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Nigeria Mission Report

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Dear Mission Partners:

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." --
Philippians 1:3-5

This is our first newsletter since coming to Nigeria. One of the things we really admire about the people of Nigeria is their joy. You rarely meet a Nigerian who seems to be depressed. And there are plenty of reasons to be depressed. They are among the poorest people in the world. A high school teacher in Nigeria makes less than \$150 a month. A common laborer makes about half that. Even the most basic kind of health care is unavailable to most Nigerians. A friend of ours recently died for lack of adequate health care. Grace was only 30. If she had lived in America she would almost certainly still be alive. I could go on and on. The point is, the people of Nigeria have many reasons to be saddled with sorrow and despair and yet they embrace life with joy and delight. Why? A recent article in Newsweek International offers some answers. The July 28th issues contains a special report of the World Value Survey. Thousands



Bob Krouse, Nigeria mission coordinator, and his wife Carol have been in Nigeria since July.

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of people from 65 nations were surveyed to try to determine who are the happiest people in the world. Guess who came in first? That's right, the world's happiest people live in Nigeria! Americans came in as the 16th happiest people in the world. You can read the results of the survey at www.worldvaluessurvey.org. The survey offers some clues about why most Nigerians embrace life with joy in spite of all of the challenges they have to overcome. It has to do with what they value most. Here's a partial list of Nigerian values: marriage, friendship, faith, helping others, honoring elders, and being content with who they are and what they have. That sounds like a list that could make all of us a lot happier.

Here is one story of a person filled with joy. The name she was given at birth was Krawakari, which means "nobody likes her" in the Bura language. How prophetic! As a little girl, Krawakari developed leprosy, and because of that she was banished from the village. "Nobody likes her" was a very fitting name for a little girl with leprosy. Her father was kind enough to build a simple thatched hut for her out in the bush beyond the village where she lived as an outcast from her family and her people. Amazingly, Krawakari's father was able to arrange for her marriage to another poor soul who had lost two wives and all of his children. Dakwali Mari was a poor, aging man who couldn't find another woman to marry because he had brought such "bad luck" upon two other wives and more than twenty children who had been lost through miscarriage, stillbirth, or childhood sickness. No other father in the village would consent to giving a daughter to Dakwali Mari in marriage, but Krawakari's father knew that this would be his daughter's only chance to have a husband. They were married in 1939, and in 1940 Dakwali followed his wife to Virgwi where she was treated at the Church of the Brethren leprosarium. In addition to treating her leprosy, Krawakari was taught to read and write, and most important of all, she heard the story of Jesus and his amazing grace, mercy, and love. When Krawakari became a Christian she was given a new name. "Nobody likes her," became Alewa, which means, "very sweet." Today Alewa is 84 years old. She still bears the visible marks of her long dormant leprosy. None of the fingers of one hand work, and she has only two fingers on her other hand. She is also missing some of her toes. Yet she goes to work on her farm every day to provide food for the two grandchildren whose mother died of AIDS and four others who depend upon her for food and shelter. Most of us would agree that Alewa is an amazing woman. But she would gently correct us and say, "I am just a poor old woman, but I have an amazing God!" There is much more that I'd like to tell you about Alewa, but I'll save it for another time. I'm working on a more complete story about her life that I'll share with you at another time.

Until then,
Be blessed and stretched.

Bob and Carol