

Andrea Herman – CALL TO PRAYER – February 2009

“The Lord is my light, and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1

Due to some changes in government regulations, I was forced to make a trip to Conakry, the capital. It is a long trip on less than spectacular roads, much of which is also on windy roads through mountainous areas. The 12+ hour trip one way was not something I was looking forward to. On top of that, we had to drive right through the spot where Nortons and I had been attacked by an angry mob with machetes and had our truck windows smashed, on the second anniversary of that memorable event. I am happy to report that God redeemed things in the way that only He can. My time in Conakry was a blessing, as I had some extra time with Heineys, got to enjoy a cooler environment and even watch and listen to the ocean! Small things maybe, but they provided refreshment when I needed it.

As soon as I recovered from the return trip from Conakry, I headed back up to the village in Mali so I could say good-byes, pack up and move out. It had to happen quicker than I wanted because I had to rush back for the 40th day of mourning for S.K. The 40th day ceremony for S.K. was the first I have ever attended. It is usually only attended by family and close friends, not the throngs that may attend the actual funeral. This time, the men and women were not physically separated, though the seating was segregated by gender.

I found it very interesting that while a few Muslim teachers read prayers and blessings and the Quran (as fast as they could, and all at the same time), the women were almost entirely disengaged from the noisy spectacle that was going on right in front of them. It was completely unintelligible, even if you could understand Arabic, because 3-4 people were speaking at the same time and loudly. In general, few women here actually practice the religion they claim to be devout members of. Religious rituals are not of interest to them. They are interested in getting and keeping husbands and having healthy children. If their religion doesn't do what they want, they seek that power and control over things through those who wield satanic power.

I was so tired that day. I had packed up early that morning in the village, crossed the border, and unpacked my truck at home before arriving at the ceremony. Despite my fatigue, I wanted to observe and understand what was going on. God blessed me with an English speaking friend, a woman who now lives in Mali, who not only spoke both English and Maninka, but was also formerly a Christian before she married her Muslim husband. Her presence and conversation were a tremendous blessing. At one point when the men were reading Arabic really fast, she said, “You know, when I read the Bible, I can understand what it says, and if someone preaches from the Bible, I understand it even better, but people who read the Quran can't understand it, even when someone tries to explain it to them.” Her statement so clearly described the situation. I honestly don't think most of the people within earshot of all the readings got any more out of it than I did, men or women. For them, it is important that people (especially religious leaders) speak blessings over the dead and the family. I don't get the impression that they believe it is in the least bit important to understand what is actually being said.

The final aspect about the ceremony with which I struggled, is that while these teachers are speaking blessings, everyone throws money into the circle where they are reading. Knowing the financial hardship it has been for the family to pay for months of ineffective medical treatment, plus loss of work, and providing food and refreshments for all 3 gatherings after S.K.'s death, it was difficult for me to watch these teachers collect a LOT of money in a very short time, while the family is struggling to pay off loans as a result of their mother's sickness. However, that is how it is done, and no one else took issue with it.

I'm not sure if it is in any way related, but since shortly after S.K.'s death, I have experienced 3 powerful spiritual attacks. Maybe these attacks just came during times when I felt particularly weak, and was isolated from other believers, I don't know. However, the whole ordeal was quite disconcerting, mostly because I didn't have any colleagues in town to whom I could go and just ask them to pray for me right then and there. Fortunately, each time, the internet was working so I was at least able to send out urgent requests for prayer. God, in His graciousness, responded to those prayers and brought me His peace and relief. I praise God for His help and I thank you for your willingness to pray for me. There are so many spiritual battles going on over this people group. Please remember the Maninka and those trying to share the light of Christ with them in your prayers, as this battle is far from over. Thank you for your prayer support!

Please join me in thanking God for:

- ◆ being able to attend S.K.'s 40th day ceremony and be with the family
- ◆ a new closeness with J.S., S.K.'s daughter-in-law, as well as 2 of her daughters
- ◆ answering my prayer (really quickly) for a new friend with whom I can share my faith
- ◆ a little more time with Heineys in Conakry
- ◆ healing my back, it's feeling better than it has in awhile
- ◆ my Together In Mission congregations who I will be visiting in April and May
- ◆ the justice that is finally being meted out to those involved in embezzlement and drug trafficking in Guinea
- ◆ those who support me in prayer and are praying for the Maninka to know Jesus
- ◆ the Norton family who is returning to Guinea after a 6 month furlough

Please join me in praying for:

- ◆ spiritual hunger all over Guinea, but especially in S.K.'s family & in the S family
- ◆ MK's husband, that he would be reconciled to his wife
- ◆ MK to be able to return to our area soon - I was just told if she and her husband are not reconciled, she'll be gone for 3-4 YEARS (She's my best friend here, I can't imagine being without her for that long.)
- ◆ Guinea's government; to honor their word and prepare for Presidential elections in 2009
- ◆ God to give me the energy to "finish strong" in my language studies before furlough (I'm currently in a slump.)
- ◆ the Holy Spirit's work in the village in Mali, that hearts would continue to turn to Jesus
- ◆ good balance in life and work, and restful sleep during the hot nights
- ◆ my furlough schedule to get solidified soon
- ◆ a safe and uneventful re-entry transition for the Norton family (they're arriving just in time for the hot season, which is a pretty miserable time of year)
- ◆ God's blessings on upcoming meetings with our new Regional Director, Mike Rodewald, that we can make good use of our short time together
- ◆ good health and restful sleep; I've been sick a LOT lately, and would like my appetite back

In Christ,
Andrea