



# THE ITEM Impact

*Strengthening churches by equipping pastors to be examples, equippers, and expositors.*

November 1, 2017



**The ITEM team from Rwanda met with Steve during his recent trip. In 2018 they will begin conducting ITEM seminars on their own in preparation of the full launch of the ITEM E-4 strategy in 2019.**

Dear ITEM Partner,

With each passing trip, our commitment to change the preaching style in Africa grows. This is because of the stories we continue to hear about how pastors prepare to preach and how those hearing the sermons describe what they are hearing.

Dr. Steve Van Horn, ITEM president, just returned from Rwanda where he and Pastor Chris McMillan from Providence Baptist Church, Hayes, VA, conducted the Institute in the Foundations of Church Leadership (ITEM's basic Bible and theology seminar). Because of our strong conviction that the preaching in Africa must improve significantly if the church is going to mature spiritually, Dr. Van Horn spent two hours talking about and answering questions about preaching.

## TWO RWANDA TAKE-AWAYS

There were at least two take-aways from this discussion. Dr. Van Horn was told that a large percentage of Africans come to church to sing and dance but are not too interested in hearing the Bible taught. The second is in reference to a commonly used phrase, "the word of God." He was told that this phrase, "the word of God," describes what comes from the pastor when he preaches. It may not even come from the Bible but because of the way the pastor is viewed, it is described as "the word of God."

We asked Dr. Nathan Chiroma, Dr. Van Horn's special assistant, to elaborate on this and this is what he wrote:

Recently, I was speaking to a couple of church leaders in Africa regarding certain issues that pertain to the Christian faith. We both kept saying "the word of God." Little did I know that we had two different meanings.

From their perspective, "the word of God" is anything that comes from their church leader when he is preaching whether it is from the Bible or not. That prompted me to engage other church leaders only to realize that they also believe that "the word of God is equal to the words of the leader (i.e. the pastor)."

I believe this is happening due to a lack of Bible exposition and leadership training in Africa. Pastors are in the habit of using one scripture verse as a springboard (because they are not trained to do anything else) to say whatever they want to say. As a result,

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most of the church members do not know how to make a distinction between the words of the pastor and the Bible. Most of the church members end up equating the Bible to the word of the pastor, who they often refer to as Papa or Mama.

It has become very clear to me that as we do our ITEM seminars we must consistently refer to the Bible as the Word of God in order to help church leaders help their members know the difference.

These new details confirm that we are on the right track when putting the preaching ministry of the pastor in the middle of what we are teaching. Pastors must begin to teach the Bible systematically, in context, so believers can learn that the Word of God is God's word, not the pastor's, and then learn and apply biblical principles. After all, making disciples includes "teaching them to obey" what Christ commanded (Matthew 28:20).

Following the seminar, Dr. Van Horn met with the ITEM team from Rwanda and assigned them the task of scheduling small seminars throughout Rwanda in 2018 for the purpose of getting experience giving the lectures in preparation of a full launch of ITEM's E-4 strategy in 2019.

## **TWO WOMEN'S CONFERENCES**

For the past two weeks, a team of 6 (four from Fallon, Nevada and two from Portland, Oregon) ministered to groups of 35 to 45 women in Burundi and Rwanda. The team was led by Karen Duncan, ITEM board member and the Women's Ministry Director. They conducted a 4-day seminar in each location. The seminars were to introduce the women to ITEM and the plan for further training. The curriculum emphasized salvation through faith in the person of Jesus and what living out that faith looks like - day in, day out, both in home life and in ministry.

Each team member also shared bits of their personal story that included struggle and heartache and how God proved Himself

faithful. The willingness to be open and personal immediately bridged a gap between the two cultures, as "struggle" is a very familiar concept to the women of Africa.

Working with women is highly relational. So, on top of the teaching, there were sweet connections being made throughout each day through hugs, smiles, and an attempt to communicate with few words and much body language. The language barrier really makes this a challenge, but one worthy of the energy it requires. At the end of each seminar, the ITEM team gave each participant a Bible. The response was overwhelming and included tears and dancing.

Karen plans to follow up next spring and then take another team same time next year for further teaching and training. (Submitted by Mrs. Danell Macy, team member)

## **RESTORING BIBLICAL TRUTH UPDATE**

As we mentioned last month, we have formed a partnership with The International Alliance to Restore Biblical Truths. The purpose of the partnership is to conduct conferences combining ITEM seminars during the day and services at night exposing the false teaching that is sweeping across Africa.

Our first conference is set tentatively for Lagos, Nigeria next April and we have a request from the Ghana Evangelical Missions Association to have a conference there. In the coming months and years, we believe this partnership is going to open up new opportunities for us that could extend far beyond the continent of Africa.

## **ON THE HORIZON:**

- No trips planned before January

## **PRAYER**

- Strategic planning related to 2018
- For strong year-end giving

*Thank you for helping to make this possible.*

By His grace,

*The ITEM Team*