

DR. SOLOMON ARYEETEEY

A TRUE MISSIONARY STATESMAN

Editor's note: Dr. Kenneth Attobrah-Apraku, an Associate Editor of the Ghana Missions Handbook, had this inspiring and intriguing interview with Rev. Dr. Solomon Aryeetey. It is thought-provoking and we believe the Lord will challenge you into action as you read. We celebrate him and his amazing wife and co-missionary, Mrs. Leticia Aryeetey.

Ghana Missions Handbook (GMH): Tell us about your childhood. What was it like growing up and what were your ambitions?

Solomon Aryeetey (SA): I grew up in Koforidua in a Polygamist home. My father had 7 wives and my mother was the 5th. I attended the Anglican Primary School in Koforidua where I wrote the Common Entrance exams when I got to JSS 1 and gained admission to Achimota School.

My dad always encouraged me to study hard and I wanted to be a doctor because that seemed to be a sure way of lifting me out of poverty because my family wasn't rich. I thus took my studies seriously.

Growing up I had an elder brother who was in the Scripture Union (SU). He taught me a lot of things about Christianity, especially how to witness. I was witnessing to people back then but I had no assurance of my salvation. I finally got the assurance in Form 4, and that was in 1968/69.

I got involved with Joyful Way in Achimota School, through my then Housemaster, Franklin Dove

GMH: Tell us about your call to missions.

SA: It was during a nationwide tour by the Joyful

Way group soon after its formation. This was during one long vacation in 1972. I became convinced God was calling me to something way beyond medicine. When I got to the University of Ghana, Legon, I was the Campus Evangelism Secretary. I remember waking up at 4:30 am with some colleagues of mine and we will move from hall to hall to undertake dawn broadcasts. On a campus like Legon, people will insult you for disturbing their sleep but we did not mind.

Whilst at Legon, I struggled with the call. I thought it meant I had to forsake medical school and it was a big conflict in my heart. One day I went to one sister who was my mentor and spoke to her about this challenge of mine and she told me, God can use doctors too? She said "why don't you finish your medicine? The medicine will equip you and then you use it as a tool in a place that they can't pay you for your work but you will be able to get into their society and preach Christ to them."

Another milestone in the calling was when I encountered the Mission organization called Operation Mobilization that was embarking on a Christian Literature distribution campaign. I got the chance to board their ship called Logos where they also trained people for missions and they gave us a prayer tag with 3 countries on them. One of my countries was Mali and I will later find myself in Mali serving as a missionary for 8 years. The others were Mauritania and Libya. Before Mali, I had been to Liberia after I finished my Housejob, where their doctors had fled the country due to a coup d'état that had just happened. They came recruiting young Ghanaian doctors and I knew that was an opportunity since I missed going there some time with Joyful Way. I had told myself that I will one day evangelize in Liberia.

My going to Liberia was more of economic immigration but later became like a tent-making ministry. I will go out during the weekends with the SIM Chris-

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tian radio station Team in Liberia. We went about planting churches and sharing the gospel and I also attended to the health needs of the people. I didn't know then that God was training me on how to use medicine as a tool for preaching the Gospel.

From Liberia, we traveled to the US. I planned that after the trip I was going to stay there and specialize in Paediatrics because I had done some residency in Paediatrics in Liberia.

Whilst attending a service in Canada, I heard someone preach and he said "why should someone hear the Gospel twice when others haven't had the chance to hear even once?" That statement broke me. And then in a church in Atlanta, I remember the preacher speaking and crying that the African church was ready to send missionaries to their own people. He had served among the Zulus in South Africa. During that sermon, he said as he cried that "we are looking for someone we can send to Mali.

There was a need for someone who could speak a bit of the French language, and someone who could use medicine as a tool to advance the Gospel". And God said, "Solo, now you understand why you were doing all the medical missionary work in Liberia. I want you to go back to Africa. Don't be in America."

I cried and begged God several times, but finally, I went. We went to a village called Masinda on the Niger river 400km away from Bamako and that is where we settled. The people there hadn't heard the name Jesus before and it was a good feeling taking the word of God to such a community. There we learned the local languages of the tribes and within 6 months we could say most things in the Bambara language. If you can speak their language you earn the right to be their friend. I was learning the Fulani language at the same time.

Now there are 7 or 8 couples who are in Mali serving the natives as missionaries from Pioneers after my family and I left and they are doing marvelous things. Many of them are

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It was at the time that strong missionaries were being carved out of the natives that Pioneers said, "why don't you go to Ghana and work towards building an army of African missionaries to go all over Africa with the Gospel."

Now I help train missionaries. We are now involved in about 16 different countries in Africa with about 1600 missionaries on the team.

GMH: Where did you meet your wife?

