

Liberia Champions Report 32
October 2020



Celebrating Gordon's birthday in Indiana.

Since both Elliott families are on deputation this year, it is going to be a bit more difficult in coming up with suitable material for these Champion Reports since we will have to rely on information sent to us from Liberia in order to give you the latest news. Currently there is very little to report so I decided that I would recycle an old blog that I wrote three years ago. I don't know how many of you would have either seen it, read it, or remembered it. The question it raises is still pertinent as missionaries are faced with it every day, and while I think I may be closer to an answer, I'm still not totally satisfied with the answer I have. So, have at it and let me know what your thoughts are.

It is easy to engage in armchair theology, sitting comfortably by a raging fire, sipping a cup of your favorite tea, coffee or chocolate while discussing and solving all the theological problems in the world. I admit, I enjoy that kind of theology. My business is theology put into practice (missionary work) and so I enjoy a good "shop talk" and debate at times. But alas, one must finally get out of the armchair and reengage with his world. So I have a very real question for all you armchair theologians who are reading this. I need your help in how to correctly apply two seemingly contradictory passages of Scripture in my world of Liberia.

The two passages that I am thinking about are Matthew 5:38-42 (especially verse 42) and John chapter 6 with emphasis on verses 25-27.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." (Texts are taken from NRSV via www.biblegateway.com)



Distributing COVID relief.

In the Matthew passage Jesus tells us to give to those who beg from you and yet in John after the feeding of the 5000 he did not give to those who were begging from him to repeat his performance and feed them again.

The situations were different, and, in a sense, the Matthew passage is armchair theology while the John passage is where it met real life. Jesus healed those who sought him out, even if they did not believe in him. His compassion went out to all and yet when met by a very persistent group of people he refused to give what they wanted but instead referred them to what they really needed.



Uptown Monrovia.

https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/sites/default/files/public/styles/ss_media_popup/public/media/article/monrovia_street_scene.jpg?itok=NeoN04e_

Here is my real-life situation that happens more frequently than you might think. I was out on my usual early morning walk one day. About one block from home I was met by a young man who wanted me to give him something to eat. Then I was met by another young man who also wanted food or drink. By the time I had arrived at my gate there were four or five (I didn't count) all basically demanding something of me. (One day it was a group of probably five or six who were trying to convince me that I ought to help them as they were shouting at me and some of them chanting, "I love Jesus" or "I'll come to church.") This day I chose to not respond to them and escaped into the safety behind our gate. My response was partly shaped by the fact that the week before our night guard, not far outside our gate, was

jumped, attacked and robbed by a group of these young men who hang out on our street and I was beginning to feel intimidated.

Over on the main street are the amputees and other crippled men. They too seem to find me and ask for help. Sometimes I respond positively and sometimes not. I tend to have my "regulars" that I am more inclined to help as I at least have a little bit of "relationship" with them.

So what should I be doing? What do you do when you see people standing by the road with a sign asking for help? My question is: How do I determine the Matthew 5 people from the John 6 people? I have struggled with this from the first day of setting foot in Bolivia back in 1986 until now. So, armchair theologians, put on your thinking caps and give me an answer. I will be grateful for your thoughts.

While you ponder over the question raised above, please remember the following prayer requests and share them with your local church in whatever way that is appropriate. Thank you.

Please continue to pray for both the Gordon and Daniel Elliott families as they travel and share the vision of Liberia with Evangelical Churches. Pray for safety on the roads, for successful communication with the congregations that we share with, and that people and churches will pray and ask God how they should become involved in the ministry in Liberia.

Praise God for a good pastors' seminar held September in Monrovia. All the LEM (Liberia Evangelical Mission) pastors were able to attend. Ask for God's specific guidance for each pastor as he implements what he is learning.



Pastor Winston

Pray for the new congregation at Mende Town. Pastor Joseph and Pastor Winston are leading the congregation. Pray for stability for the new congregation, maturity for the leaders and people, and effective outreach into the village. Also pray for the students and teachers of the grade school begun by the church.

The leadership of LEM would like to be able to purchase a vehicle for use by the church. Pray for God's direction and providing if He would choose to provide in this way.

The Liberian government has indicated that schools might reopen in November. Pray for the LEM school administrators as they plan for reopening.

Thank you so much for being a Liberia Champion and lifting our cause in prayer.

Gordon