

South Christian High School Graduation Speech

Cutlerville, Michigan

by Frances Prins

May, 1959

Friends and supporters of South Christian High:

This, our graduation, is truly a happy and joyous occasion for every one of us here tonight. We have come to the end of twelve years of formal education. For some, it is the end of schooling, and these members of our class will now leave and begin the work that they have chosen to do. For others, graduation from high school is merely a stepping stone to new and higher learning. But as the term "commencement" itself implies, it is for all of us a beginning to a new and different life.

David, the Psalmist, penned an appropriate song of thanks to God when he said, "I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and exult in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O Thou Most High."

God has certainly been good and gracious to us during the past three years. He has spared every one of our lives. Our class, as a whole, has had very few drop-outs. Almost everyone that has started with us has also finished. Many times the way has been hard and difficult, but we have been led on by God's Almighty hand.

You, as loyal supporters of our school, have also been very good to us. We certainly appreciate all the time and money that you have so willingly given for our benefit. If it were not for people such as you, our school would never have reached the point that it has today.

Furthermore, the fact that you are here tonight shows your interest in us. We know that you are here because of your enthusiasm and zeal for Christian education in general and for your own South Christian High in particular. Also, we

believe you are here because you are interested in us personally and in our spiritual welfare. This is shown to us every day by the chapel that is provided for us with its Christian films and inspirational speakers. This is also shown to us by the Christian teachers you have provided for us in whom we can confide and to whom we can come with our personal problems. It is by their exemplary life that we see how we, too, must live. It is because of their patience and understanding that we develop into the individuals that we are.

At this time, we wish to thank every one of you for coming here tonight. It is our hope and prayer that your interest in us and in our school may continue, and that your labors may be well rewarded in the faith and trust you have placed in us by giving us this Christian school. We also pray that God may give you "eyes to see" the fruits of your labors through graduates of this school who have become consecrated and dedicated to the service of God and His Kingdom.

Speech given at Babban Taron Mata

Ibi, Nigeria

by Frances Boer

1971

Kolossiyawa 2:6-7 Da ya ke kun yi na'am da Almasihu Yesu Ubangiji, to, sai ku tsaya gare shi, kuna kafaffu, kuna ginuwa a cikinsa, kuna tsayawa da bangaskiya gaba gaba, daidai yadda aka koya muku, kuna gode wa Allah koyaushe.

Ina so in fara da tatsuniya; wannan tatsuniya na kawo shi daga gida; watakila kuna da irinsa a nan. Tatsuniya yana kan wani mutum mai kaman kifi da matarsa.

Wata rana shi miji ya je kogi. Ya same kifi daya, amma wannan kifi dabam, har ya iya Magana! Kifi ya roki mutum kada a kasha shi, wai da shi ba kifi ba ne, amma dan sarki ne. Kai, mutumin din ya ji tsoro, ba kadan ba. Ya jefa kifi a kogi, ya koma gida da sauri. Da ya isa, ya ba matarsa labari akan abin da ya faru. Ta ce, "Kai, mijina kai wawa ne; me ya sa ba ka roki kifi a kan wani kyauta ba; kifi wanda ya iya magana, lalle yana da iko da yawa kuma."

Miji ya koma wurin kogi, ya yi kira, ya yi kira, har kifi ya fito. Kifi ya ce, "Me ya dame ka, abokina?" Mai gida ya ji kunya kadan, amma ya ce "In ji matata, sai kayi mamu kyautan dakin kwano. Yanzu ba mu da kome, sai dakin ciyawa guda kawai." Kifi ya yi dariya, ya ce, "Je ka gida; matarka ta riga ta samu." Miji ya tashi, ya sami matarsa a dakin kwano, tana jin dadi.

Amma bayan kwana biyu, kishi ya kama ta kuma. Ta ce, "Kai, mijina, da kana da wayo, da ka roki kifi akan babban gida; wannan dakin kwano bai ishe ni ba."

Mai gida ya ji tsoron maganar matarsa. Ya je kogi, ya yi ta kira, har kifi ya fito. Ya ce, "Me ya dame ka, abokina?" Miji ya amsa da cewa, "Wai wannan daki bai ishe ta ba, sai babban gida take so yanzu." Kifi ya sake yi dariya, ya ce, "Ba kome, mai gida; ka je wurinta, ta riga ta samu."

Mace ba ta yi wani godiya ba, ko a wurin mijinta, ko a gaban kifi. Washegari mace ta ce, “Kai, maigida, lalle ba ka san kome ba; me ya sa ba ka roki kifi akan kayan daki da ma’aikatan gida ba? Ga shi, yanzu ina da babban gida, amma babu kujeru masu kyau da tebur da irinsu; ba wani wanda zai taimake ni da yawan aiki kuma; wannan shiri ba kyau!”

Kunya ya kama mijin sosai, amma duk da haka ya je kogi, ya kira kifi, har kifi ya yarda; matarsa ta sami abububuwan duka da take nema.

Haka, shi miji da matarsa suna ta yi, suna ta yi. Mace ba ta koshi da kaya ba; takan bi mijinta har ya je gaban kifi kowace rana da roko iri-iri. Tana so ta zama sarauniya da shugabar ekkelisiya da shugabar kasa duka, har mai mulkin duniya. Kifi ya yarda, ya ba ta kaya da girma duka da ta ke roko.

