

Todd Coburn  
1481 West Road  
La Habra Heights, Ca. 90631  
(714) 357-4455 Cell  
[toeburn@verizon.net](mailto:toeburn@verizon.net)

# Ethiopia Mission 2016 - Results

August 10, 2016

Folks,

Thanks for supporting our July 14<sup>th</sup> through 31<sup>st</sup> mission to Ethiopia. Your prayers & financial support are both invaluable and encouraging. Here is a photo of the team on the way to the airport.



This year, I posted our progress daily to Facebook, and I will repeat the blow-by-blow account here for those of you who dread that electronic mumbo-jumbo so you can feel events unfold as we did.

## **Monday July 18<sup>th</sup>**

On Monday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, we met at a school in the highlands above Arba Minch in an area called the Gerresse region, which is similar to Chencha but on the opposite side of Arba Minch.



For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved, and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? (2 Cor. 2:15-16)

Here, we were met by local Christians who had covered the concrete floor of the school with fragrant leaves from a local tree as if it were Palm Sunday, and they fed us eggs, sourdough bread, coffee & popcorn in a festival of welcome and joy at our arrival.

An hour or so later, we split for ministry. Ethan Smith & I went to an area called Town Hall where many Christians were. Ethan shared the Priceless cube and I shared the Gospel to about 70, half of which were believers. At our invitation, a number of hands went up to accept Christ, but I suspected many were already Christians and were simply confirming their decision and commitment. When I clarified and invited new believers, a number of people left. We later determined these were the non-believers. We set an appointment for Tuesday at 11 am to work thru an interactive Bible study together.

Next, we went to the house of a Kale Hewitt Elder named Zalalem, where we were fed (again) porridge, sourdough bread, popcorn, oats, tea, coffee, and tea made from coffee leaves. We were feeling rather full, and Ethan prayed to bless the family, church and ministry.

Next, we went out into the streets and preached to 7 more groups of folks in the street, a few of which were orthodox who professed faith in Jesus (already). It was encouraging that after careful discussion some of these seemed genuinely surrendered to Jesus, and they shared they had learned this at their church. Some other groups had similar folks, but others had a mix of folks like this, protestant Christians, and non-Jesus-following Orthodox.

This changed my approach to preaching in the area, and instead of our normal survey of the entire Gospel, I started guiding our translators to read select passages from 1 John to lay a clear picture of Salvation thru Jesus alone. I encouraged Jesus-following Orthodox to remain in their church of choice as long as their leader's teaching could be traced as springing from Scripture, and suggested they switch if they ever find teaching in their church had drifted from God's Word.

Overall, 420 heard the Gospel thru our subteam on Monday, 5 professions of faith were made (thru Ethan's preaching), and about 120 heard the Priceless Cube.

We invited all to the Town Hall Tuesday at 11 am where we planned to do the interactive Bible Study.

At the end of the day, I felt we had strengthened folks understanding of truth, whether believer or unbeliever, orthodox or protestant. It felt like a good first day.

### **Tuesday July 19<sup>th</sup>**

Our second day of ministry in Ethiopia found us again in the Gerresse highlands above Arba Minch.

This time we started almost immediately after the two vans dropped us off near the same schoolhouse after our two hour drive up the mountain.

Ethan, Germa, Dangachew, Micaya, Solomon and I returned to the house of Zalalem, where Ethan led a study of Matthew 17 to the believers who had gathered there. It was fun teaching and encouraging them. As we left, Zalalem's wife asked us to stay a short time longer, and fed us Barley, bread, popcorn, tea and coffee.

Next we visited Town Hall, where we taught a small group of Christians from Mark 4. They also fed us bread, honey, and coffee before we were allowed to leave. Town Hall is one of the 12 sites Pastor Samuel has targeted in the region to plant churches so folks will not have to hike 2 miles to gather together.

After this, we shared the Gospel with 5 additional crowds of folks before our time was up.

### **Wednesday July 20<sup>th</sup>**

We awoke to another beautiful morning in Ethiopia. JT led us thru the Transfiguration of Jesus from Matt 17 over a breakfast of porridge, eggs, banana, pancake & coffee at the hotel. Conner Dela Vega led us in a worship song. Young men and women are busy sweeping, washing and cleaning the hotel courtyard under the low canopy of green trees that filter light on sunnier days. We feel warm, full, mostly-rested, and ready for ministry with our Ethiopian brothers and sisters. So far, all are healthy on the team. Amesseganalo (Thank You) Geta (Lord) Jesus.

