

Report from Ethiopia
ABC 5/6/18

(S) Let me begin by saying, *Thank You!* Your prayers, support, & allowing & enabling me to do this are appreciated more than I can express. When I compare this trip with my trip 2 years ago, this was so much more enjoyable & fun, it's like comparing night & day! It wasn't a fight just to survive each day & time didn't drag like last time. This morning we're not going to be looking at Ps 119, but at Ethiopia.

1. History If you're anything like me, your knowledge of history of Ethiopia is severely lacking. (S)

A. Biblical What about your biblical knowledge of Ethiopia? Where is Ethiopia first mentioned in Scripture? Gen 2:13 -- **And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia** (KJV) or as the NASB has it, **it flows around the whole land of Cush**, the upper Nile region, south of Egypt, the area of the horn of Africa.

(S) While the Bible doesn't state it, where is the Queen of Sheba from? **1 Kgs 10:1-10**

According to Ethiopian tradition, Queen Sheba came back pregnant with Solomon's baby & that line of descendants were the rulers of the country for hundreds of years. From Acts 8 we know that the gospel came to Ethiopia very early. The disciples had taken Jesus' words to heart (Acts 1:8) and had been His witnesses in **Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria**, & it appears that Ethiopia was the first of the **even to the remotest part of the earth** as Philip explained the gospel from Isaiah to the **court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her treasure** (Acts 8:27). He put his faith in Jesus, was baptized, & returned to Ethiopia rejoicing &, I'm sure, sharing the gospel with others. There was a substantial population of Ethiopians Jews, known as Bete Israel, until the 1980s when they relocated to Israel in Operation Moses & Operation Solomon. Needless to say, the Ethiopians are very proud of their biblical history.

B. Secular The Greek name Ethiopia is from 2 Greek words meaning *I burn* and *face*. Ethiopia has a population of over 100 million & is the most populous landlocked country in the world & has the 2nd largest population in Africa. Within Ethiopia is a large highland area of mountains & (S) plateaus divided by the Great Rift Valley. Because of the great diversity of terrain, there is also a

wide range of climate & animals, including 856 different types of birds. It has deserts along the eastern border & tropical forests in the south as well as mountain ranges in the northern & southwestern parts. Most of its cities are at elevations of over 6,500 feet. **(S)** Ethiopia also has the town with the highest average annual temperature in the world, 93.2 degrees (Dallol) which lies 410 feet below sea level. It's the hottest place on Earth in terms of year-round average temperatures. Ethiopia is about the size of Texas & is one of the few nations not to be colonized by a European colonial power, although Italy occupied them from 1936-1941. During this time Emperor Haile Selassie (Ras Tafari) became a world-wide figure after delivering an address to the League of Nations & becoming *Time Magazine's* Man of the Year for 1935. For most of its history Ethiopia was ruled by a monarchy but in 1974 the monarchy was overthrown by a communist military government backed by the Soviet Union. The communists were in power until they were overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front.

Ethiopia has suffered greatly due to droughts & famines. Although its economy is picking up, I even noticed this just from 2 years ago, it is still one of the poorest countries in the world. A middle class worker makes around 3,000 birr a month, which is roughly \$100 US. Over 15% of the population struggle to survive on less than \$1/day US. A few years ago in Addis, the capital city, more than 50% lived in slums. The government has been building huge apartment complexes to help alleviate this problem. Agriculture makes up the vast majority of the labor force but it's mostly by small-scale farmers who struggle to make a living. Although once known as the Bread Basket of Africa its largest export today is coffee. Recently floriculture has taken off with exports of flowers & plants around the world.

Ethiopia has over 80 different ethnic groups & languages. The largest is Oromo with Amhara not far behind. Most everyone speaks Amharic with many also speaking Oromiffa. **(S)** There has recently been some unrest in Ethiopia with the Oromo faction wanting only their language spoken or written in the country. Any sign in Debre Zeit that had English or Amharic writing had a red X painted over it.

There are thousands of refugees from Somalia, Eritrea, & Sudan living in refugee camps in Ethiopia. The evangelical church, with help from Christians in America, are planning on ways to bring the gospel to the nations that God has brought into Ethiopia.

