

The Messer Message

June 22, 2007

Dear Friends and Prayer Partners,

We hope that you are enjoying your summer with all the traveling, cook-outs, family reunions, camps, Vacation Bible Schools (or the time of free baby-sitting for parents), family vacations, trips to the park, fireworks, sporting events, preparing kids for college, etc. They say that summer is the time to relax but with all you do during the summer, we cannot see how anyone relaxes. Maybe that is why we stay so busy out here in our year long summer.

Remember Nadege? I just want to report that her "cousin/mother" came to church today! It's been so very VERY long. I greeted her and told her how happy I was to see her. Please pray that she might start coming faithfully again. She lost her brother-in-law nearly two months ago, and has been living with his family the whole time (this is their tribal way of dealing with the grief). She left her own children (3 boys between the ages of 12 and 16) as well as Nadege to just fend for themselves. Well, now she is back home (she came by today to thank me for helping her kids out with food and a lantern). It really is pitiful, but there is not much we can do except for pray for them. They do survive, and this is their culture. We cannot completely change their ways. This has been a hard lesson for me. Anyhow, pray that she will walk with the Lord. She does not know how to read, so the only way she is going to hear God's Word is to come to church. I was very happy to see her today.

Let me share a funny moment from Sunday School class. I had 23 kids today under age 10. Our little room was full, but not over crowded. I love this class, and am very pleased with their progress in the area of good behavior. A few weeks back, I was asking the children "Why did Jesus die on the cross?" Some of them said, "For our sins." I said, "Yes, but WHY did He die for your sins?" The reason: because He loves us. They could not seem to grasp this simple fact. I've taught them that Jesus loves them, but I don't think it has sunk in very much. Anyhow, today, I was teaching them about Abraham and Sara. When we finished the lesson, there were two points that I wanted them to really get. #1 Don't lie to God because He knows the truth anyhow (like Sara saying she did not laugh, when God knew very well that she DID laugh.) #2 There is NOTHING that is too difficult for God. I had told them these two points SEVERAL times. One little guy was pretty obviously not paying attention, so I called on him by name and said, "Yannik, what is the first lesson we learned today?" First, he gave me a totally blank look, and then, he said with a grin, "For our sins." Ha! Back to the beginning. :) Anyhow, these kids really are a joy to teach, and there are several who DO get it. I try to be hopeful and loving. There are some kids who used to be very naughty and have changed a lot over the years. Two in particular were very difficult (a girl named Nelly and a boy named Freddy), this past year, they both accepted Christ and have really changed a lot. They now show a desire to listen to the Bible lessons, and to understand God's Word. This is my hope and prayer for each of the little ones in my class.

We've had several people wishing to purchase benches for the church out here. Thank you! We have enough benches now to get a good start, and show the people what they will be like. We want to encourage our Ivorian church members themselves to buy these benches as well. Though it is difficult for them, it will help them to take ownership of their church if they have contributed to the building and furnishing of it. They do, however, appreciate the help that they have received from their American brothers and sisters in Christ. On a side note, those who support us regularly, please understand that your support also goes into these projects. We have budgeted a portion of our support for the work out here. Therefore, if you are in a church that supports us, you are already contributing to all the work out here. :) THANK YOU and may God bless you richly! As a lady once told me, "May you drink from your saucer because your cup overflows!"

Does it seem like we are moving very fast with this church? Well, I think the reason we have pushed so hard to get the building up and get the benches into it so quickly, is because we have this sense of "time could be short" for us. I guess it comes from evacuating three times during our first term. On one hand, we tell ourselves to slow down, and let the people do more (they will go slow for sure!) but on the other hand, we hear our hearts saying, "Go as fast as you can because you don't know how long you will have before you have to leave them." Things do seem calm though, so I guess we shall try to slow down a bit on all the projects. Rest assured that we are trying to train them in the Bible as intensely as we are trying to get their building ready. We want to give them as much as we can in case we have to leave, and they must carry on without us. PLEASE pray for a godly man that could be trained to take over as their pastor in the future. There are so many issues when handing a new church over to a National pastor. You don't want to do it prematurely, and see the church fall apart, or go in a wrong direction for lack of a solid spiritual foundation. Pray for us to have wisdom. Pray for us to have clear communication in teaching the people God's Word (we still have some struggles with the French, but not as much). Pray for the people to have understanding.

In closing, I want to thank those who have prayed for us, and written us letters of encouragement. This past month was kind of rough. Lots of little ones sick (malaria), lots of work/classes/counseling... going on at the church and at home. My cup is running over because God has so wonderfully cared for us. He has brought us through a difficult time, and granted health once again. THANK you for praying. All of the kids are doing great again. I know that some of you are really struggling with various issues (cancer, husbands in Iraq, unsaved family members...). Many we pray for by name each night. If you have any prayer requests that you want us to bring before the Lord with you, please don't hesitate to let us know. We know how much it helps us to have folks praying for us. We want to encourage you in this same way. We know the Lord's return must be soon, so keep looking up and moving forward.

Much love in Christ,

Andy and Becky Messer
Missionaries with World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions

P.S. I can't believe it, but our 1 and 1/2 year old (Hadassah) likes to eat RAW onion with seasoning salt. Is that weird or what? Guess she is her daddy's child. :)