

## **Ghana Journal Day 1**

**March 27, 2011**

Okay so it's not day one of the trip but it is day one of journaling. I was too tired to journal yesterday and the day of travel was exhausting, so now 2 and ½ days into the trip here is a summary of what has transpired.

I left Indiana on Friday, March 25 where my dear wife, Karen dropped me off at the South Bend airport. Check in for the flight went well except for a brief glitch going through security that caused me to leave a precious bottle of printer ink, with the South Bend TSA representatives. Somehow I had failed to consider that I was probably carrying more than the allowed 3 oz. That was a bit of a downer because I was not certain how desperate the need for ink was in Ghana. For all I knew, I would not be able to print out my teaching notes here since I was relying on Ron's printer for such tasks. I believe we are fine in that score for the present.

The rest of the flight was relatively uneventful. PTL! I met up with Eldon (Alfy) Schrock in New York and we flew together to Accra, Ghana. Although long (approximately 10 hours) the flight was good and we arrived in reasonable condition. We were met by Ron Bontrager and Jon Sauder who were kind enough to rouse themselves early in the morning to meet us at 7:00 am. We made a number of stops on the way home picking up various odds and ends and exchanging money. We made it back to Ron's place right around 12:00 pm.

After some delicious sandwiches and fresh pineapple along with some plantain chips, I took a nap and slept for a couple of hours. I was still feeling a good deal of jet lag when supper time rolled around. Supper revived me somewhat and it was delicious. Audrey had made pizza and salad with lemon bars for desert. We also had minerals (soda or Pop) to drink. Classic coke just tastes really good in Ghana. After a good night of sleep we had a good breakfast at Ron's. We were saddened to know that Ron and family would not be accompanying us to church today. It seems that theirs was a night of runny tummies, and Ron was battling some kind of a bug that gave him a headache and fever.

So Alfy and I headed up the road to meet Gary and Joy Butikofer. (I love driving in Ghana.) Actually, it is not as fearsome as it was on my first time last year. Also, some things are beginning to look familiar over here.

I managed to miss the junction where we were to meet them and had to back up a few hundred yards or so to park the vehicle we were driving and jump in with the Butikofer's for the long drive to church. We made it to Pastor Frank's church just at the tail end of Sunday School. It seems that I have a tendency to do that over here.

The congregation was very receptive and it appears that a good work is going on there. It was good to hear the heart of Pastor Frank and his desire to see the community come to know the Lord. He told me that many pastors in his town are fearful of preaching or evangelizing on the streets because of the heavy presence of curses and pagan religions. Please pray for the pastors in Ghana. They face a spiritual warfare that is at times very visible and scary. Pray that they will have the courage to stand in the name of Jesus. We headed back toward Ron's after church, stopping beside the road under a tree to have our lunch. It was a bit warm and cramped sitting in the back seat of the little Nissan pickup, but we had an enjoyable time.

After lunch we stopped by the Bible Institute where Gary and Joy gave me a tour of the facility. It has come so far since last year this time. I am very blessed. I can see that Gary has a real heart for the Bible Institute. PTL!

We spent the evening with Ron and Audrey and the family. It was a good, relaxing afternoon and evening and after supper we played "Golf" with Skip-bo cards.

Oh, I pulled a real knuckleheaded move. I was trying to transfer pictures from my camera's memory stick (it's a Sony) and my 5 in 1 card reader was not made for memory sticks evidently. I spent a good deal of time trying to get it out of the computer. You would think that if it slid in so easily, it would also slide out easily.

I was able to extricate it finally with the assistance of a knife from Ron. Talk about delicate repairs on machinery. I can't tell you how tempting it was to turn the computer on its side and just try to bang the thing out. Well, all's well that ends well and I was able to transfer my pictures just fine using the USB cable and accompanying software.

Tomorrow is the first day of interterm. I will begin teaching at 10:15 am Ghana time, that would be 6:15 am for those of you in the Eastern Time zone. Please be in prayer.

God bless you all.

In Christ,

John Yoder

## **Ghana Journal #2**

Good Evening Friends,

Greetings in Jesus' name. He is doing a good work here in Ghana.

It was another warm day today. Wow! That hardly needs to be commented on. But it was warm and we did a lot of sweating. The sun really beats down on you and tonight I can tell that I got a bit of sunburn. My buddy Alfie caught some rays today as well.

I woke this morning around 4:00 AM when my alarm went off. I somehow managed to sleep a little longer until 4:30 when I got up to finish preparation for teaching today at the Bible Institute. The early morning here is the best time for me to study, because it is cool and I can think a little better.

Audrey made us a wonderful breakfast of scrambled eggs and toast and some fresh banana bread, before Ron, Alfie and I headed up to the Bible Institute. The class went well today. It was a little different than I expected. It is a small class between 8-10 students depending on the time of the day they can make it. Also, because I am not here for the complete 2 weeks of interterm, I need to teach for 2 ½ hours a day to get in my 20 hours of teaching. I don't know about you, but speaking for 2 ½ hours is a long time as is listening to the same fellow for that long.