After the two hour drive up the mountain and additional time lost organizing the teams at the school, our third day of ministry led us initially to a handful of welders working on a house beside the newly-paved road. Ethan shared the Gospel using the Evangicube. It turned out that all were already Christians, but a few others had wandered in during the discussion, and so Dangachew and Micoye filled them in on the missed parts of the discussion, after which one of these surrendered his life to Jesus Christ.

Next, we shared the Priceless Cube, and then the Gospel, with a woman and a bunch of children in front of her house. Afterward, we found out she was a Christian and so were many of the children. Yet some men had come in as we talked, so we shared more of God's Word with them. These also were Christians, yet one said he had slipped from the faith and was not walking with Jesus as he should, and he (Atnafu Abrehaam) asked us to pray for him as he rededicated his life to Jesus. Please join us in praying he will grow strong in Jesus' Word and remain faithful to His Lord.

We were invited inside, and Germa invited me to share the Gospel again. I was puzzled, because we had just done so with the same folks, but he indicated that the man sitting next to me on the sofa was not a Christian. This was a small man in khakis with an intent face. He had joined us at the schoolyard, and had walked with us all morning, so I had assumed he was simply a Christian co-worker, yet it turns out he had simply wandered in and joined us. Instead of re-sharing the Gospel, I shared the parable of the sower from Matthew 13 (Mark 4). At first I had Germa reading the passage in Gamarenya, but the little man instead peered intently over my shoulder to read the Amharic from my Amharic-English Bible instead. About halfway thru the parable he shared that some time ago, a spirit had appeared to him and told him to follow God. Apparently he had refused, and he said that ever since his mind was clouded and he had been walking around aimlessly. I realized how lucky he was to be given a second chance to hear the Gospel, and asked if we could pray for him before continuing. He eagerly agreed, and we gathered around him and all prayed simultaneously that any demonic person, power, presence or influence immediately evacuate his person and vicinity. We then finished the parable, then led him in a prayer to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He expressed that he needed a Bible so he could read it, and tried to buy mine. I encouraged him and promised to bring him one tomorrow on the condition that he read it daily. He exclaimed that he would, and that he further declared that he will never read another book besides the Bible again. His

name is Derasse Asha. Please join me in praying that he grow strong in God's Word and that he become a powerful Evangelist or Pastor.

After our discussion with Derasse, we were fed Ethiopian delights in traditional Ethiopian fashion before being allowed to leave.

Next, followed by Derasse, we went to another believer's house, which quickly filled with people. They fed us again, as Colson Timblin, Alysa, and their teams also joined us. First Colson shared the Evangicube, then Alysa shared the Priceless Cube, then Ethan led a study of Matthew 17. The folks listened intently throughout, then fed us again until our seams started to burst.

This wrapped up our time in the field for the day, but at the end, Dangachew asked if our team to come preach at the church there Sunday, and I promised to forward the request to leadership.

Later, after returning to the hotel, JT, Justin, and some others of our team visited the nearby Orthodox Church. Here, we were invited to enter shoe-less by a bandaged-faced bystander named Shah. We were run out moments later, and Shah got a tongue-lashing from leadership.

Shah took me aside and asked for money to see the doctor for his face, which looked like it had made sliding contact with the asphalt, so I gave him 300 Birr (~\$15). As we talked afterward, he professed faith in Jesus Christ, and I encouraged Him to continue reading Scripture and surrendering to what it says.

When I finished talking with Shah and found JT & the others from our team, they were in the process of being scolded for entering the church compound without permission by two men. Another young man was also standing there and trying to help resolve the situation, and after a few moments I recognized him as an Orthodox I had met in the road some years ago. I blurted out, "Hey, I remember you!!" and jabbed a finger and smile his way. He smiled, and interjected, "Yes, I was going to talk with you about that", before effortlessly continuing his discussion to mediate on our behalf. I recalled meeting him years ago, when I had seen him crossing the road in a white orthodox robe. We had discussed spiritual things, and I had been impressed with his interest in Jesus and Scripture and had apparently given him a Bible at his request. His name is Muluken, and he also had met others on our team in various ways in past years. His love of Jesus seemed genuine, and JT invited him to join us in ministry tomorrow.

