



Serving the suffering church around the world



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The Light of the Gospel

By Pastor Dick Shaw
Director, Praise, Inc.

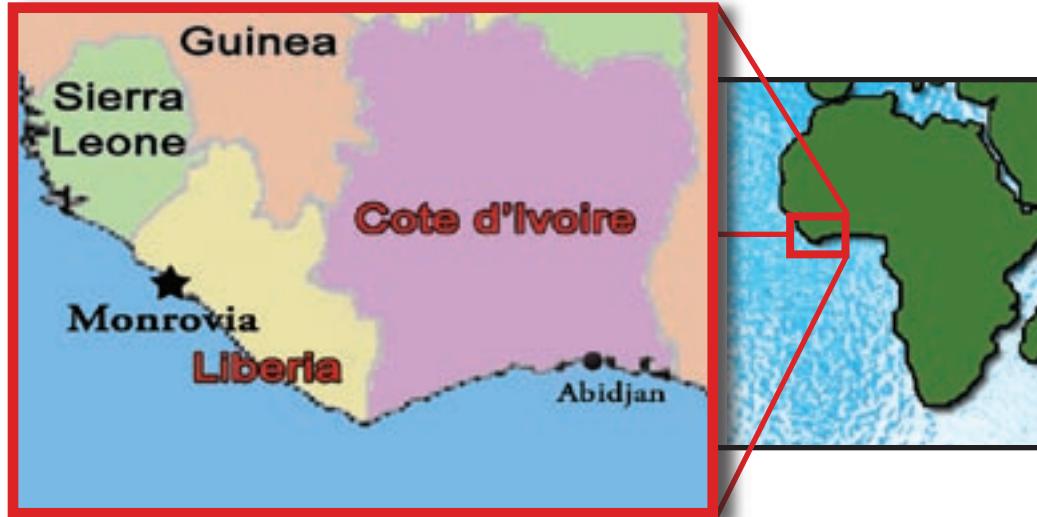
"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

Liberia is the oldest republic in Africa. It was founded in 1847 by slaves who had gained their freedom in the United States and looked back to the continent of Africa for hope and for a new beginning. Early this year Liberia installed Africa's first democratically elected woman as president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. However, Liberia is wracked with challenges and problems.

Former leader Charles Taylor, whose bloody influence in Liberia began in 1989, will probably face trial at The Hague for his war crimes and crimes against his own countrymen. From 1989-1996, over 200,000 people were murdered and over a million others were displaced by the long civil war. Many thousands of Liberians fled the country, and some have been living as refugees in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.

Recent news from Liberia includes the alarming rate of HIV and AIDS infections spreading



across the country and the deeply disturbing report that some of the peacekeepers working in Liberia who are there to help the people have been exploiting children as young as age 12, trading food and supplies for sexual favors. In addition to these problems, there has been a growing Islamic influence working through the country.

How could a country with such hopeful beginnings become mired in such wickedness and hopelessness? How could such extreme poverty and brokenness overtake a country with so much human potential? The answer is the wicked activity of the god of this age.

When people are blinded by the enemy to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, hopelessness, despair, depravity and sin grip the heart. The very worst that man can be emerges, leaving shocking atrocities and grave wickedness.

Praise is now poised to begin

ministry in Liberia. We established our IMAP (Indigenous Minister Support Program) ministry in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire when Praise representative Jim Cardillo and Pastor Jim Bull from First Baptist Church in Salem, Oregon conducted a pastors' conference and established ministry connections with national leadership. Some of the pastors attending the conference were actually refugees from Liberia, living in Cote d'Ivoire. Naturally they are hoping to return back to Liberia to their ministries in their homeland.

I recently received a request from our national leadership in Cote d'Ivoire, asking my advice about whether or not I thought these refugee pastors and their families from Liberia should return home and resume their ministries. My heart broke as I thought about their plight and the uncertainties of their lives. I was unable to give advice about the timing of their return home because we have no specific

information about the safety of the areas in the country where they had been living and working. However, I was challenged to pray for these pastors and their families, and for the broken lives in Liberia who need to be under the influence of gospel ministry.

For those who are already a part of IMAP, thank you for your commitment to help the world's poorest pastors and their families. Your monthly gift can help make the difference between desperate need and God's gracious provision. These Liberian refugee pastors are depending on the help from their sponsors each month during this very difficult time in their lives. When they are able to return home, their needs will continue, of course, as they work to rebuild their lives and ministries.

When you commit to sponsor a national pastor, I also encourage you to send your monthly gifts in a timely manner. If your gift has not arrived when we are ready to transmit funds to needy pastors, your pastor's gifts are delayed. Imagine living in desperate circumstances, knowing that you finally have a caring sponsor who has agreed to help meet the basic needs of your family so that you will have the time and energy to give as much attention as possible to the ministry of the gospel, then being told that a gift for you did not arrive. Imagine what you would say to your wife and children, who had rejoiced because they knew someone in America had promised to help them.

