

Dear Friends in the Lord,

I was in West Africa again from July 27<sup>th</sup> to August 27<sup>th</sup>. The four weeks were equally divided between Ivory Coast and Benin. After a very long wait to check-in, I had the pleasant surprise of being upgraded and so I was a little more comfortable for the six to seven hour flight. Just before reaching Abidjan, we had the privilege to see the total eclipse of the moon from 34.000 ft. With the clouds below lit up by raging storms, the view was magical.

## Ivory Coast

**Abidjan** - It was good to renew fellowship with these dear friends, especially Jules Kouakou, a dear brother who took excellent care of the logistics of my stay. I spent the week-end in Abidjan, preaching several times in the little Grace Church meeting in Yopougon, a suburb of the capital. We also had a couple of discussion meetings when people asked questions that have troubled them. Rémi Konan is a young man who does most of the preaching and he needs much prayer as he also has a full-time job. He is very dedicated to the Lord and responds so positively to any help and advice.



With Jules Kouadio

From Abidjan, I went to Agboville, a small town about one hour north-east. There is a Church planting effort there where I preached. Staying overnight gave me the opportunity to talk much more with Antonio, the man who leads this young and small work.



Rémi Konan & family

**Gagnoa** – This was the next stop, where Paul NGoran is pastor, and from where Vincent Dua works in the book distribution. The time there was spent in talks with Vincent and Paul about the work. Vincent's hard work and gifts enable him to have much impact with the message of the books in many quarters. May the truth

turn lives upside down!

I preached several time in the Gagnoa Grace Church, and had a whole evening meeting with the men from the Church. Vincent had also arranged for me to preach for two of his contacts in Divo & Lakota. These places are part of one of the main denominations, but the message of Free Grace has started impacting the pastors, especially one of them (Benjamin) who is openly siding with the truth, with the consequences one expects.



With pastor Benjamin

**Gagnoa Bible camp** – I had been asked to give four messages on the prophecy of Haggai. About a hundred participants came, from all over the country. There was a lovely atmosphere between those present, and the preaching of the local men was good and biblical. I was asked to lead several workshops with various groups (couples, ladies, leaders & young adults). These times seemed very profitable and were a blessing to me. The times with the young adults were specially blessed, and the two evenings planned became three, and I felt that the Word was not taught in vain. We looked at several of their questions, at the nature of the Christian and at



Participants at the Gagnoa camp

the question of how a person becomes a Christian. These subjects are pregnant with interest, for most of these dear friends come from families within the Churches and they have difficulty finding out where they stand.

The camp takes place in a Roman Catholic girls' school, a very nice location. The nun in charge of the place, and interacting with us was very impressed with the good behaviour of the campers. She also wanted to know more about what we taught and believed. This led to several deep conversations and, in the end, she took the recordings of the messages and bought some books. Pray for Marika, originally from Slovakia.

After Gagnoa, I returned to Abidjan for a couple of days before flying with Paul to Benin.



With Marika in Gagnoa & Vincent

## Benin

This was the second visit this year (see my report for February).

**Cotonou** – Paul & I stayed there a few days, meeting a number of individual and preaching in several Churches. The main Grace Church now meets in its own premises in Zogbo, and it was good being with these dear people once again. We also went to another district, Djédjélayé, and to a little town on the edge, Ekpè.

**Parakou** – Stopping overnight in Bohicon, where our colleague Julien Naka is the pastor, and preaching there in the evening, we went on to Parakou, in central Benin. Last February, I had a blessed time among these friends and I had sensed that the leaders would benefit from more teaching on the question of the Church. So we planned for a number of meetings with the men, looking at the nature, the life and the influence of the Church from the Word. These times were a

rich experience and there was much discussion afterwards, often continuing over a meal at the local restaurant! As I mentioned before, most of these men are first generation Christians and do not have models to lead them. In view of the impact such teaching can have for the Gospel, I plan to dig further into this vast subject and explore how to help further the brethren. While in Parakou, Paul and I preached in the Church and to met with various individuals who had questions.

**Bohicon Bible camp** – Back south, we got to Bohicon as things were in turmoil. Indeed, 24 hours before the start of the camp, the government requisitioned the school where it was due to be held. The men had just finished the main installation. They had to find an alternative venue, take down the main marquee and reinstall it in the new place, all this while campers started arriving. The camp started a day late and it was clear from the men's faces that these last minute changes had severely tested their strength!



[Partial view of the main tent in the Benin tent](#)



[Breakfast for 600+](#)

Then, on the second day, as the cook was getting things going, the water pump broke down! This was quite a blow, especially with 600 plus people present at the camp. This highlighted the need to rethink the whole camp. Year after year, numbers have increased and the situation is such now that one can wonder whether this annual event accomplishes really what it was set up for, i.e. the proclamation of the Gospel of Free Grace. So, much thinking has to be done now to find ways to get back to the original vision. We need to pray for wisdom to understand what the mind of the Lord is in this.

I was asked to preach five times. This was reduced to four sessions in the end – two messages on Psalm 1 and two messages on Isaiah 54 & 55. Again, the preaching from the local men was good, uplifting and biblical as they explained what it is like to live by grace in an alien world. The fellowship between the participants was also rich, though it is difficult to meet everybody in such a crowd.

**Porto Novo** – This time, I did not go to Porto Novo as on previous visits, but Cyriaque Aholou, the pastor, arranged for a meeting to take place during the camp. This was a good opportunity to share with the friends and to answer their questions from the Word. The situation of this Church is very encouraging. The two factions have been reunited under the Gospel, and Cyriaque is very wise in his leadership. They had four baptisms recently and, interacting with several of these friends, it was clear that there is a new sense of Gospel liberty among them. Whereas there were hardly 10 people attending the camp in the past, nearly 80 of them came this year.

Their example has started inspiring another small Church which has suffered from a split in the past, and the leaders are beginning to talk about reconciliation. The events in Porto Novo have been like a breath of fresh air among the Churches as it gave a living parable that the Lord can drastically change things and that biblical faith has a real impact on life. We need to pray for this as it is certain that the enemy of souls is not pleased!

**Back in Cotonou via Toronto** – This rather enigmatic sub-title shows how in His sovereignty, the Lord leads things in a strange way sometimes. Just before leaving Europe, I was contacted by someone in Toronto for some project. It turned out to be a young lady from a Roman Catholic background who was recently saved and who is originally from Bohicon! She wanted me to meet one of her friends because she was anxious that he heard the Gospel. So, back in Cotonou, here comes Sirius, a lovely young man from the same background who is asking what is the truth, how can one be saved, what is the Gospel of Christ, etc.!



[With Sirius in Cotonou](#)

We spent a whole evening chatting, looking at the Word in order to answer his questions. The next morning, I was preaching in Zogbo. He came with me, listened intently to the Word and met with the brethren in the Grace Church. He has much to think about, pray for and discover. We then spent another couple of hours talking about the Word at a local café. Let us pray for him! What a lovely parting blessing from the Lord!

It was then time for me to go to the airport and fly back home after four intense and blessed weeks. May the Word take root in many hearts to the glory of our good Lord!

And, yes, I was upgraded again on my flight!

Many of you personally pray

every day during the trips (some friends calculate the time difference to be in sync with the events of the day!). The Lord inspires the prayers He wants to answer.

Thank you to all of you who partner in this mission. Do not give up in this teamwork!



[Young adults at the Gagnoa camp](#)

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More photos upon request or on the *Europresse* page on Facebook.