

Special One Ministries, Inc.

"A Peculiar People for a Peculiar Cause"



Day 1 ~ August 11, 2014

Today is the day! I am extremely excited and overwhelmed about this mission trip. My travels began this morning in Memphis, TN. I met up with Bishop and Mother Sims, Mother Vicki Taylor and Brother George Gilbeaux in Atlanta, GA. We flew to JFK airport in New York City. I slept on all of those flights. When we arrived in New York, we had a delayed flight. We were to fly to Accra, Ghana at 10:30 PM but left at midnight. So, Bishop Sims treated everyone to dinner. He briefed us about our busy day ahead and asked each member of the team to introduce themselves. When we returned to our gate, we had to check in by showing our passport and travel visa. While in line, we met a man of God who said he felt like we had the spirit of God in us. He was taking a mission team of 15 people (youth and adults) for a girl's conference through his brother-in-law's church. We talked with him and the time flew by. Before we knew it we were boarding the largest plane I have ever seen or flown on in all of my life. As we walked on the plane all I could think was, "WOW"! They fed us ALL night, we each had our personal computer stations, and they had amazing access to the flight plan, movies, games, etc. However, I slept ALL night long. ☺ When I woke up—we were preparing for landing in Accra, Ghana! WOW...

Day 2 ~August 12, 2014

We landed in Ghana at 4:16 PM. It is about 11:00 or after at home. We were greeted by the Ghana Jurisdiction officials! They were nice! The locals everywhere are selling something and offering to help, I am sure trying to make a living! Bishop had our transportation team take us to exchange currency. We each exchanged \$100.00 and received c360.00 Ghanaian dollars (cedes). When we arrived at the hotel we settled in, checked and sanitized our rooms, then headed to the store for water and supplies. It was a "mall", the Accra Mall! We returned to the hotel for dinner. Dinner was delicious—I had the grilled snapper and chips (fries), with cooked mixed veggies! We enjoyed discussing our experience thus far and our itinerary for the next few days. Bishop had a meeting with the Ghana jurisdictional officials and I got a chance to meet the supervisor and her assistant. When we returned to our rooms, I got the blessed privilege of listening to the wisdom and experiences of Mother Vicki Taylor. She truly poured into me during our God-ordained and edifying conversation. As I reflect, the one thing I saw today that captured my heart was how hard the people work. What they go through to make a living was truly laborious. It was a moment that provoked genuine gratefulness in me and truly moved me to a deeper call to support missions at home and abroad. One thing I heard that blessed me immensely was when Mother Taylor said, "Don't let the 20% distract you." She explained that in most cases you will have the support of 80% of the people but you are easily distracted by the 20%. I thought to myself, "Lord why are you telling mother all of my business." ☺ We are so blessed and favored by God, full of His excellence and wisdom. Though we do and will make mistakes, we are ultimately guided and ordered by Him. We don't owe anyone explanations or apologies for being who we were created to be. If you were born to lead, lead — no excuses, no regrets, no defenses. This day has been amazing and I know it only gets better from here!

Day 3 ~ August 13, 2014

Today was AMAZING! It was surreal. The day began with travels from Accra to Elmina! Travelling was an adventure within itself. The first thing that impacted me was the children. Children are very dear to me. They roam the streets bartering. While we were at one of the very few traffic lights, a beautiful young African girl came up to our van. She took her fingers and put them to her mouth in what I call the universal signal for "hunger". Tears came to my eyes. It was overwhelming because I never figured out who she was with. As we continued on our journey we saw so much. People walked for miles and miles, bartering on the sides of the streets but mainly in the streets; aggressive driving (the worse I have ever experienced in my life); beautiful landscape; huts for homes; women (all of them) carrying their babies on their backs using fabrics – no strollers; and so much more. Once we passed cape coast and entered Elmina the streets became very narrow and were over-crowded. After checking in @ Coconut Grove Resort Hotel we ate lunch beachside – so you know it was amazing. After lunch and getting settled in our condos, we went to the most impactful place I've ever gone to, The Elmina Slave Castle. I'm almost in tears as I write. Travelling there was a culture shock. Walkers take over the streets so driving through the street to get to the castle was madness. (Funny though – two people walked into the side view mirror-LOL). Once we got to the castle we were bombarded with native Ghanaians – mainly men asking us for our names and trying to shake our hands – it was frightening but Bishop reassured me that all was well! I later found out that they wanted our name to make bracelets and items while we were touring the castle, so that we could purchase from them when we exited the castle. Visiting Elmina Slave Castle was the most fulfilling experience of my life. What affected me the most during the tour was the "Door of No Return..." Knowing how my ancestors were treated – the full history from 1482 until the end of the transatlantic slave trade provokes me. I want to begin a program for aggressive black children, a program that helps them