Now, picture the joy and thankfulness when your gifts arrive exactly as promised. Your help enables these faithful servants to dispel the darkness, to shine the glorious light of the gospel into the darkest places on earth. Pray for Liberia. Pray for these displaced pastors. May God grant that you will be faithful in extending your

helping hands. If you would like more information about IMAP, please call or write to us. There are national ministers waiting for sponsors now.

Letters from Kenya

The following letters [edited for publication] arrived recently at the Praise office from two supported pastors in Kenya. You will be blessed as you share their joy and praise for God's provision.

My name is Pastor Samuel from the small town of Nyahururu, Kenya. I obtained a BA degree in theology, and I have been able to launch two churches, which I oversee. Due to financial difficulties here in Africa, I have been crippled in so many areas, resulting in slow progress in life and ministry. This has caused strong purpose driven prayer; for years I have prayed that God might give a breakthrough in my finances. Near the end of January Dr. Weston [Praise, Inc. contact in Kenya] came to me with a broad smile and the good news that God has heard my prayers and had spoken to a couple in America to support me. As if I was in a dream, I could not believe my eyes when he gave me the money and explained to me about the miracle! An answered prayer at last! This is a big miracle. God is so real to meet us at the point of our needs. I thank God so much for you and the couple whom God is using to support my family, the ministry and me. Apart from serving as a pastor, I also work with Dr. Weston in training pastors in the college, and despite financial problems I told Dr. Weston that I will stand with him in and out of season. For all these years he has prayed with me that God would hear my cry and bless me financially. It was a great joy for me and also for Dr. Weston as we got the news from you. I want you to know that what you are doing for the advancement of the kingdom of



Pastor Samuel and his wife Alice shortly after they were married. They have been waiting for a sponsor since 2002. Their daughter Joan is now able to go to school through the help they receive.

God in Africa is worth the mighty hand of God upon your life, and it is my prayer that you will live to see the goodness of God. Little do you know what you have done; little does the couple know what they have done for my family, the ministry and me. God bless you all for hearing and obeying His voice. Pass my sincere gratitude and love to the couple that God is using; tell them they have touched the heart of God in Africa!!!! Assure them that any funds they send for my support and ministry are not in vain. I wish we will all meet someday and share God's goodness together.

*Thank you so much,
Pastor Samuel*

My name is Stephen. I am so glad before the Lord for the great things He has done. I thank God that He has answered my cry. I am married with two boys, grades five and one. I received my diploma from Destiny Bible College under Dr. Weston and began full time ministry as a pastor. Things were not so easy for me

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By John and Nancy McKeith,
serving with CAM, International in
Honduras, Central America

"Mama, mama," the child, somewhere between 6 and 8 years old, screamed. The hysterical little boy struggled to release himself from the grip of what appeared to be another family member to join his mother on the other side of airport security. His incessant screaming continued into the parking lot and until he was enclosed in a car. The brief Christmas vacation was over far too quickly for the distraught child and his visiting mother, on her way back to her job in the United States. As missionaries living in Honduras, our own much-too-short visits with family at Christmas meant multiple trips to the airport where we saw the scene repeated several times in one form or another--families torn apart by the economic necessity of a family member leaving Honduras to work in the United States.

The anguish of someone leaving his or her family behind to seek employment in the States is a common situation in the country of Honduras, the third poorest country in the Western hemisphere. However, most do not have the opportunity to start the trip in an airport, legally leaving their home country to enter legally into their host country. Many are like a young man named Juan Carlos, who lives about ten minutes from our home. His house is a cobble-together shack made of discarded sheets of roofing. Even with both he and his wife working and his wife's mother taking in laundry, there is often not enough food for his wife and three small children, let alone enough money for the oldest two to start the school year.

Juan Carlos followed thousands of others who make the attempt to enter the United States illegally each year. In addition to the stress of separation is the anguish of uncertainty for those left behind. Will he (or she) make it to the border without being assaulted and robbed or murdered? Will he be killed or maimed by falling off the roof of a train, locked in an airless container, or suffer any one of a multitude of dangers that face those taking the illegal path. Juan Carlos was making his fourth attempt to follow what seemed to him the end of the rainbow. He was arrested in Mexico and returned to his family, much to the relief of his wife and children, only to immediately begin his plans for another attempt.

Believers are not exempt from the desperation that induces people like Juan Carlos to leave their behind families and risk their lives on the perilous route between Honduras in Central America and the U.S./Mexico border. Many pastor's families receive \$25.00 a month or less in financial support from their congregations. The joy of serving the Lord does not remove the necessity of putting food on the table or buying schoolbooks for their children. A serious illness or other emergency need can strain to the breaking point a budget already stretched to the limit.

