

Bruce Forsee's Togo Trip with TLI

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by Bruce Forsee

Thank you for your support and prayers that made my recent trip to Togo possible. Obviously God was at work in all the preparations, in the lives of the students, and in my own life as well. I apologize for taking so long to let you know that I've returned, but after arriving back in the U.S., I left less than a week later to go to Ohio to visit my parents. For those of you who know them, my mother is doing well, but my father's health continues to deteriorate. He's also facing dementia and memory loss. He knows the Lord and the Lord knows him, and that's a great comfort to us all.

The Baptist Seminary where I taught was started by the Southern Baptists. Currently there is one missionary who teaches, as well as several part-time and full-time West African faculty members. About fifty students attend the school and come from Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, and elsewhere to prepare for ministry.

I traveled with one other man from Training Leaders International, Jim Jordan. When we arrived, I found that the living conditions were pleasant. I had a bedroom and bathroom to myself. The director and his wife, Sylvain and Sabine Alloboe, made us feel very welcome, and the roosters woke us up early every morning. Madame Alloboe prepared all our meals, so we didn't have to worry about what we ate. She even recruited our help, so one morning I made pancakes for everyone, and another day Jim made biscuits and gravy. I also taught her how to make southern sweet tea.

Jim has been to the Togo school, ESBTAO (École Supérieure Baptiste de Théologie de l'Afrique de l'Ouest), several times, so he was a great help. He taught *The History of Hermeneutics*, and I taught *The Synoptic Gospels*. Because of a holiday on Monday, the first week's schedule was teaching Tuesday-Saturday. The second week we resumed the Monday-Friday schedule. I taught 4 hours every morning; Jim taught in the afternoon.

I was impressed by the theological education of the students. Their biblical knowledge was probably equal to a first or second year seminary student in the U.S., so it's appropriate that they're in a fully accredited degree program.

One thing I had to adjust to very quickly was the culture. African students, of course, have a different background, different living conditions and customs, and a different perspective from western students. When they ask questions about biblical interpretation and application, they may have an entirely different reason from a western student for asking that question. Unless you, as a teacher, can discern the assumptions behind the question, you might not be addressing their concerns at all, or you might even be misleading them. I was very thankful for the help of my interpreter, Happy, who at times guided me through this new experience. When this kind of cross-cultural teaching is successful, it's clear that God the Holy Spirit is the true teacher of His people.

One of the highlights of the trip was having an opportunity to preach in an African church. I spoke on Psalm 73 and how the believer can face suffering victoriously. In a place that is heavily influenced by the "prosperity gospel," the reality of suffering is a very important message. The response was positive and demonstrated that Christians everywhere, even in different cultures, face the same temptations and need to grow in their faith and knowledge of God. It was a joy to see God's people worshiping Him in ways that were unfamiliar to me. Clearly God is at work among His people around the globe.

As I was teaching the 14 students in my class, I was overwhelmed by the profound reality of the power and breadth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the spread of the Church around the world. I decided that teaching seminary students in other countries is probably the most strategically effective thing I could do at this point in my life. Therefore, I am going to pursue a full-time position with Training Leaders International. I still have several interviews in order to be accepted as a member of the staff, so I would appreciate your prayers. If I am accepted on the team, I will then need to raise my support.

Thank you again for your prayers and support.

For the spread of His Kingdom,

Bruce