

GATEWAY INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES REPORT

“A Passion for Souls”

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Issue 1



"LET'S REFLECT AND GIVE GOD THE PRAISE!"

First of all, let me tell you that during this past year, through our national preachers and workers, and also through our one mission team trip to Uganda last March, GIMI shared the Gospel message with just over **1,000,000 people** in our African countries, the Ukraine, and here in America. What a glorious privilege God has given to this work! What is even more exciting is that of this one million people, just over **130,000 people prayed to receive Christ for the first time during the past twelve months!** Praise God! Hallelujah! Folks, this is a Pentecostal-sized miracle of God! God has gloriously saved all of these people this past year by His amazing power and grace.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...

Dear Beloved GIMI Team Members,

Blessed New Year greetings to you and your dear loved ones! Jo Anne and I prayerfully wish you and your family the greatest year of fruitfulness for Jesus that you have ever experienced. Although my old body tells it, I just don't know where this past year, 2017, went so rapidly. What a joy it has been to live another year trying to faithfully serve Jesus by taking His Gospel message to a lost world. God has truly blessed this past year with unbelievable miracles happening through this very small ministry. It was all because we have a great big God! Let me share a few of these mighty miracles that God provided for and through this ministry.



Folks, I believe God is ready to do far more than what He has done this past year, if we would only believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and be willing to get out into the fields where they are white unto harvest. In fact, over the past 19 years, since Jo Anne and I took over this ministry, GIMI has proclaimed the Gospel message to over 9,000,000 people with 2,130,000 people coming to Christ. Let me remind you of what Jesus said in **Matthew 9:35-38**, one more time. *"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."* Truly, the

fields are white unto the harvest, if we would just get to the fields where God has opened the doors, rather than our going to the fields where we are trying to force the doors open in an attempt to prove that the Great Commission is just to take the Gospel to the "Unreached People Groups". The purpose of the Great Commission is, and always has been, to catch the fish where they are biting and populate heaven with as many people as we possibly can before Jesus comes again. This twisted idea that winning people to Christ with public invitations, mass crusades, and door-to-door evangelism is not of God. It is straight out of the pits of hell! And yet, this proliferated concept of just going after the unreached people groups, even if the doors are closed, is sending multitudes to a burning hell to the tune of an estimated 80,000 souls per day in the entire world. Why, just the other day I was watching over 100,000 people in a huge outdoor football stadium, and my heart became so heavy that I suddenly stopped and asked my wife, "Where are the young "Billy Grahams" preaching in these big stadiums like Dr. Graham used to do? Where are the churches that are spiritually "on fire", going after lost souls every week like First Baptist of Jacksonville, Florida used to do under the leadership of Dr. Homer Lindsay, Jr.?" My wife and I had the privilege of attending this great church for over a year. When we moved out of Florida, we came back to North Carolina with our hearts on fire to see people come to Christ. Oh yes, we are to disciple those who get saved, but as Dr. Lindsay used to say, "You can't disciple those who don't get saved." Therefore, most of those who no longer go after lost souls, but emphasize the deeper life, discipleship, social justice, disaster relief, and many other things, are just looking for an excuse for their laziness and some emphasis to save face because of their negligence of the Great Commission! The purpose of the Great Commission is to win lost souls to Christ by the power of His Word and through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

"Continuing Our Calculation"

In addition to the large numbers of souls that have come to Christ this past year, God has blessed GIMI to be able to provide 700,000 Bibles, Scripture portions, Gospel tracts, and study materials for our work in Africa. Additionally, we have been able, through the generosity of God's people on our team, to distribute in excess of \$200,000 worth of humanitarian assistance. This includes the drilled well, food, hygiene products, clothing, medicine and medical supplies, and many other things. We are now helping many students

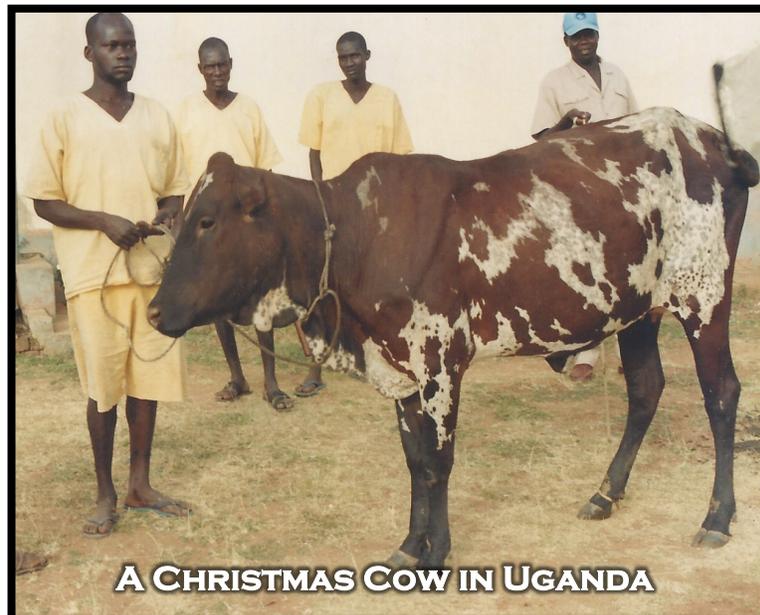
improve their preparation for ministry through our new Bible College.

So folks, to say the least, 2017 was truly a very fruitful year. And truthfully, this would never have been possible without dear friends like you serving on our prayer and financial support teams. Thank you for giving sacrificially and for investing in the souls of men, women, boys, and girls. May our wonderful Lord reciprocate your kindness with many abundant blessings! Jo Anne and I sincerely love and appreciate you so very much!

"The Christmas Cow Project Another Great Success"

While we are looking back at this past year, I am so happy to inform you that God really blessed our Christmas Cow Project again this Christmas. Because of the faithfulness of so many of you, we were able to purchase 40 cows which we prepared and served on Christmas afternoon. I must tell you that the inmates were so appreciative and very grateful to God and GIMI for providing this special Christmas meal. I want to thank all of you that invested in this effort, especially the Youth and Children's Groups in some of the churches. Because of your participation in this special project, you will truly share in the rewards for the hundreds of souls that got saved on Christmas Day.

I hope you remember that on one occasion, Jesus fed over 5,000 people with loaves and fishes. Because of this endeavor, scores of people responded to the Gospel and came to Him. Your kind generosity in the Christmas Cow Project will truly be richly rewarded because of your participation. Thank you for helping to feed the poor and also to share the true meaning of Christmas with hundreds of men, women, boys, and girls.



