

THE EVANGEL VOICE

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”

Jer. 29:11-13

2020 began quietly. Many of us stayed up until midnight to welcome in the New Year. Like so many others before, we looked at this year with hope and promise. There was just a small cloud on the horizon. There was some kind of new virus affecting Asia. Yet, we felt safe and protected. However, within a few short weeks Covid-19 had found its way to our shores. It quickly spread across the country and before we grasped what was happening the country was on lockdown and life came to a screeching halt.

Businesses, schools, restaurants, and anything in between were closed. Churches quickly transitioned from in person services to live streaming and almost every event was canceled. Travel was restricted and we were told to stay home and not venture out. Millions suddenly found themselves unemployed. Hand sanitizer, toilet paper, and face masks seemingly became as valuable as gold.

In the blink of an eye we were reminded of the words of Jesus. *“So don’t worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”* (Matt. 6:34). We might have also remembered the words of Peter. *“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.”* (1 Peter 5:7). We were challenged to heed the words of Paul. *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”* (Phil. 4:6).

Just when we thought it couldn’t possibly get any worse, we witnessed the senseless and brutal killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. The question kept floating around our minds, “How could these things still be happening in 2020?” Many of us had been lulled into a false understanding that Dr. Martin Luther King’s “dream” had been achieved. Suddenly, we realized there is still a long way to go. We struggled to know how to respond, but we knew that silence was no longer an option. Some of us participated in local, peaceful demonstrations demanding justice and change. Others intentionally began having conversations with our African-American brothers and sisters. We wanted to try and understand their experiences. As we listened to their painful stories, we had no way to process what we were hearing. Again we struggled with knowing how to respond.

SOPM class in Cameroon, Feb. 2020



Many of us began to pray the words of David. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”* (Ps. 139:23,24). We might also have remembered the words of Jesus when he reprimanded the Pharisees. *“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.”* (Matt. 23:23).

Cont. p. 4



Cameroon School of Practical Ministry

The nation of Cameroon is located just south of Nigeria on the coast of West Africa. Through your partnership, Evangel has had the privilege of teaching the School of Practical Ministry (SOPM) to pastors and church leaders in this nation since 2012. In February of this year, just prior to Covid 19 shutting everything down, our most recent class of 40 students completed the program and received their certificates. (see pictures above)

To date over 400 men and women have received this life giving, life changing training which has had a significant positive impact on Cameroon. Our in country ministry partner, Hope Outreach International, has estimated that well over 1,000,000,000 people have been impacted by graduates of Evangel’s SOPM program through in person ministry or through Christian teaching programs over the radio airwaves. This is the difference your gifts to Evangel are making. Thanks to your generosity, this next generation of pastors and church leaders are now far better equipped to reach people in their country with the truth of God’s amazing love and saving grace.



Did Someone Say Dessert??

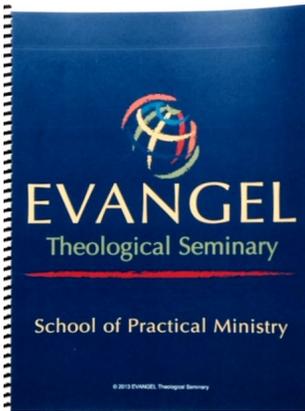


For the past 3 years, Evangel has held a Dessert Banquet in the fall to help raise the necessary funds to train pastors and church leaders in developing nations, like those you see from Cameroon. We do this because we offer this training at no charge to these men and women, even though there is clearly a cost associated with this level of ministry.

This year, due to the uncertainties surrounding groups gathering together, Evangel has decided to have a Virtual Dessert Banquet. We are truly excited about this option, because of the added opportunity for people all over the U.S. to join us. While we obviously won’t be able to provide you with a delicious array of desserts that evening, we are working on plans that we will be sharing with you in an upcoming Virtual Dessert Banquet letter.

For now, please mark you calendars for Thursday evening, October 8th. The theme for this years Virtual Dessert Banquet is **Impacting Generations**. We plan to make this a live streamed event starting at 7 p.m. which will feature a terrific speaker from Africa, special music, testimonies from those who have gone through the SOPM program and more. The entire program will be completed in 60 min. Our hope is that you will be able to join us and that you will invite some friends to join you for a “watch party” that you can set up any way you feel comfortable.

