

THE LIVING BIBLE

I completed the Missionary Training, and because of my education and writing skills was asked to join the staff, and in time one of my tasks was to be the mission secretary. I read all the incoming reports and letters, and wrote the letters to the fields for the mission secretary. Several years passed and then we received troubling letters. We had sixteen missionaries in Nigeria, West Africa, and some threatened to return home instead of complete their term. We wrote for details and reasons—but no one would tell the office what the problems were. This was before the internet and cable communication, and missionaries living in the villages had no access to telephones. They only had snail-mail which took about three weeks for letters to move both ways. Not getting an answer for the cause of unhappiness, the tension continued to build and the office had no one qualified to go to Nigeria and settle the problem. It required two to six months to get visas, so that was another obstacle in selecting someone to go. As mission secretary I was privy to all communications and I had a passport—but I didn't feel experienced enough to take this assignment; so time passed without action.

Then a troubling letter arrived from a Nigerian missionary and in desperation I decided to fast for three days and seek God for guidance. I was awake on Saturday morning and went to our living room to worship, sing and pray. The idea came: *"pick up your Bible and read where it opens"*. This was the second time God used the **Living Bible** in my young life. It opened to **Romans 16: 17-20**, and there I read: *"note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord, Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. **And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."*

When I read: *"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly"* the Spirit of the Lord touched my head and I felt His power flow quickly from my head to my belly—and I knew I was the one to go to Nigeria. I was on a plane six days later with a visa for Ghana, where I hoped I could get a visa for Nigeria. I spent three weeks in Ghana visiting our missionaries and conferring with our supervisor, who also helped me get a three month visa from Ghana to Nigeria. Perfect! In three months I could discover the problem and the home office could give me the solution; and I would be home during late summer and have time to finish the house foundation and be prepared for winter. You can see that the **Bible God is alive** and active in human lives—**proof the Bible is not fiction**. But there is more evidence to share as we continue this African mission.

Briefly—the Nigeria problem was partly the cultural difference between British and American background and thought. It was also partly because the British supervisor had vintage Pentecostal training while our missionaries were post WWII and their outlook was fashioned by the Latter Rain/Charismatic revival and healing crusades (*contrary doctrine and training*). I spent a couple of months, traveling thousands of miles with the British supervisor, talking to our missionaries—and getting no satisfactory answers from them or the British supervisor. One morning I went to the supervisor's office and we talked about a lot of things. I mostly listened, and the supervisor smoothly and quietly began to express his unhappiness; and soon I realized he was blaming everything on our home mission office and leadership. I also realized there was a wide gap between his missionary work and the training and goals of the American revivalists. The more he talked I was becoming convinced that the problems were with my leaders in America. I left his office feeling sick at heart and wondering "how" I could return home and continue working at Wings of Healing.

But God—and the Living-Bible! I went to my room and quietly began to pray for insight and answers. As I sang and worshipped the idea came to read the shortest NT Books (Jude v. 8; 3rd John vs 9,10; 2 John vs. 7,10; James 4:11; Titus 1:10,11 & 3:2,9). In these verses I noticed similar verses to **Romans 16** about *those who cause divisions and serve their own interests, not God's...who speak evil against dignitaries (leaders)...speak malicious, contentious words...(deceivers)...vain talkers whose mouths must be stopped to avoid contentions*. Slowly the truth settled in—the supervisor had his own procedures fashioned by his

experience; and he wasn't dealing with the Americans in a way that was supportive. Also, his manner was so smooth (*by smooth words and flattering speech*) that just hours before he had almost deceived me. I slowly realized these passages I just read from the Bible paralleled the passage in Romans that God used to send me on this mission.

As I contemplated how to handle the situation, I was reminded that while in Ghana another **Living-Bible** experience occurred. I was sitting on my cot with a window open reading and praying about the Nigeria problem. My eyes were closed when I heard the breeze turning the pages of my Bible, and when the ruffling stopped I read the exposed passage. It was 2nd Samuel 2:18—23. One of David's young warriors named Asahel was killed by Abner, the commander of Saul's army. Abner had warned Asahel to stop pursuing him and fight with younger soldiers, but Asahel ignored the warning and the more experienced Abner easily killed him. The story troubled me because Asahel represented the good king, David. I thought the wrong man got killed and my meditation was disturbed **until—until** I realized I was the inexperienced man having to deal with the experienced supervisor. This was a warning for me to be wise and cautious in my discussions and not to attack the supervisor. In all fairness, he had pioneered missions in Nigeria on a shoe-string budget—and the Americans were part of the problem too, because they were accustomed to a better lifestyle than they had in remote areas without running water, electricity, mail and phone service and food and clothing markets.

The British supervisor was a dedicated missionary who had labored alone until the American revivalists came—and they were both inexperienced and had a different mindset. It was a difficult mix at best. And while no missionary made any specific charges, I learned that the supervisor had not told the complete truth about a financial matter and this caused some missionaries to mistrust the home office. The Bible passages I read that day—and Romans 16 that sent me to Nigeria—led to the conclusion that changes had to be made. After an exchange of cables with the home office I was authorized to ask the supervisor to agree to three administrative changes—and then I could go home. He refused—so then I was to go to British Immigration in Lagos and remove the supervisor from being our host organizational contact, and God gave me favor with British immigration officials in completing this task. Do I need to point out how the Bible came alive in guiding me thus far? **It certainly is not fiction.**

This meant I had to stay in Nigeria until a new supervisor could be sent. As letters passed to and from America and Nigeria about sending a qualified supervisor—or me staying—I noticed an old building near where I was living and went there for privacy to sing and pray out loud. I needed answers to how I could finish the work on my house if I stayed in Nigeria; and if I stayed what would my ministry be since I had little ministry experience? As I sang and prayed three conditions came to mind. One—my old house had to be sold, two—I needed a home-base away from the area where our former supervisor lived, and 3—a legal/financial matter the Supervisor had been opposing had to be resolved. I asked the Lord to answer these three requests and I would know it was His will for me to stay in Nigeria.