A CHRISTMAS COW IN UGANDA

"Another Container Is On Its Way To Uganda!"

By the time you receive this newsletter, we should have another completely filled container out on the ocean heading for Uganda. We loaded the container on Tuesday, December 12th. We were told that it should arrive in Kampala, Uganda in about 60 days. Please help us pray for the safety of these materials as we have shipped 1,400 boxes of Bibles, New Testaments, Scripture portions, Gospel tracts, Prison Kids Boxes, and many other items for our prisoners, school kids, orphans, and others that will be getting the Gospel through these materials once they arrive in Uganda.

We are still praising God for helping to meet the cost of \$14,000 to ship and clear this container of goods. Let me say thanks to those of you that helped meet this need so that spiritually starving people could get the blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Once this container is offloaded, we hope to start raising funds to ship another one to Kenya. We must do everything we can to provide the Bibles and other booklets to help spread the Gospel, and also, to help disciple those who do get saved. Again, please pray for the safe arrival of this unit, and pray that God will soon provide the funds to ship another container.



PASTOR MIKE AND PASTOR STAN STARTING TO FILL THE CONTAINER!



MATTHEW MCKINNEY DRIVING THE LOADER WHILE OTHER VOLUNTEERS STRATEGICALLY PLACE BOXES!



WOODY ELDER, JOHNNY HEFNER, AND PASTOR STAN PREPARING BOXES!



OUR VOLUNTEERS CONTINUING TO WORK HARD TO LOAD THE CONTAINER!



THE CONTAINER BACKING UP TO OUR DOCK AND GETTING READY FOR LOADING!



THE CONTAINER FILLED TO THE MAXIMUM WITH BIBLES AND PRISON KIDS BOXES!

"An Update On Pastor Mike McKinney"

I know that many of you dear GIMI Team members have been praying fervently for Pastor Mike McKinney, one of our GIMI Board members. So, I thought I would give you an update on his condition. Presently, he is not able to do much because he has very little energy due to not being able to eat solid foods, which he has not been able to do for two years. Right now the doctors are trying to get him built back up enough to have his next two surgeries. These procedures will take place January 31 and February 1, 2018.

The purpose of these surgeries is to separate his esophagus from the pericardium around his heart. This unusual attachment is causing his stomach not to be able to go back into the normal position with the esophagus straight like it would normally be. Thus, he still can't eat any solid foods. The pending surgeries will require two surgeons to do the complete job. He will have a heart surgeon and the regular surgeon specialist at Baptist Hospital doing these delicate surgeries. Just really help us pray that God will guide the hands of the doctors and nurses and that Brother Mike will be completely restored to a life of normalcy once more. Let's just pray that God will completely heal Mike in keeping with God's will. Truly, Jesus is the Great Physician.

And before I move on, please keep praying for Rebecca and the family as they help take care of Pastor Mike during this terrific ordeal. This has been one of the most difficult times for our family that we have ever seen. We are praying that this New Year will be much better!

"Thank You, 'Sewing For Souls' Ministry!"

Back in November Jo Anne and I had the privilege of discovering a wonderful ministry up in the mountains of West Virginia. During the weekend of November 5th, I preached for Pastor Dennis Burks and the wonderful people of Crow Baptist Church in Daniels, West Virginia. During the worship service, God really blessed with three people getting saved. While we were the guests of these precious people, we were introduced to Larry and Daphne Jessup who direct a ministry called "Sewing For Souls". This is an absolutely wonderful work where Daphne and some of the ladies in the church and community spend hours and hours sewing and making clothing for children and adults for the mission fields of the world. These dear ladies make some of the most beautiful clothing we have ever seen. While they were showing us these beautiful garments, Sister Daphne

made a promise to make some clothing for our work in Africa. Just last week, we received 10 large boxes of clothing, flip-flop shoes for our ladies in prison, and a large number of cloth animal toys for Jo Anne's prison kids in the women's prisons. We are thrilled to learn that with every box of clothing, a Bible and the plan of salvation are included! What a tremendous way to present the Gospel!

I just wanted to take a moment here in this newsletter to introduce all of you, our readers, to this wonderful ministry for Jesus. I also want to thank Larry and Daphne for the boxes of special gifts which they gave us to send to Africa. These ten boxes were loaded on a container bound for Kampala, Uganda on December 12, 2017. We just can't wait to help distribute some of these wonderful gifts to our moms and the children in prison when we return to our beloved Uganda. Please help us pray for the "Sewing For Souls" ministry in Daniels, WV.

"Classes Have Resumed At Gateway International Bible College"

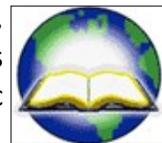
Dear beloved GIMI support team, by the time you receive this newsletter, we will have resumed our Gateway International Bible College classes with our spring semester. I ask all of you to really pray for our college and our students. Please pray for our campus students and the many who are now studying with us externally. Pray that these students will do their best and that they will indeed acquire practical learning to help equip each of them to better serve our wonderful Lord, wherever they are in His service.

If you know anyone that needs to better prepare for the work of the Lord, please tell them about our study program. We would love to have them contact us and maybe even make an application. Also, tell them about our free tuition if they are willing to sign a "Free Tuition Agreement" form which simply states that they will complete at least two years of the four year course and maintain a "C" average in their grades. Just have those interested to contact us just as soon as they can.

Our upcoming spring semester will be offering three campus courses on Thursday evenings. These courses are:

1. World Missions 101—Dr. Stan Frye—6:30 p.m.
2. New Testament Survey 102—Rev. Gary Jennings—7:30 p.m.
3. Spiritual Leadership 101—Rev. Ethan Drum—8:30 p.m.

If you or your friends have any questions about our study program, please feel free to contact us, or have your friends contact us. We are here to hopefully help better equip those who want to be faithful, well-trained servants of God. GIBC is God's School in an age of secular and humanistic schools!





