

Churches here in Cameroon are celebrating their thanksgiving for the harvests and God's blessings, each choosing their Sunday to celebrate. Church members prepare to give often sacrificial gifts of thanks to God for what He has done. Thanksgiving is an occasion to celebrate, but it is also an attitude God would give us daily.

Djang Robert's attitude through the loss of his foot is still one of thanksgiving to God for saving his life and for being with him through it. He feels a call and desire to share God's Word in his village.

I, too, am reminded to be thankful for what God has done for us. He is the Good Shepherd, and is leading even when I can't see the way very well. A couple of discouraging things have happened recently:

1) One of the most promising Kwanja teachers whom I was training in computer and in coordinating literacy activities, Venant, has left for a 3-year training program to become a teacher in the government elementary school system. This is a good thing for him to develop his abilities and to get a salary in the future, but I sense a loss for now. Venant was a key person in getting courses going for pre-literates. Before leaving, he wrote us a note, thanking us for helping him to put his faith in God's Word, which has changed his life. He hopes to get a teaching assignment in the Kwanja area after 3 years, and to continue being involved with Kwanja literacy as well.

- THANK GOD for Venant and his growing faith.  
- THANK GOD for those he has given to work with us in Kwanja literacy, and for those He will provide, although I can't see now who to train in leadership for ongoing literacy.

2) While in Yaoundé with Martin for the workshop, some of my things as well as my glasses were stolen. This was especially discouraging, because without glasses I can't see to read. This reminded me again to be thankful for glasses and the ability I still have to read. It's by God's grace that we continue to work here. God showed His grace to me in answer to prayers: my personal documents and keys were found and returned to me.

-THANK GOD that He restored important documents to me, and He is providing solutions to getting my glasses replaced!

We are thankful for the tools He has given us to share with others, especially His Word in the Kwanja language.

-THANK GOD for the Kwanja New Testament, which is being read by a slowly growing number of people.

-PLEASE PRAY for God's enabling as Martin, Jerome, and Emmanuel revise the rest of the Old Testament readings for this church year. The goal is that in every Kwanja church, all Scriptures (not just New Testament) will be read in the Kwanja mother tongue, so that God's message will come through clearly!

Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever!

Thank you for your prayers that continue to strengthen and encourage as we work here. May the great Shepherd, the Chief above all, encourage you in all that you do for Him!

"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, **that great Shepherd** of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and **may he work in us what is pleasing to him**, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13: 20-21

"And when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

1 Peter 5: 4

Love,  
*Joan & Martin*

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# THE WORD OF GOD - IN THEIR HANDS...

## - AND UPON THEIR HEARTS

Weber - Kwanja Prayer Letter November 2008

### Psalm 23

Backtranslated from Kwanja to English

*The Lord is the One who takes care of sheep.  
I am His sheep, He is the one who takes care of me;  
I lack nothing.*

*He makes me rest on fresh grass,  
He leads-brings me to the place where water is quiet.  
He restores life to me.*

*He leads-brings me in the straight path,  
This gives his name glory.*

*Even if I walk on a narrow path on a steep slope  
where there is the smell of death,  
Fear doesn't grab-hold me about anything,  
because he is with me.*

*His stick takes care of me, it saves me  
- this is what gives me strength of heart.*

*He prepares-puts good food in front of me  
In the sight of those who hate me.*

*He drips-puts good-smelling perfume on my head,  
My gourd (cup) of drink is filled to overflowing.*

*That's the way it is - every day, everywhere I go,  
His love and generosity of heart will be in front of me.  
I will always come back to the house of the Lord,  
And right there I will stay forever.*



(Illustration from Horace Knowles and Louise Bass, British and Foreign Bible Society, 1994)

Kwanja translation of Psalm 23 sounds quite different than the English translations we are used to. But it is meaningful to Kwanjas!

**Jesus, familiar with shepherds and sheep, called Himself the "Good Shepherd", because He lay down His life for His sheep.**

Raising small goats has become more and more common in Kwanja villages, but few Kwanjas raise sheep. One who does is Djang Robert, the son of the chief in his village of Mayo Djinga. His father is old and blind, but continues to profess his faith in Jesus, although the majority in his village are Muslims. Robert was the first one from his village to learn to read Kwanja, and the one who organized courses and encouraged others there to learn to read and write Kwanja. He also has been a pillar in his church, sometimes leading the service, often reading the Scriptures in Kwanja for the service.

Robert was an ambitious farmer, ran the village corn mill to grind flour, and cared for his flock of sheep, at one time up to 60 grown sheep. He still tends his sheep, although now only about 20. At night he keeps his sheep in a penned-in shelter he built for them in the village near his house, where they are safe from

Dear partners in prayer for the Kwanjas,

Martin and the Kwanja translation team (Nganko Emmanuel and Jerome) have been translating and revising the Old Testament readings and Psalms that are being used in the Protestant and Catholic Church services for this year. This has been going well, but it also has its challenges. For instance, Psalm 23 depicts a beautiful picture of God caring for us in the image of a good shepherd who leads, provides for and protects his sheep. Because of cultural differences, this image was not easy to capture. The Kwanjas don't have a word directly for "shepherd", so it was translated as "one who takes care of sheep". The Kwanjas see cattle herders and those who have sheep and goats go **behind** their animals, driving them, not leading them as the Middle Eastern shepherds did.

