

During part of January and February I had the privilege of ministering in Arba Minch, Ethiopia. Though Cattle for Christ International (CCI) has supported work in



many parts of Africa, including Ethiopia for the last several years, this was my first time to personally work in Africa. I went as part of a team of four pastors/missionaries. We conducted pastor training for about 120 local pastors and a leadership conference for about 100 of the business and community leaders of that region who had a burden to take the Gospel and the love of Christ to their own un-

reached people. A medical/dental team accompanied us from Global Health Outreach. All together we had nineteen people from around the country representing four mission organizations including Cattle for Christ.

In Ethiopia, there are 39 un-reached people groups: 39 separate tribes or villages that have been identified as having no Christian Church and where the Gospel of Christ has never been shared.

Our first day onsite we all worked in the medical clinic. One young married couple visited the dental clinic the first day from one of these un-reached tribes. When we asked the wife if she knew Jesus as her Savior, she replied that she had never heard of Jesus. Through our interpreter, we were able to introduce this young couple for the first time to the God who loves them so much that He would send His only Son to die in their place so that their sin could be forgiven. We shared with them how Jesus rose from the dead defeating death so that they too could inherit eternal life. With tears streaming down their young faces, they pleaded to know more about a God like that and how they could experience His love and forgiveness. According to this couple, they would be going home as the first and only Christians in their village.

I am always amazed at how those who have never heard the name of Jesus are so eager to hear the Good News, so desperate to be forgiven, so hungry for His personal love and affection, and so grateful for the hope that He brings to every aspect of their lives. They have carried the heavy burden of their sin for so long--not knowing that Jesus has already taken it upon Himself.

In Africa, and in many third world countries, the people carry large loads of wood, food, water, etc., on their backs or on their heads day in and day out. As time goes by and their bodies wear out under the burden of the heavy loads that they carry day after day, you notice that many of them walk around humped over even when they are not carrying a load.

The burden of their sin however seems to be even more devastating in their lives because until they hear about and accept Christ's forgiveness, their sin is a burden that they cannot put down at the end of the day--it just stays with them, wearing them down more and more every day. Like a vicious cancer, it eats away at them from the inside. They have no hope, no rest, no relief, no comfort and no peace. They are separated from the one God who created them to have sweet fellowship with Himself and so they seek

that kind of relationship with whatever pagan god or religion that comes their way--none of which are able to satisfy their need or take away the burden of their sin. No other god has given his life for them, in their place, for their sin--and no other god has defeated death and rose from the dead and is able to offer them eternal life except for this Jesus. No other god can live in their hearts and give them the peace of His presence.

My experience has been that when the poor and the un-reached hear this Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ for the first time, they most often respond the way this desperate young couple did at the dental clinic: "Please tell us more about this Jesus!" Perhaps it is more than just the burden of their un-forgiven sin; perhaps it is because they have so little and their need is so great, that they are desperate for the HOPE that only Jesus can offer.

Here in the West, especially in America, God has blessed us so much in so many wonderful ways. We have personal and religious freedom. Even the poorest of us has wealth that exceeds that of most of the world. We have government programs to meet our physical and economic needs. We have jobs and a paycheck, retirements, quality housing, an abundance of good and



safe food, medicine and medical care, inside plumbing with clean water and flushing toilets, sewage systems that we don't see or smell, heating and air conditioning, toilet paper, transportation, soft beds, ice and refrigeration, education, churches, Bibles, a powerful military to keep us safe, telephones, technology, electricity, grocery stores, private property, on and on the list goes. All these are undeserved blessings from God.

Our tendency is to place our hope and faith in these blessings instead of the God who provides the blessings. Think about it! When we have all that we need, it is easy to live as if we do not need God. To what extent do we really place our hope and faith in these things, these opportunities, these organizations, to meet our needs instead placing our hope and our faith in the living God and Him alone to meet our needs? Those who have nothing are much more open to the Gospel than those of who have so many other things to put their trust in.

As I travel around the world doing the ministry of Cattle for Christ, I am reminded that I am blessed to be a blessing. When I see all these precious people around the world who are able to feel like I feel, to love like I love, to hurt like I hurt, to laugh like I laugh, to cry like I cry, and who need God's mercy like I need it, I realize that God does not love me any more than He loves them. He blesses me because He loves all the people of the world and wants to love and bless them through me.

I hope you will allow the Lord to search your heart and show you why He chose you to bless so richly. I challenge you to allow Him to love and bless the world through you.