The interterm is a two week interval between two 10 week terms. In these weeks the students at the Bible Institute are making up all of the credit hours that don't fit into their normal schedule. There are 3 other teachers all of them Ghanaian that are teaching as well. The students have an incredibly full day beginning at 8:15 am and going until 3:30 pm. It is a rewarding experience to be a part of this.

The Subject that I am teaching for these two weeks is Holy Spirit Gifts. It is a course every one of the students seems quite interested in, because there is a lot of activity going on in the churches of Ghana where it appears that the greatest miracle workers are making lots of money and living a good life. I can tell that there is a desire to be one of these high profile ministers. Please pray that God would give grace and strength to present His Word in a way that these students will gain a solid foundation for exercising the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to edify and build the Body of Christ, while bringing glory to His Name.

After the class time Alfie, Ron, and myself came back to the house and had lunch. I then headed off to reload for my next 2.5 hour class. Ron had some repairs and odds and ends to work on around the house and my adventuresome friend Alfie, caught public transportation back to the school for the afternoon session.

He later returned and went on a walk around the neighborhood with Carter as his guide. It seems they purchased some snacks or drinks along the way that messed with Carter's appetite a little. I believe there was some prediction that perhaps Alfie and Carter would both need to skip dessert if the main course wasn't finished. It seems Carter's mom runs a pretty tight ship. Ha, Ha.

**Tuesday, March 29, 2011**

Today was another warm day that started early. I am finding that I can think much clearer and study much better in the cool before dawn around here. It just works that much better.

Breakfast was at 8 AM. Audrey keeps feeding us so well. I don't know where she has time to whip up these excellent meals, but this morning it was eggs and waffles and fresh pineapple (all you could eat). I am sure that if we didn't sweat so much during the day, we would be gaining some serious pounds over here.

It was off to the school where the class was very attentive. Giving time for questions here is not an easy task. I can tell you that I didn't get the easy questions from the class today. I am praying that God continues to give grace to teach in this culture where the work of the Holy Spirit has been so misused by pan handling preachers wanting to make a buck. There are definitely a lot of issues that are behind the questions that are asked.

After the class time, Alfy and I packed into the little Nissan pickup with Joy Butikofer for a chance to experience the Nsawam Market.

Before heading to the market we stopped by the Wisler printing operation in Nsawam to pick up a Strong's Concordance for one of the students. Then we headed to the market.

Markets in Ghana are a real experience. I am totally amazed, because I don't do so well in Flea Markets back home. These markets however create a wonderful admixture of sights, sounds and smells. Indeed to wander through even a few rows of stalls tightly jammed with product and people, creates a memory that you won't soon forget.

Today was no exception. We had no sooner found a place to park along a crowded backstreet, than we were greeted with a pitiful sight. A man known locally as the "Naked Man of Nsawam" was coming up the street toward us. He was exactly as his name sounds and feeling rather like the Levite or the Priest in the story of the Good Samaritan we averted our eyes and passed by on the other side.

One questions, "What does God want to do for that man?" The way I understand it, he has been in this condition for quite some time. A beggar of sorts, it appears that He makes his way around town living off of handouts.

We headed into the Market where Joy made her purchases and then we headed back in the direction of the school. We were on our way out of town when we noticed that the back door of a delivery truck had come open on a hill up ahead and had dumped a large load of white sacks on the road. We were able to see it in time and take a detour. You're not always that lucky in Ghana.

We made it back to the Bible Institute and caught most of Pastor Isaac's session on Islam. After the session we, as well as all the students from the Bible Institute, piled into and on to Gary & Joy's little pickup for a brief ride to one of the first tro-tro stops and then a number of the students got off. By the time we got to Gary's junction, there was only one student and Alfy and I to drop off.

We disembarked from the vehicle and walked a short distance to the next tro-tro stop. There we caught a tro-tro (my first experience, and one I was more than a little hesitant to try) and headed for Amasamon which was our stop.

I have seen many of these small vans filled with people in Ghana and have pitied the folks riding like so many sardines in a can with wheels. I just think the ride looks uncomfortable and really tends to make one think more highly of walking.

Well, today removed any doubts that I might have had regarding the reality of my previous observations. As Alfy and I stood outside, both feigning courtesy in allowing the other to climb in first, knowing that the first in had to clamber toward the back, the wait became a little awkward so I climbed in beside a mother with a child. I knew that it was not as packed as it would have been with the Ghanaians but I thought I might be able to buy a little space by dropping the fold away seat and using it. That worked until the next stop.

Alfy, somehow managed to get a seat in front and next to the door, having had the sense and "courtesy" to make sure that everyone else got on ahead of him.

The next stop though I knew I couldn't expand enough to make my row look full, so I had to shrink myself as small as I could because a rather large and buxom lass boarded the tro-tro and was motioned to the fold away seat I had just vacated. Now I was squeezed in between the expansive newcomer and the mother, whom I noticed was providing nourishment to her child in the most natural way possible. Suffice it to say that I have had more pleasant trips in my life.

Alfy meanwhile was enjoying a rather peaceful ride in front of me and I could see that I will need to learn a few things about when to board a tro-tro. I believe next time I will wait to board until there is only one seat left and that, by the door.

Well, after several "Hours", we got off at Amasamon and then had a half mile walk to Ron's place. The quote of the day came from a gentleman who was going the opposite direction from us. He met us with something like this, "Take it easy white man. Why the hurry? You're in Africa."

