



## Lessons From Mission Partnering

Tom & Laura Mullenix



*"In His name, the nations will put their hope." Matthew 12:21*

The task before us, to make disciples of all ethnic groups, baptize them and teach them to obey Jesus, is too big for any one person or ministry.

I have been involved in mission partnering since 1988 and I look forward to many more years of fruitful service. However, if we are going to multiply the work for Christ, we must multiply workers. It is my desire to coach others as they partner with other international leaders. (Most of the work I've done was accomplished as a local church minister during one mission trip per year.)

**It is intriguing to look back and see the ways that God has used to open doors for the gospel message.** We began our work on the eastern border of the Ivory Coast. Kouame lived and taught in the city of Abengourou. (He was an English Teacher in an equivalent to our Junior College.) Kouame was baptized into Christ in 1987 and volunteered, due to a vacuum in leadership, to shepherd the new church.

For the first three mission trips, Abengourou served as our base and hub – we went out from there to start churches. Kouame continued leading evangelistic Bible studies among his students. That didn't please the higher ups from this Catholic school.

When Kouame didn't acquiesce to their "suggestions" that he quit the Bible studies (students were converting). So, they began to put on the pressure. Before I arrived, he received the ultimatum, "Stop the studies or get out of your house on campus." He found other housing.

Then they put him at the bottom of the pay list. If the college payroll came up short, they didn't prorate, Kouame caught the brunt. Things gradually devolved to the place where he had to pursue another teaching position. The one he found took him to the geographic middle of the Ivory Coast.

**This move placed us at the doorstep of six cannibal tribes.** People who had a real curiosity and interest in our gospel message. You could say that they were ripe and ready for the gospel. In the next ten trips we planted churches in many villages. We had the unique experience of having emissaries come and invite us to evangelize their village.

*(continued on next page)*

**We have baptized approximately 1,500 from these tribes!** Many have heard my explanation about this particular group of cannibals: their tradition is connected to dead relatives (continuing their life-force) and the government has outlawed the practice.



Early on, an old man from the Wobe tribe converted (pronounced Whoa-beh). His family ostracized him totally. About a year later he died and the Christians from his church held his funeral according to local customs. Let me insert right here – you have never seen racism until you’ve encountered tribe on tribe. These believers were from different tribes (still all cannibals).

The Wobe leaders came to Kouame confused, they wanted to understand why those from a different tribe would celebrate this man as family. Kouame explained, “In Jesus, there is only one tribe.” They said, “We want to know more about this Jesus.” A time was scheduled for them to hear the gospel and 85 were baptized into Christ.

*Ask our Lord to awaken our African believers to the fact that they need to prepare to carry on the ministry that Kouame and I have started. Pray that many new leaders will be developed.*