The next week I traveled 300 miles to encourage one of our missionaries and had a one night stop-over. When I opened my bedroom door in the morning my Nigerian interpreter and advisor was waiting for me. I had not told him my travel plans so only God led him to me with news that a major tribal chieftain wanted us to hold healing and teaching meetings in his domain—one request answered. Within a week I received a letter from my wife saying our old house had sold—another request was answered. I told the Lord I could believe for the answer to the third request and wrote home affirming I would stay in Nigeria for two more years—send my wife and two children to Nigeria. This was not a **Living-Bible** experience per se, but it was the **God of the Living-Bible** inspiring my prayer and giving me an immediate confirming answer.

While waiting for the family to settle things at home and arrive in Nigeria I had another major experience affirming in a powerful way that the **Bible-God is alive** and that he answers prayer. We had two women missionaries ministering to Nigerian women several hundred miles from where I was staying. A single male missionary was co-laboring with me because he had a vehicle and I did not. I sent him to bring the ladies down for a few days to plan their next outreach. I prepared an evening meal expecting them to arrive by evening. As evening passed and night set in without their arrival I put the food away, prayed and went to

bed. About 2:a.m. I heard a voice outside calling my name. It was my associate bearing bad news. There

had been an accident, his vehicle was totaled, and both ladies had been taken to a hospital 200 miles away, and one had been unconscious. My co-worker was devastated and we had no transportation.

After breakfast and prayer I left him at home and walked several miles to the major road where I hoped to catch some kind of ride. God sent a small native transport which I flagged down, explained my situation and the driver was going to the city I needed to go to, and he drove me to the hospital where the ladies were. I spoke to the British doctor who told me Maxine had been unconscious since arrival and they had opened her skull to keep her alive. He advised me to contact her family in America and arrange for her body to be sent home. I thanked him, but said we believed in a miracle-working God. He said that was fine, but I should contact her family anyway.

He didn't know the spiritual war I experienced during the bus ride. In my head I would think: "*what if the missionary dies*"? And the Bible verse from John 11:40: "*If you will believe, you will see the glory of God*" would respond. This mental battle raged throughout the five hour ride. When I stood by the unconscious body, and saw the bandaged head; when I spoke and she never moved a muscle; when I spoke to her co-worker in the same room with a broken leg—I didn't know how to pray. I questioned God: "*do I have the faith to pray her into consciousness*"? Suddenly, and without premeditation, I blurted the words: "*Maxine! Wake up!*" Immediately she opened her eyes and stared at me for about thirty seconds, then I saw something in her eyes that could have been fear or pain and Maxine closed her eyes again. It had been the Holy Spirit speaking through me and I left the hospital feeling like I could walk on air—I knew Maxine would live. She remained in a coma for nine more days but walked away from the hospital with a sound mind and body; and I had experienced the life and power of the Bible one more time--: "*if you will believe you will see the glory of God*"! This Bible passage was fulfilled proving that **the Bible is not fiction!**

My wife, Dolores, and two preschool children—Gregory and Beverly—arrived in Nigeria; and just weeks before we returned to America two years later, our second son, Gale, was born. But in those two years I learned enough about missions and Nigeria that we began to shift away from the traditional missionary program. We sent Bible teachers to train nationals in revival strategy and church planting; and God raised up a National leader named Godwin—and that involved several more **Living-Bible** experiences—which further illustrated the truth that **the Bible, and it's God**, are alive, powerful, and active in the lives of true Bible believers—**anything but fiction.**

In 50 years over 3000 churches were planted and an estimated two or three million souls below the Sahara Desert in Nigeria have embraced the Christian faith. Admittedly, I was inexperienced, but the **Bible had come alive** in a way that crushed Satan's efforts to disrupt and deceive. While all the glory goes to God, I would say that the fulfillment of **Romans 16**, which started me on the journey; the wind turning pages to a passage that warned and guided me in dealing with the British supervisor; the confirming passages in the short N.T. Books; and the spiritual battle based on John 11:40, leading to the Holy Spirit speaking through me to awaken Maxine from near death—was proof that the Bible is anything but fiction—it is a "**Living, life-giving**" book! And I had a part in defeating Satan as **Romans 16:20 predicted.**

No—the Bible is not fiction—it is living in believers' lives today. Throughout my active christian life I have had many more "**Living-Bible**" experiences which I may write about. These personal experiences occurred because **God and the Bible are real, not fiction** as some people mistakenly think. Look back on your life to remember if you have had life changing Bible experiences. If you are young in the Lord, make Bible reading, prayer and worship daily activities. When you are troubled by problems take time to pray and read. Every Christian is God's favorite—but He usually responds to our prayers and questions. If you are not yet a Christian, read and pray **Romans 10:9 & 10**; find a Bible believing church; make friends with solid Christians; and let God lead you along your pathway to fulfillment and heaven.

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