BROTHER SAMMY MBUGUA DELIVERING GIMI GIFTS FOR PRISON CHILDREN



LADY PRISONERS RECEIVING SHOES FROM GIMI



BROTHER DANSON ATAMA BRINGING CHRISTMAS FOODS TO LADY PRISONERS

KENYA



LADY PRISONERS ASSEMBLING TO HEAR THE GOSPEL PREACHED



GIMI PROVIDED WASH BASINS FOR BLIND CHILDREN



BROTHER SAMMY SHARING CHRIST WITH BLIND SCHOOL CHILDREN



PRISONERS HELPING FLORENCE SSENTUMBWE CARRY HUMANITARIAN ITEMS INTO A PRISON

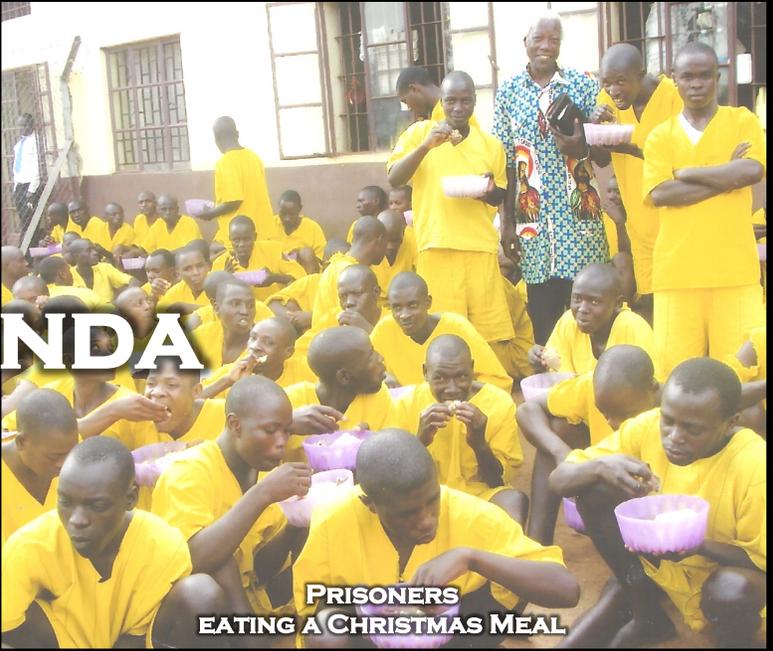


NURSE ALISHA CARRIGAN WORKING A PRISON MEDICAL CLINIC



UGANDA

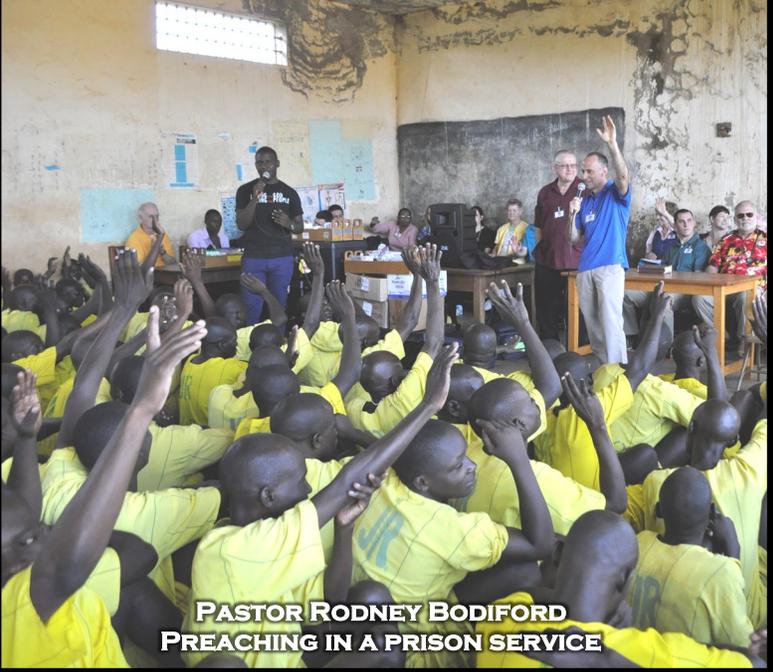
DOCTORS MERRILL (FATHER AND SON) EQUIPPED FOR A PRISON MEDICAL CLINIC



PRISONERS EATING A CHRISTMAS MEAL



PRINCIPAL MABEL WITH SHIPEROY SCHOOL STUDENTS



PASTOR RODNEY BODIFORD PREACHING IN A PRISON SERVICE



"The Mission Of A New Testament Church" **Scripture: Acts 2:41-47**

Effective Expositions For Life

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Introduction

As I begin this article today, I must tell you that I sincerely love the Book of Acts. I have spent much of my life as a preacher of the Gospel studying this book, and in fact, I have written a 60 page outline study of the Book of Acts. At the time of this article, I am preaching through the Book of Acts in the church where I pastor. The last time I did this at another church, it took me over two years to complete this study. I want it to be known that I am not a scholar on this book, but I am an avid student of the history of the early New Testament Church as it is described in the Book of Acts.

As I have spent 60 years studying the Book of Acts, I have come to make a great comparison between the New Testament Church and the modern churches of the age in which we are living. I will say emphatically that most of our churches today don't look like the New Testament Church in any way, form, or fashion. The early church had five major points of emphasis in their ministry, the first of which was aggressive intentional evangelism. This point alone nullifies most modern churches because the modern church has put evangelism and yes, missions,

on the back burner, or they have simply done away with it altogether. The evident result is that multitudes are dying and going to hell while these self-centered "Island of Me" people within these modern churches promote a country club environment and program. They only push what will benefit themselves with a maintenance mentality instead of trying to win the world to Christ.

So, my purpose in writing this article is to hopefully encourage every believer, every pastor, and every church family to get back to the five main points of ministry which the early New Testament Church gave themselves to. I do pray that everyone of you that reads this article may have the fires of evangelism stirred up within you by the blessed Holy Spirit. I pray that hundreds and hundreds of people will be led to Christ here in America, and yes, out on the mission fields of the world. And, it is my desire that our pastors and churches will get back to following the pattern the New Testament Church established after the Day of Pentecost. I do pray that God might challenge you the reader personally to help direct your church to promote the things the early church promoted. Now, let us move forward and glean from **Acts 2:41-47, "The Mission of A New Testament Church."**

I. THE MISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS EVANGELISM. v. 41

On the Day of Pentecost when Peter was preaching that wonderful Holy Spirit anointed sermon, over 3,000 souls accepted the message and gave their hearts to Christ in full commitment. This was truly the beginning of the New Testament Church age, and it was a pattern for every church today to follow. Now, some say that evangelism should not be the main emphasis of the church, but worship should be number one. Yet, I say that unsaved people cannot worship God until they get saved and surrender their lives to Christ. And, we know that lost people are not commanded to come to our churches, but we are commanded to take the Gospel message to them. Therefore, evangelism should be the priority in every church if it is going to follow the New Testament pattern. We might become so cluttered with so many activities in our churches that evangelism is put on the back burner as I stated earlier, but evangelism and winning people to Christ is the main thing we should be doing.