That sums up our day and my energy, but please pray for Alysa and Sami, as both skipped dinner due to sickness.

### **Thursday July 21<sup>st</sup>**

Thursday morning lightened as our team sat at the hotel gazebo before a spread of eggs, porridge, bread (dabo), mango and papaya juice, coffee, tea, and bananas (moos). Faces looked sleepy but bright. Alysa and Sami looked beautiful, rested, and... healthy!!!! Thank you for your prayers.

As we lined up before the hotel later waiting for the vans, I attempted to buy a crayon or highlighter for Ethan at the adjacent shop. They did not have what I sought, and I started chatting with a young man of 28 or so named Miju. At my question he said he had no thoughts about God, so I quickly shared the Gospel of salvation thru Jesus Christ. He believed, and prayed loudly with me in English

to receive Jesus as his Lord, Savior, and cleanser of his soul. Afterward, he asked for a Bible. We are not giving them out as we had in the past, but I promised to purchase him one if he meets me tonight at our return, or tomorrow morning.

After our long drive up the mountain, Derasse met us at the school as promised, and we presented him with the Amharic Bible he'd requested. He opened it immediately and started reading. Here he is, reading eagerly as two of our Disciple Makers, Wonbere & David, and others, look on.



Next we visited Andrew and Beledch's home again, where I led a group of mostly-believers in a study of the parable of the talents, as recorded in Matthew.

After that, Ethan led a similar group at Marko's house in the Evangicube and then in a study of I John 3.

Next we greeted a man named Nigussie in the street, and a crowd quickly formed as we efficiently and dynamically shared the Gospel. The crowd grew quickly, with eyes wide and heads nodding as we preached. Many who gathered were already Christians, and one Christian named Wundamariyane asked for an Evangicube to help him share his faith with others. We presented him with an Evangicard, and he thanked us warmly.

Next, we met a trio of believers in the road. We encouraged them with the parable of the treasure in the field, after which we fielded confessions, supporting comments, and seekers who backed away instead of embracing Christ.

Meanwhile, Ethan shared with another group and distributed Evangicards to those seeking them

Everyone on our team seems healthy or close to it, except Germa who was having some headcold issues that almost stopped him for a while.

Overall, another fruitful day.

## Friday July 22<sup>nd</sup>

The air was cool and the sky overcast Friday as our vans pulled from the hotel compound in Arba Minch for our last day of ministry in the Gerresse Highlands.

We visited Zalalem's house first, and led a handful of women and children in a study of John 13 and Philipians 2.

We went to Town Hall next, where Zalalem joined us, and Ethan taught another handful from John 6:35+. A man named Mahmoosh was there, who was a Christian who had walked away and who wanted to return to the church. We prayed for him, and encouraged him to stay strong. Below is a picture of Mahmoosh (far left), Zalalem (moving right), Selemon, Germa (blocked by me), another, Dangachew, and Ethan at Town Hall.



We then hurried up the mountain to the Kale Hewitt (Word of Life) Church for our culminating ceremony with our translators and disciple makers since this was our last day in the Gerresse Region. We met in the current church building, which is a branch-mud structure with a corrugated steel roof that was built about 19 years ago. A new, larger, cross-shaped structure is under construction that will be very useful for this growing church. During the ceremony, during which the women fed us anjara, tibbs (meat), popcorn, and coffee, we learned that our disciple maker, Dangachew, is the pastor of the church!!!! We also learned that Cantia, who is one of our translators who has worked with us for years, was the previous pastor. Our time was punctuated with speeches from Pastor Samuel, Pastor Dangachew, Katie Brown, JT, and Nigussie, a pastor of the Meserete Kristos Church who is one of the original 12 pastors who met us our first time in Arba Minch and who has worked with us every year since. We also were presented with some beautiful Ethiopian worship songs led by Amy Samuel (Pastor Samuel's 4th beautiful daughter) and Selemon Kebede (Ethan's translator). We then reciprocated with a rather lame song (in comparison) by us Ferenge (foreigners) which Conner Dela Vega valiantly tried to keep us from massacring. Other than this the service was great.

