

Addis Ababa Bible Training Institute Report

Graduation and Conference



The words to the contemporary Christian song “Listen to Our Hearts” capture the feelings I have as I try to write this last Newsletter for this first graduating class of the AABTI:

How do you explain, how do you describe

A love that goes from east to west

And runs as deep as it is wide?

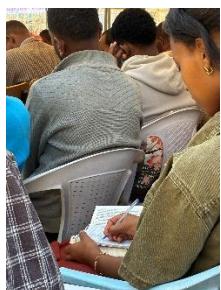
Those words get close to capturing the feelings that so many of us were feeling upon the graduation of these men. But, also, I need to let you know that the graduation was held in conjunction with the 7th National Preacher’s Conference held in Ethiopia.



I have been blessed, as well, to participate in two prior National Preacher's Conferences. One in Jajura, a rural area in South Central Ethiopia. One of my strongest remembrances is first hearing, and then seeing, large, separate groups of Christians singing and walking together as they gathered, "from the hills", arriving on the large, grassy compound in Jajura. The second was on the compound of the Deaf School in Hawassa, the, at the time, Southern Region Capital. Both events were very moving events, filled with the excitement of souls in love with the Lord and the fellowship with one another.

This most recent event, held on the compound of the Mekanisa School for the Deaf in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was no less moving. Even more so because of the very special connection that a number of us have developed with this first class of the AABTI. We were blessed to have several of the teachers that worked with these men in the classroom off and on over the past two years. Don DeLukie from West Monroe, LA spoke several different times as did Joe Boe of Fresno, CA. We were also blessed to have Tim Burrow, President of the Sunset International Bible Institute deliver the Commencement Address.

As in years past, I was so impressed with the interest and passion for God's word that our Ethiopian brethren displayed. This next picture captures this impression well, noting a late teen to early twenty's year-old female with Bible open and pen to Notepad while listening to one of the speakers.



It was a special blessing to me to note this as the speaker made special point after special point which she dutifully noted on her pad and corroborated through consulting the

text of her Amharic Bible. And I was blessed to be witness to her diligence in attention to both the speaker and the word of God.

The local church hosted this Conference, accepting the responsibility to feed and house the near to over 600 attendees from “down-country.” I was shaking my head in amazement before, during, and after this event. The Mekanisa Compound is a literal beehive of activity all the time but ever more so during this event. How would they do it? The attendees slept on mats in the various rooms of the 8-story school for the deaf and I’m sure other covered places I couldn’t possibly imagine. The School for the Deaf is in the background of this picture looking out over the floor of the recently poured fourth floor of a multi-story, multi-purpose building under construction on the compound. This new multi-purpose building is largely



the result of the remarkable expansion and development of the city of Addis Ababa itself. The school property was donated by the family of Emperor Haile Selassie in the 1960's and is currently on the main east-west “corridor” through the city of Addis Ababa. There is great pressure on landowners along this corridor to upgrade their properties

and cooperate with the city's desire to grow, expand, and improve in every possible way.

The incongruities of “expansion” in Africa were seen in this setting of a modern School for the Deaf and an under-construction multi-purpose building on the city's new modern “Corridor” across the city of Addis Ababa. This contrast is seen in the picture below as a very healthy, good-looking bull awaits just the other side of the fence where the crowd is gathered. The bull is to be dinner and lunch very soon. This was a practice



I saw during the two prior National Conferences. The bull was slaughtered, cut up, and cooked up onsite in the traditional fashion to prepare “wat,” a traditional Ethiopian highly flavored stew (look it up!). As you can imagine, this Conference and Graduation was an extremely well prepared and coordinated event that was enjoyed by all.

As enjoyable as it was to see and experience all these details and exchanges with our Ethiopian brethren, the main story is the effect of the Word of God in the hearts and lives of all our national brethren in Ethiopia as well as, particularly, our 19 new Graduates of the AABTI. We had waited to have this Graduation outside of “wet-season” and it was a real blessing to have waited. The weather was gorgeous and comfortable in every respect. The attendance of brethren from across the country was very special and especially for our graduates to have family members in attendance for this very special event for them. It gladdened my heart to see the father of one of our grads in the audience as I spoke on Friday of the event. Paulos Dekama is a preacher in the farthest south area I have ever visited in Ethiopia. He is from the Oromo tribe which is predominantly Muslim. Paulos had been reached through World Bible School and became a very effective and powerful evangelist in far south Ethiopia. The picture below will forever (precluding brain injury or dementia) be etched in my brain. Paulos, and now his son, Yonas, will remain active in preaching the



gospel in areas none of us could ever be effective in. That is the goal and primary purpose of training these men intensively in the word of God. It has been a special blessing to have these men with us these past two years. Several of them reminded me that they were just “little boys” when they first saw me preaching in a new church plant area of Southern Ethiopia. And now, they will be the leaders of the

future for the church in Ethiopia. Pray for all of these men and the churches that have mentored them. Pray for those they will mentor and bless in the years to come.

Blessings in Him, Jim Wilson and the Students of the AABTI