



<p><b><i>Niger Introduction</i></b> September 2003</p> <p>Part 02, Ch. 22 CRF Media Chronicles</p>	<p><b>Final:</b> 3/08/13 <b>Time:</b> 10:36</p> <p>© 2013 Carl and Arline Ryan</p>
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**Carl:** It was September the 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003 and I am in a small Songhai village with a Brazilian missionary couple. A baptism was planned for two young men. We walked down a path toward the Niger River but the rain had filled a portion of the path and, obviously, we did not need to continue to the river. I was prepared ahead of time to expect the strange and unusual on this four-week excursion to Africa. The first stop was two weeks here in the Republic of Niger, West Africa and then to the Kingdom of Lesotho located in Southern Africa.

Arline remained home during the trip because of expected difficulties and primitive environment. We spent several months researching the Songhai People and their homeland along the Niger River. Brad Womble, an experienced missionary working among these people, provided us with detailed documentation concerning the mission work, the people and their lifestyle. We were even able to prepare a draft script for the introduction to the Songhai People. Later, the script was finalized for Brad's narration.

**Overlay:** Satellite Communication installation

Brad and his family lived in Niamey (nee-AH-may), the capital of Niger. This city, with a population of about 700,000, has a few nice looking hotels and government office buildings but nearby people live in abject poverty. A few streets are paved but most are dirt turning to mud when it rains. For the affluent, shopping is difficult and you may be parked next to a camel.

**Overlay:** Grand Mosque of Niamey

Most shop in any one of several open-air markets located throughout the city.

**Overlay:** Pearl millet grain for sale

The bridge across the Niger River carries all sorts of traffic. It is the only bridge in the country of Niger that crosses the Niger River.

The River provides much needed irrigation water for the farmland. But, this river also harbors a tiny parasite that can cause blindness.

**Overlay:** Leading a blind man

Clinics have been set up to help those infected with "river blindness".

Most of our time was spent in the villages near the river. We were amazed at our ability to freely take the pictures and not be harassed by kids or adults. Brad says that it is due to the old man taking the pictures. Uh! In these areas, life is difficult. Vegetation is sparse – cattle walk long distances for forage. In some places, household water is obtained from a dry river bed. The rivers are always muddy. Still, they are a vital source of food, a place to do laundry and to just go wading. Schools for the children are rare.

**Overlay:** Gleaning for millet kernels at the market

Pearl millet grows on some of these parched lands and, for many, it is the staple grain crop. Often, it is ground into flour by hand but a few places have a mechanical, gas powered grinder.

**Overlays:**

- Sweet potato vines
- The soil was mostly sand
- Water from nearby Niger River
- A water pump

One of the more interesting excursions was the 2-hour boat ride up river to a small community. It was market day and the river was near flood stage.

**Overlay:** A load of goats

The people seemed to take it all in stride.

**Overlays:**

- Sugar cane
- Making a bowl
- Fresh beef?
- On the way back to Niamey

Over 90% of the people in Niger are Muslim. Yet, there are several small groups of Christians. Brad and his team have developed an effective ministry including leadership training.

It was a true joy to be among these new Christians and observe their enthusiasm as they worship together and share their faith with others.

**Overlays:**

- Missionary family from Nigeria
- Members of Brad's team

Some of the meetings were held in the homes of missionaries, ... others where ever shade was found. One of the places was difficult for us to find. There was no path to guide us but the herd boys knew the way. The small compound was surrounded by millet and sorghum growing tall. We were told that this is the place they worship Jesus.

Under the shade of an arbor, made of sticks tied together with strips of cowhide and with green gourd vines helping to provide shade, these believers were singing praises to God. While a baby nursed on her mother's breast, the family patriarch struggled to read from his tattered Bible printed in the Songhai language. Mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters all listened carefully as a visiting pastor gave a short sermon.

The world of the Songhai is very small and exists only along the banks of the Niger River. This is an empty world that appears to have no way out; a world of hopelessness and despair. The Songhai continue to carry out endless rituals in an effort to please their god so that they will have a better life after they die. They seek magic supplies and sorcery to cure their pain and avenge their enemies. They are a hopeless people that desperately need hope.

**Arline:** The time went by quickly for Carl but sufficient material was obtained to produce five chapters about the Songhai People. These chapters would complete the West Africa DVD entitled "Hope for the Hopeless". Over 1,000 copies of this DVD were distributed.