C. Interesting Facts They have 13 months in their year, but one of them only has a few days. The rest have 30. It is currently the year 2010, **(S)** so, yes, I did some time traveling. Stories differ why the calendar is different. Some say it's based on Jesus' annunciation (Lk 1:26-38). Others say it's based on when the Ethiopian Eunuch arrived with the gospel.

Also, their time is based on sunrise & sunset, like in biblical days. The Ethiopian day begins at 6 a.m. as opposed to our midnight. So while my watch may say it was 9 a.m. their clocks would say 3:00.

Over 80% of the water in the Nile River comes from the mountains & rivers of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia was known as Abyssinia for many years.

Traditional Ethiopian food uses no pork or shellfish of any kind as they are forbidden in the Orthodox, Jewish, & Islamic faiths.

Ethiopia has the longest basketball tradition in Africa establishing a national team in 1949. But running & soccer are still the favorite sports.

2. Why Ethiopia So why did I go to Ethiopia & what did we do there? **(S)** Out of 7.3 billion people on the planet, 6.3 billion live in Africa, Asia, Latin America, & Oceania. 75% of current Christians are non-western, living in one of these areas. But in these areas 80% of pastors have no formal biblical training. To put that into perspective, in the US there is 1 trained pastor for every 250 people. Around the world there is 1 trained pastor for every 450,000 people. **(S)** Teaching & training pastors and church leaders is greatly needed. As I mentioned, the gospel came to Ethiopia very early (Acts 8:26-37). & the Christians there are very proud of their Christian heritage. But they are also quick to admit that Ethiopia is full of religion. **(S)** The Ethiopian Orthodox church is everywhere, but, for the most part, is spiritually dead & based on tradition & legalism & not on the Bible. Services are conducted in an ancient language that the vast majority

don't speak nor understand. Ethiopia still needs Philips to bring them the gospel. Currently a 3rd of the population is Muslim with the rest being "Christian," which means they are part of the Ethiopian Orthodox church (44%) or some other protestant denomination (19%).

A man named Girma ((**S**) had a burden for his people & God has used him to spread the gospel in Ethiopia. Girma was born & raised in Ethiopia & lived under communist rule. He went to college in Russia but eventually found asylum in Germany before moving to the Seattle area (which has a large Ethiopian community). It was during this time that he heard the gospel & came to know Jesus. He went to seminary & began pastoring an Ethiopian church in the Seattle area but he had a heart for the people of Ethiopia. (**S**) He began traveling to Ethiopia to train pastors as he could. Eventually, he realized he couldn't do it all on his own. He began to put an organization & plan together to train pastors & church leaders. The organization is *Vision Leadership Institute*. 8 years ago he began working with Global Training Network & (**S**) Joel to do this. He put together a two-year program where pastors & church leaders come together for a week of training, 5 hours a day. This is what we were doing. They then meet weekly with a pastor to do further study. GTN teaches 10 courses & these are further divided into 24 modules the students go through with their pastors. After completing the two-year program they graduate & are encouraged to go & teach others as well. During the time they come together they study such things as Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Systematic Theology 1 & 2, Character & Integrity, Leadership Principles, Bible Survey, Missions & Evangelism, Church History, & Biblical Counseling. (**S**) This began in DebreZeit and Nazareth & is currently happening in 7 cities. Sheno, Ziway, Shashamene, Desse, & Kemisse. The day after arriving, I got to witness 39 students (**S**) graduate in Sheno where the elevation is about the same as the top of Mt McGlouglin, Mt Pitt. (**S**) On my last day, I was at the graduation of students from Debre Zeit & Nazareth with 80 graduating. These were the 1st year students I taught 2 years ago. (**S**) In 8 years over 1200 students have gone through this training. They then return to their home churches & serve & teach others.

