

The Ghanaian (Akan) View of Health - part 2

Dear Friends,

This is the second of the series where I'm writing to tell you about the concept of health and treatment of diseases from the perspective of my people, the Akans of Ghana, of which Akrampa is a part. In the July letter I explained how the non-Christian, traditional spiritual beliefs affect how people view and treat their health.

The causes of disease, and illness can be physical, emotional, and spiritual. Physical and emotional causes can be from not observing simple hygiene, lack of nutrition, even severe stress. The Congregation of First Lutheran has worked hard to help Akrampa in all of these ways. Physically, though, Pastor Jimmy realized during his 1996 visit, that the village needed clean water. That led to the crusade to provide pipe-born treated water for consumption and domestic use. In 2008, the 'Group of 8' led by Pastor Woody saw a need for the children to have a better diet and regular meals. They instituted the School Feeding (Breakfast) Program. And again in 2010 the water system was re-done after being damaged by government construction. Both the clean water and the food for the children have produced tremendous results & changed the health & well-being of the community. First Lutheran's support of me, has allowed me to take the healing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into Akrampa, to feed their spiritual need!

In Ghana, when you go into any clinic (no matter where it is located) the most common disease is malaria. Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease that causes symptoms of fever, fatigue, vomiting and headaches. In severe cases, or without proper treatment it can lead to death. Diabetes, and severe diarrhea, are two of the other most common day to day illnesses in Ghana, that also left untreated, or improperly treated can lead to death.

The Christian approach to seeking treatment for illness is simple, really. Ghanaian Christians believe that hospitals and related facilities treat diseases, but the ULTIMATE healer is God (which is a universal belief, because the Christian faith and beliefs are the same worldwide). The Ghanaian Christian will attend clinics and hospitals in principle to report issues and avail themselves of treatments being offered. Notwithstanding, a Christian would from time to time use herbs (recommended by friends or being sold in fetish-free locations) because there is the understanding that not all diseases can be treated scientifically. Thus alternative medicines and treatment of disease are also used by Ghanaian Christians. The point I'm making is that a Christ-follower would not go to a shrine to consult the fetish as to the cause and treatment of their illness. He or she is of the fervent belief that God heals and that idol worship should not be entertained at all.

Next month I will tell you more about health, spiritual beliefs, culture and their connection to the way Ghanaians view life.

Blessings,

Pastor Ben