Amma ko sau daya, ba ta nuna wani godiya ba. Na karshe kuma tana so ta zama uwargijiya na rana da wata da sama gaba daya.

Yanzu kifi ya yi fushi, ya gaji; ya ce, “Kai, irin wannan mace ban taba same ta ba, sai yanzu; ba ta isa a ba ta kome ba.” Kifi ya shiga ruwa, bai sake yi magana ba. Miji ya koma gida; ya sami matarsa a dakin ciyawa. Yanzu ba ta da kome; kaya da girmanta an kwashe mata duka. Abin da ya saura, shi ne dakin ciyawa kamar na da. Irin wannan mace ba ta isa a yi mata kyauta ba.

To. Wannan tatsuniya ne kawai, amma akwai koyaswa a ciki. Lalle mutanen duniya, kamar wannan mace a tatsuniya namu, ba za su yi godiya ga Ubangiji ba. Ba za su yi godiya ga kowa ba; suna nema na kansu kawai. Za su yi roko, a ba su wannan, a kara masu haka, a kara masu wancan. Amma babu godiya.

Amma mu ba na duniya ba ne. Mun riga mun karbi Yesu. Akwai su a tsakanimmu yau da dare, sabobbi ne a hanyar Kristi; akwai su kuma sun riga sun dade a hanyar Kristi shekara da shekaru. Amma dukanmu mun riga mun karbi Kristi Yesu Ubangiji. Ya kamata yanzu kuma, mu nuna wa kowa da kowa tafiyarmu a cikinsa.

Karatu namu a Kolossiyawa sura ta 2 ya ce mu yalwata cikin godiya, mu yi godiya koyaushe, yau da gobe. Godiyarmu tana ta karuwa kowace rana. Domme za mu yi

godiya? Bisa ga aya ta 7 – domin an dasa mu tare da Yesu Kristi, an gina mu tare da shi, an kafa mu a hanyar Ubangiji. Watau mun shiga hanyar bin Yesu da zurfi.

Yaya za mu nuna wannan godiya? Za mu yi tafiya cikin Yesu Kristi kamar wanda an dasa shi, an gina shi, an kafa shi tare da Ubangiji. Watau kome da kome da mu ke yi, sai mu yi shi tare da godiya, yadda zai girmama sunan Ubangiji Yesu.

Wannan tafiya a hanyar Ubangiji za mu yi shi kamar yadda aka *koya* mamu – in ji aya ta 7. Yaya ana koya mamu? To ga amsa:

1. Ta wurin sujaran Lahadi da safe – ana koya mamu
2. Ta wurin Sunday School na yamma – ana koya mamu
3. Ta wurin taron KYK – ana koya mamu
4. Ta wurin taron Zumuntar Mata – ana koya mamu
5. Ta wurin addu'a da karatun Littafi Mai Tsarki a gida, ko muna yin shi mu kadai ko tare da iyali – akwai koyaswa
6. Ta wurin kowane irin karatu wanda zai kara mamu ilimi na game da maganar Ubangiji – ana koya mamu

Kada mu ce “Ni, ban iya karatu ba, balle fa ganewa.” Akwai takardu wadanda an shirya domimmu, ba wuyan ganewa. Akwai su a kowane gari da kauye – na Turanci, da Hausa, da Jukun kuma.

Sai mu mata mu nemi takardu da Littafi Mai Tsarki duka, mu zauna da su, mu koya. Kamar yadda aka koya mamu, mu kuma mu koya wa yarammu da Allah ya ba mu. Mu koya masu daidai, domin su yara kuma, su zama dasassu, ginannu, kafaffu a cikin bangaskiya a hanyar Ubangiji. Idan yarammu ba su gan mu tare da karatu da binciken Littafi Mai Tsarki ba, su kuma ba za su yi ba.

Amma ya zama tilas, mu zauna da yarammu kowace rana, mu koya masu kamar yadda ana koya mamu kuma. Wannan ma zai zama hanyar nuna wa godiya ga Allah. Kada mu ce, “Yarammu ba su san kome ba, ba su a ji mu kuma.” Suna a hannummu; Allah ne ya ba mu su, kada mu bar su a duhu. Mu koya masu maganar Ubangiji ta kowane fuska.

Mace a cikin tatsuniya ba ta nuna wani godiya ba. Ba ta da dalilin godiya a zuciyyarta; tana tunanin kanta kawai, ba wani ba. Amma mu ba na duniya ba ne; muna da dalilan godiya da yawa. Dukammu muna da rai da lafiya da abbubbuwan bukatar jiki duka. Muna da Littafi Mai Tsarki a hannu, akwai murna da sallama a zukatammu. Dukan wadannan kyautai muna da su, domin mun riga mun karbi Yesu Kristi.

Bari mu sake yi karatu a Littafi Mai Tsarki : Kolossiyawa 2:6-7. Da ya ke kun yi na'am da Almasihu Yesu Ubangiji, to, sai ku tsaya gare shi, kuna kafaffu, kuna ginuwa a cikinsa, kuna tsayawa da bangaskiya gaba gaba, daidai yadda aka koya muku, kuna gode wa Allah koyaushe.

