

WEST AFRICA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
(WATS)

July 26 to August 9, 2008

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ
and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.
II Corinthians 2:14 - NIV*

Dear Friends of Nigeria,

August 14, 2008

Thank you for taking interest in my journey to Lagos, Nigeria. As much as I prepared for this two-week missions trip, there were still situations which took me by surprise.

I was not prepared for the electricity to be turned off several times a day for several hours at a time without announcement. This made teaching with Power-Point and a projector challenging. I was told, "This is Nigeria." In order to compensate for the inadequacy of Lagos' central power, both the seminary and our very nice Guest House had generators. Any school, business, or home needs a generator to function well, but few can afford them.

I was not prepared for traffic jams everywhere we went. A trip to a market in a different part of the city took two and one-half hours to get to by car, and over three hours for the return trip. Four lanes of traffic were bottle-necked into one several times. When traffic slowed, people surrounded our vehicle, begging us to purchase their merchandise. There was more honking than a flock of geese in search of open water over a frozen pond. I was told, "This is Nigeria." Nigerians find these congested conditions very distressing.

I was not prepared for daily deluges. It was the rainy season, which meant downpours saturated everything most days. I have witnessed torrents of several inches in a few minutes before, just not seven days in a row. "Welcome to Nigeria."

I was not prepared for the poor road conditions. Large deep puddles of standing water were visible on every gravel road, and some paved roads. Some were so deep that cars got stuck in them, requiring drivers and passengers to wade in the roads. "Welcome to Nigeria." Nigerians find the lack of drainage systems and poor road conditions very disturbing.

I was not prepared for such overpowering poverty. People live in open buildings without screens on windows or doors on homes. Clothing hung everywhere when it wasn't raining, and sometime when it was. Ditches were full of refuse, while chickens, goats, and children ran everywhere. It seemed to be the norm for anyone who didn't have a home surrounded by walls topped with razor-wire.

I was not prepared for the fatigue which overcame us by the end of each day. We taught from 9 AM to 4 PM with an hour for lunch. By four o'clock we were ready for a long nap before supper. Heat and humidity took its toll. Students were also tired, especially if they had to drive an hour or more both ways each day.

But God prepared where it mattered!

God prepared our team of three to come together with one heart and mind to serve the students and one another, so that we complemented one another with cheer and gladness. We experienced many enjoyable days together.

God prepared students for each of our classes. Dr. Peter Colman taught nearly thirty students *New Testament Theology*, a required class for seminary students. Dr. Joe Wasmond trained over thirty students to face the enemy in his *Spiritual Warfare* class. Given the animistic nature of Africa, the topic was in high demand. I enjoyed twelve students in my *Theology of Rest* class. Not bad for a topic that is almost totally neglected in seminaries and Bible colleges around the world. It was a perfect number for interaction and the practical exercises I had prepared for them. My students truly enjoyed God these two weeks as they discovered the pleasure of His rest.

Above all

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.
I Thessalonians 2:8 - NIV

God prepared us, filling our hearts with love for these precious, fully-devoted African Christians, so that we could respond patiently to their perplexing situations and sincere questions.

How can you teach us about rest when you have never been to Nigeria or anywhere else in Africa? You have not experienced the enormous hardships we face daily. How can you tell us to rest?

This is what I heard the first day of classes. However, after the students followed the theme of rest throughout the Scriptures, they softened. Once they saw that man was created in the image of God, who not only works, but rests (Genesis 2:1-3), they were satisfied. For the next two days new students entered the class with the same series of questions, "How can you expect us to rest? We live in Nigeria!" I turned to the rest of the students who were ready and loaded with answers to such questions. They responded to the interrogators with confidence that the Lord of the Sabbath provided rest for man to enter and enjoy, even in Nigeria. One by one the students got the message convincingly.

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Mark 2:27-28 - NIV

By the second week of classes, most students had entered their own Sabbath-rest experience. Their testimonies were awesome. Here is one example:

Dear Dr. Anderson,

I want to personally thank you for coming to WATS to expound the word of God to us. All the messages I am hearing now and the books I am reading (Max Lucado's- Just like Jesus) are just pointing to one thing and that is -"Sabbath Rest". On Sunday, I heard a sermon in church on Rapture and it just dawned on me that to see Him and to be like Him as He is when He will appear, I must have cultivated the habit of staying with him here, having my Sabbath-rest experience. To be like him, I must stay with him. Since last week, my prayer and desire is to discipline myself to stop all other things and be with Him. I also notice that in my everyday life even in these past days, I achieved much more in little time and I am very conscious of the check in my spirit not to just talk for talking sake, but talk that which will benefit the hearer.

Funmi

Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand,

II Corinthians 10:15b - NIV

As I departed from Lagos, I felt the weight of Africa on my spiritual and emotional shoulders. I thought to myself, *what can I do for all the needy Nigerians? And how can I continue to help Nigerian believers overcome the numerous challenges to their faith and living situations?* Then I recalled a parting message from the Protocol Officer of WATS.

You have not just imparted information to us; you have impacted all of us in such a way that our lives, families, churches, communities, and environment have been affected. You are impacting indirectly several thousands of people. The one, two or three to whom you have imparted will go out there and impact several thousands.

Thank you for your prayerful investment in the living Kingdom of God far beyond our shores. Please continue to pray that God would multiply our efforts, bringing to fruition the vision of WATS in Nigeria and all of Africa.

Remember to enter and enjoy His rest.

Jim

Jim Anderson



The Theology of Rest Class



Jim, Joe, and Peter with Host Family



Poverty and Muddy Road Conditions