with their aggression through boxing or some other sport as well as taking a group to the Elmina Slave Castle every year. I was speechless by all I learned and saw. I couldn't talk. I, April Dawn, had no words. I stood and listened in awe capturing the moments through the eyes of my lens. I listened to my tour guide in awe! It was so much to process in one visit. I learned that 60% of all slaves came from Ghana and specifically from the Elmina Slave Castle. TEAR ☹ It was a bit overwhelming standing at the "Door of No Return" knowing the high possibility that my ancestors probably came through that door! It was a moment I will NEVER forget. I thought it was beautiful that people actually made and/or bought wreaths and placed them in some of the dungeons but mainly at the "Door of No Return". We had a beautiful evening. Dinner was beach side and it was great as well. They have these coconut chips ~ the "bomb-diggity"! FUNNIEST MOMENT TODAY: Me, Mother Taylor and Mother Sims rode the golf cart back to our condo, and it stopped going up the hill. Our poor driver refused to let us walk (though we offered) and he pushed the cart up the hill. (LOL) I felt so sorry for him but he was very kind – such a gentleman! This experience thus far has been mind blowing! I am grateful forever!

Day 4 ~ August 14, 2014

What a day... Though it is not written, I have a bucket list. It is a developing list because God is always fulfilling my desires. One thing I added a few years ago was zip-lining. It was going to be a fulfilled desire on my birthday in 2013 but someone died zip-lining right before I scheduled my celebration. Then I scheduled zip-lining for my birthday this year and someone else died. Well, zip-lining, one of the most adventurous things I've ever wanted to do—was officially taken off of my bucket list! Today, I believe God fulfilled a desire of mine and helped me to overcome a slight fear all in one. Today, I walked the seven hanging bridges of Kakum National Park in Elmina. It was surreal and awesome! I kept whispering and singing, "How great is our God" and "Jesus, there's something about that name". We walked up the mountain—way up the mountain, a long way. I was tired but I kept climbing. Mother Taylor inspired me as she walked up the mountain—it was a rough walk but she did it. Walking the bridges was amazing. The view was spectacular and looking down at the top of the trees truly made me utter my favorite phrase, "God is beautiful!" And He is... Coming down the mountain was the greatest feeling. I took a lot of "selfies"! ☺ We traveled to Tema after visiting the park—horrible roads and even worse traffic but we made it just in time to enjoy a beautiful dinner with the Mission Team, the superintendents of the Ghana districts and the secretary of the women's department. The chairman of the board of superintendents asked Bishop Sims if I was COGIC-it was sort of funny. At home, people are always asking me or saying, "Are you COGIC?/You must be COGIC!" He made no assumptions—he wanted to make sure I would be teaching the children the right thing. Bishop Sims reassured him that I was born and raised in the church and capable of teaching the children. That was very humbling. God is... I am extremely excited and so ready to meet and interact with some children. I am ready to teach and even more excited about

worshipping God on foreign soil. I thought it was so super cool that I got to call my pastor tonight! 😊

Day 5 ~ August 15, 2014

Today was our first day of ministry – we began the day at the cultural center. Culturally it is amazing to see how different Ghana is from America but it is also amazing to see little things that help me to understand more about black American culture. We do things that we don't understand are small pieces of insight into the true native culture of many of our ancestors. Some things that baffle me.... How do they carry all that stuff on their heads? They put anything and everything on their heads, walk and talk, interact, and much more, as if nothing has been altered or changed. It was awe inspiring. Another thing that captures me is how aggressive the driving is. There are not many stop lights and signs in Ghana. The people drive so aggressively that if you don't match their level of intensity you will not go ANYWHERE! It was pretty powerful to watch each time we travelled somewhere. So much so that God began to minister to me about how the attitude I must develop in prayer. I will share one day! Lastly, there are NO elevators or escalators! How do they do it? LOL ☺ Tonight was the most AMAZING experience! Worship was overwhelming! I have NEVER experienced anything of this nature in worship. It was very liberating. EVERYONE was engaged in the worship experience. They all participated! It was amazing to see them giving God everything in them! They celebrate everything. We are taught in Sunshine Band in the states, you don't clap after the scripture is read. However, they celebrate the word of God. They clap and praise God and cheer when the word is read! That makes so much sense to me... During praise and worship, everyone dances around the altar – and the leaders lead out in the dance. It was exuberant and jubilant. It was so different from worship at home. The word was on point too. I am extremely excited right now! WOW!

