

BEN AND MARION OWUSU-SEKYERE: Joined together for the Great Commission

By Priscilla Kyei-Baffour



THE EARLY YEARS

Rev Benjamin Owusu-Sekyere was born to Mr. Kwadwo Owusu-Sekyere from Jamasi in the Ashanti Region and Madam Comfort Bamfo from Mpraeso in the Eastern Region in Ghana. He is the 5th born in a family of 8 siblings between his mother and father. His father however married several wives and had a total of 22 children.

His father was a policeman and he rose through the ranks until he retired as a Superintendent of Police.

They lived in many towns as his father was transferred to head various stations across Ghana. His Father married in almost every town he got transferred to

as a Policeman and as a result, his mother and father broke up finally just before his father was transferred to Elmina in the Central Region from Kumasi.

Ben's mother was a strong Christian and was deeply spiritual and raised her children that way. She bought them 'My book of Bible stories,' a large book with beautiful pictures of Bible Characters and he grew up reading it many times. After his parent's separation, his mother continued living in Kumasi with him and all his siblings. She was a petty trader and used this source of income to raise all her children, ensuring that all of them were educated. After a while, however, his mother decided to send him and his big brother to live with their father in Elmina at the age of 9 when they were in Primary 3 and Form 1 respectively as it was becoming difficult to discipline boys, especially his big brother.

The boys had a very difficult relationship with their step-mother which nearly resulted in the death of Ben from Malaria. He recalled the many times he had malaria continuously with high fever for days on end and in severe hunger which resulted

in malnutrition. It was during one of such bouts of malaria that he went to school on an empty stomach and came home. His step-mother still refused to serve him food and he eventually went into a coma. While in a coma, Ben remembered having an out-of-body experience where he found himself heading out of the house in a strange direction when he met a man dressed in a long robe who told him to go back home, so he turned back and at that point regained consciousness. He was saved by the timely return of his brother from school at about 5 pm that evening who found him unconscious. His brother ran to call their father and they both tried for several minutes to resuscitate him. That was when he sneezed and came back to life again.

At that age, Rev. Ben did not understand the experience but it had a profound effect on his life as he believed it was either an angel or Christ himself who saved him by telling him to turn back home. From then on Rev. Ben developed a voracious appetite for reading. The Bible became his favourite book to read and to meditate on, remembering the foundations he had reading “My book of Bible Stories.” Through reading, he developed a deep relationship with the Lord.

ACADEMIC AND MINISTRY TRAINING

Rev. Ben recalls the traumatic experience of always leaving his school friends behind from town to town and from one school to another anytime his father was transferred until finally he and his brother joined their mother and other siblings in Kumasi. He attended over 7 different Schools including Opoku Ware School, Kumasi, for his Secondary education, Konongo-Odumase Secondary School for Sixth Form and finally Cape Coast University where he completed his first Degree in 1997 with a B.Sc. in Biological Science with Zoology Major and Diploma in Education.

Rev. Ben rededicated his life to Christ in 1987 in Form 5 at Opoku Ware School, through the Scripture Union and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit that same year. Even though his mother was attending a Spiritual Church in Kumasi which he also attended from time to time when he was at home from School, he never felt any connection there. It was his Uncle, Col Retired Samuel Bamfo (Deceased) who invited him to Living Waters Assemblies of God English Church in Kumasi in 1992 that led him to become very active in church. He served in different capacities in the Missions Prayer Team, Missions and Evangelism Outreach Team, Visitation Team, and as a Sunday School Teacher. He was mentored by the Pastors of the Church including Rev. and Mrs. David Vespa, Rev. and Mrs. Tony Amoakohene, Dr. Steve and Dr. Mrs Joy Lawn who started and led missions prayer in the Church, as well as his friend, Pastor and mentor, Rev. Emmanuel Nuamah until he was called full time into the mission field in 1999.

Mrs. Marion Owusu Sekyere

Rev. Mrs. Marion Owusu-Sekyere was brought up in a Christian home in Radlett, Hertfordshire, UK,

and attended the Church of England until she was 16. She went to school in Watford. When she was 12 years old, she went to a Crusaders youth camp and gave her life to Christ. During the Camp, she recalls staying up all night praying hoping to see a dramatic change or flash of lightning. Although nothing happened, she knew deep down in her heart that she was changed from within and was saved. That was the beginning of her spiritual journey. Every summer holiday, she would go to different Crusader youth camps one of which involved helping children with special needs. This camp experience led to her training to teach children with special needs. It was only later when she went to a Pentecostal church that she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and was baptized in water.

When she was at university in Nottingham, she joined a Pentecostal church called The Christian Centre. Here she later served in the Children's and Youth ministry full time, visiting 70 primary schools to take Christian assemblies around the city. Together with her friend, Jean Price, they developed children's learning materials and ran evangelistic kid's groups in people's homes around the city of Nottingham.

Working for The Christian Centre also opened up opportunities to be involved in missions and the chance to travel to other countries on short term missions program. She went to the Czech Republic and later to Guatemala. She traveled to Ghana in 1996 when she was 30 years old and saw the many opportunities to serve God on the mission field, but she needed to be sure God wanted her to be in Ghana. She returned to Ghana for six weeks and served in Northern Ghana in January 1997 and was convinced that God had called her. The Christian Centre sent her back to Ghana as their missionary in November 1997.

