

Pastor Ben & Julie's Children - Update:

Dear Friends,

As the year 2019 begins, I would like to talk about my family. It's been awhile since I talked about us, individually and to let you know how things have been with each one of us: myself, Julie, William, Isabella, Ida and Benjamin. So here is an update on my family.

Let me begin with William, the first and oldest of the children. He is now 35 years of age and trying to be focused on job issues. Unfortunately, he's the only one among our four children who has not had a steady job for long periods. The longest period he has been on any job is not more than a year. As those of you who have been following my family will recall, he is into computer networking and installation, a career that one would think is in high demand in this increasingly technological age. The problem is that he doesn't have a degree in that field so he gets only what is available from the lowest paying institutions. When he decides to move on to something more beneficial, it takes a long time to get a new job so during that period he becomes unemployed. When he gets a job, he becomes dissatisfied and quits. It is a very frustrating situation for him. His situation has been worrying Julie and me very much. Meanwhile, as unsteady as he is in his jobs, he is now a father himself. William has a daughter named Effie. That is the name given to people born on Fridays. Effie is almost 4 years old. Sadly, William and the mother of his child are no longer in a relationship. And while we find that situation to be less than ideal, his daughter is a blessing. In Psalm 139: 13-18, the Bible tells us that all babies & children are a gift from God, created and known personally to Him. So we rejoice in the life of little Effie!

Isabella has been teaching for about 10 years now. She began with a Diploma Certificate in teaching and then continued her own education to receive a first Degree in Education. That qualification places her in the primary category of the classroom work, so she can teach mainly in the lower primary: Grade Three through Grade Six. Isabella is still unmarried. Several young men have approached but have not been found suitable. She is 32 years old. The school where she teaches is in Kasoa, a town about 6 miles away from our mission village of Akrampa. Kasoa is a major market town. It is a hub where farmers and people in the trading of fish and fish items gather. They also bring their produce from the farms and the seaside towns. Kasoa bustles with so much activity on Tuesdays and Fridays, which are market days, that it is really difficult to move around with haste. People and vehicles compete for the smallest space on the roads on market days. It is an interesting town. In her free time, Isabella loves to sing, although she is not the kind of person to be in a choir, and she loves to visit with friends. She is also fond of watching local televisions dramas.

Ida finished college with a Degree in Finance and found a job in a bank, in the capital city

Accra, as a Relationship Officer. The bank she works at is considered a local bank and it is privately owned. Her work detail takes her to other branches of her bank, outside Accra, where she organizes training workshops. These trips can take sometimes up to a week at most. She is endeavoring to save money so that she can acquire a masters degree. With a masters, her chances of getting a promotion at work will be enhanced, and to that end we are encouraging her to be focused as she works hard. Since we can't afford to help her pay to attend a boarding institution - and she wants to pay her way through that program - we are asking her to work and study. She is 28 years old, and wants to focus on getting her career as a banker firmly in place, while waiting to be married. We are all concerned about not many openings for employment if one doesn't have the requisite qualifications. So Ida wants to be fully qualified, and takes her education very seriously. Our economy is slowing down resulting in retrenchment and loss of job positions. We pray she will keep her job and then be promoted when she finishes her education. Ida is the 'movie person' in our family! She always wants to go to see the latest animation or science thriller movies, like the 'Black Panther', the 'Wolverine', and family type of dramas from Korea. I don't know why she fancies Korean dramas.

Benjamin is 25 years old and has a first Degree in Economics and Geography. He did his national service - a requirement of all who graduate from tertiary institutions in Ghana - in a bank. At first he saw himself working in the bank, but then shifted into the stockbroking and investment portfolio side of things. The institution where he works is also a privately owned enterprise. They recruited him as an investment officer.

Benjamin's hard work (making good sales and getting customers for his boss) was rewarded with a 7-day working trip to London, in the United Kingdom, with his boss. In July of 2018, his boss surprised him with the news of the trip and that they were leaving within days. Fortunately, he had a passport (acquired last year) so when he was suddenly told to submit his passport for a visa, he was ready.

We were all so excited for him! Not just for the trip itself, which came as a real blessing, but because the trip was a recognition of him being very hardworking and conscientious at work. Yes, indeed his trip was a huge surprise. And his company paid for everything. We did not have to support him with any money, not even pocket change. May the Lord be praised! Now I don't complain when he leaves home very early in the morning and almost always arrives at work two or three hours before most of his colleagues. Benjamin is almost always the last person to leave work, except of course for the CEO of his work place. This CEO is a local Chief of one of the powerful tribes in the eastern part of Ghana.

Benjamin has two main interests apart from work. The first one is close to becoming a business of his own. He 'sets up' (that is what he calls it) for weddings, christenings and other social events where people ask him to set up a place/event. This involves decorating and putting together the planning and seating of invited guests. In America, it might be called an Event Planner. Even as I am writing (today, December 14), he has put together his materials and other things to set up a wedding event. His second interest is singing. He finds time to make himself

available to support any *Gospel Singing Group* that needs a 'backup' singer. He is getting more and more involved in singing and that has created some options for travel with other singers and groups.

For me and Julie, we are just hanging in there, while getting old, thankful to God for the blessings that He continues to put in our life. I love working with the children in the Akrampa school and Julie continues at her job as a secretary. Each day brings challenges and blessings alike.

Happy New Year to you, all of our dear readers and mission friends. The Lord bless and keep you all and make His face shine upon you and all of your loved ones.

With Love,

Pastor Ben, Julie and family