Day 6 ~ August 16, 2014

WOW—what a day! Women's Day and Youth Night Services were amazing. I had to teach this morning and tonight. There is no feeling like the feeling I get when I am ministering the word of God. However, today, to teach His word in a foreign land, in place I have never been before, with people I have never met before, it was the most liberating and empowering feeling I have ever had. I am in AWE of God! The spirit of God flooded my heart and the altar appeal was simply majestic! You felt the sincerity of the women of God on the altar. You felt the anointing of God. The reverence and respect of worship was there... I love God and I feel more jubilant than I have ever felt in all of my life. I am so excited. My God tonight... The youth are EXTREME! The teaching opportunity was so blessed... The man of God preached under the anointing! It provoked me... When he finished walking the word and talking about everyone that heard the call and answered the call through their obedience, I came back to my hotel room like, Lord whatever you tell me to do... I am READY, whatever He wants me to do NOW! The word truly struck something in me!!! The man of God convinced me that what is in me equips me to do ALL that I'm called to do...

Day 7 ~ August 17, 2014

Today, today, today... God is... Our Sunday school classes were AMAZING—the anointing of God truly came into the room. He blessed me immensely! When Bishop and Mother Sims consecrated those district missionaries it was such a beautiful ceremony. It was very sacred. I was almost in tears by the sincerity of the saints. They gave God praise and celebrated Him. The people were so engaged! It brings me to tears each time I think about... I'm so overwhelmed and changed forever. Bishop's official day message blessed me as well! He preached the theme but lets us know if the church is going to effectively minister to this deeply distressed and troubled world, we need 5 things: vertical relationship; fellowship—horizontal relationships; evangelism—outreach ministries; discipleship—winning sinners souls for Jesus; and service—every member actively participating in the life and growth of the body. That was empowering! Every phase of sharing in ministry requires ACTIVE participation. We must do what we do—knowing as the Apostle Paul said above all we are accountable to God and He sees us. Tonight at dinner, I became extremely emotional at the thought of what this experience has meant and how it has impacted my life. I could not contain my tears as I expressed to the mission team how every aspect of this mission has empowered me for what is ahead. I am grateful forever. I appreciate God for allowing me the privilege and responsibility of connecting with Bishop and Mother Sims and ultimately being a member of the 2014 Ghana Mission Team. My passion has been refueled and this has reignited the fire and jubilation I once experienced in God. I am READY to be the warrior of prayer, praise and power I am called and anointed to be! I am NO longer the same and to God be the glory! Let the church say, AMEN!

Day 8 ~ August 18, 2014

Today is the day we begin our travels back to the United States. I shall never forget what God has done for me here. I needed this. Last year I told Stephanie Bass-Jackson that I am going to Africa. I knew I didn't have the means to make that declaration but I knew I would. I never could have imagined how, when, or what I would be doing here but today, I can truly say that if you seek God and His kingdom, EVERY desire will be fulfilled. It is necessary for me to WAIT on the Lord for every promise He has made because He NEVER forgets and He ALWAYS fulfills! He goes above and beyond your heart's desire because He knows what you need. I will never forget Brother George, Mother Taylor and Bishop and Mother Sims. I feel like I have a new family! I miss my mommy and daddy so I am excited to get home but as soon as I get back I am writing my savings plan for my next mission trip! I am going to prepare because now I know that this is something I will be doing regularly. I need to be in the field. God has invested too much in me for me to continue in the things that make me comfortable. God is... I love you Jesus! Until we meet again... God bless and remember, "Everyday with Jesus is sweeter than the day before..."