Please pray for continued health & safety for the team, especially tomorrow on our "off" day, and for the hearts that had seeds planted this week. Please pray also for the people of Shelle (we worked there a few years ago) as we will be working there next week.

### **Saturday July 23<sup>rd</sup>**

It is 4:42 am Saturday. It is dark and quiet, except for the sound of cars & vans on the road in front of the hotel, which float thru our open window on the fresh night air.

I lie here in bed, semi-protected by the white mosquito-netting that drapes tent-like about my bed. My thoughts are of you-all, my Facebook friends who have witnessed these posts, especially those few of my friends who may be confused at our purpose and message here in Ethiopia. Perhaps you will allow me to express God's message that we share in more depth...

God created the world and everything in it. He made mankind in his own image, and He loves the man He made very much. He loves us and He wants us to return His love. He wants our love to be voluntary, as His love for us is, and for this reason, He gave us free will, the ability to choose whether or not we will return His love.

Yet mankind sinned against God. We used our free will to disobey Him. We elevated our own thoughts and desires and assessments of truth and evaluations of right and wrong above His. We treat each other unfairly and unkindly, we are selfish, we resist His ways, reject His Word, and live our lives without a thought for His gifts, love, or purpose for us. This is sin. We have all sinned. Lots. Our sin makes us unclean and unfit for His Glorious, Pure, and Perfect Presence.

Our sin is a debt we cannot pay. No amount of money will pay this debt. No amount of good deeds will pay for it. No self or otherwise inflicted pain will pay for it. Even our own death will not pay for the smallest sin, but merely ushers us forward to judgment. This is the tragic state of mankind, and this sin of each of us has corrupted our lives, our world, our environment, our weather, our politics, our religions, our governments, our science, our definition of marriage, our valuation of life and of crime, and of justice. We live broken and diseased in the depravity of our thoughts and actions as we sin standing on the foundation of the sins of each and every one of our forefathers, fore-uncles, fore-aunts and fore-cousins.

Yet God loves us very much, and He planned a way we could be cleansed of our sin so that we can be restored to a relationship with Him.

God paid for our sins Himself. He placed the price of the sins of humanity into a bank account of sorts, so that the past, present, and future debt of sin of each and every one of His children would be covered immediately. Covered even before the act. He placed so much grace and mercy and sacrifice into this account that the sins of His followers are not even accrued to their own account. They are debited directly from His account and are easily covered by the deposit He has made for us.

The way God paid for our sin is with His own life. This is a beautiful sacrifice - that He would die for us. Yet He paid our debt even more elegantly and lovingly than simply giving up His own life. He gave up the life of His Son for us. God loves His Son very much. He loves His Son more than He loves Himself, yet He gave the life of His beautiful, perfect, sinless, loving, trusting boy for our filthy,

mean-spirited, and selfish sin so that our debt of sickness, pain and death would be utterly obliterated.

The way He did this is by planting His seed into the womb of a virgin. He did not do this in the way that our ignorant, foolish, human-crafted, man-made mythology imagine "gods" taking pleasure in women and fathering offspring. He used His Spirit to tenderly place His Seed in a virgin girl without compromising her purity or His Holiness in any way. She gave birth to a Son and named Him Jesus, as the angel commanded her. The name Jesus means Salvation, for Jesus is the culmination of the promise and practice and action of Salvation for mankind.

Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He was pleasing to His Father, to His earthly parents, and to all who knew Him. Yet when He came of age, and His Father's, God's, timing was complete, He began to teach and preach how mankind could return to a relationship with God-Almighty.

Mankind did not want to hear His message. Atheists and agnostics and indifferent and ignorant all joined forces with the religious leaders of the day to crucify Jesus so that He would stop exposing the depravity of their thought, beliefs, actions, and evaluations of themselves.

They took His body and placed it in a tomb, rolled a stone over the entrance, posted a guard, and went back about their business as if nothing had happened.

Yet after three days Jesus raised Himself from the dead. He appeared to many people, and He returned to heaven to prepare a place for His followers.

