

A Call to Prayer

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“He (God) has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” 2 Corinthians 3:6

I returned to Guinea just when Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting from dawn til dusk) got underway. Ramadan is a challenging month for those not participating in the fast. It's very difficult to get work done because people are tired and irritable, and often nap during the day. They also ask, “Are you fasting?” If the answer is “No”, the question-poser often proceeds to shame you, tell you you're wrong and that you're not obeying God.

If I may generalize, I don't know many ex-patriots who enjoy this particular month, and I personally was not looking forward to beginning my second term during this month-long event. However, as God has been doing so faithfully since I returned to Guinea, He has redeemed this month in a way that only He can.

Instead of engaging in fruitless discussions about the “surface” differences between the fasting of Muslims and Christians, the Lord used my teammate to help me refocus on the real point. When I would go into the market to greet people and was met with, “Are you fasting???” I would say, “No, and I will tell you why not, but first I want to know why you are fasting”. For most, this was a strange turn of events, and many were at a bit of a loss to explain. A few even told me I was a bad person for asking (likely out of shame that they didn't know the answer). You see, here, not unlike other parts of the world, most people follow religious traditions blindly. They fast because it's the fasting month, and because everyone else is doing it. For most, the sense of community during Ramadan is far stronger than any convictions they may have regarding the spiritual benefits of fasting, or a deep desire to know and worship God.

“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:19

I was shocked at how many opportunities God provided for me to have great spiritual conversations and occasions to share my faith during this past month, with friends and strangers alike. On days that I would greet in the market (which was usually 4 days a week), I never had less than 3 rather lengthy conversations about our sinfulness and why God is the only one who can save us. Since we were in the market, there was always an audience ranging up to a dozen or so people who were listening to the conversation.

Village visits also provided great opportunities to share. In one of my village visits, I was going to greet an old friend that had moved away. I had never met her husband, because they had been separated. She took me to his work place, which was the transit center of their village, and also the “county seat”, which provided a built-in “captive” audience of about 2 dozen travelers.

Like everyone else, he asked if I was fasting, which allowed me to tell the story of the creation of the

world and humanity's fall into sin (aka the reason they have to fast). We talked about how God is Holy, but we aren't anymore since Adam & Eve ate the forbidden fruit. We're all on the same page until we get to how to fix the sin problem. They are taught that their works can save them if they do enough good. Though I don't know any churches who teach that, I do know a lot of people who would identify themselves as "Christian" who think that same thing.

Of course the exciting part is sharing with people that God always knew that Adam and Eve would disobey. He wasn't surprised and He wasn't unprepared. He promised that everyone who believes that the "Promised One", Jesus, was sent from God to pay for our sins and received the judgement that should've been ours, WILL BE SAVED.

My friends and neighbors here have a lot of fear. One of their biggest fears is death. They fear death because they have no certainty of their eternity. They know their is a Heaven and they know their is a Hell. They hope that they've done more good than bad, and that that will be enough to get them into Heaven. They are bewildered by my assurance of spending eternity with God. Please pray with me that their bewilderment would give way to curiosity, which would result in questions about how they can have that same assurance.

Newsflash: Some of you may have heard about the unfortunate happenings on Sept 28, in Conakry, the capital. If not, you can search BBC's website. I am not at liberty to share much. I want to remind you that I am on the other side of the country from the capital, and Praise God, so far things there have remained calm. That said, things are tense. Our team and the people of Guinea need your prayers for God to intervene in this situation so that more lives are not lost in the months prior to the elections. The problem is complex. The solution is not. Please pray.

To support my work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to: LCMS World Mission
1333 S. Kirkwood Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

Make checks payable to LCMS World Mission. Mark checks "Support of Andrea Herman". Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS World Mission Web site, www.lcmsworldmission.org.

Prayers

Please join me in praising God for:

- His markable redemption of this month for His glory
- the countless new opportunities to share with those who have never heard
- His joy in spite of less than ideal circumstances
- His presence that has guided me through this past month; may others know it as well
- conversations with students and teachers of the Koran; may God's Spirit be at work
- the repaired water main and the long awaited return of water to my home
- the many rains that have come late, (but better than never!) to water the crops
- His multi-faceted protection

Please join me in asking God for:

- His help and blessing to HEAR Maninka more clearly and understand it profoundly
- His intervention in the marriage of M.K. & her husband. She will return soon, and her husband appears to want her back, but her family is against it.
- an open heart and mind for the Koranic student who has expressed interest in reading the Tawrat (Pentateuch-1st 5 books of the OT), Zabur (Psalms), and Injil (Gospels)
- comfort for H.K.'s family, (the daughter of S.K., the woman with the foot problem who died in January), who died this past week, leaving 5 children behind. The children's father is also quite ill. Please pray for God's healing and provision for the children
- Him to glorify His name in this place
- people to desire Him and seek the Way, the Truth and the Life
- His strength to keep my focus on Jesus, not the "storm"
- peace despite political tensions and demonstrations prior to the elections, currently planned for Jan 31, 2010.