

# The Ministry of Jesus Togo

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Dear friends and supporters,

This year we chose **“How to Interpret the Bible”** as the subject of our seminar for our university students. The seminar began on September 5 with 150 students and assorted graduates and leaders. It soon became evident why God had us choose this subject. **Our students are constantly exposed to false ideas** such as: “Since the leaders of God’s people in the Old Testament had multiple wives, it is okay for us to have multiple wives.” Sometimes it is a teaching such as **the “sacred lie,”** that since Rahab is listed as a hero of the faith in the New Testament it is okay to lie like she did if we are doing it for good. Since **African traditional religion tends to be legalistic**, there are many teachings that insist upon obedience to certain Old Testament laws, such as the teaching that since the Old Testament forbids women to wear men’s clothing, women can’t wear pants. It is not without good reason that the epistles of the New Testament spend so much time preparing the churches to fight against false teachers and false doctrine. Our goal was to not only produce leaders who can recognize error, but who can explain why it is error.

*In February Preston Junkin and I spent two hours at this Total station in Atakpame a bad starter and battery, the first of 7 breakdowns. This year, we are overjoyed to be driving our new truck. Many thanks to all of you who gave to make this possible!*

*We had record attendance for our two seminars this year. The schedule every day is: 7-8 student led prayer, with worship and devotion, 8-9:30 teaching, 9:30-10, breakfast, 10-10:30 worship with Jayne, 10:30-12 teaching, 12-2:30 lunch break, 2:30-3 student led worship, 3-3:30 worship with Jayne, 3:30-5 teaching.*



## A Dangerous Trap for Young Leaders

Over and over again during our two weeks of seminar, I found myself repeating, “**Mr. Gregg is not here to equip you so that you can use your knowledge to criticize your leaders.**” Our students have way more education than their village pastors and they understand and retain much more of what they learn about the Bible. They also visit churches from other denominations led by pastors who are poorly trained and who expound many non-biblical rules and ideas. **The norm here is to exalt your church and denomination and to criticize others.** We have to constantly struggle to get our young leaders to understand that **they need to respect leaders who have limited abilities, who make serious errors, and who often live lives that are not worthy of respect.** It is hard to get them to understand why they must show respect for churches and denominations that look down on them because they don't come from one of the country's larger churches. **We are thankful for key national leaders to whom they can look and who support our call to humility, unity and cooperation when dealing with the larger Christian community.**

## Gospel of Grace versus Law and Ritual

Our seminar for high school and university students began on September 12 with **250 students.** During the week we went **through the entire book of Romans verse by verse.** It is always discouraging to talk with people about sharing the gospel and then have no one able to answer when you ask, “What is the gospel?” That is why we have spent so much time in the last year teaching the 4 R's: **Roi (Creator King), Rebellion, Reconciliation, Response.** No book of the Bible explains the gospel more clearly than Romans and we spent lots of time going over and over what Jesus did for us on the cross and what it means to be saved by grace.

Traditional African Religion, Animism, is heavily oriented towards legalism, works, and ritual. **The African church desperately needs a generation of leaders who are gospel oriented and not law oriented, who are centered on the cross, and not on ritual.** This is not something that is going to happen in one seminar, but **we will continue to point all of our leaders and churches towards gospel and grace.**

## What it is like to live among animists

One of the young men on our worship team came Saturday to say that he and his brother wouldn't be able to make it to the Saturday evening worship practice. One of the other renters in their compound had her cell phone stolen and she said that she was told that the thief was someone in the house so she called a meeting of everyone in the house. **When someone here says that they were told that it was someone in the house, they were told so by someone who divined the information by spiritual powers. The next step is often to ask each suspect to participate in a spiritual ritual that will detect the thief. If someone refuses to participate because of their faith, it is assumed that they are the thief.** We have even had other cases where government judges ordered Christian's to participate in such ceremonies. **Fortunately, we have pastors who know, not only the Bible, but the culture and the law.** They were able to go to the judges and explain that what was being ordered was actually not allowed by Togolese law. We praise God that in this case the landlord recognized that the woman making the accusations was a troublemaker and he told her that if she caused any more trouble he would make her move out. Our leaders and members face problems similar to this on a daily basis. **Please pray for the Bamaze family and other Christian's who face similar problems.**

## Learning to trust God alone

This week, Wadja led the Sunday School Bible study. The theme for the day was “God is jealous.” At the end Wadja shared a testimony. He recently succeeded on a national test to enter the government school for secondary school teachers. Only a very few of those who take the test succeed. **There is much evidence that most of the positions go to those who are chosen because of their connections to high government officials.** Last year, Wadja had taken the same test. He had asked his mother for the money to take the test and she gave it to him. He found out

later that **she had gone to his uncles, who are witch doctors, and made a pact to make a large sacrifice to an idol spirit if Wadja succeeded.** This year his mother was angry at him for helping a young girl that she considered an enemy and she didn't give him any money. He knows that she would not have gone to the idol spirit again for him. **He is convinced that God didn't allow him to succeed last year because his family would have given credit to the idol spirit.** When a university friend found out that Wadja had passed the test, he asked, "Who helped you to succeed?" Wadja answered, **"God was the only one who helped me to succeed."** Please pray that others will have the same courage and conviction as Wadja to put their trust in God alone.

### Update on Claire

When we left in April, the bones in Claire's leg were healed but it was evident that there was a ligament or some other problem that caused her leg not to be straight when she walked. Last Spring, Claire did physical therapy and Jayne took her to get extensions put on her shoes to make the leg that bowed out equal with her other leg. When we returned, Claire was able to walk very short distances with a significant limp, and if she walked too much her leg ached. Jayne decided to try adding an even longer, angled extension to her shoes to keep her from walking on the side of her foot. This has helped a lot and she is now able to walk without pain to neighboring homes and even to a local market. We are still waiting and praying for a specialist to come to the missionary hospital in Mango. **We must add that Claire is her usual joyful self and that she has fully resumed all of her church responsibilities.** Please pray for Claire's continued healing.

### Prayer

- We praise God for all those who donated generously to allow us to start taking a small salary.
- Pray that God will raise up a generation of Togolese leaders with a deep respect and passion for God's Word.
- Praise God for giving Pastor Nagbandjoa health, safety and lots of great teaching during his 3 months of training in Ivory Coast this summer.
- Pray that an understanding of gospel and grace will overcome the tendency towards law and ritual in the MIJ churches.
- Praise God for our key leaders who are able to give our students good models in a context where there are so many poor models of Christian leaders.

### Wadja leading a Sunday morning Bible study



*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15*

**We thank you for joining us in preparing African leaders who can rightly handle the word of truth. We are so grateful for how so many of you who gave sacrificially in response to our need for a new truck and for personal support.**

In the joyful service of the King,

Gregg and Jayne