To, mataye, bari mu yi addu'a:

Mun gode maka, Ya Allahmu
Don ka aiko da Danka sabili da mu
Ya Ubanmu, ai, mun gode don ka tuna da mu
Ka fishe mu daga duhun, kai, ka cece mu
Ya Ubangiji, mun gode maka. Amin.

Translation of Speech given at Annual Women's Fellowship Meeting

Ibi, Nigeria

by Frances Boer

1971

Colossians 2:6-7 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

I want to begin with a fable which I first heard in my home country. Perhaps you have a similar story. The story is about a fisherman and his wife. One day he went to the river and caught a fish – a very unusual fish, one that could talk! The fish asked the fisherman not to kill him. The fish said he really wasn't a fish, but a chief's son. The fisherman panicked. He threw the fish back in the water and ran home.

When he got home, he told his wife what had happened. She said, "Wow, my husband, you are a fool. Why didn't you ask this unusual fish for a gift? A fish that is able to talk must also have unusual power.

The man went back to the river. He called and called until the fish appeared. The fish said, "My friend, what's the problem?" The man was somewhat embarrassed but answered, "My wife is asking you for a small house; right now we only have a grass hut." The fish laughed and said, "Go home; your wife already has her wish!"

He went home and found his wife in a small house; she was very delighted.

However, after a little while, she became greedy. She said to her husband, "My husband, if you were a smart man, you would have asked the fish for a huge house; this small house is not good enough for me."

The man was quite afraid of his wife and went back to the river. He called and called and finally the fish appeared again. He said, "My friend, what's your problem?" He answered, "My wife is no longer satisfied with the small house; she wants a big house now." The fish laughed again and said, "No worries; just go home. She already has her big house."

The wife was still not grateful either to her husband or to the fish. The next morning, "Husband, you don't know anything! Why didn't you also ask the fish for furnishings and house help as well? I have a big house now, but I don't have good chairs or tables or anything. I also have no one to help me take care of this big house. This is no good."

The man was totally embarrassed now, but, nevertheless, he went back to the river to call the fish. The fish agreed and gave the woman everything she asked for.

This continued between the man and his wife. She still was not satisfied with everything she had. She continued pursuing her husband and insisted he go to ask the fish for something more every day. Now she wanted to become the queen and head of the church and ruler of the world. The fish agreed and gave her the goods and power she requested. But, even now, she still was not satisfied or grateful. Finally, she asked to become the Lord of the heavens and the earth.

Now the fish became very angry and grew tired of the woman. He said, "Wow, I have never met this kind of woman before. She is not worthy of giving her anything." The fish swam into the water and never again spoke to the man.

The fisherman returned home and found his wife back in the grass hut. Now she had nothing; her possessions and power had all been taken from her. The only thing she had left was her old grass hut. This kind of woman was not worthy of receiving any gifts at all.

OK, this was just a fable, but there is a lot of teaching in it. It is true that there are many people in the world today, just like the woman in our story, who never give thanks to God for anything. They are not thankful to anyone and are always

looking for more just for themselves. They are constantly asking for more of this and that, but always only for themselves. And absolutely no thankfulness.

But we are not of the world. We have already received Jesus in our lives. There are some in our midst this evening who are very new on this path with Jesus. But we also have those who have been believers for many years. But all of us have accepted our Lord Jesus Christ. It is necessary that we show this walk with Christ to all those around us.

Our Bible reading says that we should be “overflowing with thankfulness.” We are to be thankful always and it should be increasing daily. Why should we be so thankful? According to verse 7, because we are “rooted and built up” in Him and “strengthened in the faith as you were taught.” In other words, we have entered deeply in the way of the Lord.

How can we show this thankfulness? We can show it by continuing in the Way because we have been established in Him, planted in Him, and built up in Him. Everything that we do should be done with thanksgiving in a way that will honour the name of our Lord and Saviour.

This walking in the way of the Lord shall be done “in the faith as you were taught.” How have we been taught? Here are some answers to that question:

1. We are being taught in our Sunday morning worship services.
2. We are being taught in our afternoon Sunday School sessions.
3. We are being taught in our Young People’s Group meetings.
4. We are being taught in our Women’s Fellowship meetings.
5. We are being taught during our prayer times and Bible readings at home – whether alone or together with our families.
6. We are being taught by reading solid Christian literature.

Please don’t say, “I can’t read, let alone understand.” There are many helpful booklets prepared for us which are simple to read and understand. They are available in every town and village – in English, in Hausa and also in Jukun. We women need to read books and our Bibles and seriously study them. In the same way that we have been taught, we need to teach our children so that they will

also be “established” in Him, “planted” in Him and “built up” in Him. If our children never see us reading books and studying our Bibles, they will not do so either. It is necessary that we sit with our children every day and teach them in the same way that we were taught. This is your way of saying thanks to God. Don’t say, “Our children don’t know anything and they don’t even listen to us.” They are in our hands, a gift from God to us; don’t leave them in darkness. We need to teach them the Word of God in every way we can.

The woman in our fable never showed any thankfulness to anyone. She could find no reason in her heart to be thankful. She just thought about herself, never about anyone else. But we are not of the world; we have many reasons to be thankful. All of us are alive and healthy and we have the necessary things of life. We have the Bible available to us at all times; we have joy and peace in our hearts. All of these gifts have been given to us because we have received Jesus in our lives.

