

Sellers Sequel 🤔



We stand in awe as we reflect on the things that God has brought into focus over the past month since our return to Côte d'Ivoire. Just as the Lord Jesus touched the eyes of the blind man again in Mark 8 so that what had been out of focus became clear, so he has brought much more into focus how he wants to use us in this upcoming term of service. He has also shown us his protection, provision and presence in eye-opening ways as well. 🤔



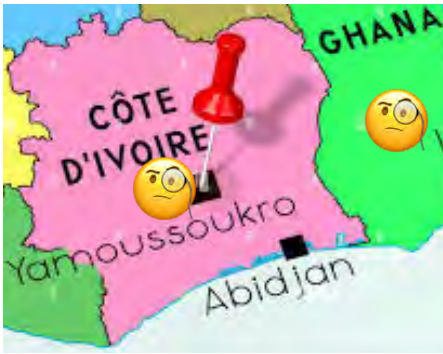
On the day of our departure we were accompanied to the airport by Laura, our daughter, and dear friends, the Canfields. Our flights from Indianapolis to Abidjan, via Newark and Brussels were smooth though long. Our colleague Bob was at the airport to pick us up and take us to a guesthouse. Our first day in Abidjan was spent running errands, renewing our residency papers, getting cell phones operational, and making contact with friends.



The next day we headed up to Yamoussoukro with Bob. About halfway to Yamoussoukro, we stopped at the only service station within a radius of about 40 miles so that Bob could pick up some goodies for his children. Initially he was not going to take time to stop there, but LeAnn encouraged him to do so; thus we made a stop. As Bob went into the small store, people standing around started motioning to the ground under our car. As we opened our window, they told us to cut the motor, which we did without knowing what the problem was. We discovered that diesel was pouring out from the engine onto the ground, pooling up around the truck. Once we opened the hood and started the car up again, we quickly found a major leak in the fuel line hose. A mechanic who happened

to be present, quickly removed the hose, went into the nearest village, found a comparable one, installed it, and we were on our way once again. If we had not stopped at the station, we would not have discovered this potentially dangerous situation and might have gotten stranded along the highway or worse! The Lord's eyes were definitely watching over us!





That was the first of three trips that we have made to Yamoussoukro in less than one month, and the Lord has kept us safe on each one. On other occasion as we were driving around Abidjan, looking for potential places to live, we got a flat tire but made it back to our guesthouse before it went completely flat. When we took it to be repaired, we learned that it had a major hole and might have blown out any time that we were traveling on the highway. Being a front tire, this could have led to serious consequences as well. But the

Lord kept his eyes on us even when we did not see the potential danger beneath us. We ended up buying two new tires and thanking the Lord for his constant protection.

Since our return, we have been blessed to be able to stay at a missionary guesthouse belonging to another mission. God has provided for us in this way, which has given us time and freedom to move around Abidjan as we have searched for permanent lodging. Over a two-week period, we visited numerous houses, duplexes, and apartments in several neighborhoods. This is not like house-hunting in the US with a realtor. We have to drive around spying out “For rent” signs, which then usually lead us to a small-scale realtor, of sorts, who then may lead us to some other places or other realtors. In two weeks, we worked with around eight different realtors to look at about twenty places. We were really fortunate that in only our second week of this process, the Lord opened our eyes to a recently renovated apartment within our budget in a new neighborhood that we did not know even existed. It is on the second floor of a small apartment building and seems quite secure. While we spent a few more days looking at other places and seeking God’s provision, our focus seemed to keep coming back to this apartment. So we have decided, to go with it, even though it will take some downsizing of our furnishings and belongings as it is smaller than our previous home. We hope to move in by the end of February.



West Africa Gathering - WAG 🤔

One reason we will not move in immediately is because we are busy preparing for the first-ever West Africa Gathering of the Church of God to take place February 20-23 in Yamoussoukro. We will receive guests from all regions of Africa as well as from the US. And our pastors and their wives from across Côte d’Ivoire are invited to be present as well as other national leaders and missionaries. It has been challenging to make sure that everyone gets their visa to enter Côte d’Ivoire and to coordinate travel arrangements. Soon we will be busy making trips to the Abidjan airport and then taking guests to Yamoussoukro. We will help host

some of these guests at a hotel, and others at IBAO. While the national church leaders in Côte d’Ivoire are the primary organizers and hosts, we are seeking to provide logistical support where needed. IBAO will host the final day, which will focus on the role of women in ministry within an African context. 🤔

Focusing on Francophone Africa



While our current focus has been on our return to Côte d'Ivoire, God has also been clarifying our vision for our new responsibilities as missionary liaisons to French-speaking Africa. With plans to visit our former fields of service in Rwanda and Congo DRC, our eyes have been drawn to the renewed fighting in eastern Congo in the area where the Church of God is active and to the plight of thousands of refugees fleeing their homes and pouring into Goma. This is very reminiscent of what we lived through in this very place in 1994, following the Rwandan genocide. Our eyes watch the horror and weariness on the faces of refugee families who have lost homes, crops, livelihoods and even family members once again. Many of these are connected to the Church of God there. We also rejoice in the vision of Church of God leaders in Congo as they see these overwhelming needs and seek to make a difference by meeting those that they are able. Our thanks to many in the US who have donated to this need through the Church of God Disaster Relief funds. 🙏

Like the blind man who could initially see only dimly until Jesus touched him a second time and renewed his vision to see more clearly than ever before, so Jesus has at times touched us anew with his clarified vision for those in need near to us and far from us as well. Last week, LeAnn lost her glasses for part of a day and we could not find them anywhere. She spent that time struggling to see what she was working on without her glasses to clarify her vision. When she finally found them hiding in the depths of her backpack, her vision was brought back into focus by the simple act of putting them on again. May Jesus' renewed touch on our vision in this new year bring new clarity and focus to our calling wherever he needs us to be!

Prayer Requests and Praises

- ***Praise** God for our safety in traveling to Côte d'Ivoire and within the country.
- ***Praise** God for helping Larry and LeAnn to find housing!
- ***Pray** for Larry and LeAnn as they move their belongings from Yamoussoukro to Abidjan.
- ***Pray** for safety for delegates traveling by plane, bus, and car to Yamoussoukro to participate in the West Africa Gathering (WAG) of the Church of God.
- ***Pray** for God's Spirit to be upon all of those who attend the WAG.
- ***Pray** for thousands of refugees fleeing attacks by M23 militia, seeking refuge in and around Goma, Congo, and for efforts by the church to care for their basic needs.
- ***Praise** God for bringing focus to our vision for future ministry in the French-speaking nations of Africa.



🤔 FOCUSING on training future servants by watching and doing

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