3. What I Did What did I do while there?

A. Friday (S) Friday, April 20th was a rest & recover day in Addis. We went out to brunch at a restaurant that actually served pancakes. (S) Josh & his family had been there for several days sight-seeing before we got there & that's what the kids wanted. Josh has been involved from the beginning with Joel. He & his wife had 2 kids & adopted an Ethiopian girl between their 2 sons ages & wanted the family to see Ethiopia. They got to meet their daughter's birth mother, which he said went very well. Friday night we went to dinner at a place called Chicago that served American & Ethiopian food. (S) One of the team members from Seattle, Kurt, got food poisoning & was very sick all night & was out of it most of the day on Saturday. (S) He recovered & thought about taking a job as a mannequin.

B. Saturday Saturday we got up, had breakfast & left at 8 for Sheno for a graduation there. (S) Graduation was scheduled for 10. We arrived at 11:30 and the graduation started then. (S) African time is a real thing & never very precise. Graduation is a time of celebration & worship & a big deal for each of the graduates. (S) Girma is still in the process of being accredited with the government, but they keep changing the requirements on him. (S) Joel, & those from his church, brought 95 Mega Voice, solar powered mp3 players preloaded with the Bible in Ahmaric & Oromiffa. (S) 15 of these were given to pastors in this area, for which they were very glad. (S) During graduation, at the front of the church, (S) a lady was preparing traditional coffee over a charcoal fire (S) & treats for all of us Americans. After graduation, (S) we left Sheno, dropped some pastors off in Addis & proceeded to Debre Zeit. (S)

C. Sunday Sunday in Sheno Kerry Kruze preached & three people accepted (S) Jesus as their Savior. (S) For Joel & those with him, we attended church at Pastor Shatto's church, which is Lutheran (S), but evangelical with some of the trappings. We'd been told there would be a wedding during the morning service. (S) Church started at 9:30, but the building wasn't full until around 10:30. After some lively worship, Josh preached a sermon on reconciliation in marriage & between us & God, Pastor Shatto preached. There was more worship & then Pastor Shatto begin calling different people up to speak. We began looking at each other & wondering what was

going on; why they were stretching things out. At noon, we were informed the wedding couple was running late & they were waiting for them. At 12:30 the service ended & most of our team left. Joel & I were waiting for the return of a **(S)** Bajaj when the couple showed up & we were able to witness their wedding. **(S)** The groom looked very excited & happy. **(S)** The bride looked very shy & bashful. But after a somewhat different ceremony, they were wed amongst much rejoicing, singing, & dancing.

D. Monday through Friday **(S)** Joel, Carlos, Kurt, & I were in Debre Zeyit/Bishoftu. Most towns have 2 names. Debre Zeit, roughly translated, means Mt of Light, after Jesus' sermon on the mount. The towns were all renamed by a previous ruler who gave them traditional Ethiopian names. Monday morning we arrived at the church where we were to teach. **(S)** Classes were scheduled for 8:30 but the students had been given the wrong place to show up. They arrived around 10 when classes began. I knew that I was to have a translator none of us had met before. **(S)** She had been recommended by one of the translators last year who had moved to Addis & wasn't available. Lidia showed up & did an excellent job. Girma sat in on her first session & was very pleased at how well she did. She was on break from university, where she will be graduating with a nursing degree this fall & then 2 years later will graduate with her law degree. **(S)** She is 23 years old and speaks excellent English. I asked how she got to know English so well & the reply was that in secondary school everything is taught in English. I further asked why her accent was so minor & she told me she further learned English by watching American TV shows, especially sit-coms. She did an excellent job & I am indebted to her. As I told her, my time there would have been pointless without her. She, as well as the students, seemed to eat up the teaching & learned much from it.

Monday through Wednesday I taught twice a day. **(S)** In the leadership class we covered the Shepherd Leader of Psalm 23, looked at an episode in the life of Paul & drew principles from it, & on Wednesday we looked at Miriam & talked about how every Christian is a leader of others to some degree. Monday through Thursday my second class was Hermeneutics, how to study

Scripture. On Monday & Tuesday we talked about observing the text, on Wednesday it was interpreting the text, & on Thursday it was on applying the text. **(S)** Although I didn't teach Romans, I had the students do some of their assignments from Romans & wrapped it up by having them observe, interpret, & apply Romans 12:1-2. **(S)**

Interestingly, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the people speak English to some degree. Around $\frac{1}{2}$ can understand & read some English. It was very clear as we were teaching, who could understand us & who had to wait for the translation. **(S)** While not getting to know the students real well, although some more than others, we spent a lot of time with our translators & some of the local pastors.