Jesus conquered death for us. He conquered sin for us. The value of His Life placed an infinite deposit of forgiveness, grace, and mercy into an account so that the debt of sin all of His children could be obliterated.

Jesus died for us because He loves us, and because His Father asked Him to. God asked Jesus to die for us because He knew His Son was up to the task. God knew Jesus was pure enough, obedient enough, strong enough, selfless enough, and loving enough to conquer death and pain and disease and sin for us.

The Bible teaches that all who place their faith in Jesus will be saved. Placing your faith in Him means that you acknowledge that Jesus is God, and that all worship for God the Father must come through Jesus the Son. Placing your faith in Jesus means you accept His death and pain and suffering and blood as payment for your sins. It means never worshiping another. The Bible says if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead then you will be saved. This is not a magical incantation, and the words themselves cannot save you or influence your destiny. It is the condition of your heart as you do this that saves you. Your heart must be in full surrender to Jesus' Lordship as you accept and invite His cleansing of your body, spirit, and soul.

When you do this, the Bible records that Jesus promised that He would send His Holy Spirit to live inside you. The Holy Spirit is your guarantee that you are a part of God's family and that you will live in heaven forever and ever with Jesus and all who love Him after you die. Guarantee means no-one can ever take the Holy Spirit from you. No-one can remove your membership from His family. No

accusation nor bully nor sin on your part will change that you will be viewed as a member of God's family forever.

The Holy Spirit is our guarantee, like a wedding ring that is grafted to our finger and that can never be removed.

The Holy Spirit also teaches us. Before we accept Jesus, the Holy Spirit confirms God's Truth and Message, in the same way that He is confirming that this Facebook post is in perfect agreement with God's Word, God's Will, and God's intent for you. Yet those who have not embraced Jesus can resist the truth when the Spirit reveals it, and Satan is eager to snatch away that seed of truth from our minds before we act, and he strives to cloud and harden our minds so that we never hear the Spirit again nor understand His truth.

Once the Holy Spirit indwells us after we surrender to Jesus, the Holy Spirit teaches us as we read God's Word, as we hear His Truth, as we contemplate His love and actions and commands. The Holy Spirit is One with God, so He knows God's thoughts and intent for our lives. He dwells within our spirit, so He communicates with us on an intimate level much deeper than words or even thoughts. When we harness our minds and thoughts, intelligence, reasoning, and judgments to the Holy Spirit within us, and place these facilities under His reign, then we begin to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God, His Will and His ways. If we resist the Holy Spirit within us, and instead follow our own minds, reasoning, evaluations and judgments, then we remain infants in the faith and our doctrine remains faulty and inaccurate.

All who surrender to Jesus and place their faith in Him are given the Holy Spirit within, and all who are filled with the Spirit are part of His family and are hence called Christians, since we follow Jesus, the Christ, or Messiah, or Savior of mankind.

This is good news indeed, hence we call it the Gospel, which is the greek word for "good news".

If you have never surrendered to Jesus Christ, give yourself an early Christmas gift, and surrender to His love right now. Embrace His Salvation, make His Grace yours, and enter His kingdom. You can do this in the privacy of your own heart, then proclaim your faith in boldness to the world, starting with this Facebook community by proclaiming "I am in Christ Jesus"!!!!

May God bless you through Jesus Christ as you pursue His Word, Will, and Ways.

By the time I finished posting the above note to Facebook, the day was breaking, chants from the Orthodox Church were droning though the air like a rude neighbor's blaring radio at a volume much too loud to ignore, and we were short on time to dress for breakfast.

The rest of Saturday was an off day for the team, with Conner Dela Vega and half the team heading off to speak at a graduation ceremony for Bible College students, an JT and I heading with the other half on an expedition to find crocodiles and hippos at Lake Chamo.

Sometime during the day, I realized I'd inherited poor Germa's throat and nose cold, who had been feeling poorly our last two days of ministry.

## **Sunday July 24<sup>th</sup>**

We joined the Kale Hewitt (Word of Life) church in Geresse Sunday morning, where I led the congregation in a study of being born again and led by the Spirit using John 3, and where Conner, Katie, Paige and Owen led the congregation in a beautiful song inviting the Holy Spirit upon us.

The rest of the day was restful.