Let’s read the Scripture verses again from Colossians 2:6-7. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Let’s pray:

We thank you our God

Because you sent your Son to us.

Oh Father, we thank you because you thought of us.

You delivered us from darkness and you saved us.

Oh Lord, we thank You. Amen

A speech given at a
Young People's Society Speech Contest
Grand Rapids, Michigan
by Frances Prins in 1959

The Christian Witness

Are you a Christian? This question has undoubtedly often been asked of you and most of us here would answer "Yes, we are Christians." But just what is a Christian? It is more than attending church on Sunday and going to catechism and young people's society. A Christian is one who has a personal trust in Jesus as his Savior to the extent that he cannot remain silent but must tell others of his love for Christ.

Dr. Boer in his book *That My House May Be Filled* speaks of witnessing in this way: When one asks the average Christian, "Why witness?" he will usually say that Christ commands it and we must obey his command. However, it is doubtful that this is the proper motivation for missionary work at home or abroad. It is a remarkable thing to notice that from Acts 2 on, not a single reference is made to the Great Commission. When Paul lists his reasons for being a missionary to the Gentiles, not once does he say that it is in obedience to the last command of the Lord. It is taken for granted that it has been written on man's heart. It is not necessary for man to hear this command. In fact, the Great Commission should not be viewed as being a command but as being first of all a natural law which is descriptive of the life and essence of the Church. Man has a burning desire in him to witness for Christ because of the thankfulness that flows forth from his heart.

Somehow, I wonder if we as Christian young people have this burning desire in us. It seems as if witnessing has become a thing of the past in so far as youth are concerned. A person who stands up for his beliefs and convictions is considered a religious fanatic. One who lets his light shine by witnessing to non-Christians is

considered “square.” Often we don’t want others to know that we belong to Christ. We hide our lights by keeping still at a time when the way has been opened for us to witness. Many times we hear someone take God’s name in vain. Here is an opportunity for us to witness to the person that God is not pleased by such actions. But we bypass the opportunity by remaining silent. We don’t want to be considered “different or peculiar” by the world. We want to do and act just like everyone else. We have the desire to conform to the ways of the world.

The story has often been told of the man who worked in a certain shop for many years. When his death announcement appeared in the papers, his friends were greatly shocked. They didn’t know that he had had any church affiliations at all. Here he had been a member of a Christian church for his entire life and no one knew of it. He certainly kept his light well hidden under a bushel.

Don’t we often hide our lights, just as this man did?

But Christian young people, why are we afraid to witness, to speak up for Christ and to let our light shine? Surely it is not because we are ashamed of our religious heritage or, worse still, ashamed of our God? This thought is well expressed in a song:

Lord Jesus can it ever be, a mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, who angel praise, Whose glories shine through endless days?
Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend on whom my hopes of heaven depend?
No, when I blush be this my shame, that I no more revere His Name.

But the time has come when we may and can no longer be afraid to witness. We, the Christian young people of America, who have all the opportunities of a Christian life, must show to others that we are Christians. For if we who know Christ and have Him as our own personal Savior are ashamed of Him, from whom will the world learn of Christ? Instead of us always following the world and conforming to their ways, we must let the world follow us. We are the Bible that the world reads and when the world observes us in our everyday lives, they must see that we are different from them and that we are Christians.

This challenge to witness has been presented to the entire Church. The Church, and I quote, is the “light of the world.” Her arms are outstretched, her doors are open, and her voice is inviting and constraining. Christ said to the entire church “Go you out into all the world and preach the Gospel” and “Even so let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.”

It is a good thing that many churches are supporting their own missionaries today for we all realize that not everyone can become a fulltime missionary.

But Christ also said in Acts 1:8 “And you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” Here we see that we must begin our witnessing at home. That is why it is important for each of us to become missionaries right here at home. We are given so many opportunities to witness.

But, you say, “Where do I begin.” Perhaps there are those in your school or at your job who are not Christians. Why not invite them to church with you sometime? It would be a wonderful opportunity for them to hear of your Christ. Maybe your school has a Mission Group that visits various places and does personal work with the people there. Why not join them? It would be a very good experience for you and imagine the joy in your soul if you could lead someone to Christ! Or perhaps you have friends who are constantly swearing. Why not tell them that they are hurting you and especially your God by doing this?

You and I and all Christian young people everywhere must become witnessing Christians. We must let our light shine; we must stand up for Christ and we must be unashamed of the truth of the Gospel.

A speech given at a Women's Missionary Union meeting

Grand Rapids, Michigan

by Frances Boer

April 12, 1977

I've decided to tell you about a Nigerian girl who has meant very much to me during our 11 years in Nigeria. Through hearing her story I hope you'll catch a glimpse of what life is like over there.

We now have 3 children, but when we went to Nigeria in 1966, we had none. Part of our assignment during that first term of service was to visit different villages and congregations in Wukari Classis. I think most of you are aware that our missionaries work with two different churches in Nigeria: the Tiv church and the EKAN Benue church. All of our time we have served in the EKAN Benue church area. Wukari is the name of a town where we lived, but it is also the name of one of the classis of this church. The classis is composed of different congregations; the congregations sometimes have their members scattered over various outlying villages. One village which we visited regularly was Nyankwala, whose leader or evangelist was named Iliya Dan Juma. He and his wife Naomi had 6 children at the time we first met them. Their oldest daughter was named Lydia. It is her story that I want to share with you this afternoon.