I guess that is probably a good comment for all of us. Why the hurry? I need to slow down sometime and observe the people around me more. I need to hear what God would have me to say and do. I need to slow down and listen. I guess sometimes it takes being in strange places and strange situations to bring us to a place where we can hear.

Back at Ron's, Audrey fixed us a wonderful supper of chicken noodle casserole and salad, topped off with pie and ice cream.

Before supper, Alfy decided to do some laundry and offered to allow me to add some clothes to the load. It was getting later and the sun goes down early here so there was not a lot of time before sundown for the clothes to dry outside on the line. After a brief discussion, we thought it would be alright to allow the clothes to hang out overnight if they weren't dry tonight. What could it hurt?

After Supper when the question of laundry arose, Ron and Audrey informed us that we don't want to leave the clothes out overnight. It seems that there is some mango fly that lays its eggs in laundry and that has the undesired result of hatching a worm that can make its way under your skin. As you can imagine to two fairly paranoid fellows, this was not welcome news.

Since a good portion of the laundry was pants, we quickly deduced that worms hatching out of those garments would result in effects that could be highly uncomfortable not mention embarrassing. We opted for a quick removal from the line. In fact, the load hanging outside went back into the laundry to hopefully minimize the effectiveness of any overly ambitious mango fly larvae.

Well it is time to close the journal for the day.

May God bless each of you and please continue to pray that we can be a blessing to those people here that God calls us to interact with.

In Christ,  
John Yoder

*NOTE: To all of you who are patiently waiting for another update, here it is. We have been running a very busy schedule and the journal often gets pushed off until inspiration strikes. Inspiration is hard to come by, when you are rushing to get to the next place or trying to stay awake after returning. I do thank you for your prayers. We have felt them strongly in the ministry that we have been involved with. Continue to pray for the final days of this trip that we do not leave anything unfinished that God would accomplish through us.*

*Thanks again for your patience and I will try to catch you up on the rest of the day's activities. This journal will take you through Saturday Evening. The next one will begin with the activities on Sunday.*

*Thanks for Reading and Praying.*

*John & Alfy*

**April 3, 2011**

Greetings to all you prayer warriors who were wondering if we had simply fallen off the face of the earth since you haven't heard from us in three days. It has been a busy time, but I will try to bring you up to speed with what is happening.

I believe that I left off on Thursday when I shared that Alfy and I were going to be going out with Pastor Isaac, David and Esten. I ended up staying home and studying because of the Class at the Bible Institute on Friday Morning and the fact that we were planning on sharing with the CFC pastors immediately following the class. I knew that if I didn't get a little quiet time in, I would have been worth very little the next day.

Since Alfy was the one with the experience, I asked him if he would do the journal entry covering Thursday Evening. I will add that to the end of this journal entry.

Friday morning we headed up to the Bible Institute and I had a rather interesting class as they are getting a little bolder and asking more questions. They certainly asked a lot of very good questions regarding the proper use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and gave some real life scenarios from local churches here. They brought these up asking for input on what they or the pastor in charge should do. It has been a very stretching time to say the least, but I have sensed your prayers and the grace of God to give me good answers and bring Scriptures to my mind at the right time.

Even though it has been a challenge to get the studying and teaching in, I am actually enjoying this trip immensely. I am thankful for our very gracious hosts Ron and Audrey and their children for allowing us to invade their lives for these two weeks.

After the class, Jon Sauder, Alfy and Myself headed to Adeiso to meet with the CFC Pastors at Pastor Stephen's Church. It was so good to see all the pastors again. After everyone was gathered, and a few introductions given, we started right in with the session and I shared a short message with the Pastors regarding Paul's warning to "Watch and Remember." I say short because I had not been speaking long when a major cloudburst unleashed itself right on the church.

This rain is a great blessing to the community but because the church has a metal roof, the rain created a breach in communication. It was very loud, so that even if I was yelling the pastors sitting right in front of me couldn't hear what was being said. Because of this pastor Stephen and Pastor Frank quickly started up a small generator and fired up the sound system. This worked somewhat but the rain was so loud that I couldn't hear myself speak even though the sound was cranked very loud. Adding to the cacophony was the fact that various frequencies were prone to feed back through the system. It was a comical mixture of yelling pastor, pouring rain, and shrieking sound system. Thus the first teaching session was cut short. It was suggested that we take a bit of a break and hope that the rain would slow down a bit before starting our next session.

As we kind of chatted around waiting for the rain to stop, it actually increased in intensity and some were moving furniture and equipment away from the windows and doors because the rain was blowing in through those openings. We ended up just gathering in a circle and Pastor Felix led in a time of praying and what a time of prayer it was! Very rarely do I experience such prayer meetings. It was a blessed time as we all poured out our hearts before God in adoration, thanksgiving and intercession.

We prayed until the rain stopped and then we rearranged our chairs into a circle and Alfy lead us through some very key scriptures on godly leadership and we had a good discussion among ourselves about what godly leadership looks like. It was a very meaningful time and I believe timely to answer some of the issues that were facing the pastors at this time. God is so good!