A. This evangelism resulted in salvation. v. 41a

The first thing we notice about the early church's evangelism was that Peter preached the Word, and the people responded to his message. Much to the dismay of many contemporary church leaders, Peter didn't try to dialogue with the people, talk with the people, or even have a two-way conversation with the people. It was the

prophetic preaching of the new Gospel which Jesus had taught Peter and the other disciples. It was a proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There was no apologetic arguing with the people, nor was there a nice easy non-offensive presentation of the truth of the Gospel. It was a strong proclamation of the Gospel with a demand for repentance. In other words, the truth of God's Word brought the people to a demand for a decision. When they were challenged to make a decision, they responded positively and 3,000 souls got saved. Hallelujah to the Lamb for this declaration of the Word, and hallelujah for the tremendous positive response to the invitation. Praise God for those who gladly receive the Word.

B. This evangelism resulted in identification. v. 41b

The second thing I want to mention about this verse 41 is that just as soon as the people received the Word of God and repented, they followed Christ in believer's baptism. There was no evidence whatsoever that the method of baptism was anything other than immersion. In fact, pouring and sprinkling didn't even come about until about 212 A.D. when a sick man by the name of Novation was delivered from the power of Satan. Because of his severe sickness, he was baptized by pouring because he was not well enough to be immersed. Then, from this date forward, the Catholics propagated and proliferated baptism by pouring and sprinkling until Constantine, the Roman Emperor in the Eastern capitol of what is today Turkey, sprinkled his entire army as they went out to war. From this time forward, thousands of Catholics, and later many so-called Protestants, followed suit with the damnable doctrine that sprinkling would place a person in the Kingdom of God—which is totally and completely foreign to the teaching of Scripture.

We do know that just as the people quickly identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ by baptism following their salvation on the day of Pentecost, every born again believer should follow Christ soon after salvation and not be ashamed of their new found faith in Him. What is so amazing is that when the early New Testament Church was started, people were ready to identify quickly with Christ, even when they knew that it might cost them their lives at the hand of the angry Jews who were not yet saved. Yet, today there are multitudes that refuse to follow Christ in believer's baptism just simply because of family tradition or ritual, a little inconvenience, or some other flimsy excuse. However, I am totally convinced that if people don't want to identify with Christ following their profession of salvation, it may very well be that they never genuinely got saved to begin with, or at least they are not sure! Genuine believers who are sure that Jesus has saved them will not delay in following Christ in baptism.

Of course, we who have studied the New Testament Church diligently know that the first act following salvation is indeed baptism, which is in fact the first step in discipleship which we will talk much about in our next point in this study. So, if our churches in this modern age are going to follow the New Testament pattern, then the second thing we must do is to preach and teach baptism as an act of obedience to Christ immediately after a person's salvation. Yet, sad to say, there are many churches today that just open their doors and allow hundreds of people to come in and join their churches without Scriptural baptism. This is not only disobedience to the Word of God, but it does a terrible disservice to those who profess Christ in salvation. If a person is not encouraged to follow Christ in baptism, then that person is not likely to keep growing in the grace of God as a believer. And folks, through more than a half-century of pastoring churches, I have never known a dedicated believer who refused to be baptized to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

C. This evangelism resulted in multiplication. v. 41c

The third point concerning the early church's evangelism efforts was that under the power of Holy Spirit preaching by Peter, 3,000 plus people got saved and gave their hearts to Christ on that Day of Pentecost. This was truly a mighty miracle, but it also showed the potential of all Spirit-filled preaching by God-called men if they will pay the price to be clean, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then stand to declare the truth of God's Holy Word. As I have believed all of my 52 plus years in ministry, the modern church never seems to reach the potential of seeing thousands come to Christ just simply because we don't believe it can happen in this dispensation, or we are not willing to pay the price to see it happen by getting our lives clean before God and then live in obedience, while exercising genuine faith in order for God to make it happen. Dr. A.W. Tozer once said in one of his books that "God is much more ready to send revival, than we are to obey for revival."

Now, I have said all of this just simply to say additionally that God still can, and will, save multitudes today if we will make evangelism the main thing and do the necessary preparation for Him to reign down His power from heaven. However, it seems quite odd to me that the only thing we hear about nowadays by those who are supposed to be great specialists on evangelism is that our attention should just be on the "unreached people groups" where we get two or three saved each year rather than planning and working to win multitudes to Christ.

Then of course, there are so many professionals who say that numbers don't mean anything to God in heaven, and therefore, they shouldn't mean anything to us down here. If this were true, why did God give us the

number 3,000 for the people who got saved on the Day of Pentecost and then mention 5,000 more a short time later? I would say that, to Jesus, every number is a soul for whom He died, and He would much rather see multitudes come to Him as to only see one or two saved each year. Of course, I know that every soul is important to Jesus because He told us to leave the flock and go after the one lost sheep. But, right now there are over two billion people in the world that have never heard the simple plan of salvation, and therefore, it should be not only our inclination to go after them, but it should motivate us to plan and prepare to try to reach the multitudes.

But folks, all I hear these days by the contemporary pastors is that we should do away with mass evangelism, altar calls, or invitations, and even stop our personal door-to-door evangelism. My question is, "Have these lazy people never read this Book of Acts?" Their defense of this unscriptural position is that we need to promote dialogue and do away with preaching. We should contextualize the Gospel into this modern culture so that we don't offend anyone, and we must not confront anyone with the truth. But instead, we need to use tactics of the world and slip upon the blind side of lost souls and get them saved without much pressure. A.W. Tozer said in another one of his books that "the purpose of preachers is not to be diplomats and try to negotiate with God to get people into heaven, but the purpose of preaching is to give the prophetic ultimatum of the Gospel message to the people in such a way as to demand a decision." This statement is absolutely profound! We are not here as saved members of the Kingdom of God to offer many ways for people to go to heaven, but we are here to proclaim without fear or favor that Jesus Christ is the only way for a person to get saved and go to heaven. And, this cannot happen unless there is faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There has to be true Biblical repentance. This means that a person must ask Christ to come into his or her life. In doing so, he or she repents of their sinful nature with a change of mind and heart, and they go in the opposite direction from the world of sin. **THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO GET SAVED!!!**

My question is, "Is evangelism the main emphasis of your church?" If it isn't, then you need to do everything you can to put it on the front burner of church concerns, or you need to leave the church where you are and go to a church where winning souls is primary! Evangelism was the main emphasis of the New Testament Church, and it should be the same for our churches today. Yes, multitudes coming to Christ should be our number one goal!