## **Monday July 25<sup>th</sup>**

As we headed out for our first day of ministry in Shelley. I was feeling slightly better, but weak with a cough and throat and blah-ness. Conner and Colson Timblin both had stomach issues. Please pray for health for the team as you pray for God's Spirit to go before us today. Amesseganalo.

We met at a school, then moved to a nearby church which was under construction, where we met our new Disciple-Makers. Ethan, Germa, Solomon and I were joined by Mebrat and Ashinafee, and we went onto the Shelley community preaching the Word.

At the first house, where Ethan Smith shared the Evangicube, about 30 prayed to receive Jesus with us. About half of these were already Christians and simply prayed to confirm their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Ethan shared the Evangicube with about 50 believers at the next location, and then we encouraged them with more Scripture.

At the third house, I shared the Evangicube, and about 30 women and children prayed to receive Jesus.

The fourth house was Germa's unbelieving mother in law's house. At first he was reluctant to enter, because they were drinking when we arrived, and Ethiopian Christians think anyone who drinks or smokes cannot be a Christian, but I shared the Gospel using the Evangicube anyway, and 6 prayed to receive Jesus.

The 5th house was a believer's, and we taught them from Matt 25. Afterward, they told us about folks who prophesized in tongues and then led people astray and asked how to handle this. We shared about spiritual gifts from I Corinthians 12, about order in the church, and about how the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets in their congregation, and how to evaluate teaching and prophecy from Scripture.

At the 6th house, Ethan shared and 15 prayed to receive Jesus. At the 7<sup>th</sup> I encouraged a group of believers working in an alley.

At the 8th, Ethan shared encouraging 20 believers. Afterward, these folks asked us to pray for a demon possessed boy who lived nearby.

We went down the street to the 9th house where we found the boy named Andenet (about 17 years old) lying under a tarp a few yards from his family's house. We asked if we could share with him, and he came out. We prayed over him, commanding the demon to leave in the name and power of Jesus Christ. Then we explained the Gospel and invited him to accept Jesus. He agreed with our message

but said we must speak with his brothers. We explained that they could not make the decision for him but that he must pray and surrender to Jesus himself. Again, with eyes lowered, he said he agrees but that we should speak with his brothers. At that point I placed my hand on his chest and commanded the evil spirit to remain silent so that only Andenet could speak. I then invited him again to pray with me, and this time he prayed accepting Jesus as his Lord and Savior, accepting Jesus death and blood as payment for his sins, and inviting the Holy Spirit to come live inside him. He raised his eyes to mine and thanked me.

We turned and his brother (another Zalalem) was standing there, so we shared with him and he prayed to receive Jesus as well.

We turned to his mother and some other women who had gathered, shared with them, and 4 of these prayed with us receiving Jesus as well.

Ecstatic but still feeling sickly, we entered another house where we shared Ephesians 4 with a Christian couple and their daughter.

We have 5 appointments to return and teach for tomorrow. I am not sure how we will fulfill them all. Also, Andenet asked for a Bible, so I will purchase one tonight for him.

I am exhausted, sickly, and ready to rest. Yet Paster Samuel was able to schedule an appointment with a leader from the Arba Minch University, so I will meet with him at 6 pm.

Pray for the team's health. Many feel poorly. Pray for the people's hearts. Many hit fierce opposition to the Gospel. Pray for the new Christians, that God strengthens and protects them. Thanks for praying for these baby believers.



### Tuesday July 26<sup>h</sup>

Tuesday was another great day. Most on the team, including myself (after 10 hours of sleep), were feeling much better.

At our first appointment, I shared Matt 5 and 25 to an eager group of 25+ believers.

At our second, Ethan Smith taught another group of 55 believers from Romans 5 after which I shared the parable of the talents.

Selemon Kebede then shared with a man in the road, a small crowd grew, and I also shared the Gospel using the Evangicube. Many were already believers, and the young man refused to accept Jesus.

We then shared with an Orthodox woman and some other women. After sharing the Evangicube, she said she was relying on being Orthodox. We informed her that the Orthodox Church accepts the Bible as God's Word. She agreed. We then showed her from I John and Romans how God only accepts those who place their faith in Jesus, and that He will not accept anyone simply because they attend church, or place their faith in anything else. She and about 5 others then prayed with us accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Meanwhile, Ethan Smith had found and shared with another man, who turned out to be a backslidden believer who rededicated his life to Jesus.

