

International Teaching Ministry of Douglas Jacoby



International Teaching Ministry Update 2008, Issue 1 Sierra Leone

"Challenging men and women of faith to think"

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Dear All,

Happy New Year, and I pray this newsletter finds you walking with the Lord and beginning 2008 in his strength. This issue mainly contains a report on my recent visit to **Sierra Leone**, West Africa.

I would also like to remind those planning to come to **Israel** that there are only **40 days left** till the registration deadline. Details: click on Visit Israel at homepage.

Many seem to be enjoying the **daily Bible studies** at the website as we go through the New Testament in a year. I have received emails from all over the world from people grateful for the help. Thanks for your feedback.

Please keep the international teaching ministry in your **prayers**. Tomorrow I start a 10-day trip. Congregations visited include Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Vilnius (Lithuania), and Reykjavik (Iceland). After a week home, at the end of the month I heading to Kiev (Ukraine), where we are launching a Russian language biblical training program. Next I will take the train to Minsk (Belarus). As always, your prayers are appreciated. They keep me safe, help me make wiser decisions, speak more clearly, and follow Christ more closely.

Yours in Him,
Douglas

FREETOWN REPORT (from December 2007)

1. Flying from Abidjan via Accra, I landed in Freetown -- though without my (lost) suitcase. As Freetown's airport is several hours from the town, and I am speaking in less than 2 hours, it is necessary to take a helicopter to the city. The roads here are abysmal -- literally, considering the depth of the potholes and erosion making many sections topographically phenomenal! Overturned, burned out cars litter the landscape. Most people live crowded into small homes, or (more commonly) crude shacks. No one in the church has electricity. (Occasionally they hook up to a generator.) But there is running water for some. The Freetown congregation has 129 members, most from a Muslim background. All were deeply affected by the bloody civil war (1991-2002). Six of the members are police officers, and they are eager to take good care of me!

2. Last night we had about 250 in attendance! (Interesting note: Here they never count the children in the total, just the adults, as in the Bible.) There were lots of visitors -- they were slightly in the majority! -- when I spoke on the topic of the *Holy Spirit*. Many people believe that miracles are proof of salvation, just as material wealth is evidence of God's blessing. Some believe that "speaking in tongues will keep you from being contaminated by the world" (!). Judging by the amount of worldliness, I would have to contest this assertion. I vigorously challenge the "signs and wonders" proffered by many religious leaders as fraudulent, or simply non-miraculous ("healed" aches and pains, no organic illness). The crowd includes pentecostal ministers, Christians, and many Muslims, and the Q session following is lively. Afterwards I took a group out to dinner, treating them (Lebanese restaurant).

3. This morning the preacher in Freetown told me that our meal cost me more than most workers make in a month (US level prices)! It is hard to imagine the depth of poverty in such a place until you actually visit it. The hard conditions throw into high relief the Christ-like and buoyant spirits of the Christians in the city. I taught again this morning, for all leaders who could make it, on Walking with God. The venue: the preacher's house. Like most homes in Freetown (and all in the church), there is no electrical power. (Generators are used in emergencies.) Next door, through the barred windows and not more than 3 meters away, the bleating of a sacrificial goat pierces the air every minute or so. Tomorrow he will be killed, for the Muslim feast of Eid, commemorating Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael (!).

4. Back at the hotel, the manager, Mohamed Sesay, is very kind to me, allowing me to use the hotel internet, sharing his ethernet cable with me. The hotel has been 80% taken over by the UN. During the war, the rebels bombed the hotel twice, and captured it. Mohamed Sesay was here at the time. It's the best hotel in Freetown, probably like an American 2 star though not in good repair, and \$85/night. Beautiful in its day... Freetown is better off than Monrovia, Liberia, where I was last year, though similar in several ways.

5. En route to Ghana, the last stop on the tour, I have many conversations. Mohammed is selling CDs -- I have already got 4 African music CDs from Cote D'Ivoire -- and we talk about the war and what he witnessed. Hamid (who helps me back to the helicopter) also opens his heart, and we talk. In line to check in I meet an aid worker and a consultant, two Kenyans trying to do what they can to rebuild Sierra Leone. It has been a short but uplifting visit to Freetown. Please keep this city, and its Christians, in your prayers.