There is no easy answer to the dilemma. Legal immigration is not an option for Honduras's poor pastors. Illegal immigration is a constant temptation that, once attempted, damages a pastor's moral authority. Immigration, both legal and illegal, tears apart families and leaves huge gaps in ministry. Handouts that create dependency on foreign funds are not the answer. **The need is for hope with dignity.**

Our response to the needs in countries like Honduras must include compassion that responds

to urgent needs. In the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, Paul commends the believers for their compassion. Verses 9-10 say,

"Now about brotherly love we do not need to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more."

Love responds to the needs of others, especially to those who share a common Lord. At the same time, a long-term solution must include economic development that enables people in churches to meet the needs of their families and support their pastors. Paul goes on to say in the same chapter of 1 Thessalonians,

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." 1 Thes. 4: 11-12

Help that includes developing effective production skills and expanded markets for products can make a positive, permanent difference in people's lives. It will keep families together, provide for their needs, and allow believers to support their own pastors with dignity so they will not be dependent on anybody.

In Acts 20:34-35 we are reminded of the importance of working with our hands, and supporting the weak. The passage closes with the well-known phrase,

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Hope with dignity means showing compassion, but it also means helping people move from a position of dependence into a position where they can receive the blessing that comes from helping others. We must help them move from a position of being receivers to being givers.

The Ministry of Praise, Inc. in Honduras

The preceding article was written by my life-long friend John McKeith and his wife Nancy, who are veteran Central American missionaries. I have visited their home in Honduras and have observed their ministry first hand.

Praise, Inc. is currently supporting national pastors in Honduras working with the Lenca tribal people. We are also doing an investigative trip this summer to consider partnering on a medical clinic in this poor country.

In addition, we are praying about and studying possible ways to help believers in Honduras with production skills and market development so they might be able to market products outside Honduras and more effectively provide for their families and ministry. For example, we have been selling Honduran organic coffee in small quantities for some time. This coffee is grown by Christians in Honduras who hope to sell this excellent product in the world coffee market.

Pray with us about this and other possible future projects we are working to develop.

- Dick Shaw

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with a family to support and a ministry to launch. This provoked my faith and together with my family, we began a long time of prayer and fasting. The desire to serve God and His calling in my life pushed me so much, leaving me at a state of no return, despite the many financial problems I have been going through. For a period of four years now I have gone through a time of testing and training as I serve God. The Lord led me to a Muslim community where I am currently serving with very strong Muslim opposition. Despite the challenges with Islamic faith, I have witnessed the Lord

Creative ways to support Praise

It may not be possible for you to make a cash donation to Praise as often as you like, but there are other ways you can contribute to the ministry. One of those ways is to donate a working vehicle. Instead of trading in your used vehicle when you upgrade to a newer car, it is likely to your benefit to donate the vehicle if you itemize deductions on your tax return. While the Internal Revenue Service rules have changed recently, there may be very helpful tax advantages for you if you make such a donation. We will be happy to assist you with all the necessary forms and guidelines. Call Doug at the Praise office at 454-1377, ext. 101 for more information.

This vehicle was recently donated to Praise. The donor received credit for his tax-deductible gift, Praise benefited from the proceeds of the sale of the vehicle, and a friend of Praise was able to purchase a reliable vehicle at a fair and reasonable price.



saving many. My prayer is that God will continue to give you the burden as you stand with me in prayer so that God's work will be done. I am excited beyond measure to know that my prayers for a long period of time have been answered. I could not believe my ears when Dr. Weston told me that God has heard my prayers and that through you I have a donation to help me as I preach. I am so blessed, and my family won't go without food again as I serve God. I will also have no problem for house rent and other household necessities. May the Lord bless you and your family so much, having faith that this is the beginning of a long journey together. Thank you again for supporting someone you do not know. This is a real challenge and true obedience from the Lord. As you sow your seed in Africa, know that it is not in vain. God will always bless you in return. Pray for me that God will extend my boundaries in the ministry and that I might be able to reach as many as possible. At one time last year I sold everything in my house to settle in a new place to do God's

work. I sold everything, including the utensils, due to our poor financial state, but God was calling me to do His work in this Muslim zone. I want you to know that you are my prayer answered; your support has helped me so much. Thank you in advance.

*Yours in the Lord's service,
Pastor Stephen*

Praise, Inc.
P.O. Box 1377
Caldwell, ID 83606
(208) 454.1377
1.877.7PRAISE
FAX (208) 459.7139
www.praiseinc.org

Product Information
World's Treasures
16534 West Oak St
Caldwell, ID 83607
(208) 454.2944
www.worldstrebasures.biz

Business Development
Steve Durham
busdev@worldstrebasures.biz

Graphics
Anne Wallace
newsletter@praiseinc.org
(208) 454.1377 ext. 107

KOP (Kids of Praise)
Doug & Stacy Carbol
kop@praiseinc.org
1.877.7PRAISE ext. 104