

GATHER THE FRAGMENTS BAPTIST MISSION

Stephen & Laura Holt



SEPTEMBER 2010

Dear Praying Family and Friends

THE CLASSROOM OPENS! Sunday, September 5 was opening day for “Little Fragments Bible Class” with 40 children in attendance. Earlier we had reported that there would be two Sunday sessions for the children however we have revamped the schedule and will only have one session for now. Laura is teaching chronologically through the major stories of the Bible using felt figures and some of her own drawings. She has seven eager and motivated ladies who take turns assisting with translation and discipline. The first week three unruly boys were asked to leave but were, of course, invited to come the next week. They have chosen not to return and the atmosphere has improved. The children are memorizing Bible verses, singing songs, and do fairly well with review questions at the end of the lesson. Please pray for the Lord to open the hearts of these little ones as they learn about the way of righteousness. Laura has been able to teach herself to read Krio and is working on language study with one of these ladies, Elizabeth, who unfortunately, cannot read. This makes the study is slow but it is helping so we are grateful for this answer to prayer.

BIBLE CLASSES: In spite of our fraudulent contractor and sub-standard building supplies, repeated delays and unacceptable workmanship, we are using the classroom building as is. In addition to our construction issues forcing us into postponing our start date, we are now faced with cultural issues causing delays. As with Christmas in the States, Ramadan creates social pressures for mixed families of Muslims and “infidels” to spend time together. Therefore, many of our men traveled delaying our last start date by two weeks. If possible, families are expected to spend the last weekend of the fast together so all can join in a day of prayer to break the fast. So here we are with Friday, September 17th set as the official start of Bible classes. The initial group is ten men who are committing to Friday and Sunday evenings from 1600 - 1800. Our first book of study is the gospel of John; we will go through this book with a focus on doctrine and training for evangelism. These men must go out prepared to contend for the faith in the midst of Muslims. Sierra Leone, along with West Africa as a whole, is losing souls to Islam daily as they build schools and provide education to the rural poor. Except these men win their own to Christ the consequences will be eternally ugly.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH: In an effort to purge out the Pentecostal heresies (women preachers etc.) so prevalent here, I recently taught an adult Sunday school lesson emphasizing the praiseworthy responsibility women have regarding preparing the next generation of contenders for the Lord. Using the examples of Jochabed, Hannah, Lois, and Eunice, our ladies were challenged to train up a Moses, Samuel, or Timothy for the glory of God instead of coveting the pulpit. The response to this was both surprising and heart breaking. One woman fighting tears and frustration, “How can I train my children; I do not know the Bible and cannot read? Can you teach us what we can do?” What a shame. Although these dear ladies have faithfully attended church for years, they are Bible-ignorant; the Pentecostal fakers have left them defenseless to train up the next generation in a Muslim country.

In October, Laura will begin a ladies’ Bible class. She has been seeking the Lord’s timing regarding when to begin the group; she has an austere taskmaster who keeps her chained to her drawing table producing Bible story illustrations for evangelism, church, and school. She had been working with a group of seven ladies to train them as assistants for children’s church. That group has asked her for additional time to help them learn the Bible; thank you Lord for your clear direction. We previously mentioned that she would be teaching the “Ruth Group”. This was a group loosely organized by a pastor from another town who was truly trying to help. Unfortunately, his offer suggested financial assistance, vocational training, and development. His goal was to help establish the women in small businesses; he however had zero funding but expected money from abroad. For many in the group, their initial enthusiasm evaporated along with their vision of free money. Laura explained we are the kind of missionaries with a Bible and a commission to provide spiritual training and counsel not a humanitarian deep pocket. After that, many went back and walked no more with her. Starting fresh with this new core group is an answer to prayer. Though less in number, they are greater in commitment. These women sincerely want to learn the Bible, make it a part of their lives, train their children, and serve the Lord – GLORY! We are learning!