Every day after teaching we'd have lunch **(S)** around 2 & then I'd study for the following day, taking a break for dinner, until around 10 p.m. **(S)** Three nights for dinner we were able to go to 3 different crater lakes around DebreZeit & have dinner at one of the resorts. **(S)** It was good getting to see some of God's beauty in other places. **(S)**

We started the week without electricity & cold showers & no wifi. But things gradually improved, although it by no means was consistent. **(S)** Between classes, coffee, tea, nuts, & bread was available & enjoyed. **(S)** One afternoon, while studying on my balcony, I got to watch this guy pick avacados from the tree in front of the guest house.

Friday After the teaching was done on Friday & after we exchanged contact information and goodbyes with the students, we headed to **(S)** Yinagu's home for lunch. She is a 71 year old Ethiopian who has been influential in the evangelical church there. She was part of the great awakening in the mid-sixties in Ethiopia when God drew many to a saving knowledge of Himself. She has been one of the translators since the beginning of Vision Leadership Institute & started a Bible college that is still going in Ethiopia. She has never married, but hosted a wonderful lunch for us along with her niece. Most African food is usually very basic & bland in flavor. That's not true of Ethiopian food. Though it is often basic (rice, bread, cabbage, other veggies, & occasionally chicken, lamb, or beef) it was all very flavorful & even spicy at times. **(S)** berbere

I fit right in because they eat without utensils. They use injera (a fermented teff flat-bread) to pick up & eat all their food. She sees Ethiopia as a gateway for the gospel to all of Africa & is constantly seeking ways to spread the gospel to the nations. Although it wasn't the full traditional coffee ceremony, her niece brewed & served excellent coffee to us all after lunch. Most Ethiopians add large amounts of sugar to their coffee, but I declined & enjoyed the pure essence of it. It's much like an espresso, thick & dark & delicious. After lunch we went to **(S)** Pastor Tassew & Rosa's home to pray with & for them. Tassew is one of the main pastors who work with Vision Leadership. He meets with students from Debre Zeit & Nazareth weekly & travels to outlying areas to meet with the teaching pastors & students on a regular basis. **(S)** Although I wasn't with Dan Bushy, who taught at the same time but in Sheno, here's one of his stories from his time there that I received after leaving, so I don't have all the details: **(S)**

One of the highlights is that 13 Christians who had been arrested were released from jail the day we prayed for God to release them. God answers prayer. Another highlight was on the last day we had a time of prayer. About 30 of us stood in a circle praying one at a time for God's purposes to be accomplished in Ethiopia. It took about 45 minutes and people were passionate about it.

As I reflect on the trip, I feel privileged to have had a small part in God's kingdom work in Ethiopia. **(S)** Thank you for your prayers on my behalf.

Ethiopia is a beautiful country that I only saw a small portion of. But I certainly knew I wasn't in the US! **(S)** The elevation where we were was over 6,000 feet. **(S)** It's an agricultural area on a plateau between the capital of Addis Ababa & the Rift Valley. **(S)** It's a happy & friendly people, although very poor. It's a country of contrasts. **(S)** While a new hi-tech train line has been finished & the Chinese have built very nice express ways for cars & trucks, many people still rely on horses & donkeys for transportation. **(S)** For short distances we often took the small, 3-wheeled bijajs (tuk-tuks) that seem to be everywhere except the US. **(S)** They cost 200,000 birr

which is about \$6,000 and a driver will make 100 birr a day driving them. Our bijaj driver every day was Mesfin. Joel writes, **(S)**

Three years ago, Mesfin was transporting our team to and from our venues in DebreZeit. When we arrived each day, Mesfin would pop his head in on our training. Soon he became interested and ended up joining us for the week. He also signed up to attend training for the rest of the year. Then the following year he did the same thing, completing the two-year program and the graduation ceremony.