II. IT IS A MISSION OF EDUCATION. v. 42a

By now many of you, my readers, have become a

little antsy because you are wondering when I am going on to discipleship. Well, the truth is that discipleship should be the second major emphasis of the church today because it was for the New Testament Church in the First Century. I am calling this discipleship a mission of education because this is what should follow for every person that gets saved and comes to Christ. Truthfully, according to **Matthew 28:20**, Jesus said to His disciples, "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" If there is teaching to be done, then the result of this should be that new converts will learn and become educated in the doctrines given to us by the early apostles.

So, in verse 42, we are told that "*they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine....*" This means they were very serious about learning more about their newly found faith in Christ and then going on in growth to become whatever God wanted them to become. Truly, discipleship is helping those we win to Christ become equipped to find and follow the perfect will of God for their lives. Therefore, discipleship should be the second major emphasis of the local church.

Now, let's learn three very important things about this education.

A. It is an education of consistency. (continued)

For many years I have noticed in our churches here in America that the consistency level of our professing believers just gets worse and worse. It is extremely hard to find believers who are consistent in their church attendance, giving, and, most of all, in the study of God's Word. I read recently where the average born again believer spends five minutes per week in reading the Word of God. Yet, the early church members were consistent in the study of the apostle's doctrine, which of course, was the Word of God as revealed to the apostles.

If we are going to disciple or educate our new converts, then there has to be a steady diet of God's Word in a Bible-believing and Bible-teaching church atmosphere. I believe this demands a structured program of Bible study on a regular basis. And yes, even with so many people in the modern church believing that the structured Sunday School program is outdated, I must confess that I know of no better way on earth to glean from the consistent study of God's Word than through this wonderful program of Sunday School.

Oh yes, I hear all about the modern Life Groups and Study Fellowships that are sweeping the landscape of Christianity today where supposedly the Bible is being taught in homes. Yet, just about two weeks ago I listened to a wonderful man of God who pastors a large church here in America indicate on his TV program that their educational department has been having some problem with their home Bible study fellowships and life groups. Do you know what this problem is? He

stated that the problem included a lack of Bible doctrine consistent with their church doctrine being taught in these groups in the homes. I regret to have to say this, but for years I have heard so many pastors talk about the difficulty of holding home Bible study groups accountable for what their groups were teaching. In fact, I believe that many of these Life Groups or home Bible studies are more about what different people think about passages of Scripture rather than being actual exegetical Bible studies. Of course, in the New Testament Church, they didn't have buildings to worship and study in as we do today, but when they taught the Bible in the homes, they had apostles there to make sure that the Word of God was the only thing that was being taught.

So, my conclusion is this! If we are going to have consistent Bible study, there has to be faithfulness by the people to attend in a structured environment under the training of competent teachers. This probably needs to be in a Sunday School or Adult Bible Study Fellowships in a church building. If the Bible is taught off campus, there has to be competent teachers who themselves have been trained, who will hold accountable those who are in the Bible study groups, and most of all, who will make sure that these home groups are not just times for coffee and fellowship, or even gossip sessions.

B. It is an education of conviction. (steadfastly)

As we move on to our second point about the need for education or discipleship of our new converts, it is very important that we take a look at the word “steadfastly” mentioned here in verse 42. The word steadfast does add to the idea of consistently studying the Bible, but I believe it means much more than this. I believe it refers to studying the Bible doctrine which results in deep conviction about what we believe. Steadfast believers know what they believe, and they stand with conviction and courage on these beliefs. And too, these steadfast people are not easily influenced to follow after false counterfeit doctrines, even if it would be taught by some friends or close acquaintances. And yet once again, I am sad to say that we have scores of professing believers in our churches today who don't know what they believe, and if they do believe something, they are easily persuaded to change their doctrines if they have been taught by someone with a strong personality or persuasiveness. Our churches today are the most shallow doctrinally they have ever been, and it is because of inconsistent, unsteady believers who will change their doctrines at the flip of a coin. This is so like the false teachers which Paul dealt with in the Corinthian Church in II Corinthians. God forbid that we educate our new believers with truth but never encourage them to stay firm in what they are taught, unless of course, God shows them that their teaching has been wrong.

C. It is an education of credibility. (apostle's doctrine)

This verse 42 tells us explicitly that what the early church was taught was the divine truth which had been given to the apostles. Because the written Word had not yet been completed, God gave divine revelations to the apostles so that in turn, these apostles would teach this truth. Today we have the completed written Word of God, and we don't need and will not be getting any more divine revelations. But we do need to study diligently the inerrant Word of God so that we can know and have credible doctrine and truth to learn. It makes no difference how much we study if we aren't studying the right material. Every child of God ought to fall madly in love with God's Word, and the longer he or she studies the Book, the greater his or her appreciation and love for It should be.

Therefore, my dear friends, if we are going to be educated once we come to Christ, then we must make sure that we are taught by the right people and taught the right truth. It is not the responsibility of the church to entertain, but it is the second primary responsibility of the church to disciple and teach the truth of God's precious Word.

III. IT IS A MISSION OF EDIFICATION. v. 42b

The third primary responsibility of the New Testament Church is to edify the body of Christ. The word edify means to build up or raise to a higher level. As a seasoned pastor for a long time, I must tell you that I have known only a few people in each of the 10 churches I have pastored who have been readily given to edifying others in the faith of our Lord Jesus on a regular basis. Oh yes, I have known scores of people who have been a blessing to others from time to time, but what I am talking about are those who make it their goal to encourage and uplift other believers. And yet, according to the last half of verse 42, the early church had a good number of encouragers who loved to fellowship with others so that they might help edify the saints. Let's take a look at this mission of edification and evaluate where we stand in this edifying potential. If we find that we are not builders and instead are destructive in our behavior and deportment, then hopefully, this study will be used by God to change us. Life is too short to be discouragers and not encouragers!

A. Edification comes through commonality. (fellowship)

The Greek word for fellowship here is the word “koinonia” which means to be close in intimacy and community. It means coming together on a regular basis for inspiration and encouragement. This idea is based upon the fact that all of us who are truly born again believers have so much in common that we need and want to spend close fellowship with one another. The

early church did this daily from house to house, and also in a few synagogues where they were allowed to continue to meet. Therefore, I sincerely believe that if a person is genuinely saved, they will have a burning desire within for fellowship and inspiration from other believers. Thus, whether to go to church regularly is not even a consideration if the person is really saved. If there is no need or longing for fellowship, there probably isn't genuine salvation. So my friends, one of the main responsibilities patterned after the Book of Acts church is to provide fellowship for those in the body of Christ. In other words, those who are really saved have no need of fellowship with the world because they are perfectly contented with the fellowship of the brothers and sisters. And therefore, they don't look at church attendance as a "have-to" affair, but they look at church attendance and fellowshiping with other believers as extremely important and priceless.

