

January 2017

Dear Friends,

It's here again, the beginning of another year. And as always, there are many stories to tell. The work you help us do is having an impact now and for eternity as the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to change lives. We are grateful we can be a part of His work through your prayers and financial support.

Equipping Ministries International (EMI) is a holistic ministry that includes *Business as Missions (BaM)*, a division that breaks the cycle of welfare-type dependency as we labor, literally, in difficult places. It is the Hand-up, not the Hand-out portion of EMI's ministry work, a Servant-Leadership Model that gets our hands dirty along with everyone else's in the work of the farm!

Why do we view EMI's *BaM* as such an important component of ministry? Biblically we see that after the Fall of mankind into sin in Genesis 3, several curses came about that demonstrate areas of brokenness in our world. First, God's relationship with man was fractured (Gen 3:23-24). Second, the abundance of the land (Genesis 1:28-29) was greatly diminished and resources became scarce (Genesis 3:17). Third, relationships that were created to be good between people became contentious (Genesis 3:16). Fourth, man's relationship with the "very good" Creation (Genesis 1:31) became antagonistic (Genesis 3:17-19).

These four areas of brokenness are addressed in EMI's *BaM* Model. Through Biblical teaching and preaching God's Word, man can be restored to a right relationship with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's lack of abundance is improved as meaningful employment is provided whereby families can provide for themselves, which allows for dignity and self-worth. Opportunity to learn skills and techniques such as improved farming and cultivation practices increases the productivity of those we work with. Relationships one with another are improved as Biblical principles for marriage, family, and community are taught and modeled, not only in the local church but also in the workplace, breaking the cycle of tribal hostilities. Finally, we address the care of creation as we use a closed water system that captures and reuses all the agricultural fertilizer run-off that could negatively affect the lake water; work to eliminate littering on the farm and better garbage disposal, build outhouses and latrines, establish clean drinking water reserves, and change detrimental practices such as dumping engine oil on the ground as engines and machines are repaired and serviced.

At the farm we work with five different tribes, including Christian, Muslim, and Animist from the Ashanti, Ewe, Dagbon, Kawahu, and Dagomba tribes. Employment on the farm demands a partnership where people of different ethnicities must work respectfully together. This working relationship with a diversity of tribes is a new phenomenon for the area and a testimony of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

It is so interesting to us that the Ewe tribe employed on the farm in Africa are originally from Benin, a country just East of Ghana, where the majority of the slaves that were displaced to Haiti originated. In 1994, we began ministering in Haiti. Just as it was there, those who don't yet know the Savior even today bring their same Voodoo and occult practices with them to the farm. It astounds us how God weaves all of these threads together in the tapestry of our lives and ministry experiences to share the Good News of Christ.

The farm has started two schools in the community that will allow for children to have a Biblical educational start, one that can affect generational changes in this area and the country. Starting a school is an essential part of the holistic work of EMI, particularly as it relates to the formation of a Biblical World View and to ending tribal hostility.

We and our co-laborers are excited to report that the farming productivity in this area has nearly doubled. The farm not only employs people from different tribes, but it encourages local farmers by buying their agricultural products, helping them help themselves. In 2016 we began milling rice from our farm, as well as that which we purchase from small farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture voted one of our community's small farmers the Best Rice Farmer for the Ashanti District. Don was voted the Best Pig Farmer for this same region. Both will be vying in their divisions for National Recognition.

Tragically, after so much growth and success on the farm, in the fall of 2016, the farm's corn crop fell victim to a plague that hit many countries in Africa last year, the African Army Worm. After nine crops in four and a half years that continued to increase and improve, last fall's corn crop was virtually wiped out. Don worked day and night, trying to combat the African Army Worm plague, but eventually the crop had to be plowed under. It was heartbreaking. We are now planting other crops that were not attacked by this plague, hoping to make it back on our feet to keep people employed through this difficult time until the new crops are ready to harvest. This is a time when only the faith that comes from serving a Sovereign God sustains us.

So, we covet your prayers as we see lives changing as Christ is proclaimed and families are empowered to care for themselves; we also need your financial help to sustain our work as we make adjustments to continue this project that is having such an impact on so many lives.

We remain-

In Him with hopeful hearts,

EMI models Servant Leadership in Ghana, where we all can get our hands in the dirt on the farm.