We passed an Orthodox man in the road who also placed his faith in his church. Once again, we reminded him that the Orthodox Church trusts the Bible as God's Word. He agreed. I then pulled out my English-Amharic Bible, and showed him from John, I John, and Romans that surrender to Jesus Christ is the only thing that will be acceptable to God. His eyes lit up when I pulled out the Bible, and he read the Amharic with Selemon as I read English. He eagerly prayed with us to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. He then asked for a Bible, and Ashinafee gladly gave the man, named Teferee, his own Gideon Amharic New Testament. The man excitedly accepted it and held it like a dear treasure as we left.

We then went to Medsele's house, where Ethan shared Romans 5 and I shared Romans 8 with about 6 women and 10 children. One of the women was a Christian who had turned away since she was married to an unbeliever. We encouraged her from I Peter 3, and encouraged her to meet with Mebrat and the other women, one of which had been hungrily checking each passage in her Bible as we preached.

We then stopped at a house along the way, where 7 women and 10+ children were. These were also Orthodox, and we shared in the same manner as before, with Ethan sharing the Evangicube then with me showing each idea directly from Scripture. One of these asked about the bodies we would have in heaven, and we shared from I Thessalonians and I Corinthians about this, and they were very excited. They all prayed to receive Jesus together.

We then went to Andenet's house, but his lean-to was stowed and he was not there. We gave his brother Zalalem his Bible, and encouraged them to study together.

We then went to our last appointment at Mohammed's house, where we discipled he and Idjeegoo and about 4 or 5 women from John 3. Then they fed us nuts, soda, coffee (bunna), and Anjara with shredded-salsa'd-anjara. It was amazing!

Thanks for praying and participating in this ministry!

**Wednesday July 27<sup>th</sup>**

Dinkenow means amazing in Amharic, and that word keeps reverberating in my mind as I consider our last day of ministry in Shelle.

We were on our way to our first appointment when Ethan suggested we swing by Andenet's house to see if he was in. His lean-to was still empty and he was not at home, but some relatives were there with Zalalem who had not been there the other days, so we preached the Gospel using the Evangicube and Scripture. About 7 were there in all, and four of their voices joined us in surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

One of these was a young woman named Senaite, who followed us to the next house, beaming as she went. She sat close and listened carefully as Ethan taught about the unforgiving servant from Matt 18 and I shared about the afterlife from I Thessalonians and I Cor. The initial group of 25 grew to over 60 men, women and children as we shared, and a chorus of 30 or so voices prayed with us surrendering to Jesus. Perhaps 20 or so were children who had previously accepted Jesus yet still eagerly expressed their faith.

We moved down the road, followed by many of the children and some of the women, and were joined by a crowd until about 50 sat before us as we sat before a nearby believer's home. I taught them about the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus from Luke 1, as they sat enraptured by God's truth.

We taught from John 9 at our next appointment with believers to more than 30, although the children got restless this time since many were the same as before.

We entered the street, leaving our followers behind, and I started to share with a handful of people in front of a makeshift shop. A crowd grew immediately to perhaps 60 as I proclaimed the Gospel with increasing volume using the Evangicube punctuated with Scripture. At the end, more than 13 voices prayed with me above the din to accept Jesus, and many smiled and warmly shook my hand, or nodded approvingly as we walked off, past an elderly Orthodox priest who was glaring angrily at the crowd as he held a crucifix out to another man who bowed and kissed it beneath the priest's glare.

We went further down the street, and started sharing with a group of 10 men and women in front of a coffee stand spread under some trees by the road. This crowd grew to about 50, and objections from the back made an increasing drone as I continued sharing loudly to the 20 or so who seemed riveted to our message. It was difficult to tell with the commotion, but I could hear more than 4 voices echoing our prayer to receive Jesus, and many smiled, nodded, or hurried forward to shake my hand as we left.

The van found us then, and our driver, Solomon (a believer of about 30 from Addis) took us to the church, where we were treated to a fine meal of Anjara, beets, potatoes, sauce, rice, popcorn, bananas, coffee and tea, as poor Kate Larson, who had come down with mild fever and stomach pains lay on a cot in a nearby house.