B. Edification comes through communion. (the breaking of bread)

When our precious Lord led in the observance of the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room, He did so in order to have an ordinance that would continuously be observed by the church to bind them together in anticipation of when He would come again. This observance was not only a reminder of the broken body and shed blood of Christ which would purchase our salvation, but it would direct our attention to the fact that He is coming again. When the early church observed the supper, it drew them closer together while abiding in Christ, and it reminded them of the sacrifice that was made for our redemption.

Thus, the act of communion is very important to every church in that it is one of the only two church ordinances that is used by God to keep our focus on the main thing. That main thing is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. If we keep our focus on the redemptive act which purchased our salvation, then for sure, it will keep our focus on telling the Gospel story over and over. With the observance of the Lord's Supper, each participant would be edified or built up in the faith of our Lord Jesus!

C. Edification comes through communication. (prayers)

The early New Testament Church was a praying church. They edified each other by praying for each other. And, in the last part of this verse 42, we are reminded that this was a regular part of the early church's tasks. Prayer is absolutely vital to the development of every child of God. And if we are going to pattern our churches after the Book of Acts church, then we too must make prayer one of the main responsibilities of our local churches. Churches without prayer are churches without power. The best way in the

world to edify and build up other believers is to pray intercessory prayer every day on their behalf. This is a privilege that we all have, and if we don't take advantage of this privilege, then our churches will lose our power to witness, our power to win souls, and our ability to encourage others. So, let me ask you, "How is your prayer life?" How is your church's prayer life? If we and all of our people are not praying, we have no ability to encourage others, especially those that might be living thousands of miles away. So, a real New Testament Church on mission for God must have a devout prayer life in order to be fruitful and productive.

IV. IT IS A MISSION OF ENCOURAGEMENT. vs. 43-45

We now come to the fourth primary responsibility of the New Testament Church, and that is that our church should focus its attention on a superior level of ministry in order to encourage the believers. We have already talked about encouraging each other in the body within our fellowship of Christians, but this encouragement must take on another dimension as we reach out and truly minister to those who are hurting.

Because the early apostles had the "sign gifts" to verify their new Gospel message, everywhere they went, God empowered them to perform many miraculous signs and wonders. The ultimate purpose of these signs and miracles was not to draw attention to the apostles, nor to just single out people so that they could be objects of sympathy, but the purpose of everyone of these dynamic miracles and signs was to give validity to the new message the disciples were preaching. It was a powerful, life-changing message that required supernatural power to give credibility to the message in order to show that it was truly from God. And to say the least, when the people saw their loved ones healed, the lame made to walk, the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, their message of God's love for them was confirmed. Because of this, many people were truly encouraged to come to Christ and give Him their lives.

Now, we don't need these miracles today to authenticate the Gospel message, but we do need to reach out to the sick and the suffering to show the love of Christ to them and for them. We know that God is indeed the Great Physician, and no one is healed except by Him, even with the attention of doctors and nurses. But it is truly our responsibility as churches to minister to those who are sick and sometimes even dying. Thus, we need desperately to have a pastoral ministry to the sick and hurting. No church is the "New Testament Church on Mission" if it doesn't try to minister to the suffering people all around us. And I would say that this really includes the senior citizens and those in nursing and assisted living homes who are so often neglected because

too much emphasis is placed upon programs for the children and youth as opposed to carrying out a regular ministry to these elderly suffering people.

A. We can encourage others by directing their attention to the Savior. v. 43a

In the first part of verse 43, we see that in that early church, when the apostles were ministering to the sick and suffering, the people's focus was directed to the power of Jesus Christ who did the healing. Therefore, if we are going to be like the early church, we too must carry out the ministry to the hurting and suffering by directing their attention to Jesus who alone can heal bodies and restore broken dreams. In other words, whatever the early church in their ministry did, they always directed the people's attention to Christ Himself. They didn't try to get the glory for anything they did. They just simply did whatsoever they did in the name of Jesus. This, should be our goal, too! We must make sure that as we minister to the hurting and suffering, that Jesus alone gets the glory.

I need to tell you that I believe that not only did the early church try to direct the saved people's attention to the Savior because of the signs and wonders, but I believe they directed lost people's minds toward the Savior in order to bring many people to Christ, even while they were ministering to those who were suffering so much. This verse tell us that people who witnessed these miraculous signs developed a reverential fear for God and, I also believe, for the apostles who were doing the miracles as well. So, not only did the early church direct the attention of the people to Christ, the demonstration of God's mighty power brought a holy reverence for God, His servants, and of course, the message they preached. If there is anything we need in America right now, it is truly a new reverential fear for God which humbles people before Him and His glorious work.

B. We can encourage others by demonstrating acts of significance. v. 43b

This last part of verse 43 is just simply a reminder that the early church was truly concerned with getting out the Gospel, and the way God confirmed His Word was with the signs and miracles which the apostles were given the power to perform. Without being too repetitious, let me just say that the performing of the signs and wonders is truly a reminder that when we minister in the name of Jesus, we should not only preach the Gospel, but we should also be concerned with the total welfare of mankind. We should love those who are hurting, and we should reach out to minister to them. As we have learned so vividly working in our ministry in Africa, every kind and gracious deed that we do in order to minister to people is used by God to open even greater

doors for the proclamation of the Gospel message. So, just like in the early church in the Book of Acts, physical ministry is just a means to an end, and that end is to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe the total Gospel is first to share Christ, and then to minister to the entire man.

C. We can encourage others by an attitude of sharing. vs. 44-45

We now move on to verses 44-45, where we discover the tremendous truth that when the New Testament Church was started, as soon as the people got genuinely saved, they not only reached out to minister to those suffering with disease physically, but they also began to look for those who were suffering with poverty and deprivation. Of course, I know in this present generation of church folks, it is very hard to find a lot of people who look intentionally for others to help. But we will not be like the New Testament Church of the First Century if we don't take a look around us to see who might need our help physically, financially, and for sure, those in need of food, then we cannot say that we are like Jesus and the early church.

