

# The Ministry of Jesus Togo

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

Our newsletters regularly swing back and forth between paragraphs that speak about spiritual development and paragraphs that speak about development that helps bring people out of poverty and misery. With a **founding purpose of “helping the whole person,”** we have advocated that there should be no separation between the two. The biblical concept of wisdom perfectly encapsulates this truth. **Wisdom begins with the fear of God, and without God there is no wisdom.** Yet, biblical wisdom always requires that knowledge be applied and lived out in everyday life. We thank God for your prayers and contributions which have allowed us the privilege of bringing the benefits of God’s wisdom to our brothers and sisters in Togo.

## **Student seminars**

*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Proverbs 26:12

Our student seminars had a record attendance with over 125 university students for week 1 and over 250 university and high school students for week 2. One of the major resources used to develop this year’s seminar for university students on Proverbs and Wisdom was Darrow Miller’s *Wisdom: The Way to Human Flourishing*. He advocates that, **when a person, village, city or society most lines up with the truth of the way God created the world, there is flourishing:** what Jesus called abundant life. We agree, and **we believe many of our students will grow in ways that create flourishing in themselves and in the society around them.**

*One of our greatest joys is watching our students grow from year-to-year. This group of university and post-university students took it on themselves to organize the everyday functioning of the seminars and to disciple their younger brothers and sisters.*

*One of the aspects of the society here that does not line up with God’s plan is the attitude towards women. What joy when the team substituted, Solange (center), with minutes left to play and then asked her be one of the five players to shoot in penalty overtime. Goal!*



The above quote was one of the most discussed verses of the week. **We have observed that much of the suffering in the lives of our students and others here could have been avoided if they had sought wise, godly counsel.** The search for wisdom only begins when we realize that we are not wise. This also implies that the search for wisdom is a life-long process that never ends. One of the most important ways to gain wisdom, but one we often resist, is through correction. As outside observers, we can watch the generational clash between the first generation of church leaders and the new generation of young leaders. At each year's student seminar there are questions from frustrated students who feel that they are not being allowed to use their gifts and training, especially when they return to their villages. It is a sensitive topic, but we appreciate the opportunity to help these young leaders avoid the pitfalls of rebellion that wipe out so many young leaders.

During the second week, the study of 1 and 2 Samuel provided many opportunities to discuss how God shapes and trains leaders. We got to see together how **God does not use superheroes, but he uses ordinary people with many weaknesses.** We saw how David had to patiently wait before assuming the kingship, even after he had been anointed by Samuel. Pastor Nakordja, the president of our partner denomination, was touched by how many leaders we studied started strong but failed to finish strong. **As always, there was a strong gospel orientation.** Jesus is the true Wisdom, the true King who meets all our needs, and the only one who completely fulfills God's expectations for leaders.

### **The importance of worship**

One of our favorite quotes is John Piper's, "Missions exist because worship does not." In our early years in Togo we regularly held worship seminars. An important part of every seminar we do is Jayne leading worship twice per day. African traditional religion has no concept of an intimate relationship with God. Less than two weeks after getting back to Kara from our student seminars, we headed back to Dapaong for Jayne to lead a one-day seminar for the Dapaong church worship team.

### **Cultural factors**

We have learned over the years that, often an unexplainable and persistent problem is due to hidden cultural factors. We are often frustrated when certain behaviors that negatively influence the churches are allowed to continue year after year. One of the cultural factors is that there is no concept of offending a Holy God in African Traditional Religion. There are taboos, but there is no idea of sinning against a Holy God. Therefore, if the gods can be deceived or placated, all is well. Also, a break in relationship is about the worst thing that can happen in a group-oriented culture. Since everyone is closely related, and broken relationships are to be avoided at all costs, problems are often not confronted.

