



STEVE & SUZANNE BUCHELE

PRAYER MATTERS

Serving In Ghana



The
Mission
Society

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Ebola and Ashesi

Greatness came dressed like a beggar knocking at an inconvenient time

AUGUST 30, 2014 At Ashesi University, we exist to educate a new generation of African leaders who have a *concern for others* and the *courage it will take to transform a continent*. These are not just words from our mission statement. Those words affect how we make decisions and struggle with the issues of the day.

There is a story Steve loves to tell about a man who was expecting an Angel of the Lord to visit. In fact he had prepared his whole for that day, and at the expected time he heard a knock at the door. It wasn't the Angel, but a ragged stranger, asking for help. He worried that if he helped this beggar the Angel's visit would missed, but shutting the door was against everything he stood for.

"Come on in," he said to the stranger. "How may I help?"

In that moment the beggar was transformed and said "Had you turned me away, I could not have come to you."

It is almost as if greatness makes an appointment and then comes dressed as a ragged stranger so we have the opportunity to prove we are ready. Ready for this institution to demonstrate a *concern for others* and have the *courage it will take to transform a continent*.

As we were preparing for a new semester, the Ebola crisis was heightening. We received an urgent call from students who had gone home for the summer. Home to an area with a serious Ebola outbreak. Liberia. They asked to return to school early, before the borders closed, or they became infected.

The easy way out would have been to say no. The students could sit out a year and come back to Ashesi when Ebola had run its course, or had been contained. For a few days it seemed this would be the decision, but we consulted with the World Health organization and the Ghana Health Service. They helped us understand the situation better, and we became convinced that the University could show *courage* and *concern* for these students with minimal risk to the rest of the student body. There was fear over media attention or rampant rumors that might jeopardize the semester. But courage and concern won out.

Steve and I moved out of our half of the bungalow to give way to one of the students. We began delivering



Dr. & Rev. at Gold Fields Gold Mine on the International Student Road Trip (see last page for details)

breakfast, lunch and dinner to these students in quarantine. (Except for the 5 days we were out of town, see *International Student Road Trip*). We received several e-mails and expressions of surprise and gratitude that we "obrunis," (foreigners) would be willing to show kindness and hospitality to these students, in a situation in which many Ghanaians were not comfortable. "It is nothing" or "Why would we not?," was my response.

When a faculty or staff member sees Steve or I walk by with to go containers of food, they inquire about the students. My reply is always, "They are well, by God's grace." In truth they are grateful, lonely, and scared for their friends and family left behind. The news from those areas is not good, but they are safe, and Steve and I are thankful that we have the opportunity to help. While we can't do anything for the people in Liberia, we can make sure that their next generation of leaders receive the compassion it will take to transform a continent.

Calendar

September - Suzanne travels to Boston to meet with the Ashesi Engineering Curriculum Advisors.

Catholic Students Association starts to meet on Ashesi Campus.

October - Steve starts "Ashesi Student Alpha". Alpha is a series of interactive sessions that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith. No pressure. No follow up. No charge. This will be a soft launch of Student Alpha.

November - Suzanne's annual extended family "Five Year Thanksgiving Trip". It will be our first time back in the States together, and to be with all our kids and Suzanne's family.

February 2015 - Ashesi Student Alpha 2.0" Using participants from the soft launch of Alpha, we expand it.

Praying for Us

As you pray for us, we ask that you pray ...

For us *personally* for our own walk with the Lord.

For our *children* that they grow into the people God created them to be. We pray each morning at 7am for our kids, let us know if we can pray for yours.

For our *ministry* at Ashesi University—pray that we continue connect with the students, faculty, and staff.

Join our prayer team!
ServingInGhana.org/pray

Campus Ministry Update

Start with the Catholic students?

Anyone who knows me knows subtly is lost on me. Even God seems to realize that hints don't work – he has to make his messages very obvious or they don't click.