Before our regular visits to her village, Lydia had only once before seen a white person. For some reason she took a liking to us, strange as we must have looked and seemed to her. Apparently she had begged her mother for several months already to ask us if she could come to live with us at Wukari, some 30 miles from her own home village. Larger families often share out their children to smaller families or childless couples, so that in itself was not so unusual. The unusual thing was that she, a 7 year old black girl who spoke mainly Jukun, wanted to live with white people who were struggling along to communicate in the Hausa language. But things were soon settled and she came with us. It was through her

that we learned many interesting details about her village, language and culture. We never learned to speak her language but she soon knew enough Hausa so that language-wise we soon understood each other quite well. She had difficulty at first knowing what to call us and when she addressed us at “That One” and “The wife of That One,” we realized we’d better find some more suitable words! So we settled on “Baba” and “Mama” which can mean simply “father” and “mother,” but which also is a title of endearment or respect for anyone a bit older.

I said that all of us – my husband, myself and Lydia – were continuing to learn the Hausa language. Hausa is a tonal language and a word changes in meaning when the pitch changes. I was trying to teach Lydia the favorite bedtime prayer of “Now I lay me down to sleep.” When I thought I was teaching her to say “ina rokonka” (hi tone, low tone: I’m asking you to keep me this night), she thought I said “ina rokonka” (low tone, high tone: which to her meant where are you planning to keep me this night?) She probably felt that on the one hand we were teaching her not to be afraid of spirits and ghosts, on the other hand we were teaching her to ask God where he planned to keep her spirit during the night. I can testify that there were many more such language misunderstandings with her and with others throughout the years!

From the sublime example of a misunderstanding at prayer time, let me point out one example which is really quite ridiculous but shows how often we are misunderstood. After Lydia had been with us for several weeks, she reported to her parents that white people were very strange. She told her mother, “When I have to spit up, she tells me to do it in a nice white oval bowl, and when I have to do a bowel movement, she makes me sit on a nice white round bowl; they don’t throw anything away – they seem to save it all in that nice bathroom! At that time we had an extreme water shortage in Wukari, so I was the only one permitted to rinse out the sink or flush the toilet!

At first when Lydia was with us, she hesitated about going back to her own compound. I don’t mean to suggest that we missionaries are living in luxury in Nigeria, but compared with what Lydia had been used to, we were living in a palace. At home she had no cement floor to sit on, no gas lanterns in the rooms at

night, no bed for herself and no toys to play with. I think she was just a bit unsure of herself and felt her little dream world might collapse if she visited her own village. She was afraid we wouldn't take her back, but by that time we had both become so attached to her in every way, that she certainly had no need to worry! As soon as she fully realized this, when she was with us she tried her best to behave as she felt we expected her to and when she went with us on our regular visits to her village, she soon disappeared into the crowd of little children who always stared at us as visitors and she acted as if she'd never been away from her own village.

Lydia always served as a real point of contact and conversation with others. Many Nigerians would ask her why she always went to church and market with me and why she lived with us. In her own way she explained to them that even though we were foreigners, we were really quite normal people who liked children and that we took good care of her. Part of the reason we took her with us in the first place was because she was sickly and we lived closer to better medical care for her and we could afford to give her a better diet. At 7 years, she weighed only 35 pounds and was so short she could just peek over the kitchen table. She soon grew both in weight and height and we started teasing her that she shouldn't grow too much because we were going to charge her future husband a bride price of one dollar extra for every pound she put on while under our care! The fact that she was so much healthier later was a very practical demonstration to the Nigerian community what a little medication and proper diet can do even for a sickly little child.

Lydia was almost 7 1/2 when it was time for the new school year to begin. Even though at that time primary schooling was not compulsory in Nigeria, we thought it a good idea for Lydia to go to school. Her father told us very frankly that he thought we were wasting our money on paying school fees for her – after all, she was only a girl and a weak little girl at that! I must add that at that time, Christian school fees were \$5 a year!

We sent her anyway to the primary school in Wukari. Some of you who have been attending Women's Missionary Union meetings for many years will be interested

in knowing that Rev. Peter Dekker who served as a missionary in Wukari for some 15 years was very instrumental in the founding of this school – named Ebenezer school still today.

Lydia went to this school for 6 years and then began applying for admission to a junior high school. The whole educational system has changed very much in Nigeria during the last few years. New schools are now being built everywhere due to the introduction of compulsory primary education in 1976. But one thing has not changed – there are still many more students that are trying to get into a post-primary school than there are schools that are ready to take them.

A school that many of you have read about – Wukari District Combined Secondary School (usually just called Combined) – was no exception. Lydia, along with about 600 other boys and girls took an entrance examination for this school. There would be room for only 72 new students in the next class. About 200 of those who took the test were called for an interview. All of these had done quite well on the written examination, but now only those who could understand and speak English fairly well would pass this oral test.

There has been such great competition to get admitted to good secondary schools that fingerprinting the students at both the written exam and oral interview has been found necessary. Before the time of fingerprinting became a common practice, some university students would take the exam for a younger brother or friend. He would of course do very well on the examination, but when the younger brother appeared for the first day of school, it was found out he couldn't so much as speak a sentence of English! Students have, of course, found new tricks, but apparently fingerprinting has helped to assure that the same person who takes the test is planning to attend the school.

