

Retreat Reflections: CABTAL Staff Retreat, Yaoundé, Cameroon. June 13-16, 2011
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On June 13 to the 16, 2011, Jola and I had the privilege and pleasure of being the guest speakers at the annual CABTAL (Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy) staff development retreat. After flying to Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, on June 8, and taking a few days to recover from jetlag and finish the retreat preparations, we headed to the retreat site on Monday evening, June 13. We arrived there in time for a wonderful meal and a movie night while we were introduced to the staff. Their heart for the Lord and for us was evident from the moment we walked in the door. We were provided with best room the facility had and were invited to join in the opening prayers for the retreat. As I listened to some of the most God centered prayers I have heard in years, I found it ironic and humbling that I had been asked to teach these people how to rest and pray better.

After spending most of Tuesday getting to know the staff, we did our first Sabbath-Rest message that evening on the topic of releasing our concerns to the Lord. The response was truly a miracle. I felt tired, unprepared and unworthy, and some resisted and questioned the teaching. Yet, people began to see the need for regular Sabbath time spent sitting at the feet of Jesus. It was beautiful to see hearts soften to the truth that God wants us to rest and even created it. The sessions Wednesday on reviewing our lives and remembering the Lord's work were also well received. Here are some of the comments we received:

...Thanks you for changing me, making me see things I would have never known and bringing me back on track in the ministry. Thank God you guys came! TR

...It has been a blessing having you amongst us. Your teaching about "Sabbath rest" has reawakened me. I will reinforce this in my home. God bless you. RT

...I'm so blessed with your teaching & look forward to implement your directives. May the Lord richly bless you guys. Come again next time. MN

...Thank for your coming here in Cameroon. Through you our God had mercie (Sp) on me and remember how it is good to be in his presence. I am so grateful and bless(ed). May God richly bless you and provide to all you need. NKS

...I am grateful God brought you to address issues which I have struggled with. May God bless you. Thank You. BT

And yes, there was talk of there being a "next time," but the Lord will have to work that out in His timing.

On Thursday I taught three sessions on prayer based on the work of D. A. Carson in his book "A Call to Spiritual Reformation." These sessions dealt with the topics why we do not pray, how to pray better, and some specific training on intercessory prayer. As with the Sabbath teaching, the Spirit of God moved in the hearts of these dear servants and these sessions were well also received. The comments were unbelievable:

...You came to Cameroon in obedience to our Master. He is faithful. See, He has used you to revitalize our prayer life, especially mine. May He continue to use you to equip others. SN

One thing that surprised us was the comments on what they learned watching us interact as a couple:

...Wow! What can I say? You (-ellew) sounds and is so deep in your knowledge of God to me. Press on brother! I received ministry just by looking at your interactions as a couple. I learned from this! ZE

...I enjoyed your presence and your teachings. I equally enjoyed the way you expressed your love for each other. CN

We left the retreat on Thursday evening tired, and with joyful but heavy hearts in the hope that we would see these new friends again. By God's we will.



CABTAL Staff Development Retreat