



News From Mark and Diane Vanderkooi

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Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up... And the Lord said, "Just look at how this corrupt judge judged on behalf of this widow. Now if even a corrupt judge finally made a just decision, how much more so will not God who is righteous render good judgment on behalf of his chosen people who call out to him day and night? Yes, even if they need to keep on waiting a long time, he will most certainly judge on their behalf. I tell you, even if he tarries, he will judge for them quickly. But when the Son of Man returns, we will see whether the people of the earth kept faith in God in perseverant prayer or not." (Luke 18:1,6-8 back translated from Kwong.)

Father in heaven, another Kwong radio broadcast is beginning even now, and as is our custom during these broadcasts, we come to you in prayer yet again in the name of your Son Jesus to pray for the Kwong. We come having nothing new to pray that we haven't prayed a thousand times already. Yet come we do – for you have yet to grant those things for which we ask. We come, not because we believe that with enough nagging you will finally capitulate like the unjust judge, nor because we imagine that by sheer quantity of prayer we will overwhelm the inertia of the status quo and get what we want. Rather we come, lest in failing to pray the thousand-and-first time, we show impatience with your providence, or betray a subtle incredulity that you should actually do a miracle (for that is the essence of our prayer), or lest we should prove at the end of the day to be not half so resolute in our love and concern for the Kwong as we profess. We come because we know that you smile on unrelenting, blind, bullheaded, persevering prayer that sees beyond any apparent futility. We pray because the Son of Man really does mean to find faith on the earth in general and in us in particular when he appears.

We pray that you would have mercy on the Kwong. Over the last decades they have been the beneficiaries of spiritual advantages few other tribes in Chad have ever had – the teaching and encouragement of a white missionary in their own language, a complete set of discipleship materials in their own language, a first-rate primary care facility, and their own radio station just to name a few. Yet as the years wear on, their hearts remain hard, their minds remain darkened, and they refuse, for the most part, to turn and be saved.

We confess that they will not, indeed cannot turn unless you awaken something in their souls. So awaken, oh Lord, their hearts. Have mercy on them in their ignorance, and be patient with their stubbornness. Lift from their minds that deadweight of tradition which makes change of any kind so abhorrent to them. Break the stiff-necked pride by which they dismiss Christianity as the plaything of children. Open their eyes to see the irony -- that only by becoming like the very children they despise might they enter the Kingdom of Heaven and achieve therein the true greatness and strength they admire. Open their eyes to see that life is more than millet farming, and that joy is more than super sweet tea, polygamy, and a motorcycle. Make the stories they hear on the radio of your tender mercies for the humble of the earth come alive to them. Open their eyes to the poignancy and elegance of the atonement, and help them to understand something of the breadth, grandeur and beauty of the age to come. It is doubtful if mere human effort could articulate these things with more coherence, vividness, and perspicuity than we have, yet unless and until your Spirit awakens their hearts and breaks through the fog of their souls, all our best efforts will continue to be like so much water rolling off a duck's back. So in this our prayer, we confess the finitude of our missionary efforts, and acknowledge that ultimately, the success or apparent failure of this endeavor is yours to grant and yours to withhold.

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The *Flip* Side

Something-Flu in Chageen

On June 8, to our immense relief, we moved the staff of the clinic into the new building we built for them over the last year and a half. No sooner had they moved in than the month of August brought some sort of respiratory epidemic which combined with malaria to kill a dozen children aged 3 to 4 years old. Lambert and the rest of the staff managed to save many more lives than they lost, but it showed again just how brutal life can be in Africa. There never was a proper laboratory diagnosis of the disease. Lambert just kept trying different drugs until he found a cocktail of Amoxicillin and Quinine and a decongestant which seemed to do the trick. All the carrying on about Swine Flu in the USA seemed strangely trivial in comparison.

Luke, Genesis, Psalms

Mark, François and Joseph finished translating the book of Luke, and in November a consultant with Wycliffe will make a final check before publication. They have also pushed through to chapter 34 of Genesis in what amounts to a complete rewrite of the rather poor translation of the book we attempted back in 1996. Meanwhile, we have begun a long-term project of systematically translating the Psalms. We had previously translated significant parts of several Psalms for the Kingdom of God materials – Psalm 2, 19, 23, 72, and 139 come to mind – but we want to see a collection of 30 or 40 published in the next few years, and hence this new effort. Since it complements our current teaching program with the children, we began with Psalm 18, which David sang “when the Lord delivered him from all his enemies and from Saul.” Putting poetry into a very non-poetic language like Kwong is quite difficult, but we think that the dividends this effort will pay in terms of deepened spirituality for the Kwong church will be well worth it. It is hard to imagine true spirituality in *any* culture without the Psalms.

A new song for the Kwong

Diane, meanwhile, has set part of another Psalm to music -- Psalm 56:5-6: “when I am afraid, I will trust in you. If I trust in you, what can mortal man do to me?” As with her other Kwong compositions, she uses the traditional 5-stringed harp called a “gimbil”. This instrument, like all Kwong music, is tuned to a pentatonic (5 note) scale, as opposed to the more familiar octave (8 note) scale we use in the West. When she taught this latest song to the children in Sunday School a couple weeks ago, we were amazed at how the kids took to it – a new song in their language using their tonal system, but infused with a kind of pleasing melody that their own music mostly lacks. They just kept on singing it. We saw once again in the children a receptiveness to new things in general and to spiritual truth in particular that validates the considerable effort we have invested in them in recent years.

Oxen, horses, pumpkins, and fulcrums

Fulcrums are wonderful things – force multipliers as we learned from the unfortunate men and women who had to teach us physics. Mark learned his lessons well. So, when an ox managed to get his hoof caught under one of the steel gates of our new clinic building and then bent it all out of shape in his effort to extricate himself, Mark knew exactly what he needed to bend it straight: a Fulcrum. And what more convenient fulcrum than one’s very own rib cage? And what more fitting lever than one’s very own arm? Well, at least this time he didn’t exceed the rated sheer strength of his arm, but the bottom two ribs on his right side were a different story. It actually didn’t hurt too bad for the first 24 hours. That is, until (enter horse, stage right, pumpkins, stage left) a bunch of horses decided Diane’s said pumpkins were good eating. Mark, filled with righteous indignation (after all, pumpkin pie is a favorite), took after them. While the horses cantered sort of bored-like and Mark did his Usain Bolt imitation, the damaged fulcrum gave way. Ouch once, ouch twice, ouch for 3 weeks. Unlike the time he fell off the bottom rung of a ladder and broke his wrist, or the time he smashed his flip-flop shod foot to smithereens on the hank of the large sow which was plowing up the front yard, this time we didn’t bother with

the formalities of an x-ray. He seems, however to be healing, the pumpkins are still growing, and oh yes, the gate is still bent.