

A wise colleague and I were chatting this month and he said, "mission work has been the most challenging and the most rewarding work that I have ever done." Although my friend's previous career was farming, he wasn't slinging around cow dung when he said this. In fact, it sums up quite well our experiences this month. We had two wonderful visits; from Pastor Samuel Camara, a Maninka friend from Mali, and from our LCMS agricultural missionaries, Delano & Linda Meyer, based in Sierra Leone (none other than the man earlier quoted). We took some great strides forward in the development of the local church. Our radio ministry started broadcasting and we received good feedback. Those were some very rewarding experiences. However. . .

K.B., the man I've written about in previous newsletters, was blessed with another child. This time there was a considerable amount of family pressure to give the baby an Islamic baby-naming ceremony. Unfortunately, he succumbed to this pressure. Earlier in the month, we had agreed to start worship at his village so that all of his family could participate. He lives 30 kilometers from town and it is expensive and difficult for him alone to come, much less his three wives and nine children. There was also another lone believer in a village 5 kilometers away (he was one of the people from "L" who were baptized last year) who also had difficulty coming to town and was going to participate. K.B. ended up changing his mind after originally agreeing to this plan. He had been receiving many threats and was afraid of being run him out of the village since he was not born and raised there.

I was very thankful that Pastor Samuel was visiting at this time because he helped me with a lot of feedback and wisdom. To say these experiences were "lows" would be an understatement. Still, Pastor Samuel's reaction to the baby naming ceremony was, "it's difficult but not insurmountable." Again, when K.B. was telling us he wouldn't be able to have worship in his village, Pastor Samuel's gentle encouragement was, "I'm not going to tell you HAVE to have worship in your village, but don't let Satan scare you into losing your faith." These words on a page don't do justice to the events - how much tension there was, how the Holy Spirit through Samuel diffused the tension, how K.B. was really perched on a precipice ready to fall.

In fact, since that time he's made some progress, and that was what Samuel meant when he said the situation was difficult but not insurmountable. So in all these things we give thanks to the one who worked faith in K.B.'s heart in the first place. We are continuing with the chronological Bible storying in his village, and although the group has shrunk from the beginning group of 40+, they seem to be understanding what this is all about. When we had urged the other believer "A.S." to participate in worship at K.B.'s place, at first he didn't show up, but apparently more recently they've been praying and talking together.

The radio ministry started well, but then for two consecutive weeks the radio station itself messed up the programming. First they played the program at a time when few people are listening (instead of the earlier, more well attended to time we were given), and then the next week they didn't play it altogether. It's hard to know if they were trying to sabotage the program or just seriously unprofessional. The latter is quite possible; in any case they did play it last week although 15 minutes later than it was supposed to have gone on air.

Our visit with the Meyers was beneficial for those who participated in their teaching, but at a much smaller in scale than in years past. Previously we had gone to villages where we were doing evangelism and shared with them the teaching the Meyers do about caring for the soil and managing the harvest. We were able to see though that many of the lessons taught were ignored, so we decided to use a different approach and work with a small number of people who are more open to new ideas.

One of the problems we've faced not only with agricultural teaching but evangelism and literacy as well, is that people may say what they think you want to hear (i.e. agree entirely with new ideas presented in agricultural training) but their ulterior motivation is that the foreigner is going to help their wildest dreams come true, even if it has nothing to do with the lesson presented.

We are in need of your prayers for all these areas of ministry. Though we "count it all joy" (James 1:2), the trials are sometimes difficult to face. Our family has also been battling small illnesses for the last few weeks. We would appreciate you lifting these things to the throne of grace with us:

- Thanksgiving for Pastor Samuel Camara's visit and his ministry. Pray that God continues to keep him healthy as he is constantly traveling to evangelize and teach.
- Pray for K.B. and his family that they all would be strengthened in faith.
- Pray for the radio ministry that those who hear would believe and that the Word would continue to go out
- Pray for the villages of K.D. and B.D., because of traveling and holidays there has been no evangelism in these places since November, however two evangelists are currently visiting there.
- Pray for good health for our family as the hot season begins.

In Christ,  
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