

Ferke News Update

May, 2017

"Now I know that I'm not being cursed by God when I suffer."

"I've wronged my husband. How can I win him back?"

"I've been storing bitterness in my heart. I need to take it to Jesus."

"I need to ask forgiveness of other ladies in the church."

"This will save my marriage."

"We (the women leaders in the church district) are taking the material and teaching it for the women in the village churches." (one month after the conference)

These and other comments were made after the five women's conferences that my ministry partner, Gnimeni, and I taught together during the past 4 months. What we are teaching is biblical counseling material on conflict, bitterness, suffering and marriage with at least one hour of health teaching. Gnimeni has also done 3 conferences without me because of both scheduling conflicts and subject matter. (There are some cultural issues, like funeral practices, which are better for her to address.) In addition to the women's conferences, together we did a conference for adolescent girls on sexual purity and living their lives for Christ.

The women's ministry is growing. Please pray for wisdom as we plan the next steps. We see a need to help pastors' wives learn how to minister to women. There is also a need among the single women in the churches. Their number is growing. Not being married, they are not considered to be women, and very few are integrated into the life of the church. The pressure on them to have children outside of marriage is great.

The need for African women trained in God's Word is huge. Please pray that both men and women will capture the vision. Men need to see its importance and support it, and women need to see their need for Bible training. Fatouma, is a third-year student at the Bible Institute. She has sickle cell, so has many health problems, but is a very courageous woman. (Her husband is also a student pastor, and they have one daughter in 8th grade.) Please pray for Fatouma's health, a good finish to her studies both this year and the next, and a good integration into the women's ministry.

The widows' ministry continues to bear fruit. Some widows have decided that they do not need to chase men to satisfy their desire for companionship and their needs for money. With the encouragement and prayers of the others, they are trusting the Lord. The widows' prayer ministry is growing, and other church members are bringing their prayer requests to the group. In answer to prayer, they have seen the son of one widow come to the Lord and begin caring for his mother. Several families have asked the group to help the new widow at the death of her husband. One widow was one of three wives and is a new believer in Christ. She is the only Christian in the family. The widows' group is having someone visit her each day of the 40-day mourning period. Other churches are now asking to begin a similar group. Please pray for this ministry as jealousy from other pastors and 2 women in the group who seek to be in charge are becoming threats. Please continue to pray for Fanta, the widow who leads the group.

I taught a modular class at our university level theological school in Bouake in March, and will be teaching a class on contemporary theology there in July. In addition I'll be teaching a one week module at the Bible Institute at the end of June, and there is only a little over one month to finish the school year. (I teach Tuesdays and Wednesdays.) Please pray for God's wisdom and for health and strength from the Lord.

Please be much in prayer. It is God that changes hearts and lives. Thank you for your part in what God is doing here in Cote d'Ivoire.

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