

Dear Friends in Christ,

Norton Newsletter, November 2007

"You are acting as if you asked someone to bring you back a bag of cassava, and they brought you back a bag of bananas!" So were the words of "K.B", the N'ko literacy teacher in village "F", in response to a small controversy. He went on a trip to Bamako in the middle of this month to learn more about his new faith. He was able to attend a seminar on Baptism and Holy Communion while he was there, and gained much in the way of encouragement and knowledge and new Christian friends. Unfortunately, when he returned home he found that the study group was scattered and people had agitated against it. They said it was a Christian study and designed to trick them. But K.B. countered with this statement: "Of course it's a Christian study! Those men who asked for permission to teach us are Christians and they never disguised that! They said we were going to learn from the Bible, and they taught us from the Bible. You are acting as if you asked someone to bring you back a bag of cassava, and they brought you back a bag of bananas!" In other words, when someone says what they are going to do, and then does just what they said, where is the cause for complaint?

In the end the literacy group started anew with some of the same people as well as some new ones. There are many who have left, but the ones who have stayed on are more serious now than they were before. K.B. himself has completed the baptism course and is going to be baptized, Lord willing, this coming Sunday. He also participated in an evangelism trip with Sacko Koulibaly to the village I've written about, "K.D", returning just a few days ago. Both the evangelists and hearers were encouraged through this time, as the evangelists learned to rely more and more on God, and the hearers were more and more convinced of His love for them. Even one of the leaders who was at the beginning strongly opposed to the evangelist's coming participated in the study and presented no opposition. Please pray for these men, and pray for this town.

We are not sure exactly how things are going to go for evangelism there in the near future. Sacko Koulibaly has applied to a Bible school in Mali, where he hopes to start studying in January. If he's accepted there will be no one to take his place in village "K.D." The Bible school he hopes to attend would teach some of the same books that our mission uses throughout West Africa as T.E.E. (theological education by extension) courses. The difference is that the Bible school is taught in the local language, while the materials we have are either in French or English, which Sacko doesn't know well. Also, the Bible school allows for a group to study together, while traditional T.E.E. courses are meant for individuals to study the books on their own. This school would meet for the first four months of the year, for four years. So while we would still have much contact with Sacko, this will be a long term commitment for the future.

There are many places where people have invited us to come and teach, yet we have not been able to reach them all. Some of the places are very remote, and others are closer to town. And now it appears that we will be losing our main evangelist for much of the year. "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." (Mat. 9:37). We simply don't have enough people to reach everywhere, but we are praying that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers. We're hoping to train "K.B." into an evangelist, and others from his village who will hopefully eventually receive Christ. During K.B.'s trip to Bamako we made a stop in Siby, a town along the way, and conversed with a trusted Maninka friend and colleague in God's mission, Pastor Samuel Camara.

He saw the many gifts God has given K.B. and said to him, "since God has blessed you with so much, He will also ask much of you."

Earlier in the month I planned to attend the ordination of the first pastor of the Lutheran Church of Guinea, Julien Kotembedouno. Because both Philip and Heidi became ill I was not able to go, but the leader of our fellowship, Kwaku Henaku, who is a English speaker from Ghana, went and shared with us the great joy of the occasion. We were able to celebrate Thanksgiving last week with missionary friends and other Americans in our former residence of Kankan. Indeed we have much to be thankful for this year.

Join us in thanking God for:

- K.B.'s profession of faith and desire to be baptized this coming Sunday -The evangelism in village K.D. and how receptive people, even those formerly opposed to it, have become.
- Continued peace and stability in this country, which allows us to remain and work here.

We ask you also to bring these requests to our LORD.

- For a good completion of the evangelism/chronological Bible storying in village "F"
- For God to provide workers for the many opportunities there are to share His Word in our area
- For Sacko Koulibaly and his training to be a well-equipped leader
- For our strength and health, we have all suffered from small illnesses this month

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