
- 14) Pray for all the staff here at Haven of Hope for patience and wisdom in dealing with the children.

More than anything else we appreciate all of you who remember to pray for us. I especially want to thank my home church, New Covenant Community Church, for all you do for us to keep us here on the field. Your unselfish attitude in support of missions is second to none that I know. May God richly bless all of you for your service to His work worldwide.

Merry
Christmas
and
a
Happy
New
Year
In
Christ!