



Living Letters

2 Corinthians 3

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Dear Family and Friends,

Clouds came over the land. Rain and wind swept over the earth. In our home, we felt safe, comfortable, and excited that our empty cistern was getting filled from the downpour. The rain continued to the afternoon. We then got the hint of something bigger taking place than what we realized, and our joy for water in our cistern turned to sorrow for the destruction we would discover that had happened in our region.

Our host family had flooding, the church collapsed from the water, crops of peanuts freshly picked and piled in fields were swept away and people could gauge the height of the flooding by how high up in the trees the plants were now hanging. One road north of town became inaccessible. Another road had a bridge give out. A few communities were washed away by this generational flood.

Trauma—it “is a wound of the heart and mind that causes deep suffering.”¹ It comes in many different shapes, sizes, and without invitation. It enters our lives, and we are never the same again. We all have experienced trauma. How we deal with it is a different story.

In October, the Bible Society of Ghana sent a team to help train local facilitators for trauma healing groups. We participated in the several day workshop as we looked at questions like “If God loves me, then why do I suffer?” and “What is a heart wound?” The healing groups provide a space to look at what our culture says, what Scripture says, and to compare the two. Sometimes, our church culture even says something that isn’t well supported in Scripture.

Naomi has been working with a healing group in Gbintiri in the time since the workshop. Local leaders are looking to expand the groups outside the town after they finish this initial group. It is a long process of 6 sessions taking about 2 hours each session.

The sessions include a traumatic story, a Bible story, reflection questions related to both stories and the topic of the session, and an activity for processing the topics. It is a space for looking and seeing that “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Ps 34:18 NIV).

During this time of the year, we think of the trauma in our lives. We think of its hurt, shame, pain, and separation. There is the death of the friend and family member, the drought that demolished crops, accidents, sicknesses, etc. It is pretty gloomy. It is real. It is dark. It is painful.



The road north of town was impassable.

Participants performed a skit of Job for a community and discussed the presence of God in suffering.



1. <https://www.traumahealingbasics.org>



We were able to visit the village church in November and to worship with our family. It had been three months since we had been there. The road becomes unpassable for our truck during rainy season. It was bittersweet getting to join our family there while also mourning the destruction of the building, a person's house, and the fields.

This is the world that God entered and dwelt in—to be present and near. As we approach Christmas, we dwell in a season called “Advent,” meaning “coming.” We reflect on the coming of Jesus and his birth. We also look to the coming of Jesus once again. The metaphors and imagery are rich: the Word made flesh (John 1:14), the Light of the world (John 1:9) and the Son who is a brother (John 1:12-14).

God also endured suffering. Jesus knew pain, the pain of the world. He knew it not for the platitudes that we can then speak but for the indwelling redemption only He can give. In the Word of God, we have the incarnation brought for humans, across all languages. The Komba Bible is that incarnation brought for people here, into their context. We are getting closer. We are over halfway completed with updates to the New Testament with only Lamentations and Daniel waiting to be consultant checked. We are prepping for typesetting. People are excited and waiting for its coming. We are in an Advent. The light is coming brighter. It is here with us to stay. It is coming to dwell, for people to easily return to and know that God is here. He is present. He always has been. Through Jesus' birth, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, we have hope.

A pavilion replaces the foundation of the village church. A new beginning is coming. People are engaging life's traumas with God's Word. Healing is coming. The final books are being checked for the Bible. Hope is rising. May the hope of Jesus Christ be with you this Advent season and forevermore.

Confident in Christ,

Michael and Naomi Ersland

Prayer Requests

- Praise God for the consultant checking of Ezekiel and the progress we are making with updates to the New Testament.
- Pray for a local community that has been experiencing much trauma. May God help everyone in the area to be present with them and to grieve with them.
- Praise God for Jesus Christ, who entered the world and became sin for us so that he might die to give us life.
- How may we pray for you? Please let us know so that we may be praying for you!

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