Lydia passed the written test and went to the interview very nervous and fearful. When the committee asked her what work her real father did, she told them, "He's a farmer." She said she was afraid to tell them that he was also an evangelist for fear that they would ask her to spell that word!

Lydia is now in her 4th year at Combined and will hopefully graduate in June of 1978. We are pleased that she is active in Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) at the school; she's also a member of a preaching club that goes to several more remote compounds to lead worship services; and she sings in two of the school choirs. Lest you think I'm trying to say she's perfect, let me assure you she's also gotten involved in her share of student rebellions and other things that aren't quite so pleasant to report. But, in general, we are happy with her performance at Combined.

At one time Lydia had been interested in getting a job with a radio station after finishing Combined. But to our great surprise and joy, in her last letter to us she wrote, "Baba and Mama (she still always calls us that), I want to go to university." Then we had to smilingly think back to ten years ago when her own father felt we were wasting our money and our efforts on her by enrolling her in Grade 1.

When you pray for missionaries and the mission in Nigeria, think also of Lydia and thousands of young people like her who have already undergone such great cultural changes in their short lifetimes that it's almost incomprehensible. A mere ten years ago, she had hardly ever seen a car, or an adult outside her own village, or a foreigner; she'd never even thought of going to school. Now there is a paved road going right to her village with buses, cars and motorbikes coming and going all the time. Her own father now uses a motorbike to ride to Wukari in less than half an hour, a trip that used to take almost a full day by lorry. A little girl who had never even dreamed of going to Grade one now has serious dreams of going to university. A little girl who spoke only Jukun, now is really quite fluent in both Hausa and English.

I thank God that during our years of work in Nigeria, I have had such close contact with Lydia and I hope that now in the new work which we'll soon be beginning, we may continue to influence many young people in their decisions for Christ.

Frances' speech at a Christmas program

Hillcrest School

Jos, Nigeria

December 15, 1988

I was born, the youngest of 7 children, in a small farming village in Friesland, the most northern part of the Netherlands. When I was 6 years old, our family emigrated to the U.S. So most of my first-hand remembrances of Dutch holiday customs are from my pre-school years.

The month of December was special for 2 reasons: *Sinter Klaas* on December 5 and *Kerstfeest* on December 25.

Sinter Klaas or Saint Nicholas was an actual person who served as a bishop in Asia Minor in the fourth century. He was famous for his generosity and kind deeds and became known as the patron saint of children.

In the late afternoon of December 5, as we were playing quiet games in the house, very mysteriously *pepernoten* (small ginger cookies) would be scattered all through the room. That meant that *Sinter Klaas* was in the neighborhood and would soon come with presents. We were often a bit apprehensive about his actual coming, because our big brothers told us that *Zwarte Piet* (Black Peter) always accompanied *Sinter Klaas*. If we had been bad during the year, *Zwarte Piet* would put us in his bag, take us to Spain, and make *soute drop* (salty licorice) out of us. I must add that I carry no permanent scars from this scary story told to me by my brothers!

I never saw either *Sinter Klaas* or *Zwarte Piet* when I was little. A bag was always dropped off just inside the door with a note saying that *Sinter Klaas* was too busy to stop, but because we'd been good children, he was leaving us a bag of surprises. The surprises were usually chocolate candy bars, large gingerbread

cookies in *Sinter Klaas* shapes, oranges individually wrapped in colorful tissue paper and some small toys.

My parents tried to continue this *Sinter Klaas* tradition after moving to the US, but because no one else in our neighborhood knew this was supposed to occur on December 5, we soon lost interest.

When John and I spent time in the Netherlands on a study leave from 1972-1974, I noticed how the whole story had changed. *Sinter Klaas* now came in person by boat to Amsterdam several weeks before December 5 and visited all the schools and shopping malls. He was still dressed as a bishop, but *Zwarte Piet* was no longer a kidnapper of bad children. He was now the friendly helper who threw candy from his bag to all the waiting children.

We observed that the Dutch were very proud of their unique *Sinter Klaas* tradition and encouraged all Dutch people to continue celebrating a truly Dutch holiday. (Mysteriously, Cynthia throws *pepernoten* to the audience!) Wow, it looks as if *Sinter Klaas* has found his way to Nigeria, but he's 10 days late!

According to *World Book*, during the 1600s the Dutch brought the custom of *Sinter Klaas* with them to America. The Americans couldn't pronounce *Sinter Klaas* properly and changed it to Santa Claus. They must have also gotten mixed up on the date and changed the whole thing to December 25!

The second big event in December which I remember from my childhood is *Kerstfeest*. That was a purely religious holiday. I remember it because it was church, church and more church! Everything else was done in the Frisian language, but when it came to Bible reading, praying or church – *that* was done in the Dutch language. We went to church twice on Christmas Day and then once on the following day. So, if Christmas was on a Monday, we would have gone to church twice on the Sunday, twice on Christmas Monday and then again on Tuesday morning. No wonder I remember it, right?

