



Living Letters

2 Corinthians 3

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 2
MAY 2022

Dear friends and family,

Hi, its Michael this time! The past several months have been filled with work on proverbs, mainly Komba proverbs. I'm sure you have heard that proverbs are an important aspect of wisdom and speech across much of Africa. It is very true [*understatement]. The proverb spoken at the right time lends itself to a rich conversation. Proverbs tend to be an aspect of speech among elders. It can be easy for an observer to not fully understand the depth of the conversation, and I am guessing I have heard plenty without realizing it.

I have been intrigued with proverbs for several years. The last time I was in Ghana I tried working through some proverbs that had been collected by a translator for over 15 years prior. I didn't get very far then, since lots of other things vied for my time. We began checking the book of Proverbs the beginning of this year. It has been slow working through the book for various reasons. In March I began revisiting Komba proverbs and reading about translating proverb-like sayings and proverbs in other projects. In April I finally finished going through the list and correcting the spelling of the proverbs so I could analyze them. I spent a little over a week and a half analyzing the list and writing my observations in a document to share with the translators.

We were able to look at the document the beginning of May. I have corrections to make to my analysis, which is good. I am always learning! We were then able to take that analysis and apply it to our team checking of the book of Proverbs. It has been a joy to work with the translators in this book. We have been able to shorten the text and utilize structures of Komba proverbs so that the content sounds like *proverbs* instead of *prose*.

As we work through the Wisdom books, I continue to grow more fascinated with the text, the ancient context, and today's applications. Ecclesiastes reminds us that nothing was new to the author at that time. Then, through Christ, something new did happen- the world experienced a perfect man who brought creation, restoration, life, and resurrection. Wisdom's true nature is revealed. In Proverbs, Wisdom existed before the earth (Prov 8). The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Pr 9:10).

God works through all cultures and languages to bring us back to himself. Many Komba Proverbs sound like Scriptural proverbs; they can be used for instruction, correction, and enjoyment. As we translate the Wisdom books, they reveal aspects of culture that are familiar here while transforming culture with new proverbs and God's Wisdom.

One Komba proverb says, *Bukpaab fɔg ke,imɔɔn por le*. "If your farm is far, then your okra will become overgrown." If something is distant and



*Easter Day (above)
and visiting a Lutheran church (below)
as they read the Komba translation on
their phones and from books.*





We were able to join the Komba Easter convention (top left). There was much celebration over Jesus' resurrection!

removed, it will become dilapidated. With God's Word in our hearts, the crop can flourish.

A brief update, we finished consultant checking 2 Chronicles and Hosea back in March and then Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah in May. We are gearing up for team checking Ecclesiastes and consultant checking Micah-Malachi in June. The translators have completed drafting everything, and so our focus is on team checking, community review, and consultant checking remaining books!

Naomi and I have been busy getting out into the community as we have attended funerals, a chieftancy enskinment, various churches, Easter convention, house building in the community, language classes, learning how to cook local dishes, in addition to daily activities and routines like transporting tractor disks in the bed of the truck, watching goats give birth outside our kitchen window, electrical issues, and thesis research. Life here keeps us busy daily and we are thankful for the people here who guide and walk us through life and pick us up as we stumble.

We have a little update, God is graciously bringing us into a new vocation of parenthood. We are awaiting the birth of our child sometime in July or August. We have been busy preparing. Naomi has been feeling well. We have enjoyed seeing and feeling the child move each day. We are thankful for the support of friends and family.

Confident in Christ,
Michael and Naomi Ersland

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