Later, back at the hotel, Kate was able to rest in bed. She was feeling sick but was game the whole way home. Behind us, new believers were taking their first steps in their new lives as Christians.

Please pray for these people, that God will fan to flame the new Spirit inside them, that He protect their families, that He send them gifts of the Spirit, and that He strengthen and protect our dear Mebrat as she disciples them in the coming months and years.

Thank you for your prayers, interest, and support.

Having finished the work in Shelle, tomorrow we head up to the Chencha highlands to visit Abraham's Church that started after JT's first visit and where we have performed many weeks of ministry over the last 8 years or so.

I felt healthy and satisfied, amazed that God used me and the team so powerfully in spite of all our shortcomings.

The left picture is about half the crowd at our first appointment. The right one is a few of the new believers at Andenet's house. Senaite (new believer) is on the right, then Mebrat (my disciple maker), Bizoi (new believer), Zanava (new believer), Gatanet (new believer), Girma (my translator), and Ashinafee (Ethan's disciple maker). Selemon Kebede (Ethan's translator) is crouching to my left.



### **Thursday July 28<sup>th</sup>**

Thursday we visited Chencha, where JT, Colson, and Nicole first preached to the entire community 7 years ago. At the time, Abraham was JT's disciple maker, and together they planted the church that Abraham now pastors.

Kate Larson still feels poorly, so she remained at the hotel, and Katie Brown stayed with her to keep her company.

We walked past Shanka's (the little woman with the twisted body who accepted Jesus about 5 years ago and who died last year) old house, up the slick, red-mud road in thick fog and light drizzle to Abrahams church, where men and women from the congregation welcomed us with bows, handshakes, shoulder-butts, and greetings of "asham", "salaam no", or "abat".

They greeted us with songs, then JT greeted and encouraged them, then invited me to encourage them, which I did using a Gamo Bible reading from I Cor. 1:4-10 & 16:13-14 for the greeting and I Thess. 4:13-18 for the encouragement.

They then fed us something like kidney beans and coffee, and after visiting a bit more, we headed back for a celebration where Pastor Samuel and his wife Nehemiah and lovely daughters prepared a fine Ethiopian meal for us, after which they surprised JT with a Birthday cake, since he was kind enough to invest his birthday in the field, and is "fortunate" enough to share his birthday with President Obama.

Tomorrow we take the 10+ hour van ride back to Addis Ababa. Please pray for health for the team and safe travels.

## **Friday July 29<sup>th</sup>**

This was a loonng day, but was capped off with the best pizza in Ethiopia at the Azteca Restaurant. Here, we were greeted by Rick Eisemann, who had just finished leading a team in Addis Ababa for a week, and was expecting a second team for the next one.

If you are still hungry for encouragement and stories from our trip, I invite you to check out Katie Brown's blog at <https://thelittlemissionary.com/>.

## **Saturday July 30<sup>th</sup>**

We have completed the work and returned safely to Addis Ababa. We had pizza last night, and ice cream today, and had pizza again a couple hours before boarding our late-night flight for the 20 hour flight home. Most everyone feels decent or even good. Thank you for your prayers and support. The total result of the entire team are as follows:

Gospel Presentations: 4214  
Professions of Faith: 663 (128 from Ethan & I)  
Discipled: 1764  
Priceless Cube: 2188  
Rededicated Lives: 10  
Restored Friendships: 9

Please pray about potentially joining us next year.

## **Sunday July 31<sup>st</sup>**

We arrived safely in LAX about 8:30 AM. All were safe and well. Kate Larson slept nearly the whole way.

Thanks for praying!

## **Epilogue**

Well, that is the blow by blow account of our trip. I would love to have you join us next year.

I am not sure yet, but if folks are interested, we could have an in-person flow-down & dinner at our place or at my folks. Let me know by E-Mail ([toeburn@verizon.net](mailto:toeburn@verizon.net)), phone (714-357-4455) or text (same number) if you are interested in that.

May the Lord bless you by giving you a deeper understanding of His Will and Ways, and His call upon your life.

Todd Coburn

714-357-4455