**Overlay:** CRF Media Chronicles

© Filmed: 2003

**Narrators:** Carl, Arline

**Background Music:** All music and background sounds are from the on-camera video.



## *A New Day for the Songhai*

Ch. 23 (6:42) Filmed October 2003

For most of the Songhai, their day begins with a call to prayer. Loud speakers mounted on the minarets of mosques throughout their homeland are used to issue the five obligatory calls to prayer each day. **Islamic practices define the Songhai's daily life.**

Islam was introduced in this **area** and to the Songhai some **500** years ago. Today, 99% of the **Songhai people** claim Islam as their religion. Despite their outward devotion to Islam, they have never completely rejected the spirit world of their past. ... It is still part of their daily life. ... Dances and costumes are used to **communicate with** the other world. ... Magic potions, animal parts, bird feathers, and

other assorted items are commonly used to appease the evil spirits and to cause sickness to an enemy.

Among the 3-1/2 million Songhai **living along the Niger River**, there are only a few hundred Christians who worship and pray to the one true God. Missionaries are working with these Believers to better equip them for sharing the truth and light that only Jesus brings.

In the village of **Tagabati (TAG a bah te—long e)**, ... **Daouda (DOW dah)** ... with very basic training, equipment, and books, ... uses antibiotic ointment to treat pinkeye for **Hamidou (HAM e—long e doo)**. After the treatment of this common ailment, Daouda watches and listens as his patient, a new Believer, learns about baptism.

The villagers watch ... and some even join the group ... as they head toward the **river** for the baptism. Rains have filled the low spots in the pathway making it difficult to get to the river. Hamidou is baptized on the flooded path.

**Pray for the Believers here in this small village of Tagabati.**

**Pray that they will follow Hamidou's example of obedience to the one true God.**

In the village of **Tillaberi (TILL ah bear e—long e)**, Christians are hard to find. There are less than a dozen in this village. Yet, ... one Christian family living here is easy to find. Along the main street of town, Caroline (**Carol + line, as in a straight line**) watches over her display of plastic dishes that she sells. While waiting for customers, she faithfully reads her well-used Bible. Her roadside stand is next to a carpenter's workshop. Across the ditch, ... in a small two-room mud and stick apartment, ... Caroline lives **with her** husband, **Femi (FEY me)**, and their children, Joy and Jonathan. Femi and Caroline are missionaries from the neighboring country of Nigeria. Their desire is to tell the Songhai people about Jesus.

**Pray for these missionaries and their family.**

**Pray that Femi and Caroline will see many come to faith in Jesus Christ.**

There are a few Believers in the town of **Gotheye (GO tey)**. Here these Believers are learning how to share the love of Jesus with their neighbors and friends. Since most Songhai cannot read, **some** learn how to share the Word of God using pictures. First, the missionary teaches them the lesson. **They practice** teaching the material to each other. **Then they share The Word with those who have not heard.**

**Omar (O – mar)** is **also** following the example of Jesus as he is baptized. This spot in the muddy waters of the Niger River is in full view of those in the large market nearby.

This small garden plot provides a source of income for some of these Believers in Gotheye. Here, ... as in other places, ... following Christ has its price. This price includes the loss of jobs as well as being ostracized by family and friends. A small number of plants can be watered from the river by using buckets. However, a much more efficient method ... is the foot driven pump that was donated to the group by Christian volunteers from the United States.

**Pray for this small group of Believers as they witness in the town of Gotheye and in the surrounding villages.**

**A group of Believers gather together in a family compound in the village of Guria Bon. Once a week a local church planter from Tera travels out to disciple these new Christians. They have been very obedient to apply Scriptural Truths to their every day lives.**

**Pray for these new Believers, and others like them, that they would continue to mature in their faith.**

In the city of Tera (**TER ah**), ... some three hours drive northwest of Niamey (**KNEE ah mey**), ... a church planter's conference was held. Seventeen Songhai Believers attended this workshop. For some, this was the first time to visit Tera even though they live less than 50 miles away. The conference provided a time of worship together. The participants were also able to listen to lectures in French that were then translated into the Songhai language. The small group studies helped them to better understand what must be done to reach the Songhai for Christ. It was also a time of fellowship and food. **Pray for this small group that they will have boldness as they reach out into the Songhai villages, towns, and cities.**