I remember a student named Adams from my Leadership I class when the discussion was about the essential qualities of a leader. "A leader must have a loud voice," he said and everyone laughed. Adams persisted above their laughter, saying people see him as a leader because when he speaks, people listen — "they have no choice, I have a loud voice."

On my trip up north I had been praying about how to start the Ashesi Campus Ministry, and thought I heard, "Start with the Catholic students." The meaning wasn't clear but it was loud, so I wrote it in my field notebook. I knew the Catholic students attending Ashesi had difficulty attending Mass since the nearest Catholic Church is 45 minutes away.

A few weeks ago, I was having lunch with Adams and I learned he was from



Steve & Albert on his graduation day

Wa. I had just been in Wa, when traveling to see our Mission Society colleagues in northern Ghana and Togo. I also learned Adams is Catholic. I asked Adams if he had ever considered inviting a priest to campus to lead Mass. Turns out he had, but had run into some difficulties with the other Christian organization, one that was rather possessive of their position as the only religious student organization on campus.

Then we were joined by a visiting faculty member who was flying out that evening back to the states. Of course, he was a *Catholic*, so I introduced them, and the three of us brainstormed about next steps. Was this a sign I wondered? I even pulled out my notebook and saw where I had written *start with the Catholic students*, so I wouldn't forget it.

OK GOD, I GOT IT.

That afternoon nearly everybody I ran into was Catholic. - As I said, subtly is often lost on me, so it felt like God was thinking "Steve isn't the brightest bulb in the lamp, I'm going to have to make this really obvious." *Start with the Catholic students*.

The Mission Society suggests that we refrain from leading a ministry during our first year in the field. They want us to better understand our new setting and our place within it. It's a good idea. So I listen, observe and wonder about the spiritual needs of this community and come to understand that while the Mission Society asks that we refrain from leading a ministry that first year, it says nothing about helping someone else organize it. I might have missed these-less-than subtle nudges if I was busy starting a ministry. Clearly, I'm supposed to help another ministry before starting my own.



**The Mission
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Cultural Adaptation

Scheduling our chaos crisis

We knew from our pre-deployment training there would be periods of cultural adjustment to our new home. Called the *Cultural Adjustment Cycle*, it began in Texas with the *settled stage* in our home in Georgetown. This was followed by the *unsettling stage (or Tourist Stage)* as we moved to Ghana. Then comes *chaos (or Culture Stress)*, and hopefully *resettling*, which again leads back to the feeling of being *settled* in our new home

The hardest stage is chaos, we were told, which many experience around their six month mark. The honeymoon is over, there are cravings for anything that feels normal from the past, and those quirky customs we found so in-

teresting in the Tourist Stage become frustrating and annoying. Research shows that the focus changes from trying to thrive to just surviving. It is the low point of the Cultural Adjustment Cycle.

As we began our sixth month, Suzanne and I joked about scheduling our chaos crisis, hoping humor, or laughing at ourselves would ward off the difficulty of this stage. So far, so good, but you never know when it will hit.

SO WHERE ARE WE?

We've had some "honeymoon over" experiences. Steve hurt his back a month ago from a bad bump on the rough road, and Suzanne is exhausted from being the senior ranking academic administrator on campus for the past six weeks. We miss our chiropractor Dr. Butera in Austin, and Suzanne remembers summers as a time to relax and de-stress. We moved out of our apartment. Ebola fear is circling the world, and economically, Ghana's currency has lost over 40% of its value since we've been here. Suzanne turned 50 with Steve and friends here, but she was also longing for her family and close friends from Texas.

We are OK, maybe not great, but probably right on schedule. With your prayers this too shall pass as we move back into our half of the bungalow and on to the resettled stage, and finally settled, at home in our new culture. We tell you all this not to complain, but so you know: Your prayers are very important to us. Passing through this stage will come much more easily when you are praying for us. Thank you!