Following the time with the Pastors, we headed back toward the house. On the way Jon found out from Sara that the power was out in the neighborhood and had been out most of the day. I felt sorry for them because they were having a party at their house that evening and had invited about half of Ghana to be their guests. Actually, that is not quite correct, but they did have a lot of folks coming to their place.

When we made it home sure enough, the power was still out.

Alfy and I headed over to Ron's to freshen up a bit, feeling privileged to have made the guest list for this illustrious gathering at Jon & Sara's. When we got back to Jon's things were just getting started and there

was the overwhelming consensus that we should find a way to hook Ron's generator up and power some fans.

Jon Groff was the resident electrician and between he and Ron they hooked the leads right into the main power connection outside the house and we soon had fans and lights. We had a very good time together with wonderful food and good fellowship and the knowledge that the Philadelphia Phillies won their game on Friday. That last fact was a little more meaningful to some of us than others, but we won't mention any names.

We got back to Ron's after the party and the power was still not on at their place. So because Ron and Audrey were not back, I opted to shower in Mosquito repellent and then sit on the front porch. If I hadn't showered in the mosquito repellent, I would have needed to scratch on the front porch. I much prefer sitting peacefully to scratching, so even though the mosquito repellent is slightly odiferous and has a greasy feel, I passed a rather enjoyable time on the porch. Alfie opted to forego the repellent and went for a walk around the neighborhood in the dark instead.

Ron's came home shortly and bless his heart, Ron even hooked up the generator here and let it run all night. I was so thankful because in this heat to try and exist without fans is a real problem.

I might insert here, that this is the longest stretch of time that I can remember sleeping all night without needing a sheet or blanket to cover me. I cannot imagine any covering feeling good in this heat. I simply turn the fans on high and try to catch as much breeze as possible. It is very warm in Ghana and does not (in my estimation) cool down much at night.

Saturday Morning, two fellows showed up a little late for breakfast and nearly caused all of us to be late for the morning pastor's meeting at the Bible Institute. Jon Sauder came to drive us to the Bible Institute and although we were a little late, some of the others were "later" and so we were able to start together, even if it wasn't on time.

I shared the second part of the two part message I had begun on Friday. Then After a brief break, Alfie shared some good insights and lead a discussion on Leadership. The Pastors seemed very appreciative. The last hour of the teaching time was spent in a bit of an open forum time as we reflected on some of the questions here dealing with church discipline. The questions are no easier here than in the US. I believe sometimes they seem harder because of the cultural coloring that comes with the territory. We had a very fruitful discussion looking at issues of why, when, and how soon church discipline should be used. After looking at a number of Scriptures which speak to this topic, I believe we all came away with the feeling that we had at least broadened our understanding of what is at stake in church discipline, but biblical church discipline is a relatively new concept here. There are not a lot of good examples here for these men to observe and learn from. Perhaps that is too true in the States as well.

Jon Sauder closed our teaching time together (Jon is doing a really good job by the way in his role in working with the CFC Pastors and churches.) Ron and Carter showed up with food to top off a great time with the pastors. Of course since this was an event for the pastors we were treated to a Ghanaian staple, Fufu with a couple of choices of soup.

Fufu as many of you already know is a lump of pulverized cassava (when you have a chance to eat fufu, you will have a new revelation concerning the statement, "Beaten to a Pulp.") It is basically flavorless and is eaten with one's fingers by pinching off globs, dipping them in the stew and then swallowing like a champ. You don't chew fufu. If you try to chew, you will find yourself in a losing battle with a gag reflex. Alfie, Jon Sauder and myself dug in rather gingerly at first, and while we could agree that it wasn't that bad, it certainly sat heavily in our stomachs and it would have been a real stretch to describe it as delicious. Still, we had a good time and it was worth the effort to be able to fellowship with the Ghanaians and to receive from their culture.

After lunch the pastors had their time of reporting. This is a time where the pastors submit their attendance records and any other records or receipts for review and to share what God is doing in their congregations. It is also a time for them to bring up struggles or ask questions, typically on a more practical or business level (finances, facility needs, etc.).

Jon Sauder is taking responsibility of this aspect of the ministry now but Ron sat in yet this time to help with handling the requests and listen to the reports. It was a privilege for me to sit off to one side and to

hear the reporting and the needs along with just observing the interaction with the pastors. Please continue to pray for the churches that have been planted and the men God has called to pastor them. They are operating in very difficult circumstances and face challenging situations with limited resources. Please pray for Jon Sauder as he will give oversight and guidance to the church ministry here. It takes a lot of grace, discernment and compassion to do his job. Pray that God gives him wisdom and power from Heaven for this task.

After we left the Bible Institute Saturday afternoon, we came back to Ron's briefly before going into Accra. We had a delicious supper and a very nice time of fellowship with Ron and Audrey and their children. Then it was home to study briefly before going to bed.

Sunday we were scheduled to participate in a joint baptism with two churches.