Marion saw that most of her friends were getting married and wanted to get married as well but she was willing to wait for God's timing. As soon as she came to Ghana, all the things God had been telling her about marriage and ministry started coming together in ways she had not seen before. She had become friends with Ben from her first trip to Ghana and observed a similar passion and vision for missions and Northern Ghana, through from the missions prayers Ben had been part of since 1993. Interestingly, before he made the move, God had already told her he was going to be her husband. Ben proposed and they got married the following year

on the 5th December 1998, just over two years after they first met in August 1996. They now have two beautiful children who live with them at the King's Village, Ghana and although education has been a challenge, they also feel part of the mission.

MINISTRY AND MINISTERIAL TRAINING

Ben and Marion entered the ministry before proceeding to do their master's degrees together at Mattersey Hall, Assemblies of God Bible School in the UK graduating in 2003 with a degree in Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies. They also enrolled in the Assemblies of God Missionary Training at the International Bible Training Institute, Burges Hill near Brighton which they completed in 2004. They were accepted as Probationary Ministers of the Assemblies of God, Great Britain under the mentorship of Rev. David Shearman, and the ministers and elders of The Christian Centre in Nottingham for two years and attained the full ministerial status of the Assemblies of God, Great Britain, in 2006 as a Commissioned Missionary serving till date.

MISSIONS FIELDWORK, EXPERIENCES, AND CHALLENGES

On entering the mission field, Ben and Marion worked hard to encourage rural churches and while reaching out to plant new churches. There were initial challenges of cultural adjustment and a few personal challenges especially in the early days especially working in a different culture.

When their ministry began, one focus was to raise money for work and every donation went into that. Though Marion had to resign her main monthly paid job with her church before entering the mission field, a few individuals from her church came together with gifts to support her personally before coming to Ghana. This was what they both relied on to support themselves as a couple for a long time together with gifts from the church whenever there was a need. According to them, they never had to speak about their personal needs, though they had challenges with personal support. God was faithful and always provided whenever there was a need for extra resources whether for travels or family needs. This enabled them to give full attention to the ministry without having to take on secular jobs which at the beginning Rev. Ben considered and

would have also held them back in achieving their goals on the mission fields.

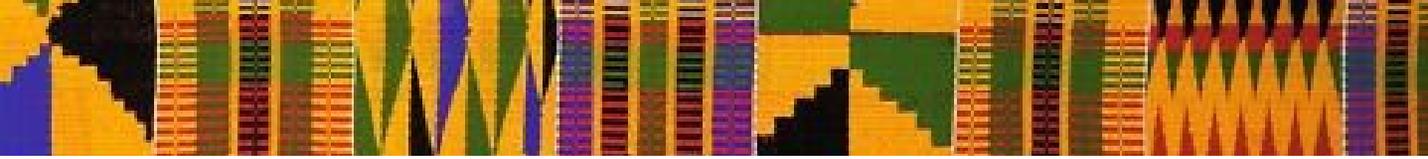
CURRENT STATE OF MISSION LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY.

Ben and Marion have worked hard to build partnerships around the world especially in the UK and US. Individuals have been touched by God to stand with them in the ministry as partners, some helping to raise funds. Some of their friends came together in 2019 to register the King's Village Ghana as a Charity in the UK and some other friends are working to register it in the US to promote support in raising funds. Their ministry and missionary work have cut across churches and denominations which is very rare in Ghana and they believe that needs to happen more and more in Ghana to support local missionaries.

Ben and Marion feel that the Church in Ghana is doing well and growing, but there are many challenges especially in cross-cultural missions with hardly any cross-denominational acceptance of indigenous missionaries or support. They have seen some challenges in the understanding of Missions both in Ghana and globally. They have also experienced the practical life of missionaries and long-term implications looking at how difficult it is to for individuals called into missions to commit to long term missions while fulfilling the responsibilities and the many implications for support and long-term life issues such as marriage, children's education, etc. They believe that the church in Ghana needs to include the training of long-term missionaries in the Bible School as it is done for Pastors and support them on the mission field not only within denominations but also cross-cultural missionary work that cuts across denominational boundaries.

LAST WORDS FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Ben and Marion believe that missions in the church stand on three main pillars. First, those who pray, second those who are called to go, and third those who are called to support. Any church that raises the young people on these 3 pillars is bound to experience revival in missions. Everything concerning missions should start with prayer and through the prayer, they will experience the true call of God for their



lives either to go or to support missions in the church. Churches need to promote mission's prayer, to help young people develop a deep understanding of the Mission of Christ on earth, and to know that the Church is much bigger than the local church. We need to go back to the book of Acts to see how the Holy Spirit empowered many for missions across cultures to the "ends of the earth" and even in our days.

Encouraging the youth to pray for unreached people groups especially in the northern regions, and many villages that are without churches, and also beyond the borders of Ghana will help the youth to serve well in the church - not only looking at what is happening within but more importantly seeing God's big picture towards the nations and serving to claim the nations as their inheritance in Christ (Psalm 2:8).