Probably the most favorite Dutch Christmas carol is *Ere Zij God*. In order to do justice to this beautiful carol, you really need a large pipe organ and a large congregation. We've brought our organ keyboard along this evening but we

couldn't find a congregation. The three from our family who were born in the Netherlands will sing it for you once; then we'd like to ask all those of you who have Dutch or German roots to join us for another try. The words mean: Glory to God in the highest. Peace be on earth to the people whom God delights in.

Fran's speech on the Christian Home

At St. Piran's Church

Jos, Nigeria

March, 1990

When Emmanuel Egbunnu asked me to participate in a seminar on the Christian Home, I told him that usually Nigerians laugh at my ideas when it comes to such issues. They say, "Wannan hanyar Bature ne, ba namu ba." (That is the way of Whites, not us.) He told me to proceed anyhow, so here you have some words from a baturiya (white woman).

The text that we are considering this afternoon is Genesis 2:24. The King James Version and the Revised Standard Version record it in almost the same words: "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh." The Good News Bible and the New International Version write it this way; "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one." Because I was asked to speak specifically on the word "cleaving," I will use the King James Version.

According to the dictionary, the word "cleaving" means "a very close, lasting and indissoluble attachment." It also means "to adhere firmly, loyally or unwaveringly." "Adhere" means "to hold, follow, or maintain loyalty steadily and consistently (as to a person, group, principle or way)."

As I have already pointed out, the word "cleave" is not used in the newer translations. Even in the older translations, the word is not used often. Usually it refers to one thing cleaving to another within a human body, or people cleaving to other gods instead of to the one true God.

I only found 3 references in the Old Testament where "cleaving" means the union between a man and a woman. We have already noted the first one in the

assigned text of Genesis 2:24. Genesis 34:3 talks of a man named Shechem, who wasn't married to Jacob's daughter, Dinah, but he had slept with her. It says "His soul clave unto Dinah and he loved the damsel and spoke kindly unto the damsel." In I Kings 11:2 we are reminded that Solomon had a strange relationship to many women. He was warned about these foreign women who would turn his heart toward their gods. But it says, "Solomon clave unto these in love."

The New Testament reference that is helpful in this discussion is Mark 10:7 and 9. The Pharisees had come to Jesus with questions about divorce. Jesus quotes from the Old Testament and says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife." Then He adds, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

A careful reading of Genesis 2:24 suggests that you first must "leave" in order to "cleave." Actually the preparation for leaving begins at the moment of conception. The fetus is prepared to leave the safety of the womb in order to be born. All the mothers here know how painful that moment of "leaving" is, but it must leave so that it can become a person. We teach our young children that leaving is part of growing up. A very young child leaves his parents in order to go on an outing with someone else; a child leaves in order to enter pre-school, eventually to go to school all day, and then someday to go off to boarding school or university.

The parent who is not teaching his child to leave is being overly-protective. I quote from the *Sunday Voice* of March 11, 1990. "Maternal overprotection can be seen as a deliberate action of the mother to shift her love from her husband to her children. A mother who has faced disappointment and is unhappy with her husband frequently pours her pent up feelings of affection on her children."

Then Genesis 2:24 says that the child leaves the parents in order to cleave to the spouse. A traditional marriage form reads this way: "Moreover, God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him.' Thereupon God created woman of man's own substance and brought her unto the man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

Our Lord Jesus honoured marriage by his blessed presence at the wedding in Cana. He confirmed it as divine ordinance, as an honorable estate, and a lasting bond when He declared: 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.'

The apostle Paul shows its exalted nature when he calls holy wedlock a symbol of the mystic union of the Savior and the Church, His redeemed bride, commending it as a state honorable among all." (*Psalter Hymnal*, 1959 ed., p. 114)

John Calvin is a well-known 16th century reformer who is respected internationally for his solid Biblical exegesis. He writes in his *Genesis* commentary about Genesis 2:24 – "Among the offices pertaining to human society, this is the principal, and as it were, the most sacred, that a man should cleave unto his wife. ... the husband ought to prefer his wife to his father. But the father is said to be left, not because marriage severs sons from their fathers, or dispenses with other ties of nature, for in this way God would be acting contrary to himself. While, however, the piety of the son towards his father is to be most assiduously cultivated, and ought in itself to be deemed inviolable and sacred, yet Moses so speaks of marriage as to show that it is less lawful to desert a wife than parents. Therefore, they who, for slight causes, rashly allow divorces, violate all the laws of nature and reduce them to nothing. If we should make it a point of conscience not to separate a father from his son, it is a still greater wickedness to dissolve the bond which God has preferred to all others."

I think it interesting that the text says a *man* shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. It has been taken for granted in most cultures that woman would leave and cleave, but here the *man* is told to do so. Remember John Calvin's comments: "A man ought to prefer his wife to his father." "It is less lawful to desert a wife than parents."

What does the principle of cleaving mean in practical terms for today? If a married man is offered an education or job opportunity somewhere, a Nigerian man will often go away alone – sometimes even for years. A *Bature* would probably not go alone, at least not for an extended period of time. He would wait until it was possible for his wife and children to accompany him, or else, he would turn down the opportunity.

If a husband and wife are truly to cleave, this can't be done at a distance. If two sheets of paper are glued to each other or cleave to each other, they can't be separated again. If you try to separate them, both sheets will be damaged. The palms of my hands can be joined or cleave to each other only when the hands remain on my body. If the one hand is cut off, the palms can no longer cleave.

