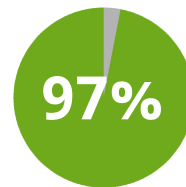


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How Did I Get HERE?



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



Just a short time ago, I had what most would say was the “good Christian life.” I had a stable job that met all of our needs. God was the head master of our household, we attended church every Sunday and got fed with solid, deep biblical knowledge. We own our home in a purposeful area that allows us to serve as God’s witness in our back yard. We were active in the missions team at our church and had an amazing group of Christian friends. We attended mission trips each year and aimed to do missions locally and globally. We had the typical Christian walk here in the USA and it WAS good.

This past week has been amazing and challenging at the same time. We are continuing our network building and raising support. With the help of Rev. Dr. Elmo Familiaran of ABCNJ, we were introduced to and had a two hour lunch with Rev. Dr. Edgar Nicolas who is president of the Haitian Baptist Alliance of churches here in the USA and the Alliance’s leadership team. So my story picks up on Thursday at this meeting and we are speaking a combination of Creole and English (mostly they spoke Creole very slowly for me and I spoke English). I mentioned that we were still looking for a church on Sunday to speak at. Quickly, we were invited to speak at the Haitian Evangelical Church of Jesus Christ in Jersey City, New Jersey. The pastor said that we should expect to preach for 40 mins to an hour, I accepted and the meeting went on. As we were leaving, I received the directions and the time to arrive, the next words I heard were a shock, “And you are going to preach in Creole.”

“YIKES!” I thought to myself, “I have two days to write a sermon in Creole, get the sentences corrected for spelling and grammar, practice the pronunciation and be prepared to present this in front of an audience of 125 Haitians! Oh yeah, we also have deputation meetings and events scheduled during those two days.” I am sure most people would shed a bead of sweat over this (yes, I used sarcasm in a journal), but I have about eight weeks of Haitian Creole intensive training under my belt from last June-July.

I naturally came to John 15 as my scripture reference, it seems to be my life passage for this season in my life and I have preached it before in English. Luckily, I have an amazing wife who was also willing to speak for half of the sermon time to preach what God had placed on her heart. I began with introducing who we are, where we are going, what our work will be in Haiti, and an ask for support. Then, onto scripture and to preach God’s Word. I wrote about three quarters of my message and with blind faith I emailed it to my professor from this summer at IU Bloomington and asked him to review it and suggest corrections so that I would at least have something written correctly. The message was so difficult for me to write, because I have a 1st grade vocabulary, speak like a pre-schooler and am trying to teach God’s Word at an adult level. When I checked my email on Saturday morning, he had replied with all sorts of corrections and suggestions for clarification. Which I took and finished writing my sermon at 11:00pm on Saturday night.

Sunday Morning came and it took about 2 hours to drive to the church. We arrived and found a parking spot in the city and were sat up on the stage as the music and worship began. As I sat on stage looking over a packed sanctuary; with simple, yet beautiful decorations and little modern technology worship began. The service was presented in a combination of French and Creole and I only understood a small portion of what was being said and sung. As I sat on the stage it almost felt surreal for me. I looked over at Lynette and then out into the pew where Ricky and Calen were sitting and asked, “How did we get here?”

How did we get to be sitting on this stage? Here is a country guy from rural North West Pennsylvania, sitting in a church full of Haitians. Not only that, but we will be speaking to them in their heart language." I sat back in my chair and chuckled, because this doesn't make sense in any earthly terms.

As the time came to speak, I started out super nervous. A couple of times in the first paragraph, laughing was heard from the audience as I tried to sound out the words and get a cadence to my voice.

For those who don't know, during this process of becoming a missionary, I was tested and diagnosed with dyslexia. Through research, I discovered that dyslexia is different from person to person and it's not always reversing letters or difficulty with numbers. My problems arise with words. As I read, the words tend to move around on the page, almost like worms. Although the text size is the same, random letters or even words will get larger or shrink while I read. Though, it is often labeled as a disability, I have found dyslexia to be my mental ABILITY in the ways that my brain works differently. All that being said, reading and reading out loud has proven difficult for me in English, much less as I learn another language.

During this particular Sunday I did okay through the introduction and ministry presentation. But once I transitioned into God's Word, a supernatural peace came over me and the words on the page began to flow out of my mouth with minimal effort, even though this is my first time reading this scripture aloud. I hit my first sermon point that was a question for the congregation to respond to, and you know what... They responded and came alive with excitement. I was so energized and as I transitioned to Lynette to take over, I was in disbelief of how natural it had felt. Granted, I know that many mistakes were made, but God didn't waste this time or experience. In fact, only God can get the credit for this. It wasn't me speaking on that stage that Sunday of March 4th, and God revealed to me through this gift, a reminder that He is right here with me.

As I was praying through the end of the service, tears welled up in my eyes and I felt such a sense of His comfort. As I looked around at these beautiful people, I had an overwhelming sense of family and God changed my question of, "How did we get here?" to a statement of fact, "This is your family."

It is in God's strength that I am empowered. It is in God's voice that I am able to speak. It is God's face that I see in people from all walks of life. It is in God's direction that I navigate closer to Him. It is in God's love that my heart is comforted and complete.

Blessings to you and please feel free to contact me with questions or comments about this article or ways we can pray for you as you step out in the direction that God is calling you to more.

Brian Smith