

The Messer Message

July 29, 2008

Dear special friends and family,

July has been very busy. It began at the end of last month actually. Andy and I went to Abidjan to fetch his niece and nephew. I think you already know that. They came and helped us with our VBS (13 kids got saved!!) After Andy took them back to Abidjan and came back home to San Pedro, he had a bit of a health breakdown. Over exhausted. About 9 years ago he was diagnosed with a virus called Epstein Barr. It makes you feel very tired and often achy. It can tend to make you not sleep at night and you lose a lot of weight (why can't I get this virus?—just joking!) At first he thought it was just normal fatigue, but when his pain would not go away after several days of rest and he could not keep up with his normal activities (he was feeling bad for 3 weeks straight) we finally got some tests done at the clinic here. We were happy when they ruled out Typhoid (my brother had undiagnosed Typhoid for several months and ended up going back to the U.S.), Diabetes (it runs in his family) and some type of infection. So, we can only conclude that it is the Epstein Barr virus that has resurfaced. The Dr. told Andy it will remain in his body and can flare up if he gets too run down. He was VERY run down. So, he has been making time to rest each day, taking Juice Plus more faithfully (a health food supplement that we can't get out here, so we had been skipping it too much), and drinking carrot juice. I am very happy to report that he is already beginning to feel better. Last time he had this, he was weak and in pain for over 2 months. He lost about 20 lbs. and was very fatigued. This time he seems to be doing better and pulling out of it faster. Guess it helps to have dealt with it before. So, I guess the prayer request is that he will slow down and take time to rest so he does not overdo himself. Next month (August) he'll be having some of the Bible School men preaching for him so that he can have a break. They are in the practicum part of their training and they need the experience anyhow. This way he will be able to mentor and help them with their preaching.

It is exciting to see what the Lord is doing with His people out here. There have been so many great witnessing opportunities. Some have accepted Christ and some seem right on the verge (Andy has been witnessing to a Muslim Moroccan man quite a bit - Andy believes the man is close to accepting Christ as his Lord and Savior - pray for his salvation). We are also discovering another interesting part of our role out here as missionary/pastor—matchmaking. We have had a man come to us and ask us to find him a wife. SCARY! We're really praying about this one. It is hard for the young men who want to serve the Lord to find young women who are equally serious about God. We are learning that the accepted way is for the man to go to the pastor and let him know that he wishes to find a wife. The pastor then tries to find a suitable woman who loves the Lord... and introduces the two. If they like each other and believe it is God's will, they will arrange to pay the dowry and get married. If not, we keep looking. I guess it is better than the "village way." Those not in the church tend to live together for a long time, call themselves married, split up if something goes wrong and start over with someone else. This method often leaves a woman stranded with several kids, at which point she heads back to the village to live off her family, or she comes to the church and begs for help. It's VERY rare to find solid families with the mom and dad legally and culturally married. Pray that God will guide the young Bible School men to godly wives and likewise, the faithful young women to godly husbands. It makes me think of Ruth and Boaz for some reason. Not a lot of romance or dating, but a good, wise choice and the Lord's blessing. Pray for us to have wisdom in dealing with this issue.

The kids are doing well. They have been healthy for the most part, however, we did have a little bout with malaria for Prisca and Hadassah, but they recovered quickly. We are at the end of summer vacation and will begin school next month. Our goal is to finish by the end of May and go on furlough sometime in June (after Bible School graduation). We pray that our church will not lack for leadership when we are gone. This year we will have a home school helper named Melissa who is coming out in October to help us. She will stay for the rest of the school year and head back to the U.S. when we leave. This is going to be such a blessing to have someone else to listen to children read, answer questions or give instructions. Pray that all of her needs will be met as she prepares to come here in just 3 months. The kids will be studying French again this year with their tutor named Elisabeth. Nadia and Lexie will enter the class. You can pray for them. Nadia wants to learn but Lexie is not too sure. Lexie in particular has a hard time with being friendly to the Ivorian kids. I think the problem is more of a language problem than a skin color problem. There is a little boy in our neighborhood who is part Ivorian and part African American. He lived in America and speaks great English. Lexie (and all the kids) love him and enjoy playing with him. She just does not want to try to reach out to other kids who don't speak English. Nadia is doing much better with this, so I'm hoping that if Lexie learns more French it won't be such a problem for her.

I know I always put this part at the end—next time I'll start with it—but I can't close a letter without saying that we really do appreciate our support team. You give faithfully, month by month and we can depend on you. We also know you pray for us and uphold us when times get tough. THANK YOU so much. We always wish for God to bless you and meet your needs. As always, the door to our home is open to you. If you can get here—we can feed you and give you a bed. J We have not had many takers so far, but we keep putting out the invitation. There is a team planning to come sometime in February and we are really looking forward to that. Also, next month, Brother John O'Malley, our missions Vice President will be coming for a short visit. Pray that he will have safety in his travels (he will also visit some fellow missionaries and dear friends in Ghana, the country next door). So, never a dull moment (ok, sometimes a dull moment, but even that is welcome!) We love you all and appreciate your support much more than you can know. Each month when we pay our bills, we thank the Lord for those who give so we can live here.

Please pray for:

1. Andy's strength as he recovers from the virus.

2. A Moroccan man's salvation
3. Safety for Nadege (our "semi-adopted" Ivorian daughter) as she travels back to her village for her mother's funeral.
4. Wisdom and strength for Becky as she gets ready for the new school year.
5. The financial and personal needs to be met for our friends (Melissa and Tabitha) coming to help during the school year.
6. All the cares that a church family can bring upon you (sin issues, unemployment, people looking to find a wife/husband, etc.)
7. Our sister church in Tabou (they are trying to finish their church building - lack of funds).

MUCH LOVE AND THANKS,

Andy and Becky Messer

Leah, David, Nadia, Lexie, Prisca and Chowie (Hadassah)