

# Pastor Training International

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Teach to Preach

## PTI Prayer & News – May 2007 *'God is the King of all the earth.'* (Psalm 47:7)

Dear praying friends,

Our God has been wonderfully good and gracious to us in answering much prayer for the conferences that have taken place over the past two months. Both Brian Lotter and Alan Levy give thanks to God for the privilege of serving him in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone and for his strength and grace to deal with all the situations they met.

### Zimbabwe

The first conference took place at **Rusitu** in South East Zimbabwe near the border with Mozambique. Due to the remoteness of the area, communication with the Bible College had been very difficult, but the conference went very well. There were 74 present, many of whom were past students of the college. The great majority of these pastors have very few books and were in need of spiritual refreshment. Brian was helped in the teaching by Timothy Myambo, the college Principal, as well as two other staff members. Timothy helped Brian each evening with the open session.

The pastors each filled in an evaluation form at the end of the conference. They were thankful to the Lord for the thoroughness of Brian's preparation, and the *"good relevant application on a practical level, [he was] extremely clear in his presentation."* The fellowship with pastors from other denominations was a new experience for many and an enriching part of the conference for them.

The teaching on justification, sanctification and regeneration proved to be beneficial, as was their introduction to the value of expository preaching. *"I was exposed to expository preaching for the first time"* said one pastor, and another remarked, *"Particularly it was helpful because there were a lot of new things I learned."* The experience of many others was similar.



Brian Lotter with the group at Rusitu

Brian was moved by the warmth of the welcome given and the fellowship he shared with these dear men. He mentioned that the other moving moment was *"to see the joy on their faces as they received their books."* So many commented on the need for more literature, as well as their desire for similar times of teaching in the future.

At the **Bulawayo** conference there were 32 delegates, which was a little lower than expected due to a national strike that made travel rather difficult. The men were nearly all pastors who had not attended a Bible college. Brian was helped in two lectures by staff at the college. Very similar comments were made about the conference, and while the forms were not filled in with quite as much detail, more of the pastors wrote personal notes of thanks. This extract sums up their feelings:

*"We were greatly blessed by the teachings of brother Brian and this has given us a new dimension of ministry... We want to thank you again for the reading material you gave us and we hope we shall be blessed through it. I'm hoping and praying that this shall be a continued programme by PTI to continue equipping us to be good ministers."*

### Sierra Leone

Alan spent 6 weeks in the country, during which time he encountered intense heat that even the local people noticed. Mike and Vi Webb of UFMSL were his hosts for much of that time, and we thank God for their hard work in preparation for the conferences. Alan arrived home only 2 days ago, and while we have his report there has not been the opportunity to look at any of the evaluation sheets.

All spiritual work is a battle and this was more apparent for the conferences here. The church in Sierra Leone is weak, and the comment of the host pastor at the venue of the **Freetown** conference gives an indication of the difficulties of the first week: *“God the Father spoke in the Old Testament, God the Son in the Gospels and the Holy Spirit after the resurrection so that’s it. Now we are free to ignore the Word completely and be led by the Spirit.”* Many other practices which denied God’s Word were encountered. Alan mentioned that they listened well and took note of the continued authority of God’s Word as he taught. At the end some commented that they had never heard the Scriptures opened in this way before.

Since that conference, Mike Webb has written the following:

*“For some the Bible teaching was difficult to accept, others began to think things through (biblically). One pastor went back to his church and immediately called a meeting to see how they could implement the biblical principle of ‘giving’ in their church – he will need much prayer. One pastor writes: ‘Our total dependence will now be on God alone and His Word’. Another said: ‘The training helps me correct some of my mistakes.’ And another commented: ‘I learnt not to be harsh with my wife.’ (Vi says – that can only be good!!)”*

When Alan moved on to **Makeni** he found those who attended to have a better grasp of sermon construction and doctrine, together with a more open and receptive attitude to the teaching of the Scriptures. When he moved to **Kenema** and **Bo** he found things even better with some good questions asked as well. In both centres, his series on the attributes of God, taught with strong personal application, were much appreciated. They learnt truths they had never studied or even thought about.

In all these places the pastors received books; but this is not a reading community. Please pray for the Lord to change this situation and implant a desire to study more.

At weekends Alan was able to teach at the Grace and Truth Bible Institute to pastors, senior church workers and students. These, together with Sunday preaching services and other opportunities to preach during the two week ‘break’ in the middle of his time there, meant that Alan ministered the Word of God on 108 occasions.

We are very thankful to the Lord that we received a grant from **Barnabas Fund** to fully fund the conferences in Sierra Leone. They were keen to support these training courses as Sierra Leone is a country where they already work. Please give thanks for their willingness to share in our ministry like this.

These conferences are now over, but there is much follow up work to be done in prayer.

- Please pray for the Holy Spirit to apply the truths that have been taught in both countries. As pastors reflect upon what they have been taught, may God enable them to work out these truths in their lives and churches.
- Please pray that the books will be read and that the Lord will use them to underline truths which they learnt, and to give them a desire to dig deeper into God’s Word as well as a passion to proclaim and apply it to their churches.

### **For the future**

God willing, our next conferences are to take place in **Malawi** in early July. The first pastors’ conference will be at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi (**Blantyre**) 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> July. The second will be in the northern region at **Nkhata Bay**, 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July. These are being arranged by Zambesi Mission in cooperation with the Evangelical Association of Malawi. Timothy Alford and Richard Underwood will provide the teaching with the help of Abraham Folayan.

Timothy writes:

*“This will be my fourth annual visit, but the intention each time is to encourage the attendance of pastors who have not previously been present or received gifts of books for their ministry. So far, approximately 10,000 books have been given during ten conferences in Malawi. Considerable distance mentoring has resulted from this.”*

In August and September further conferences will take place in **Zambia**, and we plan our first visit to **Ethiopia** for the first two weeks of October. We will give more prayer information for these nearer the time. Please pray for the trainers as they prepare; and for those who will attend, that the Lord will use the truths they are taught to their great benefit. There is considerable work to do in preparation for the smooth running of these conferences. Please pray much for this important aspect of our ministry.

With thanks for your fellowship in the Gospel,

Gordon Oram – PTI Editorial Board