In verse 44, we find the words that the people had all things in common. This doesn't mean that everyone brought all their resources and put them together and then divided them with each other like the Communist say they do. It just means that the newly saved church members looked around them to make sure that no one was left out or suffering unnecessarily while others had plenty and enjoyed a very high standard of living. And I need to add, when many of the early Christians really got saved and then were baptized, identifying themselves with Christ, they may have lost their jobs, their homes, their belongings, and most of everything they had. Why? Because this new fangled Gospel was hated by the Jews initially, and they would do everything to destroy it, just like Saul did before he became Paul the Apostle.

Now, verse 45 is one of those verses that is really difficult for us Americans, living with such an abundance of things, to really understand. I never preached this truth for over 40 years of ministry, but in recent years I believe that God did tell the early church that if it were necessary to sell everything they had in order to help meet the needs of the people who were suffering and in poverty, they should go ahead and do this. Scores of the early church members obviously did sell what they had because of the content of verse 45. When they got saved, their hearts were changed dramatically from self-centered people to compassionate and sympathetic folks who went out looking for people to help. Why, this verse also tells us that they wanted to help meet all men's needs. This probably included lost people who were not saved as well. So, like the

Muslims and many other religions do, these early Christians went out looking to help all people regardless of race, rank, or religion. This should surely be the example for our churches in these days. For sure, we are not to be just welfare and humanitarian organizations, but Billy Graham said many years ago if the churches would reach out and help the suffering in our communities, we wouldn't even need the government organizations who are trying to meet the needs of those suffering in our society. I would go so far as to say, if our churches would go with compassion and concern like the early church did, we might be winning more people to Christ because people would see what we do, and not just hear what we say.

My question to you my readers is, "Have you gone looking for some people to help lately?" If not, why don't you make a commitment to do this today as you read this article. You might not only help alleviate suffering, but you might just help rescue a soul from hell, as well. Just remember that our humanitarian help should just be a means to the end of winning people to Christ! Yes, we do need to have an attitude of sharing if we are going to follow the pattern of the early church. And yes, please remember hundreds of the early church members were in abject poverty, but like the Macedonian believers described in II Corinthians, they gave out of their own poverty! Don't you think we should? I surely do, and it is not just what I think, but it is what my wife and I practice almost every week of our lives.

V. IT IS A MISSION OF EXALTATION. vs. 46-47.

We now come to the last of the five main points that every church should be emphasizing, if it is going to live up to the standard of the early New Testament Church. And as I stated earlier, some of you probably believe this should be the first point in our mission statement for every church. In other words, there are many people that believe that worship or exaltation should be the primary part of our mission as churches. But as I stated before, lost people can't worship, and therefore I believe evangelism needs to come first. But, once we gather God's saved people together, there should be faithful and consistent worship of our Lord. Let's take a look at several things about this praise and worship and see what we can glean from these two verses.

A. The early church had public exaltation. v. 46a

The first part of this verse tell us that the early church daily went into the temple to worship publicly. They weren't ashamed of their new faith in Christ, and they were zealous about showing to others their love for the Savior Who had saved them. We too should never miss gathering together to worship unless we are sick or traveling out of town. There is no greater way to display

our sincere love for Christ than to worship in the house of God regularly.

B. The early church had private worship. v. 46b

According to the second part of verse 46, the people went from house to house fellowshiping with each other, and, without a doubt, they were worshipping there as well. The point I want to make is that we will never be good worshippers in the public until we learn how to worship Christ in the closet or in the houses where we go. We too should have this private worship because it is in these private quiet times with our families and, yes, even next door with our friends, that God really wants to show up and bless us tremendously. Worship alone or with a few doesn't provide nearly as much opportunity for us to seek the attention of others when in fact, we should only be seeking the presence of our wonderful Lord.

C. The early church had pleasurable exaltation. v. 46c

As the early church members moved from house to house, fellowshiping together and worshipping God, they had a sense of joy and gladness about them. Their lives were filled with the sweet presence of the Savior, and they were thrilled to be a vital part of the new family of God. When we worship at home, next door with our neighbors, and even in our collective worship services, there should be heart-expressed joy and gladness as we lift up our head and hands to worship our wonderful Lord God. This worship should bring pleasure to our hearts because we know it brings pleasure to the heart of God. And of course, the Bible teaches in several places that God intends for us to bring pleasure to His heart with our worship and lives. **(Revelation 4:11)** This joy and gladness must not be just from the excitement of loud music or emotional extremes, but it must be from our hearts because we feel for sure that we are bringing pleasure to God's heart because we are worshipping Him or exalting His name.

D. The early church had persistent exaltation. v. 46d

I also want to mention that the early church was extremely single-minded in the focus of their worship as they worshipped God wherever they went. They were truly persistent in their commitment to worship and praise God, and so should we be as well. The idea of "hit and miss" worship or smorgasbord Christianity is not found anywhere in the Bible. What I am talking about here is gathering for worship ever once in awhile, present one Sunday and out the next, "hit and miss" Christianity, or even going from church to church trying to find just the perfect people and the perfect pastor or preacher. These ideas of worship and service are truly not characteristic of the early New Testament Church, and they should not be traits of ours in this generation either.

E. It was praise-giving exaltation. v. 47a

The first part of verse 47 tells us that the primary object of all our worship should be that we exalt and praise God. This means that we don't meet with God to brag on ourselves or even others who might be performing, entertaining, or just speaking. We are truly to exalt our Father with heavenly praise that comes from a clean and true heart that is centered on God the Father and His blessed Son. There is no room just for noise or emotional upheaval, but there is room for single-hearted praise and worship for none other than our Lord and Savior. And please be reminded that praise is not to be worked up with musical instruments or loud music which detracts from our Lord. Praise must flow from our hearts naturally because of our love for Christ and our willingness to honor Him for all that He has done for us.

F. It was persuasive exaltation. v. 47b

In the second part of verse 47, we are told that when the early church praised or worshipped the Lord, it brought pleasure and favor with all the people. Therefore, we know that the early church's worship and praise was pleasing to God, and that it helped persuade others to focus on Christ and Him alone. Genuine heartfelt worship which comes from one's entire being will always bring praise for God, and it will influence others to praise the Lord, also.

Now, let me mention again that so often in our modern churches, we have entertainment, noise, emotional expressions, and even sometimes some passionate preaching, and sad to say, a lot of these actions don't really ever worship God. Instead, they appeal to the flesh. This is why sometimes people go only to churches that have this contemporary excitement, but they don't go to churches where solid Biblical preaching, which ends in conviction, is coming from the pulpit. It is the old philosophy that we are all basically good, and therefore, we don't need to be made to feel guilty for our wrong. Of course when people believe this, they must forget that without Biblical preaching, which brings Spirit conviction, people are not made aware of their wrong, and thus, they will not repent of their sins. Without repentance, there can be no forgiveness.

