

I was still pretty discouraged this week trying to recover from the high infection rate on the surgery service. Most of the patients who got infections are improving. The autoclave has been temporarily fixed but could fall apart any day. I am inquiring into a replacement but have no details yet. Thanks for praying for wisdom in this and the resources to get a replacement one out here by air freight. I was also a bit down because the family practice resident on the surgery service now is not taking good care of the patients and has not listened to my counsel. I love to teach but it is a lot more challenging when the students ignore what I say and the patients suffer.

By Friday afternoon I was thankful I got through the week without exploding or crying and was ready for the weekend break. On Saturday morning I was greatly encouraged after attending a workshop on prayer by Lyndon Wall who is providing pastoral care to the SIM missionaries in Nigeria. Much of what he said was not new but he focused on the idea that we need to clearly understand what God has assigned us to do, discern His will in helping us accomplish that assignment and pray for His will to be done. I know God has me here to teach and train Nigerians and young people. Now I can plead with the Lord that for me to do that effectively, He needs to solve some of the problems in my environment that are thwarting me from fulfilling this assignment He gave me. I have been striving and am tired so am glad to shed the load of responsibility into His capable hands to solve the insolvable. It is wonderful to serve a sovereign God and an omnipotent God who can do amazing things when we get out of the way. I know we are often His instruments for change but not always.

On Saturday morning I received a call from one of the operating room nurses. He wanted to see me in my office at the hospital to give me a message. I feared the worst that he was going to let me know he was planning to resign. My other fear was that he was going to call me on the carpet for my frustrations with the operating room the past two weeks. Simon has been a good friend to me in the operating room, a good leader and a godly influence on the compound, his church and at the hospital. He is also a good anesthetist who has also given me anesthesia several times. I met him at 4 o'clock and he began his speech. It took about 30 minutes before he had said what was on his mind. He has been under a great deal of pressure from his family that he is not making enough money to pay school fees and for them to live as they would like. He has received many offers to work elsewhere for a lot more money and they are pressuring him again to resign and get a job that pays more. He has faced this challenge before and was giving me the latest version. He came to me for encouragement that it was worth it to stay. I was relieved that he still wanted to stay and proceeded to share from my heart and experience that we face many of the same pressures. I believe God has given me the "assignment" to be at Evangel and has given me the gifts to serve Him here. I challenged Simon that if God has given him the same assignment, he needs to help his family understand that and know that God is also able to provide for their needs if He wants them to stay at Evangel and serve Him here. I'll spare you the whole speech but at the end when we closed in prayer, I was greatly encouraged that the Lord has provided me wonderful people to work with here, people who are making more of a sacrifice than we are, who are under strong pressures and temptations but who remain faithful to God's call in their lives. We would like to help him with the school fees for his children and I told him so especially since we have helped him in the past. Please pray for Simon and other staff at Evangel who are serving the Lord sacrificially in order to be part of the Kingdom work here.

Tonight about 7 o'clock when it was dark and the yard gate was locked, the dog began to bark wildly and we heard someone calling from the gate. I don't especially like night visitors for obvious reasons but cautiously looked out the door to see who was coming for a visit. It turned out to be my good friend SH from Kano. He is an incredible Nigerian missionary working among people of the faith that is predominant in the north of Nigeria. He had come with his wife and high school daughter. We have been helping pay her school fees in the ECWA staff school in Jos. He is the man who converted to Christianity from that other faith and was instrumental in challenging Dorothy to begin the street children ministry.

After the usual Nigerian greetings he mentioned he had heard we had returned to Nigeria and he wanted to "greet us" in person and welcome us back. We asked about his family and were horrified to hear the story of how his son had been murdered at a university in March. His son was a strong believer in Christ and was doing well in school. SH had led a young man to Christ and had to leave his family because of persecution. The parents then arranged for a group to attack SH's son and murder him "so he would know what it was like to lose a son." It was horrible and a strong statement on the cost some Christians are paying to be a witness for Christ in this country.

He shared how God had given him the grace to forgive the killers of his son even though the family was still struggling with grief and confusion. He spoke to a group of Christians in a northern city and gave his testimony. Afterwards an elder in the church came up to him. This elder also lost two children because they were Christians. The elder had been planning for years a way to get revenge on the murderers and had been making weapons and working on the perfect plan for the revenge murder. He was dumbfounded to hear SH share how he had forgiven the attackers of his son and so repented of his own revengeful plans and brought the weapons to the church as a sign of his change of heart.

Saleh has been a missionary to the villages in the north of Nigeria where there are very few Christians. He is encouraging missionaries stationed in these remote areas and said they have been thrilled by the spiritual revival sweeping many areas. Many are coming to Christ in the rural areas. In one village the missionary had led three people to Christ. They wanted to build a small mud hut with thatched roof as a prayer place to worship in the village. In northern Nigeria word has gone out to all the chiefs that if they allow Christians to build a church, the government will not bring them electricity, build them a road or build a school. So the chiefs are under a lot of pressure to discriminate against the Christians. This missionary decided to build the prayer hut on his own property. So with the little money he and the new converts could scrape together, they built a mud hut and were planning to put on the thatch roof.

People in the next village heard what they were doing and because they thought if that village did not get a road or school or electricity because of the Christian prayer hut, they would not either because they were further away. So they came at night and completely destroyed the hut. When the chief heard about it the next day, he called the villagers together and demanded to know who had done this. "This is not our custom. We welcome strangers as a blessing even if we do not believe what they believe." No one in the village admitted destroying the hut until one person finally raised his hand, "I saw some young men from the next village doing it." The chief was furious that the neighbor village chief had not approached him in the proper way if he was offended by the prayer hut. So the village people determined it was an act of war and decided they would attack them with their bows and arrows and destroy something of value in that village. The Nigerian missionary stood up in the meeting and said, "Please do not do that. That is not the way we do things. We have forgiven them and even if we do not rebuild, it will be OK. Revenge is not the answer. I will try again but please do not attack them." The chief then wisely answered the people by saying, "I know what to do. I know how to irritate them in the best way. We will all convert to the religion of the missionary and build a church right in front of my palace." So that is what they did. The whole village "converted" to Christianity and began coming to church. They knew nothing of what it meant so the missionary had an amazing and challenging responsibility to tell them the whole Gospel story and the life of faith in Christ. They even invited the neighboring chief and villagers to come and worship with them.

Wow! What an amazing story of courage and faith. We are humbled by what God is doing here and hope we can be an encouragement to pioneers like SH and others on the frontlines of this battle for souls. Thanks for your prayers and support as we pray and support our colleagues here.

Finally, David was sick this weekend and Dorothy seems to be coming down with the same bug. Thanks for praying for a speedy recovery and protection for the rest of us.

In Christ,
Bill Ardill

Please reply to <bill.ardill@sim.org>.

* SIM by Prayer *
