

THE CRY FOR TRAINING IN CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS

“**T**here is much to do, there’s work on every hand...” This was one of the theme songs of Missions Conference. When we open our eyes to the world around us we see how true it is. The fields are white unto harvest! We are so excited to see more and more people opening themselves up to the idea of being laborers in those fields and singing from their hearts, “*Here am I, send me!*” But harvesting a crop is not a simple thing to do, as farmers would affirm. In fact, if you do not know what you are doing, or if you do not know how to use the proper equipment, you may spoil the harvest or hurt yourself and others! That is why no ignorant person will be allowed to harvest a farmer’s crops. That is also why there is a cry for training in cross-cultural missions. The desire to see the fields of the world ‘harvested’ is biblically correct. The longing to reduce the numbers of injured ‘harvesters’ is the heart of the Mission Board and SENT staff as we launch the SENT II program.

This was presented in the SENT booth at the Missions Conference against the backdrop of a small African village compound and a part of a house like the missionaries in Ghana live in.

Our booth consisted of two sections, one representing the SENT I School and the other the SENT II School. This is the training school our mission has run for two years now in the city of Tamale, Northern Ghana. It is a three month introductory course in cross-cultural missions. It includes weeks of study directed by our missionaries, covering subjects such as Islam, Indigenous Church Planting, Culture, Language Learning, and Missions History. It also gives the opportunity to practice some of the newly learned skills in activities such as sharing the Gospel in Ghanaian schools and staying with missionaries out in their village stations. This SENT I program was represented by several walls of pictures and information in the booth. It is meant as a first step in missions training and can be followed up by the SENT II program, which was covered by the main part of the booth.

The SENT II program is not entirely new, although you may not have heard of it before. For about five years now Charity African Missions in Ghana has been running the so-called “GES Program”. Young people obtained a visa to stay in Ghana for two years by teaching English in the village schools. The rest of their time was used to assist missionaries and learn practical skills such as crossing cultures, discipling young Christians, and planting village churches. This program has been a great success and the GES alumni can testify that it has changed their lives. Seeing the opportunity for successful



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training, the Board decided to expand the program and re-name it SENT II (Serving Every Nation Training Advanced). Daniel Kenaston will be the administrator for this program. One of the changes is that instead of only singles, the program will also include up to five young married couples. The need for training young couples headed for the field is keenly felt by our Mission Board. It seems like the country of Ghana is very well suited for hosting this program, as it is a relatively open, friendly country which is still considered to be third-world and partly unreached. This provides a perfect, ‘safe’ learning environment for people who can then go into more difficult fields equipped with the knowledge and experience they will need there.

Daniel Kenaston explained these things at the booth, after which six SENT II alumni (GES workers), who recently returned from Ghana, shared some of their experiences while giving a little glimpse of their lives on the field. Part of the booth was made up of a house similar to what the SENT II pairs/couples will be living in in their villages: a simple, two-room mud structure, containing a kitchen/living room and a bedroom with a foam

“SENT I: *a three month introductory course in cross-cultural missions.”*

“SENT II: *a perfect, ‘safe’ learning environment for people who can then go into more difficult fields equipped with the knowledge and experience they will need”*

mat and mosquito net. The returned workers showed in their presentation how they cooked on a charcoal brazier while they were discussing their time in Africa. Their lives consisted of teaching English to village children in the mornings and then traveling around to the different villages around their stations in the evenings. They explained that the teaching was a challenging but very rewarding work. The English taught in the schools is very basic, but the challenge lies in keeping a crowd of rowdy children under control and communicating with them even though you do not know their language. But as they said, to see their little hearts open up and to become their ‘hero’ was definitely worth it all. Who knows what the fruits will be of all the seeds sown daily in these village schools? Besides that, learning to work with children is very valuable for any young person.

In the evenings, the SENT II workers would go around and visit the different villages where churches have been planted or people have shown an interest in the Gospel. They encouraged and discipled the Christians, studied the Bible with them since they usually cannot read well or not at all, and preached to as many people as would gather for a service in the evening, which could be anywhere from five people to a hundred or more. The girls focused on discipling the women, which is much needed in a tribe where religion is considered to be men’s business. This was another part of the presentation in the booth. It took place in the ‘village compound’ that was constructed there. The girls

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discussed an evening they spent in a village with a group of young Christian women. All the workers shared how blessed they were to see the Gospel at work, changing a tribe from the inside out. They considered it a privilege

to share God’s word with people who want to hear it so badly! Also, it was a tremendous opportunity to learn evangelizing and church planting in a hands-on, practical way. The goal of missions is planting an indigenous



church that is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. The best way to learn about that is watching an indigenous church develop and blossom. This is one of the great strengths of the SENT II program! The SENT II workers shared how blessed they were to be able to assist the national church leaders in the work of evangelizing their tribe, rather than being the ‘white men in charge’, and they saw clearly how this method of missions is so much more effective long term.

Another benefit of the program is the opportunity to observe our experienced missionaries in Ghana in their daily lives and work. You just don’t learn things from books in the same way you do from real life! Being discipled by these missionaries on a regular basis and being able to ask them any questions that might arise is a wonderful chance to learn many valuable lessons. Seeing the way the missionaries come down on the level of the village people and live like them, and then witnessing how that opens many doors for relationships and evangelizing, makes it easy to understand

the importance of incarnating the Gospel in the target culture the way Jesus did.

Being able to spend two years living in an African village is an incredible opportunity in itself, and good preparation for long-term missionary service. The SENT II workers shared how they learned to build relationships across huge language and culture barriers and how blessed they were to realize that it is definitely possible.



In short, the power of the SENT II program lies in its practical, hands-on approach. The students will spend one out of every four months in Tamale studying various subjects and will then immediately be able to go to their village outstations and live as missionaries for three months. This provides experiences and training that no classroom could ever give you.

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The presentation was closed with a few words from the father of two of the former SENT II workers. He shared that there is nothing he would rather see his two sons do than spend their lives for the Kingdom and how pleased he is with all they were able to do while in Ghana. He pointed out that there is so much a young person can do with their time and money, and that this is, in his eyes, definitely the most valuable choice.

“Training sounds good, but why two years? Isn’t that long...? That is a term of missionary service! Should we really spend that much time and resources on just training?” Many people have these or similar thoughts when hearing about the program and understandably so. However, in light of long-term missionary service in a closed country, where planting a church might take up to twenty-five years, two years of training really is not that much, especially not if the training can keep you from making mistakes that might greatly hinder your ministry or even put a stop to it totally! These two years are by no means wasted time. In fact, while you are training, you will see a lot of fruit all around you: school children’s lives are changed, villages hear the Gospel, churches are planted, etc. All the SENT II alumni (about 18) agree that their time spent training in Ghana was absolutely worth it.

Yes, the fields are white unto harvest! We believe that God’s call is sounding out for anyone to come and work for Him. But the Bible says, *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed”* (2 Timothy 2:15). We want to sing with all our hearts, “Here am I, send me!” but are we prepared and equipped so God can actually send us? The harvest is out there, but do we know anything about the work of a laborer? Do we know how to run the harvesting machines? Here is an opportunity of a lifetime to learn!

Applications for SENT II are available at the Missions Office.

—SENT (Serving Every Nation Training) School

