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A Gift Received ... With Abundant Joy!

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." (Eph. 3:20 NLT)

In October, I had the privilege of traveling to Freetown, Sierra Leone to help teach the 6th class of the School of Practical Ministry (SOPM) there. This verse from Ephesians perfectly describes my experience. In fact, on the last night of class, as the students were praying for each other to receive a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I just sat in my seat watching. I was overwhelmed at the goodness of God and the calling He has placed on Evangel to teach the WORD to the world. This group of 91 students who represented 3 countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea) and over 20 different denominations and ministries raised the total number of SOPM graduates in Africa to over 1,000.

Who would have dreamed this would have been possible? Certainly, not my Dad when he founded Evangel in 1982. I never even considered the possibility when I succeeded my Dad as president of Evangel 25 years later. The thought didn't cross my mind when we launched the SOPM for lay people in the U.S. in 2007. Little did I know when we went to Kenya in 2009 to teach 10 students, the open doors God was placing before us. God chose us to be His instrument to bring solid Biblical instruction to so many in places I had never dreamed I'd go.

So much happened while I was in Sierra Leone. I experienced the miraculous protection of God when a fire broke out in a building right next to the church. Despite the seriousness of the situation, no one was injured and nothing on the church property was damaged.



I was inspired by the commitment of the students to study and complete the 3 learning projects. Many evenings, after 5 hours of class, students could be seen working on those projects. I was humbled by the passion and faithfulness of the students. I got to know 2 of them really well.

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Teaching the WORD to the World

This is the vision statement that underpins our logo. It could seem very presumptuous and in fact it would be, if it were not for the doors the Lord has sovereignly opened over the past seven years to do just that. Although we have only been to 4 nations in Africa, the ministries we are connected with in those nations are reaching out to touch and minister to many different countries on that continent. Every time the School of Practical Ministry is conducted, the students who graduate have the potential to travel to other nations and teach what they have learned, effectively multiplying the outreach and boundaries of the SOPM program.



In addition, "Teaching the WORD to the World" is a vision, that with your prayers and generous support, has a long future. Less than a decade ago (see Bob's message on Sierra Leone) Evangel was focused on training here in Virginia. Then, the requests for international pastoral training began to come and now seven years later, over 1,000 international pastors and leaders have been trained to date.

As you can see from the *"Looking Ahead"* article on p.4, specific plans are underway for next year and beyond. In truth, only the Lord knows all that He has planned and purposed for this ministry in the years to come. We are working hard to build a solid foundation that will carry the weight of this vision into the

foreseeable future. Part of that plan is being realized as we train and release certified indigenous instructors to continue the SOPM training, so Evangel can consider new opportunities the Lord would open before us.

Right now, we feel a bit like Moses at the edge of the Red Sea. Only through eyes of faith and a clear dependence on the Lord was Moses able to take the children of Israel across to the other side. Similarly, we too are looking ahead, trusting the Lord to open new doors of opportunity and provide the finances for future SOPM programs in His timing. Already there is interest being shown in India and in the Philippines to bring the School of Practical Ministry to those countries.

To be clear, "Teaching the WORD to the World" is a huge vision and a daily walk of faith. But that is the mission to which God has called us and we trust that you have a sense of that in your spirit as well. As we prepare to embark on a New Year, let's commit together to walk faithfully with our great and awesome God, to take steps of faith as He directs and then to put our faith into action to see His Kingdom purposes accomplished!

Tom Watson – Administrative Director, ETS

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Pastor David and Pastor Abraham stayed in the guest apartment with me. These young men were so excited to be included in the program and wanted to receive every last thing they could. It seemed like they were always asking me questions about the material. Pastor David shared with me that receiving his Practical Ministry certificate meant more to him than the bachelors and masters degrees he has received. Pastor Abraham talked about how he would never forget what God had done for him during the class.

I also learned about 2 significant developments in Sierra Leone. First, I was informed that the local Christian college is requiring that anyone wishing to pursue a bachelors degree in theology or a related field must first have completed the School of Practical Ministry. Second, I also learned that a man who completed the program in 2013 is the director of communication for the Sierra Leone Parliament. Certainly, God is giving us incredible favor.

Finally, I concluded my time in Sierra Leone with excitement about the future of the SOPM there. In the month leading up to my traveling I was busy working on an international training manual for instructors and support staff. While in Freetown, I had the opportunity to teach through the manual with the leadership team. At the graduation service, 2 instructors and 2 support staffers received their official Evangel certification. This leadership team is already planning next year's class. They intend to take the SOPM to Bo (the 2nd largest city in Sierra Leone) and are projecting an enrollment of 150 pastors and leaders. I also had the opportunity to meet with the executive committee of the Alumni Association. They are also excited about the future and have some big plans as well.