**There is a new day for the Songhai. But ... the workers are few. ... Your help is urgently needed!**

**Will YOU be a part of reaching the Songhai for Jesus?**



## ***Bringing Hope to a Hopeless People***

Ch. 24 (3:50) Filmed October 2003

Struggling to survive... along the banks of the Niger River, ... the 3.5 million Songhai were once rich and powerful. They ruled much of what is now known as Mali and Niger. Centuries ago kings, sorcerers, and warriors used their leadership skills, magic, and armies to establish the greatest medieval empire in West Africa.

But things changed as fierce invaders from the north pillaged the land and the desert consumed the crops.

Their proud way of life was no more. ... Their faith in Islam could not help. ... They became enslaved to the spirit world

and its darkness. ... Their sacrifices to demons brought only bondage. ... The sorcerers could not make things return to their days of glory.

However, through all of these traumatic changes, the Songhai family unit remained firm. ... They continued to work together on their small farms. ... Respect for their elders remained. ... Boys and men continued to care for the fields and livestock, while girls and women performed household chores. Marriage was only allowed to family members and entire villages still trace their heritage to one common relative.

Today, the Songhai struggle to survive in one of the harshest climates of the world. Little rainfall and heat indexes in excess of 150 degrees punish their land. Three out of five children will die from hunger or diseases before their fifth birthday. Survival depends on the water from the Niger River and working together.

The Songhai has endured much. They know how to survive where others would fail, but they do not know Jesus. Nearly all of the 3.5 million Songhai continue to show their allegiance to Islam, and, ... at the same time, ... cling to their practices of magic and sorcery. There are very few followers of Jesus Christ. (***Overlay with number of believers***)

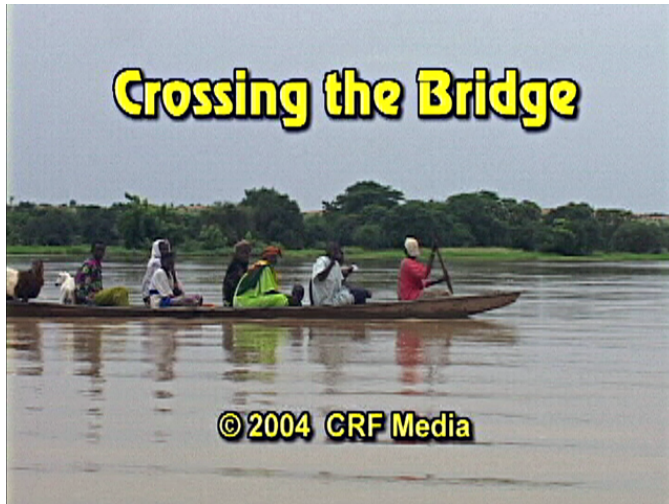
Is it any wonder that they have a fatalistic outlook on life? They feel that an impersonal and non-caring god is in charge and nothing that they say or do will make a difference.

They are a people living in darkness, needing Jesus above all else. Walking among these down trodden people are a few who are bringing the message of a personal and caring God. The team is small, but it is backed up by thousands who are praying and by many who are volunteering their time and talent to the task of **bringing hope to a hopeless people.**

... Slowly changes are occurring ..... Several small churches have been established ..... Leaders are being trained ...  
... Believers are emerging.

YOU can help by ...Joining the Songhai Prayer Team Joining one of the short term medical, prayer, or teaching teams  
Joining the Songhai Team as a short or long term missionary

You CAN help introduce the Songhai to a God who cares.



## *Crossing the Bridge*

Ch. 25 (7:35) Filmed October 2003

For centuries the Songhai have traveled up and down the mighty Niger River in their small wooden boats. But this river provides more than a means of transportation; it is the lifeblood of the 3 and ½ million Songhai people who live along its banks from Mopti, Mali to Niamey, Niger.

The clear streams and waterfalls in the lush green mountains of Guinea are the beginning of this 2600-mile long waterway. It flows northeast past Bamako, Mali and then through Timbuktu. Turning southeast, it crosses into the country of Niger and past the city of Niamey and eventually completes its journey through Nigeria to the Atlantic Ocean.

