

## DAY 4: WEST AFRICANS TAKE LEAD IN SHARING BIBLE STORIES

Mrs. Lombena transitioned with ease from the standard West African greetings into the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. The Togolese man listening to the story crafted in his native tongue was attentive to her vivid storytelling. What followed was a lively discussion about the truths and implications of the Bible story.

With sincerity on his face, he asked her to pray for him in the name of Jesus, the One who came not to condemn but to save. Essodina Ayewa, Mrs. Lombena's trainer who had been watching from the side, stepped up to lay hands on the man as they prayed.

"When you tell a story from the Word of God, it's powerful. It affects someone. He listens," Essodina said.

Mrs. Lombena, along with nearly 40 other students, recently graduated from a three-year program at the Baptist Bible Institute of Togo (IBBT). For the first time, its curriculum included training in orality methods, one component of which is the art of crafting and sharing biblical stories with people who prefer oral communication methods over written ones.

"We hear about the joy that animates the people who listen to the Bible stories all the time," said Dombe Tchalaré, IBBT director. This led him to require all students to receive the training, and he envisions creating a dedicated school of orality within IBBT.

Essodina highlighted how the orality training has been an important complement to the school's classic theological education. "It gives them practical knowledge: how they can preach, do evangelism, counsel, and address doctrinal issues" using stories from the Bible, he said.



IMB PHOTO

*IMB missionary Katee Sheppard\* consults with Lala Togue about his mission action plan. Lala is a newly appointed Togolese missionary to the Akasselem, an unreached people group. The missions training event was a partnership between the Togo Baptist Convention and the IMB. The new home missionaries have been appointed to work with unreached people groups in Togo and Benin, several of which are a part of the IMB's "55 in 5" initiative, which aims to reach 55 unreached African people groups in five years.*

.....

The orality education is also the first training in Togo being led entirely by African believers who were originally trained by IMB missionaries.

IMB missionary Katee Sheppard\*, alongside a team of nationals in five countries, has effectively used Bible storying for more than a decade in a ministry to truck drivers. She said the drivers are normally closed to gospel conversations, but they love the stories.

"They ask questions about the stories, and God opens doors to tell them Bible stories that lead many to Christ," Katee said.

Katee's team understood the value of training more people, and to date, IMB missionaries have equipped more than 25 national orality trainers across several African countries. Together they have led orality workshops and seminars for thousands of believers representing dozens of languages.

Evangelist Seni Zoungrana is one of the trainers who lead orality workshops. He discusses both the joy and responsibility given by Revelation 7:9 of "that day we're going to sing the same song in our different languages. Imagine the melody it will give!"

**PRAY** for the African orality trainers as they continue to organize and teach others how to effectively use Bible storying to share and teach God's Word.

**PRAY** the graduates of IBBT would put into practice the orality skills they have acquired when they return to their towns and villages.

**PRAY** for the unreached people groups of sub-Saharan Africa, asking God to confirm in their hearts the truth of the stories they hear.

*\*Name changed.*