Once again , please put this date and time in your electronic calendar and be looking for additional details in the coming weeks. Your participation would be a huge blessing to us and to the ongoing training of this next generation of leaders in Africa and beyond. We must be prepared to move forward as soon as countries open up once again!



SOPM Revision

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The School of Practical Ministry is the flagship material we use to train pastors and church leaders in developing nations. Initially developed in 2007, the material is taken from seminary curriculum written by Dr. Bob Reichard, founder of Evangel Theological Seminary.

Although this is excellent material that has blessed pastors and church leaders from the U.S. and developing nations for the past 13 years, we have been sensing the urging of the Lord to revise the SOPM curriculum. This revision is providing opportunity to add new material, to update other information and to take out some material that isn't well understood in cultural settings outside of the U.S.

Previously, the SOPM was organized into 7 Learning Modules and 3 Learning Projects. We have now reorganized the curriculum into 3 main sections; Building the Foundation, Understanding the Call, and Serving the Kingdom. We are adding new material in the areas of Godly Leadership, Effective Communication and Spiritual Gifting. In addition, we are reworking our Church History curriculum so that it more accurately reflects the rich racial and ethnic diversity manifested in the Church from the day of Pentecost through the 21st century.

The end result of these additions and revisions will enhance and strengthen this innovative program for the foreseeable future. Our goal is to have this revision completed by the fall.



- The School of Practical Ministry has been taught to more than 1,300 men and women from 7 countries?
- Evangel Seminary partners with “in country” ministries to provide the international SOPM training? We only go where we are invited as the funds are available.
- The overwhelming majority of pastors in developing nations have little to no formal training because it is either non-existent or it is too expensive?
- ETS has never charged a fee for the SOPM training? The reason is that most of these pastors are bi-vocational and their level of income is astoundingly low.
- We also train and certify native instructors to continue the SOPM training in our absence? This makes the program sustainable, portable and accessible to more students.
- Finances for the International SOPM program are all raised here in the U.S.? Without your generous and often sacrificial support, these pastors and church leaders would have no hope of receiving any type of formal sound Biblical training.

We began earnestly asking the Holy Spirit to show us how we practically fulfill the mandate spoken by God through the prophet, Isaiah. ***“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.”*** (Is. 58:6)

At the top of the first page, I quoted 3 verses from Jer. 29. I believe they are incredibly relevant for us today as we try to figure out where we go from here. God spoke to His people through a letter written by Jeremiah. The Babylonians had ransacked Jerusalem, torn down its walls, and burned the Temple. Now, the Israelites were living in exile.

For centuries God had warned his people of coming judgment and implored them to repent. They ignored His warnings and now they were dealing with the consequences. God never said “I told you so.” He never said, “Make the best of the mess you’ve made.” Instead God communicated His love and care for His people. He told them He had good plans for them and that they had a future. He even told them that if they sought Him wholeheartedly they would find Him.

What incredible words for the situation in which we find ourselves today. God is calling us to once again wholeheartedly seek Him. Despite what we are living through, there is a bright future for God’s people. We are seeing that churches are having more people view their live stream services than would have attended in person. People who wouldn’t enter a church are virtually attending and receiving the living Word of God. Worldwide there seems to be a new openness to the Gospel message that has not previously been seen.

For so many including Evangel, God has continued to show His faithfulness. Although our major spring fundraiser, the 14th Annual Golf Tournament was canceled, monthly financial giving has remained consistent. This adjustment time has also provided us with the opportunity to work on some long delayed projects.

We are currently in the middle of a major revision of the SOPM Level 1 curriculum (see related article on p.3). This material was originally written in 2007 and although very good, was in need of revisions and updates.

The great news through all of this is that God has life changing plans, hope, and a future for each of us. All around us are people who desperately need to hear the Good News of Jesus. Let’s determine to live out Kingdom principles in our communities. Finally, let’s walk in the power and boldness of the Holy Spirit and minister the life giving love of Jesus.

Grace & peace,



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Communicating With Evangel



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