On our drive to the training this year, he told us he was selling his Bajaj and becoming a pastor. His church, through prayer and by observing his life, could see that God was calling him to full-time ministry. Yinagu, who is one of the seasoned Ethiopian women leaders of the training here, declared, "He is part of the fruit of these trainings!" What a joy to see young leaders raised up and placed into positions of leadership. I am so thankful to be a part of the development of pastors and leaders here in Ethiopia.

Next year Joel hopes to be able to video some of the stories of those who have been trained in this program so that we can have a better idea of how God is using it in Ethiopia.

It is common to see someone herding their livestock through the middle of town. While many buildings are elaborate & beautiful, the scaffolding all looks like this **(S)**, eucalyptus logs nailed together. We stayed at the Sheba guest 2 years ago & this year. Here's a picture of their expansion from 2 years ago & from now. **(S)** I'm sure there's much more I could say, but I'll let that suffice for now. **(S)** What questions do you have that I might be able to answer? **(S)**

Why do organizations like Global Training Network train pastors around the world? Why does Joel ask me to go from time to time? Because of the Cross of Jesus. It His death & resurrection that brings true life to people around the world. It is His gospel that the world desperately needs.

As we come to the communion table, we come to Jesus because we believe He is who He claimed to be & that He did what He came to do. The proclamation of His death & the remembrance of all that He is for us should draw us into deeper communion with Him. Faith is being satisfied in all that God is for us in Christ. Jesus has given us the ongoing object lesson of Communion to feed us spiritually with Himself. The Lord's Table proclaims the gospel. As John Piper has said, *Faith is a spiritual feasting on the risen, living Christ so that all that God is for us in Him satisfies our soul & sweetens our love for Him & breaks the power of sin in our lives.* We are saved through Christ's death & resurrection. We are forgiven through Christ's death & resurrection. We are kept through Christ's death & resurrection. When you eat of the bread & drink of the cup today, understand that Christ's death & resurrection has purchased your salvation. Unless you're trusting Christ alone for your salvation, let the bread & juice pass you by, because they have no meaning for you. But if you have placed your faith in Christ alone for your salvation, then receive the bread & the cup with gladness because by it we proclaim His death & resurrection for us; by it we remember who He is & what He's done; by it we feast by faith on the goodness of our God who has given us His Son, forgiven our sins, & graciously given us eternal life with Him.

Time of silent prayer, confessing our sins & preparing our hearts & minds to remember Jesus & His death for us. PRAY MEN COME

On Jesus' last night with His disciples, while the meal was still in progress, He took some bread, gave thanks for it, broke it into pieces & handed it around to those present while saying these words: **This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.** After the meal was over, He took a cup of wine, gave thanks for it, passed it around to His disciples, & said, **This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me** (1 Cor 11, Mt 26; Mk 14; Lk 22).

These are tremendously significant deeds & words. It's a shame that we're so familiar with them that they tend to lose their impact on us. By what He did & said, Jesus was dramatizing His death before it took place & giving His own explanation of its meaning & purpose.

During this final meal Jesus had with His disciples, He gave them instructions for His own memorial service, which wasn't to be a one-time deal, but to be an ongoing thing. They were to copy what He did, both His words & actions. They were to take, break, bless, & share in the bread & wine. What did these two things signify? Jesus said of the bread, **This is My body given for you**, & of the wine, **This is My blood shed for you**. His death speaks to us from both elements. The bread didn't stand for His living body but for His body as it was shortly to be **given** for them in death. The wine didn't stand for His blood as it flowed in His veins while He spoke to them, but for His blood which would be **poured out** for them shortly in death. We celebrate communion not to remember His birth, His life, His words, nor His miracles. It is His death on the cross that is central to Christianity & that is what we remember. PASS

Paul tells us in 1 Cor 11, reading from the Amplified Bible, **that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was treacherously delivered up & while His betrayal was in progress took bread, & when He had given thanks, He broke it, & said, *Take, eat. This is My body which is broken for you. Do this to call Me affectionately to remembrance.***

We remember Jesus' death on the cross for us as we eat of the bread together.

Paul goes on & tells us, **when supper was ended, Jesus took the cup also, saying, *This cup is the new covenant (ratified & established) in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it, to call Me affectionately to remembrance.***

We drink of the cup together remembering our Lord's shed blood, His death for the forgiveness of our sins.