JOHN 6:12

...GATHER UP
THE FRAGMENTS
THAT REMAIN
THAT NOTHING
BE LOST

BASED IN

Sierra Leone,
West Africa

AN INTERNATIONAL
OUTREACH OF

The BIBLE
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A MINISTRY
OF HELPS IN
WEST AFRICA

In June, I began teaching a basic discipleship class on Wednesday evenings. Two of the most difficult doctrines to correct have been eternal security and baptism. But the Holy Spirit is moving hearts and it appears we are making progress. In response to interest, confusion, and doubt, I held baptism class at our house for a small group of inquirers. Of that group, four requested to be baptized. Although they had previously been baptized, it was without scriptural understanding of its purpose or the beautiful illustration of the gospel. Some had been taught that baptism was part of salvation and one had received infant baptism. All now have a very clear understanding and testimony of salvation apart from baptism. PRAISE THE LORD! On the afternoon of Sunday, July 18, we walked down the hill to the river. People who were there to do laundry or bathe heard the rousing testimony of “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus” followed by four very solid public testimonies of salvation and desire to live for the Lord along with earnest gospel invitations.

On a recent trip to Freetown, I stopped in a small town about five hours from home. As I was purchasing some produce, a young man approached me and seemed surprised that I did not recognize him. He explained that he had been in Baomahun a few months ago and had listened to one of our open air preaching sessions. “You were teaching about the way of life and the way of death; you had some pictures hanging up.” He must have been referring to the illustrations of Cain and Abel and would have been among the crowd pictured in our July prayer letter! He earnestly requested that I travel to his village to give them the same teaching. There are many who need to hear; there are many that want to learn. So much more could be done here; I wish I were 35 again!

MISSION MOUNTAIN: This is the nickname given by the locals to our little home on the hill. Although not all of the problems with the house have been corrected, we are comfortably settled in and rejoicing in God's provision. We had some unexpected funds donated, which has allowed us to install one solar panel sufficient to power four lights. What an indescribable blessing to have lights at night and early morning without having to feed a thirsty generator. This keeps our early morning reading and devotional time quiet, which we both appreciate and the budget appreciates the reduced fuel consumption. We were also able to purchase a 5KV diesel generator to run our well pump and a freezer. We run this generator for a few hours in the morning and again in the evening timing it with other necessities such as cooking, computer work, and printing for the classes. The freezer has been a tremendous blessing as getting supplies in town is not always dependable. We have stocked it with various grains and other staples we purchase when we travel to Bo or Freetown but the biggest advantage and blessing are the treasures from Laura's garden.

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH: We concluded our last letter with the statement that we were in good health but here it doesn't take long for that to change. In the pioneer missionary days of the 18th and 19th centuries, the region of West Africa became known as “The White Man's Grave”. Little wonder with such dread diseases as malaria, typhoid, dengue fever, and cholera among others. With little or no way to treat these potentially fatal sicknesses, many of those among our missionary forefathers gave their lives to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thankfully, due to medical advancement and accessibility this title no longer applies. I was recently laid out for three weeks with typhoid, which was far worse than malaria. The strong antibiotics required to treat this are available locally “over the counter”, so to speak. Typhoid is completely avoidable with proper personal hygiene and community sanitation, both are foreign concepts in this culture. I believe I contracted typhoid one Friday morning during evangelism. Whenever we walk through town, the children just cling to us holding onto our hands and fingers and rubbing the hair on my arms. They are very lovable, however, there is no telling where their darling little hands have been. While I stood with Bible open talking to a group of Muslims, I put my finger to my tongue to moisten it and help turn the page. I try not to imagine too much further than that. Now I am very careful to carry my Bible in my right hand so it is not exposed to any our little friends while on visitation. Sierra Leone is decidedly not the place for germ freaks. Typhoid passed, I am now I am treating my feet for an intense case of jungle fungus (athlete's foot on steroids). My feet were so swollen and painful that I could not walk for several days and even now, two weeks later, they are painful, cracked, and bleeding. Laura is grateful that she has not required as much nursing as I since she is quite certain that I would not make as good a nurse as she! We cannot tell you how much we appreciate your prayers for health and safety.

We're still having fun!

Because He Is Worthy

Stephen and Laura Holt