The great bend of the river is where the powerful, medieval Songhai kingdom once ruled over what is now the inland delta of Islamic Timbuktu and the animistic, Saharan dunes of Gao as well as the parched savannah of Niger's southwestern corner. But today the Songhai kingdom is no more; instead the people struggle to survive along the banks of only a small portion of the river.

Only one **bridge** spans this river as it makes its way through the landlocked country of Niger. It is here in Niamey, the capital city of Niger. Most of those who cross this bridge do so to get to the other side. When one considers the journey, just getting to the other side seems insignificant. ... This is a journey through time and through culture. Walking the path on the bridge that crosses the Niger River, one can see the present, the past, and the future-- all in one place and at one time! The rich, the poor, the educated, and the uneducated are all part of this short journey from one side to the other. One can traverse the bridge by donkey cart, on foot, in cars, buses, and taxis, on camels and motorcycles. On this bridge there are those who seek a better life and those who seek only to survive.

A vendor carefully arranges fresh, boiled potatoes, neatly cut in half and a young man washes out laundry. The bridge embankment is used by many for drying their clothing. As one nears the end of the bridge large, intricately painted boats come into view. These ancient-looking vessels have a cargo of pumpkin-squash. One by one they are unloaded and set out on the riverbank for distribution throughout the city.

..... long pause ....

Looking back across the river, the skyline of Niamey appears clean and inviting to the traveler, but a closer look reveals a much different picture. Vehicles, people, and animals share the few paved roads of the capital city. The majority of roads in residential areas are not paved. In most places the muddy, dirt roads not only serve as a traffic way, but they are garbage dumps and places where animals scavenge for food as they roam the neighborhoods.

The few high-rise buildings are flanked with market places that seem to be in the wrong part of town. It is in these markets where most people shop for food, clothing, and other supplies. ... In addition, in shadowed stalls, one can also purchase traditional herbs, bat wings, bird feathers, snake skins, animal skulls, and a large assortment of other ingredients for making magic potions to ward off evil spirits, heal ailments, avenge wrongs, and protect against enemies.

There are also other kinds of bridges in Niamey. The population of Niger is extremely diverse with numerous ethnic groups; the Hausa, Kanuri, Songhai- Zerma, Fulani, and Tuareg are some of the larger people groups. One must be able to daily cross the many **bridges of diversity** among language, economic status, life-style, dress, and customs. Despite the differences, one common characteristic uniting all people groups of the country of Niger is their steadfast devotion to Islam and to traditional beliefs.

Mosques are located in most every village, town and city. The faithful cling to their prayer beads as they count off the 99 names of God. It is said that over 99% of the people in Niger are followers of the Prophet Mohammad. ... The central mosque in Niamey appears as a fortress blocking the way of those who seek to tell about Jesus. The strength of Islam, the rituals, the sanctions to those who stray from the faith, centuries of indoctrination in the Qu'ranic teachings, and fear of animistic gods make it extremely difficult to cross this **bridge of faith**.

Walking among the Songhai are a few who show the way to this bridge of faith — the bridge from the Songhai to God. This

is not an easy task for the messengers, nor the seekers, nor for those who choose to journey across This Bridge. It is a difficult journey for the Songhai to cross over mighty currents of traditional beliefs and Islamic faith to reach an eternal life with Christ; it is a narrow, unknown, shadowed, inconceivable path through culture and family to finding forgiveness and belief in Jesus. It is frightening for seekers to contemplate the cost of crossing this bridge, and it is even more terrifying to take the first step onto the bridge. Just like the bridge at Niamey, it is the **only bridge to Eternal Life**. It is by crossing This Bridge that they can pass from one side to the other—from death to life.

How will they find the only bridge to eternal life with Christ?  
Are you willing to help us show them the way?  
Will you tell the Songhai about Jesus?

