

Brants - Closing Moments in Ethiopia

Howard Brant – March 15, 2016

Pure joy describes our short trip to Ethiopia. Everything happened so quickly, we were hardly aware of the significance of the events taking place around us. But as we look back, we know our Heavenly Father was coordinating a series of events that only He could do. Our first week we were in SW Ethiopia with the Gurage people with specific focus on training sessions with pastors and church leaders from 80 churches. We spent a little time with the students and loved seeing the new school put to good use. (See the pic with this year's students – note the women!)



We were invited to the MANI conference at the African Unity venue in Addis Ababa. 600 delegates from all over Africa came to share and learn about all the different initiatives now coming out of Africa. (See the separate conference report attached) I had wonderful opportunities to encourage younger men who are fully engaged in Kingdom activities. (Pic at left with representative from China and a young Ethiopian woman). Two days before we left

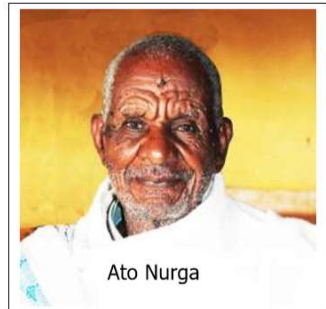
one of the Gurage leaders came to us in Addis Ababa. This was Tadesse Nurga, son of the first Gurage man I led to the Lord. He provided summary statements of all the income and expenses for the Gurage Bible School then he stood up to pray for us... but before he prayed, he said: We thank you for bringing the Gospel to Gurage. Truly you can say that you have delivered your soul to our people. Then he quoted from Paul's message to the Ephesian elders recorded in Acts 20:25-27 "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God." Tadesse went on, "I declare this night that you are "innocent of the blood of all Gurage."

We also visited the home area of the first Gurage believer, Gubre Mariam. His grave and church on his land is a reminder of his faithfulness to the Lord. He was imprisoned by the communists and let out of prison to die. We have spent many nights sleeping on his floor dozens of times (and been eaten alive by fleas and bedbugs). We knew all his children since they were little kids. But now (40 years later) they are all grown and our last night in Ethiopia his 3 sons and two daughters invited us to one of their homes and threw a wonderful Ethiopian dinner. Then they said, “As our father was faithful to the end, you too have been faithful in your ministry to us.



We want to celebrate your faithfulness to us and to our people.” One of the sons, sang a song about the faithfulness of God ... and then we regaled each other with fun stories and of how the Gospel spread among the Gurage people. It was just a wonderful evening. The third incident was a true miracle. Our flight out of Ethiopia was on Emirates Airlines to Dubai and then up over the North Pole and down into Seattle. Emirates flies Airbus 330’s on the Addis-Dubai route and these planes are always crowded (270 passengers) with Arabs, Chinese and Indians flying back to their own countries. Jo-Ann and I always choose aisle seats across from each other as the flights are long (four hours to Dubai, and then 14 hours from Dubai to Seattle). We like being able to escape our seat without disturbing others.

I took my seat waiting to see who would be my travelling partner. An Ethiopian man took the window seat next to me. He looked like a trader or business man. I greeting him and we sat quietly as the perfunctory instructions about seat belts and oxygen were given.



When we started talking we switched to Amharic (language of Ethiopia). I asked, “So where are you going?” His response, “To Dubai.” I asked, “Are you going on business?” His response: “No, I am an evangelist and I live in Dubai.” My interest peaked! I said, “So you are an Ethiopian evangelist living in Dubai!” He responded, “Yes I have been there about 5 years and I have started a church of about 100 people... I came back to Addis for an operation (he showed me the scar on his neck) and am just returning.” I couldn’t believe my ears. For years, we have been working with Ethiopians to send out their own missionaries! Here was one I knew nothing Ato Nurga about – who had gone unsupported, unknown, and simply led by the Lord. I could hardly contain myself. Now I chimed in. “Well I too am a

missionary and have served for many years in Ethiopia.” Suddenly he looked at me and asked,

“Are you Dr. Howie?” I was totally shocked that he knew my name. When asked how he knew me, he said, “I am Sebsibe, elder brother of Tadesse the son of Ato Nurga (above pic), the first Gurage man you led to the Lord. I knew you when I was a little child and you used to come to our house and preach to our family.”

It seemed like the circle was complete. The first man that I led to the Lord in Gurage... his son was seated next to me... a missionary to the Arab world! Well, I could have wept! It was God’s gift to put this man right beside me. Our Heavenly Father truly does “all things well.” Thank you Lord for three sweet memories.

Your missionaries,
Howie and Jo-Ann Brant