### **Alfy's Addendum**

Last Saturday when we arrived in Ghana we went to the Bible School to see the construction. As we pulled into the walled complex, and the unfinished construction was in front, off to the right were two Mango trees with several men there. It turns out that this is the gathering spot on the campus, with several benches under the nice shade of the mango tree. There at the mango tree, with them sharing roasted ground nuts (peanuts), I met David, Pastor Isaac, and Esten. I peeled and cracked enough of the ground nuts to be sociable, but was rather successful in not eating too much. David, Isaac, and Esten were very welcoming, and are on staff at Crusades for Christ, and have helped with the construction process. It is fascinating to hear them tell how they used the machetes to clear the land, and how they killed snakes, and how they built the wall on campus – one block at a time. This included not only laying the block, but making the block –mixing the mud, pouring it in forms - then mixing the cement and laying the block. The wall alone took months, before they began building the school buildings.

These young men live on campus – in part of a storage shed that is set up for living quarters. No electricity here. They sometimes want to read or study at night, and so will use the light from the cell phones. But if the cell phone battery runs out before they can charge it while the generator is running on the construction site, they may have to walk to town to find a place to charge their phone. Their food is cooked over a fire outside. They have been ministering in a local village, and Isaac is pastor of a small church that now meets on the school campus, with David assisting. They also have two boys that live with them, at least a good bit of the time, that have troubled home situations.

Isaac, David, and Esten have been very accepting and friendly to me while here, and I appreciate them and their testimony. On Thursday we decided to go to a nice restaurant in the evening for a time of food and fellowship. We met at a busy bus stop, a place where buses, mini-buses, and taxi's gather to pick up and drop off passengers – a very busy place with a lot of the grime and smoke of Africa traffic. Throw in a large amount of people, and a number of street vendors selling their wares, and you have the bus stop. Isaac and I stayed at one spot, a little down from the bus station, while David and Esten went to bargain for a taxi. They did this so they could set the price with the taxi driver before the driver saw that I was a white man, since the driver may try to charge too much money. Taxis here can be many shapes, models, colors, conditions, etc., but are identified by the orange quarter panels in the front and back, and the taxi sign. Soon a taxi pulled up with David in the front seat opposite the taxi driver, and Esten in the back. I jumped in the middle of the back seat, and Isaac piled in. It was crowded, but we were on our way. Our destination was a restaurant about a half hour away where the school had gone for a graduation dinner when David graduated.

We made good time on the way there, going the opposite way of most traffic, and with most of the way being paved (mostly) except for stretches where there was construction, and then it was very rough dirt road. We found the restaurant without problem, and soon were sitting in the upstairs dining room. This restaurant is known for its rotisserie chicken, and sitting there looking at the chicken, and enjoying the air-conditioner (I think the first air conditioned building for the week), I could have been back in Manassas, VA. We all ordered a round of Alvaro, which is a delicious non-alcoholic fruit ale. We then all ordered the chicken and rice plates. Wow – it was a lot of food! – consisting of a half chicken and a large pile of rice with fried vegetables in the rice. The food was delicious and all enjoyed it!

We had a great time of fellowship – a time to kick back a bit and laugh and relax, and also talk about things ranging from the difference in cultures and countries, “men” issues, backgrounds and families.

Somewhere in there we decided to order a plate of “chips,” which I understood were fried plantains. When it came, it looked and tasted like French fries. We had a discussion about if this was potato, plantain, sweet potato, or exactly what this was that we were eating. To settle the debate, we asked. Turns out, it is made with white potato. I was in Ghana eating good old French fries by another name – there was a reason it looked and tasted like French fries!

I was full, and didn’t finish my plate. I’m not sure if anyone finished their plate – but it was a case of not asking too much because I didn’t know if they were not finishing it because they were full, or because they wanted to save some for later if food is not as plentiful, or were they wanting to take some home for the two young boys. Either way, when all the leftovers were pulled together, there was a sizeable carry-out plate as well.

After dinner we decided to walk around town awhile, and look for a dry erase marker for the school. It’s different walking in Ghana, where there are not a lot of street lights. Lots of people, and yet some rather dark places – good to be hanging out with friends. We were going down one particularly dark road, and I wanted to dig out the flash light to be able to see what I was walking on or about to step into, but no one else had a flashlight – so just walked on in faith with these guys and all was well. Even at night, there was just stand after stand of people selling things – except not white board markers. We finally found a stationary store – that was closed - and gave up on the marker for the night.

We started the taxi process again – white man waits, native bargains for price – and we are were off. I knew we had a pretty good driver when he impressed even the Ghanaians in the car. The traffic was very bad, but this guy knew the less travelled roads to get around it – we weren’t sitting still just a whole lot. We paid the price in huge potholes and being bounced around on the dirt roads, but we got there way before the majority of the rest of the traffic. As we left the traffic, and sped up again on the highway, with an African preacher rather loudly talking on the radio – it was good to just ride along in the crowded taxi taking in the sights and sounds. David was up front with the driver. David’s dad died when he was very little – he doesn’t remember his dad. His dad worshiped idols, and so when his mom married his dad, she also worshiped idols. David has four siblings, and their family was extremely poor after their dad died. His mom met someone who told her about the Lord, and she became a Christian. David was the only one of his siblings that went along with his mom to church. David wanted to learn to read and write, but the family did not have enough money for school. So David would go down to the where the farms were, and while school was in recess would work on the farms and earn enough money to go to school. By doing this he was able to finish high school at age 20 or in his early 20’s. He worked with a pastor for some time in church planting, and then came to this area looking for work. His cousin had gone to the Bible school and really wanted him to come. Someone sponsored him, and he graduated at the top of his class after a year of Bible school here at the Crusades for Christ school. Now he has been living at the school, working on the building project, and helping Isaac with the small church that meets on campus. He is the only one in his family that finished school, and now carries the burden of being like the “older brother” and really wants to be able to help his family.

