

How did we get involved in the Lord's Work in Africa ? (1971-1974)

The introduction we gave at “[Get involved](#)” (Eastern Bible Conference, PA, USA, 2013) answers this question. Please read the following excerpts of this introduction:

“I’m very happy and thankful to see so many missionaries this evening. Perhaps you are surprised that I call you missionaries. A few days ago, a brother asked me some questions about the work the Lord allows me to do in some African countries, and he asked me about the length of the period, so I just told him that on the January 9, 1975, Brother Siegfried Nick from Germany and I with our families left for Cameroon. So he said “Oh! You have already been a missionary for 38 years!” I could understand why he made these observations, and I agree on the one hand, but on the other hand, I do not agree.

I did not become a missionary on January 9, 1975. And that’s why I said at the beginning of the meeting that I’m happy to see about 129 missionaries. Because as soon as you repent towards God and you believe in the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, you start with your Christian life; you start to serve the Lord, you start to become or to be a missionary. Each of us has become a missionary from the very first day of his repentance to God and his faith in the Lord Jesus. And the question is not in the first place, “How to get prepared to become a missionary,” but the question that occupies our hearts is: “Am I ready to do what the Lord wants me to do from the very first day that I got to know Him as my personal Savior?”

When I was asked to give a short introduction to missionary work, I was

asking the Lord, "Lord, what do you want me to say?" and while thinking of this question, it was not easy at all. I prayed for it, and finally, the Lord gave me two verses. And I'd like you to open your Bible and read these 2 verses.

First in Exodus 4:2

"So, the Lord said to him: 'What is that in your hand?'" I would like you to engrave this question in your heart, in your minds. I'd like you to ponder this question this evening, and even in the coming days. "So the Lord said, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A rod.'"

And then, another question in 2 Kings 4:2.

It says, "So Elisha said to her: 'What shall I do for you?'" And now the question I was thinking about "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, 'Your servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.' Then he said, 'Go, borrow vessels from everywhere from all your neighbors, empty vessels and do not gather just a few.'

Two questions that I would like to consider a little bit, to study a little bit together with you, as missionaries

Two questions that the Lord has put before us:

- What is that in your hands? - What do you have in the house?

I would like to make some applications. God asks this question: "What is that in your hand?" because He wanted to use Moses as His instrument. But Moses was not willing to do it; there was a lack of willingness. But the Lord is helping him and finally, Moses becomes willing, really willing.

I'd like to emphasize the point of willingness. Are we willing to use the opportunities the Lord is giving us day by day? "What is that in your hands?" A stick! A dead piece of wood. What can you do with a dead

piece of wood? Not much! But as soon as the Lord sees willingness to serve Him, He can use even the little things that He entrusted to you, it's even a principle of Scripture, that the Lord often starts with small things, to see if you are faithful. And then he can entrust bigger things to you.

Our personal experiences

Allow me to share some personal experiences, not because I want to put myself in the forefront—that's not the intention—but perhaps our personal experiences might be of help.



We married in 1971 and were looking for opportunities to serve the Lord in our village. And we got the opportunity to have a stand in a marketplace. Brothers Jan and Karel Rouw gave us some literature that we could use at the

marketplace. But how to get the literature to the marketplace? We had bikes, old bikes but still useful. We took a bike, bought an old suitcase and filled it up with Bibles, books, and gospel tracts and we brought them to the marketplace on Wednesday morning. And my wife started to work in the marketplace while I went to work. I was a teacher and was free on Wednesday afternoon, so I would join her then. But later we needed two

or three suitcases, because there was a growing interest in the literature we offered. So I found a chassis from an old buggy and wheels. I made a wooden box and fixed a bar



so we could pull it. I filled it up in the morning with literature—we lived in an apartment on the fourth floor so we had to go downstairs to pull it up—and then my wife pulled it 3 kilometers to the marketplace on Wednesday morning. (And what we did not know at that time was that she had a heart problem. It was only during our stay in Cameroon that the Lord allowed us to discover it. She had to come back to the Netherlands for medicines and then she was able to return to Cameroon.) But despite this heart problem, the Lord gave her strength to pull this heavy wooden box, filled with books, to the marketplace. And then at 12 o'clock, when I was finished at school, I joined her at the marketplace and all the people around who were selling clothes, candies, and whatever, saw me coming, and they often said, "Oh! Mr. Wijnholds, Mary is already there, now Joseph is coming!" They were mocking us. But they were kind as well and we were able to give them a lot of literature.