None of this would have been possible without the faithful prayer and financial support of you, our friends. Your efforts have not only blessed us, but also the Church in Africa. You have invested in the lives of 1,000 pastors and leaders who are passionate and committed, as well as in the lives of the men and women to whom they minister.

We want you to know that during this Christmas season of gift giving, **the International School of Practical Ministry has been A Gift Received With Abundant Joy** by the 1,000 pastors and leaders who have had opportunity to go through the program. Thank you for helping make all of this a reality!

On behalf of the Evangel family, I want to wish you and your families a most joyous and blessed Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Grace & Peace,

Bob Reichard, III
President

Testimonies

At the conclusion of each International School of Practical Ministry, we ask the students to share with us how they have been affected by the things they have learned and the interaction they have experienced.

In a society where our options for learning seem limitless, it is often hard for us to grasp just how desperate these men and women are for the type of training that Evangel is offering through the SOPM program.

Here are some representative examples of how individual lives are being touched and transformed due to the generosity of you, our generous partners.....

I also want to thank Evangel for what it has done in my life. I never knew my spiritual heritage, my spiritual gift, the role of the Holy Spirit in my life, how to better communicate the Gospel, or to be a better leader or minister. But through Evangel Seminary, I now know them all. R. Kargbo

Attending the Evangel Seminary SOPM has brought a great challenge in my life. As I learned about the suffering by men of God in the Scriptures, the Lord encouraged me not to relent, despite what I face in propagating the Gospel. I also learned lessons that have brought an overhaul change in my ministry.

Pastor A. Charles

I want to also thank God for the supporters, organizers and teachers of Evangel Seminary. God has used them tremendously to bless and open our eyes of understanding. The SOPM has been a blessing to me personally, my family, my ministry and to the Body of Christ in our beloved nation of Sierra Leone.

E. Bangura

"For God is not unjust to forget your labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and continue to minister to them. " Heb. 6:10

Highlights of 2016

- ✓ 60 Pastors and Leaders trained through the International SOPM program in Cameroon, Africa in June. This includes staff from the new Christian School that Hope Outreach International, our ministry partner in Cameroon, started this year
- ✓ International Training Manual and documentation developed to strengthen and standardize the instructional program for future SOPM Level I indigenous instructors and support staff
- ✓ New highly qualified and gifted individuals, Steve Sill and David Mehagen, joined the Board of Trustees for Evangel (*Both men have either completed degrees or programs of instruction offered by Evangel*)
- ✓ 91 Pastors and Leaders trained through the International SOPM program in Sierra Leone, Africa in October
- ✓ Two indigenous instructors and two support staff were certified by Evangel to continue training pastors and leaders through the SOPM Level I program in Sierra Leone
- ✓ Successful Benefit Golf Tournament was hosted by Evangel for the 9th consecutive year to raise needed funds for the work of this ministry

Looking Ahead - 2017

- Spring semester SOPM Level I program to be conducted at Evangel in Harrisonburg beginning in January. (*This class can also be taken by distance students through a live interactive video stream. If you or someone you know would be interested, please contact the Evangel office by Friday, January 6th*)
- Evangel will conduct the first International School of Practical Ministry Level II in Cameroon, Africa in July. This program provides a much more intense study of the Scriptures. We will work with 35-40 of the top students from previous SOPM Level I programs
- A third SOPM Level I program is slated to be offered in Madagascar, Africa in August of 2017
- The indigenous certified instructors already in place in Sierra Leone, Africa are planning to conduct an SOPM Level I program in a different province of the country. This will open up opportunities for pastors and church leaders in that region to also receive this valuable training. They hope to have 150 pastors and leaders in the class sometime in the late fall

You Can Help Us Say YES ...

Over the past 7 years, the International School of Practical Ministry has not only impacted the lives of 1,000 pastors and church leaders in developing nations in Africa, but they will in turn touch the lives of multiplied ten's of thousands of men, women and children in the course of their ministries.

The leader of Hope Outreach International in Cameroon, Dr. Julius Esunge, told us last year that conservative estimates indicate that over 1 million people have been reached by those who have graduated from the SOPM program in Cameroon alone.

You can be sure that any gift you give towards this international training will be invested wisely and multiplied dramatically in terms of lives impacted.

The Lord is the one who has opened the doors and orchestrated this work in Africa and the possibilities for training continues to expand. However, as good stewards, we are only able to say "yes" to these opportunities as we have the necessary funds.

As this year comes to a close, would you help us be able to say YES in 2017. Your generous tax deductible year end gift to Evangel at this time will help make it possible to fulfill the goals already set for next year and to say YES to new initiatives that the Lord unfolds as we seek to honor Him through training and strengthening the next generation of pastors and leaders.

THANK YOU! (*Your best gift, right now, would be a big help! Be sure your gift is postmarked by Dec. 31st to ensure a 2016 tax credit*)