I ended up with a window seat for the ride home, and Isaac took the middle seat. Isaac is a young pastor that grew up in a Muslim home. Growing up, he did not like Christians and would speak badly of them. However, along his journey, he had three visions about Jesus – and set out to be a follower of Christ. This meant that his family rejected him and he left the area. He ended up on the streets of the capital city, and at a very low point when he had very little, he met a pastor that helped him. Somewhere along the way, he came to know some of the people that brought groups over to Ghana for crusades. Since they were going to Muslim areas, he would help prepare the groups for going in the Muslim areas, and perhaps went to help guide the groups. Through that work, he ended up going to and graduating from the Crusades for Christ Bible school. He has been helping out with the construction on the school, as well as pastors the small church that meets outside on the campus of the school. He also worked with the young people in the village to create a drama team – to share the gospel through

drama. He knows these villages don't have a lot of activities, and if a drama team comes to the village, even those that don't want to hear about Jesus will be curious enough that they want to watch the drama. Isaac also now teaches at the Bible school. It is interesting to sit and listen to this young pastor passionately teach a class about the Muslim religion, God's desire to bring the Muslim people to himself, and showing in the Quran some of the teachings that are actually there.

On the other side of the back seat is Esten. Esten is more quiet or reserved, but still friendly, appreciative, and seems to be a level-headed person. Esten helps with some of the translation needs in the churches and ministry. He is currently helping with the construction at the Bible school campus, and in watching him work, you can tell he has construction experience. He comes from a village some distance from the school, so he stays with David and Isaac during the week, and then travels home to his wife and family for the weekends. When asked about his conversion, he explains that he is from the same village as one of the pastors that graduated from the Bible college, and who is now part of the Crusades for Christ ministry. Since he and the pastor are from the same village and good friends, he was one of the pastors first targets.

Esten got off first, to go talk to his sister. The rest of us travelled on, and I was next to get out. The driver missed the turn for the village where the house is where I am staying, so he pulled over and I jumped out, walked back the road and then turned onto the little dirt road leading into the village. The evening was a good time, and I appreciate these new friends. In reality, it's a good chance we will never be together like that again. I may never see them again after next week, but there was fellowship and good times in Christ. It was good to walk down the dark, dusty dirt road of the village toward the house – kicking at the dirt, and kicking around a lot of the thoughts after being blessed with such an evening.

## **Journal #5**

**April 5, 2011**

Greetings again friends,

Today is Tuesday, but I will go back to Sunday and try to catch you up to the events of today.

Sunday morning dawned hot and sunny and after breakfast, Ron put all of the seats into the van and Ron & Audrey, Carter, Ariele, Callie and Savannah, along with Jon & Sara, Max, Rory and Ellie and the two pale faces from America loaded and left from Ron's place. A few miles up the road we stopped and picked up Gary and Joy Butikofer and our Sunday traveling party was complete.

Our cheerful and slightly squished group of missionaries was headed for Bawjaise for a service at Pastor Foster's church. Both Pastor Foster as well as Pastor Frank (where we were last Sunday) had a number of people ready to be baptized and since their churches are only a mile apart they decided a joint baptism would be in order. The plan was for each church to have its own worship service and then come together for the baptism at one place.

Braving the bumpy roads and jostling and bouncing along through the beautiful Ghanaian country side we arrived at our destination where the service was already started. It was a lively service and I was reminded of my previous experience here last year. This is a church that really likes to sing and dance. It was not all fast paced and when they sang slower worship songs and prayed, although I couldn't make out all the words, there was no mistaking the expression on their faces. They are truly in love with the Lord.

It is so amazing to me how these people can make a very rough place look welcoming and worshipful.

This particular group has been meeting in a school classroom that we certainly wouldn't consider a school if it were in the US. It is a low shed type of structure with a concrete floor and low concrete walls finished off on top with rough cut lumber and a tin roof.

It is to this place that they will bring lace and draperies and cover the walls in a variety of places making it look very nice. They also bring in many of the chairs and a sound system every week for the service.

Worship on a Sunday is no simple task and in the heat over here you don't hear any complaint from them. They are thankful to have a place to meet. No air conditioning and no padded pews, no fans; but the Spirit

of God is there and that small shed becomes a sanctuary where the worshippers join their hearts, hands, voices, and sweat in praise and adoration to God.

After a very lively time of worship after which even the most well-heeled parishioner was fairly glistening with perspiration, they settled back and stayed alert throughout the sermon on baptism. They are a very respectful church and following the service they made us partake of their tradition of hospitality to visitors, which consisted of them sharing a snack with us. Usually this is a soda (pop to some of you) or some other drink and this time they had added some popped corn. It always makes me feel a little bad and “a lot” conspicuous to be sitting up in front of everyone (they usually do this on the stage area) and some in the back look like they would really like to have the things we are having.