**Jesus said, “I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life;  
no one comes to the Father but by me.”  
John 14:6**



## ***Boubacar's Search***

Ch. 26 (6:42) Filmed October 2003

Boubacar (*BOO-ba-car*) is a new Christian with a deep desire to worship and fellowship with other believers. But, ... who and where? ... Boubacar is one of the 250 or so believers among the 3-1/2 million Songhai People of Niger, West Africa. He feels so alone. Where can he find someone who has also chosen to believe in Jesus? A caravan is making the five-day journey to sell their load of tobacco. Could there be a believer among the people there? ... Maybe the slow, steady gait of a camel carries a Christian rider. ... Looking at one of the many mosques that dot the landscape, Boubacar knows he won't find any Christian believers there. However, there are many worshippers at the mosques who are personally disillusioned ... searching because the

meaningless traditions of worship and rituals have left them empty. In fact, he knows that he is no longer welcome at any of these. ... He is now an outcast. His friends make fun of him because he has chosen the religion of the white man. His family pleads with him not to bring this dishonor on the family. His father has even told him that he is no longer his son. The entire village has denounced both him and his decision to follow Christ. Boubacar longs for reassurance and a community that can support him in this lonely and difficult time. ... What about those on the river? ... Perhaps there is a Christian among the passengers in the boat taxis that travel up and down the Niger River. ... Or, maybe one of the fishermen casting his net in the murky waters... Would there be a Christian at the market? There are lots of people there. The faithful Muslims are easily spotted as they obediently go through their religious habits. What about the vendors selling their produce? Maybe ... maybe ... there could be a believer

As he searches, Boubacar continues to ask himself, “Where are the Christian believers among my Songhai People? Why are they so hard to find?” Stopping another Songhai, Boubacar asks, “Where can I find Christian believers?” Scorn and reproach are evident as Boubacar listens. ... “Christian believers? You mean those heathens who have turned their backs on us? There is a group of them not far from here.” Looking around, Boubacar asks, “How can I find them?” ... But there is no answer. The man has abruptly left him standing alone. There is no road ... no path ... not even a cattle trail! All that he can see are fields of dry, tall millet and sorghum nearing harvest time. “Where shall I go now?” A Zebu bull, with its majestic horns, comes into view. Boubacar smiles realizing that there will be herd boys nearby caring for the cattle. Maybe they can help him find some other believers. Boubacar approaches the boys and asks, “Where are the Christians?”. The boys respond as they continue to drive their cattle to water, “You will find them in just a few more minutes. ... Go past the bundles of millet heads drying in the sun.”

Walking on past the bundles of millet, Boubacar finally arrives at some homes that are similar to his own. There are 8 to 10 mud-brick buildings. A cooking fire is smoldering near the center of the compound. There are about 25 people living here. He sees men, women, and children ... maybe some are going to the church ... but, where is the church building? Suddenly, Boubacar remembers something important that he has been taught ... the church is not a building but it is the followers of Jesus Christ! He joins this group of people and asks, “Where can I find Christian believers?” Several ask Boubacar, “Who are you? Why do you come here? Where is your home?” With boldness, Boubacar replies, “I am Boubacar and I am

searching for other believers in Jesus Christ. I am a Believer.” After visiting for a few minutes, Boubacar listens with joy as he is told, “Come and worship with us.” Silently Boubacar prays ... “Thank you, God, for leading me to these people who follow Jesus where I can worship and learn more about You.”

Under the shade of an arbor made of sticks tied together with strips of cowhide and with green gourd vines helping to provide shade, these believers are singing praises to God. While a baby nurses at her mother’s breast, the family patriarch struggles to read from his tattered Bible. Mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters all listen carefully as a visiting pastor gives a short sermon.

Very few of the Songhai dare to abandon their Islamic faith and their dependence on sorcery in order to follow the path of Jesus.

Pray for those who dare  
Pray for those who will follow  
Pray for isolated Believers like Boubacar  
Pray that Believers will multiply in number  
**Pray that it will be easy to find fellow Believers among the Songhai**



## ***Just Another Day for the Songhai***

Ch. 27 (9:18) Filmed October 2003

This is just another day for the 3-½ million Songhai living along the Niger River. It is a day that cattle are driven to pasture; ... a day for children to walk along sand dunes or just hang around; ... a day to swim with the neighborhood kids; ... or a day to take a bath or do laundry in the murky river waters. Others try to catch some fish with their net. ... The fish are small but they will provide food for this fisherman’s family as well as some income from the market. ... It is also a day for filling water buckets from holes dug in the sand of the dry riverbed. It is a day that will require much work just to survive... in the field planting, tilling and harvesting millet...in the garden tending the vegetables, and at home caring for the children. Like all other days

controlled by Allah, the good and bad will come to all. But, ... tomorrow will be really exciting ... tomorrow is the weekly market day.

