WHERE IS MY HEART?

Posted on March 21, 2011 by Eddie

Categories: Bible Translation, Mission, Observations

Yesterday, I was speaking at Twynham Church for the Community in Dorset. After the service, someone asked me a question where my heart is; is it still in Africa doing translation work or someplace else. It's a question that I hear fairly often and I'm generally nonplussed as to how to answer it. However, this time, I found the question reletively easy.

I loved working in Ivory Coast and I still feel a strong attachment to the country. I also enjoyed the time I spent visiting other Francophone African countries (such as Niger in the photo above). There is no doubt that a slice of my affection will always be given to Africa. I'm also passionate about the need for people to have access to the Scriptures in their own language. Being directly involved in a translation project as we were with Kouya, was a wonderful privilege - one that Sue still enjoys in Madagascar. I also thoroughly enjoyed being able to work with a number of projects; something I could do during my time in leadership roles in Africa. All of these experiences were humbling, exciting and encouraging and have left their mark on me.

But my heart is firmly here in England - at least for the moment. Let me explain...

I believe that cross-cultural mission, which includes Bible translation, is the responsibility of the whole church worldwide. It isn't just for Western Churches, nor can we say, as some do, that the West should back off and let the new churches of the South and East get on with the job. The call to mission is a call for all God's people. Over the years, the British Church has played a huge role in the work of announcing God's Kingdom to the world. However, at the moment, it is my perception that interest in mission is declining in the UK. Some aspects of relief and development work and some types of short term work are still attracting attention; but the hard graft of long term cross-cultural work is slipping out of focus in many circles.

Now it isn't a disaster for world evangelism if the British don't play their full part. This is God's mission and He will work his purposes out. However, it is close to a disaster for the British Church if we don't play our part. The British church will miss out on so much if it doesn't actively play a part in the work that God is doing around the world at the moment and that would be a huge shame for the UK. I strongly believe that we won't really be able to get to grips with evangelising the UK, until we get fully engaged with reaching out to the world.

My role at the moment is to encourage British Churches to get involved with mission. Primerily, I want to see them involved with the work of Bible Translation with Wycliffe; but if they can deepen their interest in any other sort of mission work, I will be a happy man. This is not a poor second best to working directly in a Bible translation project and it is certainly no less strategic. The British Church needs world mission much more than world mission needs the British Church and if by encouraging mission involvement, I can bless the British Church - that will be brilliant.

So, for the time being, my heart is here. At sometime in the future the Lord may move us on, but he hasn't yet.