

The Messer Message

August 24, 2007

Dear Prayer Partners,

Hello from the Messers here in San-Pedro, Cote d'Ivoire. Just to start out, it really is great to be here. We are so happy that the Lord has kept the country stable enough for us to be stay this long. We've been here a year and five months so far on this term. It's a blessing! Thanks for your prayers in that department.

Last week, our church did its first VBS. We called it Club Biblique d'Enfants (Children's Bible Club). It ran from Monday through Friday starting at 9:30 AM and going till about 12:15 PM. We've had children's Sunday School classes all along, and special children's meetings now and then, but never an official VBS. Our theme for the week was Willie the Gospel Worm (the colors of the wordless book -- Black = sin, Red = Christ's blood shed for sin, White = God's forgiveness and cleansing, Gold = the promises of God/heaven and Green = growth in the Lord). I was asking Andy how many kids he thought we'd get. He guessed about 30 to 60. It is vacation time and many children have gone to visit other family. The first day we had 80+ children! I did not have enough of the coloring booklets (with activities...) that were for kids who can read and write, so some of them had to color pictures instead. One teenage boy made a decision to trust Christ on that day. That afternoon, when we got home, we printed out about 30 more booklets and several more coloring pages. The second day we had over 120 children! Good grief! Really. "Good" because we WANT the kids to come and "grief" because again we were running out of booklets as well as snack (cookies and Kool Aid) and had to run (literally--our car is in the garage) to the nearby boutique and buy some packaged cookies and juice packs. OK, that afternoon we printed LOTS more booklets and I was up till about midnight making 200 cookies! Oh, I almost forgot, on day 2 there were 4 children that prayed with a leader to accept Christ. We had the kids split up into 6 classes, and they were all jam packed full! The little kids class (up to age 7) had 38 kids in it one day! Days 3-5 went a bit smoother because by then we had the hang of it. We had enough booklets and we brought extra Kool Aid in a jug to refill the cooler when it got emptied. The kids all memorized the verses that went with each color (they did a super job with that!) and seemed to have a great time. On Day 3 there were actually about 17 children who wanted to get saved (ages 8 to 10). It was thrilling to see them respond to the simple message of the Gospel. We pray that they will grow in the Lord now (as was taught on the last day--GREEN = spiritual growth!) On Friday, we invited the parents (several came, but not as many as I had imagined) for a closing program. The kids recited their verses and explained the colors of Willie Worm. Then we had popcorn and packaged cookies (I was too tired at that point to bake anymore!) Everyone said they had a terrific time and we all have great plans for next year's VBS.

Now for one of the best parts of the whole VBS. Andy wrote an awesome puppet skit. We got people from our church to read the script which Andy recorded with the video camera. Then he put it into the computer and was able to play it over the speakers at church (nice and loud!) My sister's kids did the puppets (we had two teens from our church who were supposed to help, but they failed to come to practice, so were not prepared.) The show was really great and everyone loved it. It was about a boy named Jacques who was a Christian, but because of a desire to have more money and nice things, was convinced by his friends to work for a man named Mr. Mé (pronounced May). The job was to steal things and then sell them to other people. We found out later that Mr. Mé's last name was Chant (pronounced shont) = Méchant means "Bad" in French. The kids loved this character, and you should have heard them yelling whenever he came up on the puppet stage. Anyhow, Jacques got caught trying to steal a bike and was turned over to his parents. He then explained everything to them, and repented of his sin of putting money before God. He asked forgiveness of his neighbor, the bike owner. The skit ended with Mr. Méchant saying he needed someone else to work for him now. He pointed into the crowd of children and said, "Maybe one of you?" Andy did such a terrific job of writing the script (VERY EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND FOLLOW!) getting it recorded (it played so nicely, loudly and clearly!) and teaching the kids how to do the puppets. All in all, it was a huge success! Thanks for all those who prayed that VBS would go well here! God did indeed answer your prayers.

We are excited about planning another VBS next year, and we have many ideas of how to make it run more smoothly. Thanks for your prayer support! God bless you!

Please keep our Radio Station Permit before the Lord. In two weeks, we will be in Abidjan. While there, we plan to meet with the government people who handle these permits. We are hoping for a favorable response! When we get back, we'll let you know what we discover.

Love in Christ,
Andy and Becky Messer
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Sent by Salem Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, NC