

### **God's Love and a New Tribe**

*And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." (Revelation 5:9 NKJV)*

"The Love of God is Greater Far..." The sound of my students singing this song on the last day of the seminar still rings in my mind and heart. I was in Bujumbura, Burundi for three weeks this past summer to teach a library research seminar at Hope Africa University. The words of that song so encapsulated the blessing of those days.

A former missionary to Burundi prayed Philippians 4:6 over me the Sunday before I left, "Do not be anxious about anything..." From that time until the present, God answered that prayer even when I spent fifty hours in a Brussels' hospital on my return journey. Another example of God's love showed up after my hospitalization. When I went to the airline's ticket desk to get my boarding pass to depart for home, I learned that I had been upgraded to first class. Hallelujah!

Even though the students at Hope Africa are expected to learn with English instruction, the communication exchange often inhibits learning. This time the language barrier was crushed as Linnet, director of the library, translated my instructions to the students in their heart language. God's grace and love permeated our teaching day by day. One day I was not well prepared (generally not recommended) due to a busy weekend. As I was teaching, God provided the perfect ideas for instruction that day. It was one of the most meaningful class sessions. Students were diligent and eager to learn. Many said that the instruction came at a perfect time for them in their academic journeys. A real bond, esprit de corps, formed between the students and me, and

their final presentations proved the positive learning and relational connectedness in the group.

Even though I have known several of the students, as well Linnet, for years, still I was deeply moved at how God drew the twenty-eight of us together, despite being from five different countries and speaking four different languages. I have learned that Africans know to which tribe they belong, just as those from the West usually know their ethnic origins. In reflecting upon this, Revelation 5:9b comes to mind, "[He]...purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." Despite our earthly "tribe" of origin, the Lord Jesus by his sacrifice has given us birth into a "New Tribe."

Having returned to my own earthly tribe, I ask myself, and you as colleagues: Whom in our day-to-day lives can we invite to become members of a "New Tribe"? For whom can we pray? Whom can we encourage? Are there those with whom we need to reconcile?

The world desperately needs to be able to see "how good and pleasant is it when [the people of a New Tribe] dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). As together we await a New Heaven and a New Earth, let us love deeply our brothers and sisters, as fellow heirs and members of a New Tribe.

—Karen Parsons



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