

The Messer Message

November 3, 2008

Dear praying friends and family,

Hello. Yes, we are still alive, and yes, we are still in West Africa. I don't know how it is for you, but sometimes I find it difficult to keep up with all of our missionary friends — Who is on furlough? Who is on the field? Where are they? How many kids do they have now?... So, let me fill you in briefly. J

We are in San Pedro, Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. If you look at a map of Africa, it looks like an ice cream cone that fell over (ours tend to do that out here with the heat!)—we are on the bottom side of the fallen ice cream blob. Our city, San Pedro, is a major port city—so that lets you know we're on the edge of the ocean. Pretty much each Monday (unless it is raining) we go to the beach and look at the Atlantic Ocean. It is beautiful. It is the one main item of beauty here in San Pedro, and the Lord has made it so that man can't really destroy the view looking out to the huge, never ending (or so it seems) ocean.

The season for us is hot/dry with occasional thunder storms. It will continue to heat up throughout the months of Jan. to June. Your winter is our summer.

We still have 6 children (that number should not change J) who are all doing well with home school. Leah is in 5th grade, David is in 4th, Nadia is in 3rd, Lexie is in 1st (fun) and Prisca and Hadassah are doing preschool. We have added a home school helper named Melissa (Missy) Cheeseman to our bunch. She has been such a blessing. She is great with the kids (firm enough to make them do as they should, but also very kind and loving.) I could not be happier! She also helps with making desserts for class parties, cooking lunch on Sundays (with David's help) and general clean up chores. She really is a wonderful help to me in our home.

Andy has been very busy with Bible School this fall. He has a total of 8 students (6 men, 2 women—5 out of the 8 are from our church). He is teaching a class on Personal Spiritual Life which we believe will greatly help the students in their walk with the Lord. We have also begun an English class on Saturdays taught by my mom and me. We had 14 students last Saturday. The hardest part for them at this point is pronouncing the vowels in their short sounds. We do a lot of repetition. Everyone say, "ba" "be" "bi" "bo" "bu" all together. J

Another ministry that our church is beginning is a Children's Bible Club. The children will meet each Wednesday morning at 8 AM for a light breakfast (bread and boiled eggs), followed by a Bible lesson, singing, and game time. The children are very excited about this new activity that will be specifically geared for them. We are excited by the fact that our Ivorian church leaders will be directing and teaching the whole program.

This term has been very difficult for us personally (David's sickness, Rebecca's death as well as other illnesses that we don't always write about—several of our kids have had malaria in the past 3 months), but spiritually it has been so very encouraging. We are seeing the church members take ownership of the church and its ministries. We now have a choir which is led by an Ivorian church member. The women have formed a ladies group and have taken over the cleaning of the church each week. The members have also pitched in to plan and organize the Christmas program this year. We simply cannot express how thrilling it is for us to see these believers maturing in the Lord and taking on more responsibility in the church. Not to mention that it helps to lighten our load as well. The two guys (Williams and Parfait) from our church who are in their last year of Bible School are able (and required) to preach at least once a month as part of their last year training. Another of our members, Jean, has his own church work and is also in the last year of the Bible School program. Sometimes William and Parfait preach at Jean's church to give him a rest too. Having these men available to preach allows Andy to have a much needed break from time to time.

In my ladies class, we finished our series on "Building Christian Character to Become a Virtuous Woman" and have now begun a series on "How to Teach." The women have been taking turns teaching the class and have done a great job. We are really working to get the church ready for our departure next June when we go home on furlough. We are so thankful that the Lord has raised up some godly leadership among our church members. Men and women who know His Word and are not afraid to proclaim it, stand by it and uphold it. It is very exciting to watch!

We very much appreciate all of you, our dear friends and supporters! Thank you to those who pray for us. You may never know how much we needed those prayers this past year. Please continue to pray for us, especially for physical health and strength for the work. We pray that the Lord will bless you for your sacrifice of time as you bring our names before His throne! We are so grateful!

We wish you each a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas (in advance). We have two young ladies who are planning to come and visit Melissa (our home school helper) the week after Christmas as well as a church group that is coming out in February to help with the ministry here. That said, you probably won't hear from us until the new year. Until then, our plans are for Missy and I to finish up school lessons with the kids, for Andy to finish up his class with the Bible School students, for the church to finish getting ready for the Christmas program—there will be music, verse recitations and small drama presentations, and in general to survive (keep the house running, the laundry done and the meals served). We will be busy working with the new Children's Bible Club and preparing our church to fly solo for

a year. We are glad to remember that they will not really be "flying solo," because the same Father who helps us will be with them every step of the way. Never forget that if you belong to Him, He is with you too. I remember when that fact really hit home with me. I was in High School and was invited by a Chinese friend to spend the weekend at her home in another city. They were celebrating Chinese New Year (not in January). I was the only American and I felt extremely out of my comfort zone. It was very comforting to me to remember that God would never leave me nor forsake me and no matter where I went, He was there. May this truth comfort you today.

Prayer Requests:

1. For continued spiritual growth in the leadership of our church.
2. For wisdom and strength as we finish our final year before furlough.
3. That our Bible School students would persevere through the program.
4. The salvation of all our children.
5. For the completion of the church building in Tabou. Their roof is on but they still lack the funds to make the bricks to finish the walls. (photos available of the work upon request)
6. For opportunities to share the gospel with those who attend the English Class.
7. Wednesday Children's Bible Club: for God to work in the children's hearts.

In Christ,
Andy and Becky Messer