SA: We met on the Legon campus. We became friends because of missions. I organized that meeting where she was saved. She had some questions and someone else directed her to me to answer her questions. She said she was feeling called to missions so she wanted to leave Law School. Hence someone told her to come and talk to me since I had gone through that before. It was missions that brought us together. We knew that God had called us.

GMH: How long have you been married and how many children do you have?

SA: Leticia and I got married in December of 1978. Before our 7th wedding anniversary, we had all our children, 6 of them but the last one was a set of twins. There were 3 boys and a girl and when we wanted one more girl to seal it off, the twin boys came. Now they are all old and married and the grandchildren are coming in. We are expecting grandchild number 9 soon.

GMH: What advice will you give young people concerning marriage with regards to missions?

SA: God never calls a man alone. God calls a family. You dare not go to the mission field not convinced about whether your wife has the same burden. Discordant couples are one of the leading causes of missionary attrition. That makes marriage non-negotiable. If God has called you please be patient for Him

to bring one who bears the same vision, not one who is going because they have to follow the husband but one who is going because she has the same calling on her life.

GMH: What advice will you give readers when it comes to finances and missions?

SA: When Jesus spoke about money and missions, He said “Don’t worry about what you will eat or wear for your father knows your needs.” It is not about money. If money is a reason why you are going into missions you are fooling yourself. The mission field is sacrifice. You don’t go to receive from the people. You rather go to lay down your life for the people and that should be the motivation. In all, this God will not forsake you. The testimony is that God has taken care of us and all our children. We were able to put them through the best schools in Ghana and give them the best education. All that God showed us was to give us a market space in the US and how we could export foodstuff. God is faithful.

GMH: Who has been the greatest influence in your life?

SA: I have had many great influences in my life. There is my big brother, who mentored me and introduced me to some really good Christian books by teachers such as Watchman Nee. There is also Mr. Franklin Dove who was my housemaster and who mentored me. And there was also Mr. Akushie who was the president of Joyful Way in those days. He went to Nigeria to teach in one of their technical universities with the missionary aim of reaching out to Muslims at a time when many people went to Nigeria seeking money. Unfortunately, he died at the young age of 33 years. Many other people mentored me while on campus and when I joined Pioneers.

From the bible, Apostle Paul is my model. I like to follow his example and learn from how God used him.

GMH: What is your view on the way missions is conducted in Ghana? What are we doing right and what can we do better?

SA: Well, awareness has been rising in the last few years but I think it has taken far too long. I feel the church is sometimes too focused on ‘blessings’ and ‘money’ and not much is said about using what you have as an avenue to honour God. The Church is supposed to be focused on missions. Missions is supposed to be the engine that drives the life of the church. When Jesus said He will build His Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, He meant that we are a church that goes on the offensive and goes through those gates to snatch people out of the fire of hell. I speak with a lot of Christian leaders and sometimes, I think that their role in equipping the church for the work of the ministry is lost, though this is a mandate stated verbatim in the bible. The focus seems to be on the benefits we get from the cross but we forget that the cross was an example to be followed also. Jesus took up his cross and we must take up ours also. He was crucified on His cross and we should be ready to die for Him on our “crosses”. If that is the way the Master went, shouldn’t the servant walk that same road? The directive is very simple; ‘Go and make disciples’. What is there to not understand about that? Our attitude towards the call causes me a lot of pain and I wonder how long it will

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GMH: What are some of the greatest challenges you face?

SA: Getting churches to partner with us for our missionaries. It’s just so hard to get churches willing to send people and resources into these ‘dry’ areas. Everyone seems to be focused on big cities. It is like we forget that mission work is an act of love. Do you know the impact it will have on a missionary field if you can set up a health facility or a school where Muslim children can also come and be taught? Sadly, the Churches don’t seem to be interested in these areas and everyone who says God has called them nowadays wants to be in the cities. I believe I have

every right to question that call because I doubt God will pour water into the sea instead of dry land.

But I have a lot of hope for the future because of the words of Jesus. He let us know that the gospel will be preached to the ends of the earth and then the end will come. I believe the words of the one who said 'Let there be light' and light appeared so I know even Saudi Arabia will be full of the gospel. We should all keep fighting and working till the last man has heard.

GMH: Do you have any hobbies?

SA: I like watching soccer. I like the EPL and I support Manchester City. I used to support Arsenal but they nearly gave me a heart attack! And I like cooking and do a lot of it as well.

GMH: Any last words?

SA: I wish someone will take a megaphone and go to the churches in Ghana and tell them to stop wasting God's time. We call it the Great Commission but I call it the Great Omission because we have omitted to do what the Lord has commanded. It is the biggest frustration I have about the Ghanaian Church. But I believe the word of God and if we won't go, God may raise up stones to go.

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