Sometimes I think it is harder to allow these churches the dignity of giving to us than it is to insist on giving to them. There is a difficult line to walk when assisting those who have less than you, but it is a real mark of love to allow them to give back at times. I believe we need to be more intentional in this regard. There are times that I believe we are guilty of the idea that the greater should bless the lesser. Usually this means that the greater is the one with more money or resources and the lesser is the one who is dependent. It is a difficult mentality to deal with and I think that we deny others dignity and respect when we refuse to receive a blessing from them because they are poor or live more simply or have less opportunity.

Perhaps another thing that comes into play here is that we also know that we can get these same things or better things perhaps and we don't really want what they have to give. God forgive us for our arrogance. These things don't happen just in Ghana, but I suppose they happen frequently in our own backyards as we “have the faith of our Lord with respect of persons” (or their resources). What is the answer? Well for starters....

After the refreshing drinks, I headed out to the van and replaced my dress shoes with flip flops and felt sorry for all the poor souls, who after looking at my feet, grabbed quickly for their eyes, fell to the ground and then staggered to their feet again looking for someone to lead them about by the hand.

True it that is a little exaggerated, but I must say the sight of the visiting pastors bare feet, white as the driven snow, in the midst of all that dark skin has to be just a little shocking. I felt more than a little conspicuous and rather self-conscious on the long walk to the water hole for the baptism. What could I do? I was the lone member of the gypsy band of missionaries that was elected to assist with the baptism. I must confess that I was more than a little concerned for the quality of the water we were to be baptizing in. I am in reasonably good health but I have also heard many stories concerning bad water and waterborne illnesses and parasites. Yeah, I know we are to walk by faith and not by sight.

When we got to water a large portion of our group was already there having opted to walk a different path so as not to be blinded by the neon feet of the preacher, no doubt.

When we were certain everyone was there, Pastor Foster, Pastor Frank and I waded into the chocolaty water. As we waded out the church began to sing and it was a very special time. I was no longer so concerned with the water and my feet were hidden from view beneath several feet of brown swirling current. But it was a holy time and a special time as one by one over twenty people waded out to make a public profession of their death to sin and resurrection with Christ. It was beautiful and I am blessed because I see that God is building His church here and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Everyone baptized here was a reminder of God's faithfulness to His Word and His willingness to forgive and change lives. It is also a reminder that because of your faithfulness to the mission of Crusades for Christ here in Ghana, there are souls who are walking in a newness of life that very probably would not have known of the Savior had you not given to, prayed for, and encouraged the work. Thank you. Thank you for providing a humiliating walk of the glowing feet for me. It reminds me of what David said when rebuked for dancing before the Lord. He said I am willing to be even more of a fool to bring God glory. Yes, I will gladly walk many more paths in humility to see the Kingdom of God grow. It was a meaningful time. God is here and the church is growing.

After quickly changing my clothes in a not so private setting, and bidding good bye to the church, we once again loaded up the van and headed back toward home.

Very shortly we stopped beside the road under a spreading tree and ate a picnic lunch together. Life has some very simple pleasures here in Ghana. This was one of them. There is something kind of neat about just pulling over to the side of the road hopping out of your vehicle and voila! There is lunch. Thanks Audrey!

After getting home we relaxed a bit and then around 5:30 PM, we all got together again at Ron's. We had a really good time together eating and talking and laughing. Ron set up a projector and we all looked at pictures together using various computers and collections of pictures. It was time of laughter and some tears. Home looks so good from here. The memories awaken feelings that are bitter sweet.

As I sat listening to the conversation and observing, I was struck by the reminder that this wonderful staff has been called by God to leave so much that we still enjoy, to serve Him over here. This is a fine place no doubt, and it is not so much about things, but home and friends are greatly missed. Please don't forget to lift them to the throne of Heaven and bless them at any chance you get. This is a fine group of servants you have sent and they are worthy of double honor as they minister here in Ghana.

Monday morning we were at the school earlier than we have been since our plans were to travel to the Cape Coast Castle. I was able to switch teaching hours with Pastor Kingsley and we had a wonderful time together with the class.

Following the class time we headed back to Ron's and then loaded up for the trip to Cape Coast. We had not gone far when we saw a car trying to run from the police. It was not very successful and before long it had to pull over again for at least the second time. There is something rather forbidding, seeing a man in uniform, armed with a machine gun approaching a car. I was certainly glad we were not the ones being stopped.

It is not the easiest thing to find washroom facilities on a road trip here in Ghana. So announcements from little ones with pressing needs are regarded seriously. Thankfully, on the way to Cape Coast we were within walking distance to a fine facility (by parking and crossing a busy divided highway) and on the way back it was dark (the roadside works well in these situations.)

Alfy, Carter and I were the only ones that ended up taking the tour of the Cape Coast Castle. It is a place that always grips me when I visit. The history of slavery is such a sad one. It was from this very castle that many hundreds and perhaps thousands left their native soil as virtual prisoners and property. Although that seems such a tragedy and we vow it should never happen again, there is much slavery going on today under the new name of human trafficking. Perhaps the only thing we learn from history is that we have a hard time learning from history.