The market, like the rest of Songhai life is along the river’s edge. Many people get to market by boat. These small wooden boats have changed little since the Songhai settled here centuries ago. The radio in the stern of this boat is about all that has been added over time. Mango trees along the bank provide for delicious fruit as well as shade for a young swimmer. One can feel the excitement as the boats draw near the market. Boats ... large and small ... bring people and produce to the market. Some are like a big bus carrying a 100 or more passengers on board. ... Others are more like a taxi with a dozen or so people moving through the water. Still others are family boats, but regardless of the size of the craft ... all unload the same way. Some just watch as the cargo of people, animals, produce and other items are brought to shore. The air is full of greetings as people start to see their “market” friends.

The market is busy all day. A man carries a new grinding pot that they call a humburu (**Hum boo rou**). . Sugar cane stalks are ready for chopping and eating. Bundles of straw for roofing are for sale. A freshly butchered side of beef passes by, as others just mill around. Firewood has been stacked next to more sugar cane. Not for sale is this boy’s toy car made of wire. Kola nuts, a bitter, high caffeine treat, can usually be found. Some just sit and talk. ... Others are hard at work. This is more than just a place to buy and sell. This is the main social event for the market town and all of the surrounding villages. For many, this is the only outing that will break the monotony of an otherwise dull life.

Grinding millet or sorghum grain by pounding in a wooden pot is done every day. Today the flour will be used for making bread cakes to be sold at the market. Sorghum and millet grain that has been threshed out is displayed in piles.

Some make clay pottery that can be used for storage or display. The pots are made in much the same manner as they always have. A highly skilled young woman can make a container in about 15 minutes. Her mother has taught her the craft of

pottery. The women of this village have handed these methods down generation after generation. After the clay is molded, it is hardened in a big pit outside of the village with a fire of millet stalks, and then it is ready for use.

Hoe handles are made from a tree and then fitted with a steel blade. They are used to till the sandy soil along the riverbank. Millet heads, sugar cane, and cattle are all for sale. At the larger markets, camels and donkeys can be purchased. The hungry shopper or the weary vendor can always find fresh meat, bread cakes or other items cooked over an open fire. Some people come to the market in ox carts; others use a donkey to pull their two-wheeled carts. These carts are also needed to haul the produce to and from the market. Transportation, market day, and life in general have not changed for the Songhai for hundreds of years.

Market day is always a special day for the Songhai, but the next day ... the market grounds are silent. A few patrons are at the outdoor restaurant that was very busy during market day. A young boy leads a blind man by the empty stalls. Hoping to chase hunger away from their home, two children sift the dirt as they glean for kernels of grain spilled the previous day. Children pass by the school that is often closed. (Is it any wonder that only one in ten of the Songhai can read?)

Just as the market day is important for the Songhai, so is Friday. It is the day to go to the Mosque for prayer. With prayer beads and prayer mat in hand, they hurry to do their duty. ... Boys with their pots are looking for a handout. In the hopes of receiving alms, the cripple and the blind always come to the gate at this time. They will receive gifts today because Allah bestows special blessings on those who give on Friday. At the Mosque, they pray memorized prayers to Allah in a language that most do not understand. They also hear an exhortation by the chief priest. Once again, the day is over,.... and tomorrow ... the cycle begins afresh.

Change from this “just another day” way of life is difficult for the Songhai. The habits of life run deep ... but ... change is coming. Access to the modern day world is now available to many. A satellite dish ... bringing the world closer to them ... is obvious to those passing ... but they don't see it. To the Songhai, it seems that the only change is the decay brought on by time.

There are a few people seeking to introduce a new day to the Songhai ... a new day of forgiveness and joy brought through faith in the only true God. Some of the Songhai Christians are learning how to teach God's word to their friends and neighbors, ... but ... with so few Christians, ... it is a lonely task. ... A task that only the truly committed will undertake.

(Change voice tone on end.)

**How can YOU help these Believers share the Good News of Jesus? ... Will you commit to earnestly pray for those who have chosen to follow Jesus? ... Will you fervently pray that soon the Songhai will see a new day in faith in Jesus Christ? ... Will you travel to a far away land to show the love of Jesus to the Songhai?**

**(narrated and scrolled)**

**“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.” Romans 10:14-15**