



# The Cain Chronicle

NEWS AND NOTES FROM NIGER

FEBRUARY 2002

## A MORNING IN THE LIFE OF A MISSIONARY

I wake up a few minutes before the alarm is set to go off and shut it off before it wakes Kimberly. It's 5:30. My friend and colleague Donald Bolls and I try to go prayerwalking every other day about 6:00. It's still dark when Don arrives and we head down the dirt road, using moonlight to guide our way. We pass several groups of men making their way home from morning prayers at the mosque. We walk about 45 minutes, getting our exercise, talking about our ministry, and praying for the Zerma people.



Back inside the house, I make a pot of coffee, shower off, and have my quiet time. As Kimberly and the kids are getting up and dressed I get Caleb dressed and get his breakfast ready. Salaamatou arrives about 8:30. She's a young woman we've hired to keep our house clean and baby sit Caleb. While she begins her work Kimberly puts a load of laundry in the washing machine and then she and Caroline head for the school-room.

Our neighbor from next door, an elderly man with two wives and several sons, daughters, and assorted grandchildren stops by for a visit, as he does almost every day.

We greet each other and sit down on our front porch. Caleb comes out and chatters away in Zarma, much to the amusement of our neighbor who goads him on with a series of questions. After we visit about 15 minutes, he takes his leave and I walk with him down the road to the door of his compound and greet his family. (In Zerma culture, it's customary when someone visits to walk with them down the road when they leave).

As I walk back to our gate I greet our neighbors, Salou and Aissa, from across the street. They maintain a stall outside their gate where they sell an assortment of food items and condiments. As with most greetings I inquire after their health, how they slept, how's the cool weather, how's the family, etc. and they do likewise. By this time Caleb has dragged out his two tricycles and he and Seybou, our neighbor's son, are scooting them around the street barefoot.

I head back into the house to do some work on the computer but as I'm booting it up I hear someone clapping on the porch and Salaamatou informs me a woman is here to see me. I step outside to greet her and she greets me back. I don't recognize her. After a short pause

she tells me her baby is sick and she doesn't have any money to go to the clinic. "Jam!" I say, which means "Sorry to hear that." She goes on to tell me it's been three days and she doesn't know what else to do. I tell her to wait a minute and I come back with 800 francs (a little over a dollar), which is what it costs to get into the clinic. The price includes a return visit and medicine. Thanking me profusely, she heads out the gate and down the street toward the clinic.

I've spent about 15 minutes at the computer working on a volunteer request when again I hear the sound of clapping as a group of 7 young men file onto the porch. These guys will see me later on in a class but since they were passing by they decided to stop in. They make small talk for about 20 minutes and then go on their way. I

*(Continued on page 2)*

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*(Continued from page 1)*

walk them part way down the road and on the way back greet several people who are on their way to the market. Today is market day, which is every Wednesday in Oallam. I walk back in our yard where Caleb and Seybou are playing in the sandbox. Salaamatou has just finished mopping the floor so I wait a few minutes for it to dry, pulling some weeds out of the flower bed. Kimberly and Caroline come out of the schoolroom for a mid-morning break and we go into the house together. Caroline shows me her new book for reading. Kimberly puts another load of laundry in the washing machine and asks Salaamatou to go the market and buy some lettuce and tomatoes. We hear a voice from the porch calling out a greeting. Three women have arrived to see Kimberly. She visits a few minutes and then lets them know she needs to get back to teaching.

I spend another 30 minutes at the computer and then make plans to go to the market, but as I open the gate Abdou, a friend from Mangaize, a town about 50 kilometers north

of Ouallam, walks in. We greet each other and head for the porch. While he settles in a chair I go get a cup of water for him. I had made plans earlier to come to his village on Friday and he wants to make sure I'm still coming. He informs me the chief appreciated the Arabic Bible I sent and it would be good to go visit him when I come. We visit a while longer and then Abdou pulls out a prescription for some medicine, which the doctor at the clinic in Mangaize wrote for Abdou's wife. He can't afford the medicine and asks if I can buy it as his wife is really sick. So we walk to the pharmacy together, which is just around the corner. It comes to 3000 francs, or about 4 dollars. I stop back by the house and then head to the market myself.

The road near the market is filled with carts, donkeys, and camels chewing their cud. Inside the market it is not unusual to see several stalls in a row all selling pretty much the same sort of things. There's food, clothes, cloth, cooking utensils, farming tools, everything you need to exist in the bush. I meet several people I know who've come in from villages where I've visited and done storying. They all want to know when I'm coming back.

I'm looking for a tea-making set for the church in Ouallam

which we can use for informal meetings. Drinking tea together is an important part of Zerma culture. I find most of what I need in one of the shops: a small wire basket to hold the hot coals, a teapot (holds about two cups of water), and four small shot glasses. (We're drinking tea, not alcohol!) At another place I buy a small bag of charcoal. All that's left is the tea and sugar, which I will buy from Salou, Seybou's dad. To make tea you dump a small handful of loose leaves in the teapot, fill it with water, and then set it on hot coals where it will boil away for 15 to maybe 30 minutes, adding a little water now and then. Then you add a good dose of sugar and pour the tea from the teapot into the glass, back and forth several times, holding the teapot high enough to get a good head in the glass. Then you fill the glasses (half tea and half head) and pass them around, sipping it loudly because it's extremely hot. The first round is very bitter, even with the sugar. Once the tea is gone, you

*(Continued on page 3)*



**So that the  
Zerma People  
may come to  
know Him!**

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*(Continued from page 2)*

repeat the process, using the same tea leaves, twice more. The third round is about the right strength for me. Of course during this whole time you are visiting and enjoying each other's company.

On the way back I run into a man from a village where I've made arrangements to show the Jesus film. I assure him I will be coming and staying overnight. He says he'll be sure to remind everyone I'm coming and they'll tell the nearby villages too. He tells me they're really excited about seeing the film.

I walk back to the house to find Kimberly preparing lunch and Caroline setting the table. Salaamatou is leaving and will come back at 3:30. I drag a protesting Caleb off the street and we sit down for lunch together. I've just started when we hear clapping outside. Kimberly gets up to see who it is. It's a woman who wants to see me. I know her vaguely. We greet each other with the usual greetings and then she tells me she hasn't eaten in two days and doesn't have any family to turn to. We give her some fruit

and vegetables plus some money to buy millet. She thanks me profusely and heads out the gate.

Back inside, we finish lunch. I settle Caleb down for a nap while Kimberly reads to Caroline. I settle down for a short nap myself and am just drifting off when Caroline wakes me up and tells me there's a man on the porch.

*In our next newsletter, I'll tell you about the afternoon.*



**PRAYER REQUESTS**



As many people come to our doors with physical needs pray that we would have discernment about how best to help meet those needs. Pray that the Zerma would understand their greatest need is to know the Savior.

Pray for our ability to speak and understand the Zarma language. Pray that we would continue to develop a knowledge and understanding of their culture and worldview.

Praise God that His Word does not return void and the sufficiency of Christ alone is adequate to break down any language or cultural barrier.

*We appreciate you,*

*Phil, Kimberly, Caroline and Caleb*