Before closing this point, I would like to say that we must always remember that even when we gather collectively to worship, others are watching us. Therefore, we need to realize that the kind of worship we render to God may just be imitated by others. So, we better make sure that God is truly praised by our worship, and yes, even pleased by our exaltation of Him. If He is not, then others may turn away and fail to worship Him as well. So, let's make sure that our praise and worship not only honors our Lord, but it also affects those around us, either positively or negatively.

G. It was productive exaltation. v. 47c

We now come to the last part of verse 47, which tells us that as a result of the early church's true worship and exaltation, many people go saved and were added to the membership of the local church. Let me stop and remind you here that the mission of the New Testament Church started with evangelism and it ends with multitudes coming to Christ. Yes, even our worship and worship services should be focused on bringing others to salvation. Although it is very important for every believer to worship God on a regular basis for himself or herself, we must never forget that lost people are watching us to see if our lives are truly genuine because the sincerity of our Christianity will be revealed in our style and method of worship. Maybe we should give more attention to the way we worship, the things we do when we worship, and how our worship is affecting others. I hope you will join me in making this a personal prayer request for each of us.

CONCLUSION

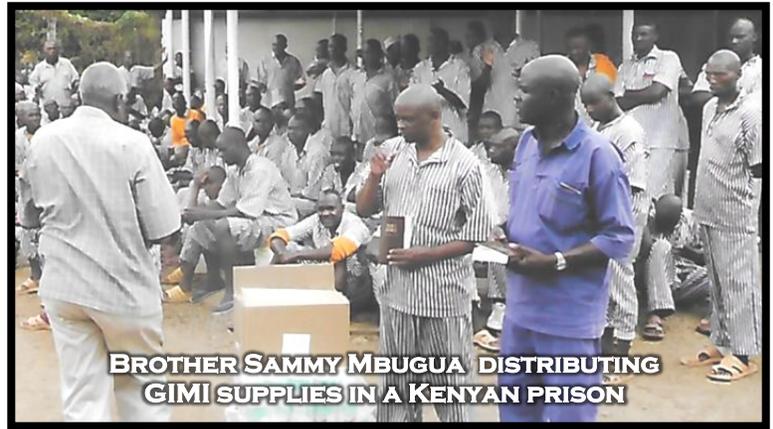
As we now come to the conclusion of this article, let me ask you a few straight forward questions. "How close is the church where you attend to the New Testament pattern? Does your church have the same priorities that the Book of Acts church had? Would you say that your church leadership does its best to keep the main things the main things?" I surely do hope so, because if the five parts of the New Testament Church are the main priorities of your church, then your church should be growing in every way. Your numbers should be growing, many people should be getting saved, the church should be baptizing many people, and the fellowship level of your church family should be high. Your ministry to the community where you live should be meeting the needs of scores of people. And, let me go one step farther. If your church is following the mission of the New Testament Church, then your participation in the Great Commission cause should be the main interest, and also the main effort, of your church family.

Just as a reminder, let me tell you again that the five step program of the early New Testament Church was evangelism, education, edification, encouragement, and exaltation. I do pray that your pastor and church leaders have these on the front burner of your church's ministry, regardless of where you are located. I assure you that these steps will work anywhere in the world because the Bible methodology is still very relevant. I also like to remind you that we don't need to contextualize the Gospel into the culture, exchange preaching from the pulpit for dialogue, take the offensiveness of the Gospel out of our proclamation, and water down the message of repentance and redemption in order to win people to Christ. We need to remember what Paul told the Roman

believers in **Romans 1:15-17**, when he said, *"So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."* My dear friends, if we could get our churches back to the New Testament pattern, we would not be wasting so much of God's money on the wrong things and wasting so much time and effort in worthless programs. And without a doubt, we would be reaping the harvest from the fields that are white unto harvest.

Let's go build some New Testament Churches!

"Some Highlight Ministry Photos from 2017"



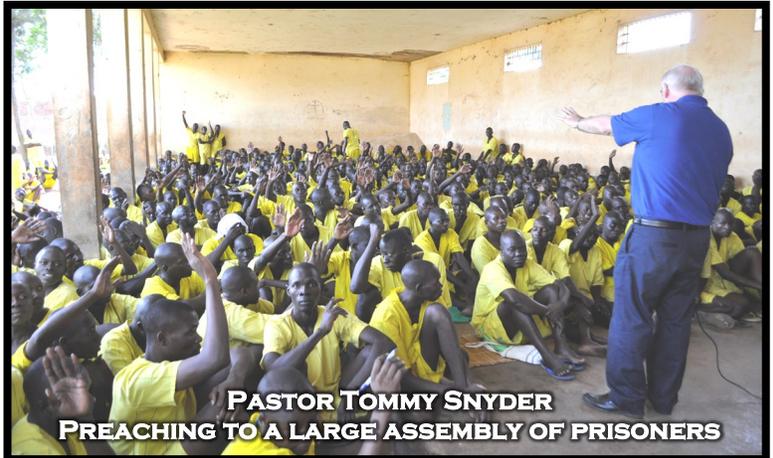
BROTHER SAMMY MBUGUA DISTRIBUTING GIMI SUPPLIES IN A KENYAN PRISON



REV. SSENTUMBWE GIVING GIMI BIBLES TO STUDENTS



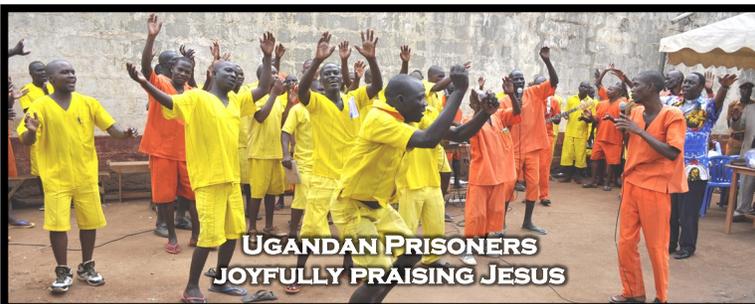
PASTOR STAN AND MAMA JO ANNE IN UGANDA



PASTOR TOMMY SNYDER PREACHING TO A LARGE ASSEMBLY OF PRISONERS



THE FRYES WITH MANY OF OUR AFRICAN STAFF MEMBERS



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