

THE HARRIS HAPPENINGS

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

~2 Corinthians 5:17



Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Colossians 3:10

About 10 months ago, I met a man by the name of Thomas. He was part of a cult here called the "Roho" who mix many cultural beliefs and traditions with the Scriptures. Somehow, he heard about, or was invited to my Wednesday class out at a place called Kibos, and began coming. Thomas heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its clarity and truth for the first time there - and he placed his trust in Jesus Christ for his salvation! Glory to God! I am always amazed and in awe of Him Who is able to do ALL things, and doesn't need me, allowing me to be used of Him, in part of His perfect plan! A sinner, saved by God's grace-being used in the lives of other sinners coming to know the amazing grace of our great God!

Over the Christmas holiday, I started hearing stories about how Thomas has been sharing about Jesus Christ in his church. They were saying that Thomas was teaching about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation. That by trusting in the person, and the work of Jesus Christ-you can be set free from sin and made at peace with God. Many of the members in Thomas' (cult) congregation were going to Pastor Boniface (one of the leaders in that village, and the point pastor in my class) and asking him about Thomas. Why did all this change in Thomas take place? Where was he hearing these things, and getting this information?

The last few months in this class, we have been going through an "Inductive Bible study" together. The 3 main points are about learning how to: Observe, Interpret, and Apply the Scriptures. It took us a LOT longer than I had anticipated to go through the short book of Jude (25 verses), as a practice. And I have to admit there were times when I could grow frustrated with the seemingly slow pace and small level of growth in the understanding and lives of these guys. However, even though He doesn't owe me anything, the Lord knew I needed this encouragement - and He graciously granted it to me. When we finally finished going through the book of Jude together, Thomas exclaimed that in his 38 years of ministry, he has finally, for the first time, actually understood the main message of the book of Jude - "to contend for the faith!" I think this is extra special, because it is such a beautiful reminder that it is the Holy Spirit Who will teach us, not mere men like me. Thomas can now see with eyes open and a heart that can understand the things of God - because he is His child. And now he can learn HOW to contend for this new-found faith that he has!

Now, I have just recently found out that Thomas has not only been a part of this "Roho" cult, but is the leader of a "congregation"...and actually what would be called the bishop/overseer of several (5) others of these Roho cult congregations! I was surprised and discouraged by this news, though it does help to explain some things I had wondered about? He has continued to attend the "Roho" cult services, but is supposedly using this as a platform to share Jesus with the lost among that congregation. And he also continues to wear the traditional "Roho" attire, identifying him as a leader in this cult community. Thomas could be influenced by the other pastors and/or his friends and community not to listen to this new teaching? He could be influenced by the money that he is receiving from the other churches as payment for being bishop? He could be influenced by the power and prestige that comes from being elevated as a "man of God" or leader in the church and village? But I told Thomas, it's like he is standing at a crossroad. Who is he going to trust and follow? Will he look to himself, and his own worldly wisdom of things that can be seen - of how to provide for and protect his family? Or is he going to look toward the Lord, and trust in the things that cannot be seen with his physical eyes?

Please pray for Thomas that he would continue to keep his eyes on Jesus Christ. He has some pretty big, and hard choices and changes to make. Pray that he chooses to love the Lord God with ALL his heart, soul, mind, and strength ...and to love his neighbor as himself (by not being a stumbling block). And please pray for Thomas, and so many other pastors - and for us all - that we would find our true identity in Jesus Christ ALONE - not in our work, positions, titles, circles of friends, families, or communities, outward appearances, or anything else, other than HIM. May people see Jesus when they look at our lives...and may HE alone get the glory and the honor in ALL things!

In Christ,
Brad Harris

Praises:

- Ben's growth in the Lord-and choice to be baptized!
- For Thomas' salvation!
- We are truly blessed to be serving the Lord-we don't deserve to be.
- For God's amazing grace and goodness in our lives!
- For God's continued abundant provision and protection in our lives!

Prayer Requests:

- For my (Brad's) mom's health. She may have to undergo a procedure for her heart. Please pray that all goes well.
- For continued "connection" and growth in our relationships: marriage, children, ministry, friendships, and most importantly, with the Lord.
- For this new season of homeschooling; with added children, curriculum, and challenges to the mix in this new school year
- For Thomas, and all others, who have hard choices to make for the Lord in their lives.
- For us to truly find our identity in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, alone.