So the above translation back into English from the

thieves or wild animals at night. In the morning he lets his sheep out and directs them across the road and outside the village to a grassy pen where they graze during the day. It was as Robert was caring for his sheep that something tragic happened to him. This is a translation into English of his story:

"On September 27<sup>th</sup> last year, at about 8 AM, something was about to happen. I took out the sheep from their enclosure, I hadn't yet found the time to take them out earlier. I had lots of work to do that day: 1) I had to grind the corn at the mill; 2) I was waiting for the government agriculture official; and 3) I was going to offer sympathies to the chief of Pangari for the death of his father.

I hurried to take the sheep out. One of them was sick. When I opened the gate of their pen, the strong ones ran ahead and crossed the road. Then they looked back, but they didn't see me. They stopped, and spread out along the road, grazing along the sides of the road.

I arrived with the sick one, and it ran to the others. A van also was rolling along, coming towards us. It was only 50 feet/steps away. There was still enough room for him to stop, but he didn't. Then I thought of the words Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The van still was coming right on, my concern was for my sheep. I thought of Jesus' words from John 10:11-13:

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.'

The person who is seeking only after money does not accept to suffer. So I came out onto the road, I stayed on the left side, to chase my sheep out of the way, leaving the driver the right side. I didn't know that he would follow towards the same side that I was running to. I stopped, seeing that the road was wide enough that he could pass if I stopped. I looked behind

to see how he would pass, but the space between the car and me was only a step away. Darkness came before my eyes. I heard a thud. God took me away from directly in front of the car. The car hit me, I fell. My left foot pulled me underneath the car. The back tire ran over my leg. The driver then stepped on the brakes, while he was driving on my leg. Then the tire didn't turn, but drug my leg along, pulling me along until he stopped braking.

The driver came out and saw the car on my leg. He backed off, then took me quickly in his van to Mayo Darle health center (20 km away). There they looked at it and said that it needed to be amputated, it was crushed far too badly. We went to the hospital at Banso (more than 4 hours away)."

We heard news of the accident. We were shocked to learn that he had lost his leg! This would be a major setback to him, since he has always been an ambitious, hard-working farmer. It cost him dearly to protect his sheep! And indeed, not one of Robert's sheep was harmed. He was a "good shepherd" following Jesus' model!

Many Kwanjas know the work that Robert has done to help his village and to encourage faith in God's Word, and they prayed for him. After some weeks to recover at Banso, Robert returned to his village. Many came to comfort him, but he was the one who encouraged the others as he witnessed of God's power and God's healing to all his neighbors, many of them Muslims. He said that first of all, God had protected him so that he was not killed as the car came right at him. Secondly, he felt God's presence and peace through the prayers of God's people after the accident. Then God gave him a dream shortly after his leg was amputated. In the dream he saw a very bright, shining man who lovingly unwrapped his bandaged leg, washed it in some kind of ointment, and then rewrapped it for him, - and the pain went away! When he awoke, the pain was much reduced. God showed him that He was caring for him. Robert returned with crutches so he could walk. He is waiting for his leg to feel stable before seeking a prosthesis. Gifts from others from Canada have provided for this.

After returning, Robert was exhorting others, "Don't mess around with God. Put your faith in Him and His Word, and listen to what He says. He has been more real to me than I have ever known before."

We were encouraged by Robert's strong witness of faith. When we prayed about whom to send to a 2 week training workshop sponsored by SIL in Yaoundé, we decided to include him in the invitations. This workshop just finished well, with participants from several language groups. The CBS (chronological Bible storying) workshop was designed to help Cameroonians to develop an oral style of telling Bible stories, since many people are much more oriented to listening to stories than to learning to read them.

The workshop taught a method of preparing stories, and strongly encouraged those who came to learn to share the gospel through Bible stories, following very closely the written Scriptures, but using an oral style that will be interesting to their people.

At the end of the workshop, Djang Robert recounted what the workshop meant to him. Some Sundays ago, the Scripture text read in church was the parable of the master who hired workers for his vineyard throughout the day. He found men hanging around the market place, doing nothing. He asked them, "Why aren't you working?" "Nobody has hired us," they replied. So he sent them to work in his vineyard. At the end of the day he gave all the same wage. This Scripture bothered Djang Robert, as he was struck by the question, "Why aren't you working?" He then asked God in prayer, "What should I be doing as work for you? I can no longer work my fields as before. What can I do now?"

That night he had a dream in which he saw 2 sheets of paper, but did not understand their significance. Two days later, Djang Emmanuel went to see him with 2 sheets of paper! One was an invitation to the workshop, and the other was the application form to fill out. He knew that it was God's call to him, to give him a task to do. And he feels called to continue with this, telling stories from God's Word as God prepares the way.

Five Kwanjas from three other villages also participated, as well as participants from 4 other language groups. The Kwanjas, like most Cameroonian rural peoples, come from basically an oral culture, slowly advancing in learning to use written materials. Many will never invest the time and money for books to learn to read. Others are older and have poor eyesight. The Word of God must reach Kwanjas orally as well as in written form. (Next year we will write more about a recording project planned for the New Testament in Kwanja.)



Shu-Mei presented the method of telling Bible stories at the workshop. She had worked with us with Prom-Alpha, and now is working with SIL Scripture Use.



- THANK GOD for Robert and others, through whom we are encouraged in our faith.
- THANK GOD for the SIL workshop which encouraged Kwanjas and others to share stories from God's Word in their own languages.
- PRAY that God will use this workshop, and follow-up from it, to bring His Word orally to more and more Kwanjas!
- PRAY for Djang Robert and the others who attended the workshop. Pray that God will inspire them as they share orally from the Scriptures the stories about God and Jesus from God's Word.
- PRAY that the Good Shepherd will lead each one in where and how to share His Word orally, that it will bear fruit in the lives of people!

