

Gowins' Ghana Updates

January 2014

Our View, Stateside

In May of 2013, Jere and Ruth Ann Gowin returned to the U.S. Jere currently serves as our liaison with the work in Ghana, and in December, he told of how God is blessing the new leadership of Pastor Sammy and his helpers, Isaka and George.

Reflection on Five Years of Ministry

In 2008, Ruth Ann and I could not have begun to imagine what God had in store when we came to an orphanage in southern Ghana and began evangelizing the Trokosi slaves of the Volta Region. While evangelizing those precious souls, we began to seek a ministry amid the stronghold of false religion in the north. God had a plan all along, and soon we were able to move to the north.

We prayed, asked questions, and initiated relationships in hope of finding a niche of service. We learned there were many villages in hard-to-reach places where no one had preached Christ. Our custom was to travel the back roads looking for villages that had no witness. When we discovered them, we sought an audience with the chief and/or land owner (sometimes one and the same person). After obtaining permission to minister in the village, we allowed the people to pick a day and time for us to come and preach. At that time we would drive the truck under a big tree, and the people would gather.

We began in Genesis and spoke to those sitting in the dirt or on a log or wooden bench about who God is. We traveled from Genesis systematically through the parts of the Old Testament that spoke of who God is, the consequences of sin, and the inability of mankind to please God using our own devices. After the service we ministered to the medical needs of those who attended the service. After several months of hammering on the Old Testament truths, we presented the One the Old Testament had been preparing hearts to receive. The response was awesome and in significant numbers.

First was village Qs, where we got to know the culture by working with our people on their farms and spending time in their homes. We quickly discovered they needed the Word planted in their hearts and some form of ministry to their bodies via medicine and first aid. We knew if the truth of the Scriptures were to take root in our people's lives they needed to be able to hide the Word in their hearts, so we initiated a literacy class so our people could learn to read their own language.



Jere and Ruth Ann Gowin with the leadership team in Ghana—(l to r) Pastor Isaka and Esther, Pastor George, and Pastor Sammy and Grace.

The village of Qg, only a half hour from Qs, became our second village of ministry. The land owner and his brother were pagans yet came regularly to our services and eventually donated the land for our church to be built upon. We discovered that most of the villagers professing another religion are also idol worshippers, though their religion forbids it. We also discovered that some of our congregation that professed Christ also sacrificed to idols. “No man can serve two masters,” so we focused our preaching on idol worship and what the Bible has to say on the issue. The land owner who attended our church was also the “witch doctor” of the village. If someone had a severe medical problem or another issue regarding his farm or family, they would go to the man, pay him a fee, and the land owner would offer a sacrifice to an idol to “fix” the problem.

When we purposely emphasized our preaching on idol worship, the land owner and his brother began to be sporadic in their attendance and eventually stopped coming altogether. Others responded well to our message and gave up or burnt their idols. The church folks continued to pray for the land owner/witch doctor. Recently, this man was led to Christ!

Qs and Qg were established early on in the work and are maturing as churches under the strong leadership. Looking back, I recall struggling with the decision whether to reach out to other villages or to just focus on the two. I am glad my evangelistic heart and the open doors before us kept us advancing forward. As time passed, our team slowly grew in number, allowing us to reach out to new villages. The next three villages—Qgu, Qsl, and Qgb—are remote. We could no longer drive the 4x4 regularly. We had to rely almost exclusively upon dirt bikes, not only because of the difficult travel conditions but because we had to separate to minister to different villages on Sundays. When we initially traveled to three of our villages, there was no road to ride upon—just a glorified path. Presently only one village, Qgb, is without a road and requires MUCH effort to reach during the wet season. Pastor Isaka recently told me they are averaging nearly 200 there each Sunday. The church is comprised primarily of young families and is on fire. In the coming months, a work team will be coming to assist them in building a church.

Leading into the Future

The Lord of the harvest is blessing the work. Pastor Isaka can do a much better job than I ever could in the churches. He speaks the language, and he is one of the people. Pastor George likewise is tremendously effective in his work in the five villages. Pastor Sammy has set up a church structure that I had striven for yet was unable to accomplish because of my inability to weld culture and leadership together.

Pastor Sammy also told of a young man he led to Christ. “On Thursday, November 7, a carpenter came to fix one of our doors. After I ministered to him about our Lord Jesus and answered his questions, he said, ‘I did not have anyone to explain to me like you did, so I will come for you to tell me more so I can join your church.’”

Because Sammy is Ghanaian, the young man he is referring to was able to open up to him. I worked side by side with this young man, as well, having discussions with him about the faith. Pastor Sammy could go to where the young man was and bring him to the foot of the cross, which I could not do. I am so glad Sammy is leading the churches.

Yes, God used Ruth Ann and I for His purpose, yet others are picking up the ball and running strongly.

Before we traveled into Ghana in 2008, I searched the web for unreached people groups in Ghana. When I looked at The Joshua Project (www.joshuaproject.net), I noticed that some tribes like the Chakali were among the world’s most unreached people groups. They are a small group consisting of only 5 or 6 villages. Now the Chakali no longer need to be on that list. The Church of God (Holiness) has planted churches in both Qgu and Qsl, which are two of the larger Chakali villages. Praise God, for He has made the way for that people group to come to Christ.