Our study of the story of Uzza touching the ark allowed us to discuss the issue of **the dangers of lightly approaching our Holy God.** We were able to put a practical application on the teaching by confronting three problems that regularly occur at our seminars. The first is students who fail to pay their personal contribution for the seminar. A second problem is students who decide to go into town and visit a new town rather than attend all the sessions of the seminar. We used wrist bands to deal with the problem of those who do not register and changed wrist bands one morning to deal with those who had gone into town. There was also a firm and repeated teaching that those who do not pay or who do not attend are liars and thieves.

The third problem is that every year we have students come who have not reached the required academic level to understand and attend the seminar. We dealt with this by illustrating a major theme for the week: **God's judgement and God's salvation always travel together. There are always consequences for our sin, but there is always a route to reconciliation with God through the sacrificial death of Jesus.** We had another talk about liars and thieves and asked all those who were not qualified to be at the seminar to confess to their small group and to receive God's forgiveness. We also made it clear to the leaders that any leader who allows a non-qualified

student to come next year will be obliged to pay that student's transportation costs. We received feedback from many students that the confrontation of these problems was just what was needed.

*Last year we asked some loving and generous supporters if we could postpone for a year their offer to come home for Titus' first Christmas. We saw God's hand as we are not only returning to see Titus, but also for Angela's marriage to Dan Dwire.*



*Francois, a graduate student who hopes to be a law professor, shares with the high school students about what opportunities exist for higher education and about what they need to do to prepare themselves for these opportunities.*

*Worshipping a Holy God.*



*Most of our younger students at the seminar probably didn't know that Abraham is not from a Ministère International de Jésus church. He is one of many young leaders from other denominations we have encouraged and trained over the years. We try to teach by example that we are not here to build the kingdom of The Ministry of Jesus but the Kingdom of God*

*The student leaders organized a Bible competition among the younger students. They got the idea from youth camps we ran years ago. The top winners were all from churches that use Jayne's children's curriculum.*



*It was a joy for Pastors Nakpergou, Nakordja, Jayne and I to sit back and watch the students lead.*

## Finances

This year there will be three graduate students, who will each receive more than all the undergraduate scholarships put together. Each is a key leader who is planning on becoming a university professor. The higher the level of the leader, the higher the cost to train him or her. When you invest in a young African leader, you are making an investment that will pay dividends for generations. **Please ask God if he would want you to invest in post-graduate training for a key African church leader.**

We are slowly and carefully developing the infrastructure, the leadership, and the program for our pastoral training program. God has graciously provided seed funding for the immediate needs but **our needs to initiate this vital program far exceed what we have received. Please ask God to give you a heart to develop the leaders who will go to the villages where there is no Gospel presence.**

In August, for the first time ever, I had to tell Pastor Nakpergou to not withdraw needed funds from the bank because the available funds were insufficient. We immediately made an unscheduled transfer of funds from the US to allow us to get through our seminar expenses. **We are always in need of undesignated funds and we could greatly use a boost right now if God would so lead you.**

## Prayer

- **Praise God** that we have now completed the first dorm for the pastoral training farm and that we have the funds to build a home for the director's family.
- **Continue to pray for** Jeremie and Tani B. as they prepare to lead the pastoral training farm.
- **Praise God** that there seems to be political peace in Togo right now. Pray for the peace of Togo as the 2020 presidential elections approach and as jihadist violence reigns in neighboring countries.
- **Pray** for unity of vision with our African partners and for unity among them.
- **Praise God** for our health and safety and for the health and safety of our key leaders. Life here is often very fragile and we ask for your continued prayers for this matter.
- **Pray for** our students to put their trust in God as they seek jobs and to be faithful to God when they get jobs.

Student-led small groups every afternoon, allow student leaders to develop their skill, to influence the younger students and to help the less advanced students understand the teachings.

*Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.*

1 Samuel 3:7



**We praise God for the part that you play in helping African leaders to know the Lord and to be able to understand his revelation in a way that will transform their lives, their churches and their country.**

In the joyful service of the King,

Gregg and Jayne