Casper & Suzanne do the "Ebola Handshake"

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I do thank God Suzanne was there to be "the mum". Each night at dinner, she had us play the "best/worst part of your day" game and that usually launched us into a long discussion about something about the student's home culture. Like dinner at our home, it lasted several hours and we learned and laughed so much about the cultures of Kenya, Zimbabwe, The Gambia, Sierra Leone and of course the Lone Star State.

WE CAME BACK WITH THE SAME NUMBER

So it was a successful trip: We came back with the same number of students we left with. We came in under budget, ate well, feel connected, and are happy to be home. It was good to have saved the gold mine tour, which happened to be a VIP tour, to be the last event. It



Signaling "Take Two." At Gold Fields this meant take two minutes to check your protective gear.

seems Gold Fields was happy to host Ashesi and wants to build on this relationship with the University. I'm glad we could help.

YOU MADE IT HAPPEN

Special thanks to **Hodges & Eun Ju Martin, Chuck Newman and Keri Gerber** for supporting this trip through their gifting to our Special Project Fund at the Mission Society. At breakfast the last morning we told the students about the people who had funded their trip. "Someday when you are very successful people, remember this trip and invest in the life of

a college student or missionary to help them do something they would not otherwise be able to do."

We look forward to keeping you informed about how God uses this experience to draw these students closer to the gospel of the Kingdom.

INT'L STUDENT ROAD TRIP

The International Student Road Trip!

WHAT IN THE WORLD DID WE JUST DO?

Those were our thoughts as Suzanne and I were going sleep with the sounds of the forest surrounding us. (It's never quiet here.) We had taken six international students we didn't know that well, each from different cultures and different family dynamics, and committed to being with them 24/7 for a tour around Ghana. While we might like to fool ourselves into thinking everyone knows our culture and their family functions like ours, we learned rather quickly, they do not. But a few days into the Road Trip, we realize these students are just kids like ours. Valena - stop texting at the dinner table! Joe - it's your turn. K-Sowe could you help me with... Ah parenthood, does it never end?

"I'm looking forward to seeing more of Ghana," Reshma said. Like most Master Card Scholars, she was a little stir-crazy from always being on campus. Master Card Scholars (MCS) are some of Africa's brightest students who come from disadvantaged families in the lowest quintile income bracket. They are at Ashesi on full scholarship through the Master Card Foundation, and their program includes a summer enrichment experience their first year. They do not return to their home country until year two.



With our tour guide. I really didn't line them up by height

I talked to the Dean of Students about a tour around Ghana for the MCS students. The Dean said it was a great idea, but wouldn't happen for lack of funding. Suzanne and I prayed about it, the executive team approved it, and some great friends funded it. The first ever International Student Road Trip was born.

The students were amazing, real troopers. I don't think they grew up taking the long car trips that are a part of the American summer vacation experience, but they hung in there and never complained.

IT IS ABOUT CONNECTING

From my experience as a pastor, I've found successful mission trips have three components:

Did we Connect with God?

Did we Connect with each other?

Did we Connect with the people we came to serve?

After we got back I began evaluating the Road Trip, based on those three components:

Connecting with the people we came to serve - in this case *serve* was about being fully present with the stu-

dents, and as a group in the places in Ghana we explored. Each night one student gave a presentation about a site we would visit the next day. Then when we were at the site, we knew something about what we were seeing, and so naturally the students asked more probing questions.

Connecting with each other - Suzanne and I got to know the students well, and feel connected to us. While they all knew each other before this trip, I don't think they were that close. They bonded as international students and now we see them hanging out together on campus. They belong to something special.

Connecting with God - a bit fuzzier. God is doing something more long-term on this one. I know we want to see the big bang conversion experience on mission trips, and by that measure, this trip was a failure. No student came to Christ. I do think, however, we saw a small spark of faith ignite. More by action than words, Suzanne and I shared our faith, our students experienced how a healthy marriage functions, and saw how people of faith operate in a world that does always cooperate in ways we were expecting. *(Continued on [page 3](#))*

Contact Info

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