If the cleaving is to be complete, the man must cleave to his wife as well as the wife cleaving to the man. The palm of one hand can't cleave if the other hand is gone. In practical terms, if the wife is offered that educational or job opportunity, the situation is the same as when the man is offered it. As I read Genesis 2:24, either *both* man and wife leave the old place and cleave in the new place, or *no one* goes away.

Several weeks ago there was a question in the *Banner*, the weekly magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, about the implication of this text. The question is answered by a Rev. Kok who is the director of pastoral care at Crystal Cathedral in California.

The *question*: I am one of three siblings. After my marriage 25 years ago, I moved to the West Coast; my sister has also moved quite a distance from our parents' home in the east. Only my brother still lives near home. My brother bears the major burden of looking after my elderly parents. I know that both my parents and my brother resent it that my sister and I are not around. But we can't move back there. Our homes, jobs and Church affiliations are established; our children have all grown up here. We have put down too many roots. I am sure other families face this problem. What can we do? How do we deal with the guilt?

The *answer*: How do you deal with your guilt over being so far away and being unable to help from week to week? Start by asking yourself what you are guilty of. Leaving father and mother and cleaving to your spouse? Following God's job opportunity at the other side of the country? Being a good wife and mother? Guilt is not appropriate unless you've committed a crime or sin. If you're really guilty, you need forgiveness. For what do you need to be forgiven? What you are feeling, it seems to be, seems to me, is a false guilt. No wrong has been done.

I might add that the editor entitled the article *Cleaving and Leaving is not Wrong*.

In summary then, a child is taught to *leave* the parents. We were taught to leave when we were children and now, as parents, we are teaching our children to do the same. But a spouse is taught to *cleave* - man to wife and wife to man. This is the permanent marriage bond of Mark 10:7 and 9 where Jesus says: "A man shall cleave to his wife. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

Fran's Speech at a Symposium for Mothering Sunday

at St. Piran's Church

Jos, Nigeria

March 29, 1992

The Parents' Role in the Mental or Intellectual Development of a Child

Proverbs 22:6 – Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.

This well-known Bible verse is helpful also in the aspect of a child's mental development. What a child learns in infancy and throughout his childhood, he will not forget,

All parents, whether they want to admit it or not, serve as role models for their children. What a child sees his parents doing, that he will also want to do.

One excellent way to be a positive role model for your child in his mental development is for him to see you as a reader, both oral and silent. Even as a very young child, he must be wondering, "What is this mysterious thing my parents holds in their hands? Why do they look at it so intently? Why does it make them break into a smile or frown occasionally? Why does it keep them so quiet?" The child will automatically want to share in this experience by climbing on to their laps.

What a marvelous way to begin your child's mental development by sharing with him the mystery of a picture and the printed word. Read often to your little child, answer his questions about the pictures and words. Make reading as much of a pleasurable experience for your child as breast or bottle feeding. Make it a one-on-one experience which will serve as one of your child's very earliest memories.

As your child goes into the toddler stage, don't let videos, nannies and play groups serve as an escape from your responsibilities. Teach your child to be a doer: to read his own stories, to write and illustrate his own stories, to create his

own games with the toys he has. Don't encourage him to be passively viewing television or videos or to always play games that others have marketed simply for the money in it.

Once your child has reached elementary school age, his teachers and peers have much more influence on his mental development than you do. However, if you have trained him properly in his pre-school years, the benefits will soon be evident.

Insist on regular bedtimes for your growing child. A child who has not slept well or long enough will not be able to endure the mental stimulation to which he is exposed all day long at school. There is something wrong with a child who is feeling tired and sleepy by 10 A.M. Often the problem is simple: He did not get to bed on time the night before. God has created us so that we need regular rest and sleep. Your child's growing body needs much more rest and sleep than you do. It is your responsibility to see that your child gets that rest and sleep. In order for education to be effective, the home and school must work together. No matter how talented a teacher your child has, that teacher can do nothing for the mental development of a child who is not properly rested.

In addition to keeping up the discipline of proper rest, you also have a great role to play in checking up on your child's homework. In this area also, you provide the consistency your child needs. Ask your child every day what he needs to do as homework. Is it a Spelling list? A Memory Verse? The Times Tables? Be diligent and consistent in this. Maybe he needs only 10 minutes of help from you, but it's important that he knows you are available to help him.

As your child goes into Junior or Senior Secondary and possibly into a boarding situation, you have less and less of a role in his mental development. But again, if you have trained and stimulated him properly from early childhood on, he should now be somewhat ready to try things on his own. You should be ready to sit back and take some pride in your child's mental achievements. At this stage, your main input is the *time* you take and the *interest* you show in his accomplishments. Does he have a part in the school drama? Be sure you are there to see it. Is he making a speech on Awards Day? Be sure you are there to hear him and cheer him on. Has

he written an article in the school newspaper? Be sure you read it and discuss it with him, whether you agree with his point or not.

I would now like to summarize my main points;

During infancy and early childhood, make books and reading a most pleasurable experience for and with your child.

During elementary school, provide the proper discipline and atmosphere for your child's mental development. Be sure he gets plenty of rest and sleep. Be consistent about checking on his homework.

During secondary school, provide him with the encouragement he needs to become his own person. Be willing to take of your time to show him how interested you are in his accomplishments.

I end where I started: *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.*