



GOSPEL OUTREACH TO ETHIOPIA

WOODWARD PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

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July 25, 2014

Dear Brethren and Friends of the Gospel Outreach to Ethiopia,

The gospel message always takes precedent over tradition, culture and customs. When the Spirit convicts an honest heart through God's word (John 16:7-8), faithful disciples will always follow God's way. The power of the gospel is demonstrated best through the lives that are changed by it. (Romans 1:16) The following story is an example of the process of setting aside culture and the determination to accept God's instructions. Brother Okello is a college graduate and came to the Lord through studying World Bible School lessons. He is an example to all.

BEING ASKED TO SERVE BRINGS CONCERN FOR A NEW CHRISTIAN:



To the leaders of the Makanissa Church of Christ:

I have taken seriously Bro. Abebe's request for me to serve in the Church during the Sunday worship assembly. As I thought about it, I felt it is better for me to share some information about my life before I became a Christian.

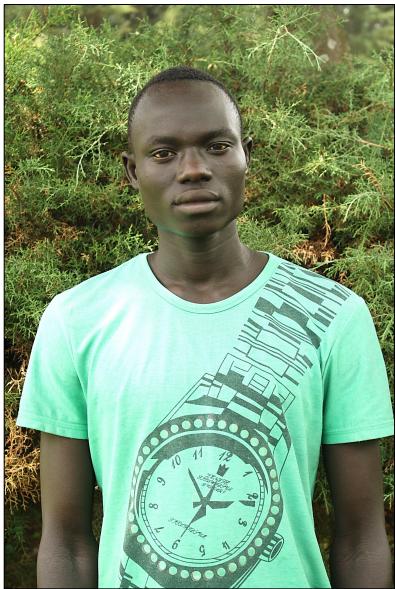
I am from the Anuak tribe. Our ancestral lands are in western Ethiopia and eastern Sudan. The Anuak culture concerning marriage is contrary to the clear instruction found in the Word of God and I was born into that culture. The traditional marriage custom for our tribe says that a man must inform his chosen lady of his wishes to take her for his wife. Under the old tradition, she could have up to three years to give her answer. But today, the waiting period has changed and it may be only a month. The culture allows that during the waiting time and before marriage, it is acceptable and expected for the man and the woman to have intimate relations. In almost all cases today the lady will be impregnated and will give birth to a child. The culture also requires that a "bride price" be paid to the woman's family, sometimes after she is already pregnant with the child. I wanted to be sure that the church understood the customs of our tribe that I was a part of prior to becoming a Christian and being added to the church.

My own life is an example of how this custom and culture works. I chose a lady and she became pregnant and bore a child. I have paid the bride price and am now counted as married according to our tribal tradition even though she is still living with her family. The parents can take back their daughter if the bride price paid is less than they demand.

From the time I learned about God's plan for marriage, I have prayed about my situation and that God would forgive the sinful choices made prior to my marriage. Before I start serving the Lord in a public way in the worship assemblies I would like for you to consider my situation, spend time in prayer, meditate concerning it and advise me what my decision should be. Serving before God and other Christians is a very serious matter and my desire is to please God and fully obey His word. The leaders of the church must help me decide if I am worthy to serve based on my past life. In all things I want to be right with God more than anything else.

Brother Okello Obang Okway

TWO NEW BROTHERS FROM A DISTANT LAND:



Eyasu Belacho, left and Teskara Abdesa, center, are from an area in the Western Region of Ethiopia called Gumze. These men are members of that tribe and speak a language that is specific to that region. They are both students this term at the Nekemte School of Preaching. The first preacher to enter the Gumze region to preach the gospel was Abeyot Onaba, right. Abeyot graduated from the Nekemte School in May 2011. Another graduate named Jano Bagesha accompanied Abeyot and together they established a house church in the village of Benshangul. It was there that Eyasu and Teskara obeyed the gospel message and were added to that new church. Abeyot and Jano sent them to Nekemte to be trained and then return home to serve as ministers in Benshangul. This area is over 250 miles west and north of Nekemte. It continues to be amazing how the church is spreading and how committed the Preaching School graduates are in taking the gospel to distant places. 250 miles isn't far for us here in America, but in western Ethiopia it is a two day bus ride and a walk of several hours to reach the village where these new brothers live. Eyasu said he wants to preach for the church in Benshangul. Teskara said the same, however, he said he has relatives living in another area called Korka and he feels he must also go there to preach, providing the same opportunity for those people that God gave to him.

MORNING CHAPEL AT THE SANTARIEA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF:



Each morning, more than 800 children and staff gather to sing, pray and participate in a lesson from the word of God at the five Schools for the Deaf and three Christian Kindergartens in Ethiopia. This great ministry and all the other life changing outreaches are made possible by the prayers and financial faithfulness of you who read this newsletter. Please know that you are an important part of touching lives, planting the word of God in tender and open hearts and making a difference in a world that seems to have gone crazy. Jesus said He had come to

"preach the gospel to the poor and to heal the brokenhearted....." (Luke 4: 16-19) You have chosen to carry on His work. May God continue to bless you as you serve Him.

Kevin and John Ed Clark