One day, when my wife was pregnant with our first child, we were no longer able to do this. She was not able to pull that heavy wooden box. And we prayed to the Lord, "Lord, you stopped this opportunity, but we would like to serve you in our place, to preach the gospel, and also to help people to get know the truth of the assembly and other important truths that so many believers and the churches don't know." It was in the 70s when most churches in the Netherlands were still conservative. So I put an advertisement in a small newspaper and announced a Bible study at our home in our fourth floor apartment starting in one month. While we were waiting, we were out walking one Saturday, and suddenly, a lady was coming, running after us, stopping us to ask, "Are you the Bible man?"

It appeared that people had asked her: "Where are this man and his

wife? Who are they? We are looking for Bibles, books, and tracts, and they are no longer at the market place.” This lady was a journalist for a free local newspaper. So she said, “Can I come and visit you and have an interview?” We answered her, “Yes, you can come; we can talk, but have an interview...? let’s talk first!” So she came and said, “I just want to know why you stopped, because people ask me all the time, ‘Where is the Bible man?’”

She asked permission for an interview, and we said, “We agree with the interview, but we want to read the final text before you publish it.” She said, “I agree. Can I also have a picture of the two of you?” But we answered: “No, no pictures of us, but we have another suggestion for a picture.” And I went in one of the rooms and came back with a double ladder with steps. On the steps, I had put keywords. From the middle upwards, keywords like “repentance, forgiveness, justification, heaven,” and from the middle downwards, keywords like “disobedience, condemnation...” and at the end “hell.” Black letters on a white ladder. I said to the journalist: “You can take a picture of this if you want and insert it in the article.” And she did it! With these keywords about heaven and hell!

People don’t like to hear about hell, do they! The next week, she sent us the article: it was really good, there were so many references to the gospel. Really, a gospel tract, all in the pages of the newspaper! It was printed the next week, in the free local newspaper, 250,000 free gospel tracts with these keywords! With our address... “This is the address of the Bible man, if you want a Bible or a book or whatever...” So you see! We started—please, I don’t put myself forward, I just give an example—we just started with small things: a bike and a suitcase, and then a

wooden box. And then, when we didn't see other opportunities, the Lord provided. And in one day, 250,000 free gospel tracts. It didn't cost anything!

Then we had the Bible study at home and some people came. Two men, a lady and her daughter, and a married couple that lived on the fifth floor of our building. I thought "Wow," I was 24 years old and the two men were 60 years old, but not only that, both were elders in their churches, in two different Protestant churches. I suggested studying the gospel of John, but I was really very nervous to study the Bible with two elders. But, my dear friends, we are so rich in our assemblies, we are so rich with the books we have, the comments on the Bible that brothers wrote years ago and new comments as well, because in a few minutes, I found out that I was like a one-eyed man in the land of the blind, because they didn't know much about the Bible. But they enjoyed it and one of them prayed at the end of the Bible study. He always said, "Lord God," he used the Old Testament's name of God. In the Protestant churches in the Netherlands they refer a lot to the Old Testament, "The Lord God." But when we arrived in chapter 10, he prayed at the end of our Bible study using the expression, "our God and Father". At the end of his prayer, he had tears in his eyes and he said, "Brother Hilvert, I'm over 60 years old and it's the first time in my life that I call God my Father. I've never known it, it's new, but I got this knowledge through these Bible studies."

We see the two aspects of the ministry the Lord is still entrusting to you and to me, because we all are missionaries: the ministry of the gospel for those who are still unrepentant, and also the ministry of the assembly with all the truths that are linked to the assembly. That's what we were able to do in a very simple way during these Bible studies, just an

example to give you as an encouragement.

And if God could send Moses, you should ask: Can God send me for a certain task? And he did it in full fellowship with his God. But it was not easy... Serving the Lord is not always easy. Serving the Lord is one of the most blessed and beautiful privileges! You understand? I want to repeat it: Serving the Lord is one of the most blessed privileges the Lord allows! It's a grace! He does not need me, he does not need you! He wants to use us! It's a grace! And when we are ready to serve Him, we will know these two things: sufferings and joy. I can tell you because of our own experience, that this is true. I often say to young people who have questions about serving the Lord: Tears in your eyes but joy in your heart!

While serving the Lord in our own city, He directed our thoughts to His Work in Cameroon where brothers and sisters were praying the Lord to send missionaries.

The Lord guided our exercises by His Word and Spirit, making it plain to us and to another family, Siegfried and Erica Nick from Germany, that He was calling us to serve Him in Cameroon.

We shared our exercises with brothers and sisters of our local assemblies and they gladly extend to us the right hand of fellowship.