Following our tour of the castle we all headed down to the castle restaurant next door and had supper eating in the spot that President Obama had eaten at while he was in Ghana (according to the helpful restaurant staff). The drive back was fairly uneventful and we were all so tired that most of us went to bed directly.

Last night was the coolest night so far since we have been here in Ghana. And once when I awoke, I had just the slightest thought of perhaps pulling a sheet over me, but the thought passed quickly as I thought I should enjoy the feeling of coolness and draw every possible ounce of enjoyment from it that I could.

Since this is the second installment you are getting today, I will wait to share today's events with you until later.

May God bless each one of you.

In Christ,

**Ghana Journal # 6**  
**April 7, 2011**

Hello Friends,

This will be the last entry for the Ghana journal for this trip. I am beginning this as I wait to board my flight out of Atlanta for South Bend. I believe Alfie is in the air for Washington National Airport. We had a nice flight through the night from Ghana. Both of us were amazed at the amount of sleep we actually got on the flight. Perhaps we were just worn out a little extra. We had a very busy 12 days in Ghana.

Let me back up to Tuesday. Most of you already are familiar with the pattern of the days over there. Like normal we had breakfast around 8:00 AM and got to the school by 10:00 AM. The class went well and I noticed that they are really becoming much more free to ask questions and give input. I could see that I would not be able to wrap up in quite the time that I had anticipated. Pastor Gary was very gracious and agreed to administer the final exam Thursday instead of making me do that on Wednesday. I was grateful for the extra time.

In the Afternoon, I caught up on the journal and worked on my personal Bible Reading Schedule (I got a little behind in Ghana). I also was reviewing the material in preparation for creating the final exam for the students.

We had a wonderful supper. Audrey prepared some authentic Ghanaian food with both rice and boiled yam. She made a wonderful red stew containing meet and flavored wonderfully. This was to go over top of the rice or yam. She said she had made a mistake in adding extra salt, but I thought it was wonderful.

After Supper we headed over to Jon and Sara's for a house dedication. It was a special time as we gathered in the living room first and Jon led us in some praise songs as he strummed his guitar (he is a man of many talents). After that we had a meaningful time of prayer as we started first at the outside gates and Jon as the leader of the home anointed the gateposts and later the door posts with oil. We took turns praying over all the entrances to the house and we could truly feel the presence of the Lord. It was a real time of connecting our hearts with each other and all of us with the Lord.

When we got back to Ron's, although it was a little late, Audrey still blessed us by whipping up some wonderful mango, banana milkshakes. What a refreshing way to end the day.

Wednesday morning began at about 4:30 for me. Having gotten to bed at 12:30 AM, I was grateful for the grace of God as I prepared for the class. I actually was wide awake and could think. Breakfast was at 8:00 again and we had pancakes and eggs with lots of fresh white pineapple. At the school, the class went well and we all gathered out in front to take a picture together after the class. It is amazing how we have become friends in these few short days. I pray that God continues to do the work that He has begun in these students. I know that the call to ministry that they have answered is not easy and they have many inconveniences to deal with. Please keep the faculty and students in your prayers.

It was back to Ron's to shower and finish packing before heading into Accra. Alfie had some last minute souvenir shopping to do before going to the airport and then Ron and Audrey took us to La Galette, a wonderfully American seeming restaurant with great pizza and wonder of wonders, tortilla chips!! and salsa (those disappeared in short order). To give a reason for my exclamation over tortilla chips, they are virtually non-existent in Ghana. If you want chips and salsa, you use plantain chips. Supper was wonderful but also tinged with melancholy because we knew that we were leaving these very precious people behind and it will be some time before we see each other again. All too soon it was time to make our way through heavy traffic and to the airport.

After saying our farewells, Alfie and I made our way into the crowded airport and through throngs of people to get our luggage checked by Ghana Customs. Then it was to the Delta counter where

we went through several agents the one checking our passports, another running a powder test on our checked luggage looking for traces of who knows what? Finally, boarding passes in hand, we made our way to the immigration desks on the upper level and with a minor snag of the agent wanting some money from Alf, we made it through without incident . We grabbed a coke and a meat pie at the little cafe in the terminal and then headed toward our gate. Security was another circus but we finally made it to the gate area just in time to walk out to the plane.

I was asleep before we took off and slept fitfully through a good part of the flight.

As I wrap up this final journal for this trip, I am amazed at how quickly it was over. So much has happened in the past 12 days. God has worked so many wonderful things. He is so good! I reflect on the events and I am grateful. You, the faithful givers, prayer warriors and interested parties have really affected our lives in these past two weeks. I know that the power we walked in was from God. Thank you for petitioning Heaven on behalf of this ministry. The ministry in Ghana will continue because the zeal of the Lord of Hosts has declared it and will accomplish it. His Glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Let that knowledge continue to motivate us to concentrated prayer that His Kingdom come in fullness, and His will be done in completeness in Ghana, just as it is in Heaven.

So ends the journal for Alf and I, but please continue in prayer as Joe and Dorothy Stutzman leave tomorrow (Saturday, April 09) for Ghana. They will be staying with Ron's and ministering there for a number of days. Pray that God uses them mightily and that they are given traveling mercies and health, both spiritually and physically.

In Christ,

John Yoder