

Cameroon Ministry Update

ITEM's trip to Cameroon last month was a great success. We received positive feedback from the attending pastors, all were encouraged and well prepared to lead their churches afterwards. One of the attendees gave the following testimony. "I am so excited for this ministry and the ITEM training. What I have learned so far and from these seminars is Bible application, spiritual discipline. The training has helped me be exposed to scripture and reading in the correct context. I am now devoted to teaching God's word. Praise Jesus."

We are so excited to see how God continues to bless ITEM and transform churches one pastor at a time. We thank all of our donors for making this possible and continuing to support ITEM. Your financial support and constant prayers allow us to bring God's word to other countries and advance His Kingdom.



View from the Frontlines

November 2023

Women's Ministry

ITEM's Women's Ministry is up and running! I have had two opportunities to travel to Kenya and Uganda in 2023, and I am so excited and encouraged about this new and important ministry. Back in January, I traveled to three locations along with my indispensable companion, Dorcas. At each location, we met with women who are already leaders in their churches, as well as women with leadership potential. We held one day trainings in each location, and we tried to discern what would be needed to begin to develop a Women's Ministry in these churches. Dorcas and I decided that we would focus on two locations to begin with, and in May, Dorcas traveled to these places and conducted introductory trainings on Women's Ministries.

In September, Dorcas and I traveled together to our pilot locations in Nairobi and Kisumu, and we held two full-day trainings in each place. We talked about being women of prayer and diligent Bible study, as well as what will be needed to begin establishing Women's Ministries in their churches. Our oft repeated mission statement was: "To develop and establish a Biblical, God-honoring and flourishing Women's Ministry in the local church." We added in a one day training in a new location, because we had an extra day to spare, and it was very well received. We hope to be able to follow up here next time with our two day training. The women that we are working with are so excited and eager to begin to implement the things they are learning, and Dorcas and I are looking forward to continuing to build on what we have begun. We are so grateful for the generous support we have received that has allowed us to begin this important work.

As we look to the future and as we plan and dream about what is possible- we truly covet your prayers. I am absolutely certain that none of this would be possible without your prayers, and I am deeply thankful for faithful prayer partners. I am also filled with gratitude for the financial support I have received. This has allowed me to travel, as well as enabling Dorcas to continue the work- even when I am not there. As we tell the ladies in our training- women are valuable and important to Jesus- we see this His Word - and they are also vitally important and valuable in their churches. Thank you again for your generous support! We are excited to continue to work with the women in Kenya!

Sandee Crossen

Much work is taking place ...

>> Fall 2023 Banquet honored God's faithfulness and favor to ITEM and Steve over the last 20 years

>> Testimonies from African pastors in training



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ENGAGING THE EMERGING GENERATION OF LEADERS IN AFRICA

Over 30 African countries have outlawed homosexuality. One, Uganda, passed an anti-homosexuality bill that threatens life in prison for those who say they are gay. It also includes the death penalty in certain cases. One activist claimed, "This is a lot of blackmail. People are receiving calls that 'if you don't give me money, I will report that you are gay.'" The bill is one of the toughest pieces of anti-gay legislation in Africa.

A long-time friend of mine, an atheist, contacted me on Facebook messenger and asked, "What are your thoughts about 30+ African countries have anti-gay laws many influenced by American, right-wing evangelical influences."

How would you respond? Would you go immediately to what God says about homosexuality? There is a better way. Do not go on the defense nor attack. Ask questions. Here is how our discussion went. (I will paraphrase to save space.)

Steve: Are you assuming that 100% of American evangelicals are behind those laws?

Friend: Not 100% but most believe being gay is sin.

Steve: What is your understanding of the meaning of the word "sin?" Would you label any action as a sin?

Friend: Yes, but not in a Christian way. Any negative action against individuals and groups.

Steve: Is any act universally wrong (a sin)? If so, who defined it that way?

Friend: Murder, abuse, suppression of groups in society, genocide.

Steve: My question remains. Who gets to decide that all murder is wrong? Hitler was convinced he was right. Richard Dawkins, the leading atheist, says "There is no right or wrong. We are all just dancing to our DNA." If he is right, then no one can say that what Hitler did was wrong. He was just dancing to his DNA.

Friend: I do not agree with that.

Steve: So, you do not agree with the leading atheist. So, my question remains, "Who decides what is right and wrong?" Seems like you are saying it comes down to each individual.

(At this point he put a "thumbs up" emoji under that statement.)

Steve: If declaring what is right and wrong is an individual matter, then neither of us have the right to judge what Uganda leadership has done. They are doing what they believe is right. For the record, I do not agree with what they are doing, either, but my disagreement is grounded in my Christianity. Labeling homosexuality as being wrong is one thing. Responding at Uganda has, is out of bounds and not what the Christian response should be.

It was very late, and I had to sign off. I offered to continue the discussion at any time.

Did you note my approach? I began by asking questions; question after question and showed him that he does not live by his atheistic claims. This is typical. Most atheists do not live by typical atheistic claims. They claim to be atheists but live according to many Christian principles.

This was a discussion I was having with a friend here in the States, but similar conversations are taking place in Africa. As I continue to meet with the emerging generation in Africa, this will be an issue that they are going to need to learn to deal with in a biblical way, mixing grace and truth.

My next trip is scheduled for mid-January when I will be back on the University of Rwanda and meeting in Zimbabwe with a group of evangelical leaders from several southern African countries.

By His grace,
Steve

Dominican Republic

In February of this year, ITEM responded to an invitation to begin training in the Dominican Republic. After some initial challenges, we were able to identify a highly qualified indigenous leader named Pastor Polo to spearhead our efforts there. During the first week of September ITEM was able to launch our initial training cohort in the city of La Romana, which is located along the sparkling Caribbean coast.

Pastor Polo and ITEM associate Robert Zink led the training, which was received with great joy and eagerness. Approximately twenty-seven pastors and church leaders attended from as far away as Punta Cana and San Pedro de Macoris, which is several hours journey. Pastor Polo informed us that this was the first training opportunity for the majority of pastors present, and those in attendance were greatly encouraged and challenged by the training. We are excited to hear how the Lord will use this training to transform lives in the Dominican Republic.

Madagascar

Our team in Madagascar held a seminar and reported great attendance, with testimonies from 4 of the pastors in training. Each pastor noted how the training ITEM is providing has helped them learn the truth of God's word and revealed to them how to properly teach their families and their congregation.



Burundi



Our Burundi coordinator, Pastor Boniface Okalo, along with 3 trainers, gave thanks to God for allowing them to hold fruitful IFCL and ICOMP seminars over the last few months. They were blessed with wonderful attendance, and clear messages that spoke of Gods' vision for the church and how to properly teach Gods Word.

ITEM currently ministers to 15 African countries across central Africa – Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, and Madagascar. In each of these countries, the Christian religion has flourished but biblical knowledge and pastoral training has lagged far behind. 95% of pastors in the majority world have not received any kind of formal Bible training and are in need of ITEM.