

Nigeria 2009 #2

Today my reading glasses were smashed; David Umune left his passport in Owerri; the cell phone company had the wrong time on their network giving us the incorrect time on our phones and we missed our flight to Liberia. The power has gone off at least a dozen times before breakfast and three times during the Inauguration!

No matter how much time goes by and how things improve in West Africa, life is still a challenge.

Nigeria is seeing real progress. Improvements are pleasantly surprising. Bags arrive on time. Lining up still means using your elbows and yelling at times, but hey, I have done that in Canada!



The kids in the rural Ibo-Edda areas are amazing. They are beautiful. Some of the most photogenic youngsters I have seen in my travels. More than that, they have strength about them that you rarely see in such young kids.

The reason may be in how they are raised. The traditional spirit-worship culture initiated rituals that shock us westerners. Children as young as four years old are required to go through a type of spiritual initiation. They are left for weeks, sometimes 2-3 months, in a small shelter built by their parents. They have no clothes, food or water and have

to forage for themselves during this time. Many die from exposure, insect, or animal attacks. Parents are not allowed to mourn. They are just buried and forgotten.

The children who are taught in the new churches and schools resist these practices and refuse to take part once they have been introduced to the gospel. It takes incredible strength to stand up against your parents and the tribal pressures. These kids radiate strength and an insatiable desire to learn.

The TETMI Christian schools are packed and kids ride dozens of miles by bicycle to be part of the new TETMI high school. Each year we build bigger facilities and we are always one step behind. Children stuff themselves into benches



made for three, but sitting five for entire school day. All classes have 40 – 50 students in rooms that could not accommodate 20 in Canada. The discipline is amazing and they are all dressed in crisp, school uniforms.

These kids get very little male parental care at home. Fathers are generally working the fields seven days a week. The slightest attention; a smile, high five and they radiate and respond. Progress is exceptional in a very short time. Crazy 'Uncle Phil' gets mobbed, and loves it. The children are transforming these communities, radically

impacting their parents and changing the whole society.

TETMI has targeted about 75 villages, villages defined here of more than 5000 people in some cases! The changes are so radical that leaders from many of these villages have come repeatedly to beg TETMI to come and start churches in their areas.

We were able to book another flight for 5:00 a.m. tomorrow morning on Bellevue Airlines. It sounds like an institution of some type... hopefully not a duct tape and baling-wire airline.

-Phil

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