

As you read this letter, Annette, all her family, and I are in Ethiopia delivery thousands of books to schools.

Why Ethiopia?



Annette's family has a special place in their hearts for this country because in the early '60s her parents worked as medical missionaries with the Anuak people in western Ethiopia. Annette's home church, Eastminster Presbyterian, also has had a long-term relationship with Ethiopia. Since the late '60s they have supported many missionaries and projects in Ethiopia, including a recent \$100,000 donated to upgrade or build libraries at four Christian colleges. Due to her parents' involvement with the building project, they discovered that all the schools lack accreditation due to the fact that they do not have enough books in their libraries. So the whole family – including three preschoolers and Annette's sister, Ruth, who is six months pregnant – have carried over a thousand pounds of books to help

the schools with their goal of becoming accredited.

As a result of this initial project, money was raised to purchase study Bibles for Ethiopian seminary students and pastors, many of whom do not have a Bible of their own in their own language. Initially, enough money was raised to purchase 652 study Bibles. Then a man from Wichita, Kansas heard about this effort and decided to personally make sure that *each* pastor in Ethiopia would receive a study Bible. It is estimate this will cost him \$300,000...what a wonderfully generous Christmas gift.

You may ask, "Why hand-carrying books into the country instead of just shipping them?"

It's a question that all of us who are lugging around the 20 65-pound bags have asked more than once. However, it is necessary because things shipped over here are often stolen upon arrival and/or the recipients are charged exorbitant customs taxes (100 percent or more) based upon the randomly decided, over inflated value of the things.

Which reminds me of the time a group of friends from Florence, South Carolina, sent Annette and me a Christmas gift package. Our postman told us that we had a package waiting for us at the local Mexican post office. We took the bus downtown...excited to retrieve and open our first-ever *care package* since arriving in Mexico. The guy behind the counter told us that we'd have to pay \$31 worth of import taxes for the box. I asked how they decided the value of the contents since it was obvious that the shoebox-size package had not been opened. He shrugged. We paid. And upon opening the gift we discovered homemade cookies, a bag of popcorn, a variety of Lipton teabags, and a hand-written Christmas note from the group. I'm thinking the customs agents might have overestimated the value of the chocolate chips in those cookies. ☺

With Hearts Overwhelmed by God's Gift and Your Friendship...

Tim & Annette

P.S. If you think of us, please pray for us as we begin our trip back through Egypt, to a youth workers conference in England, meetings with Latin American leaders in Miami, and then home to Mexico where a group of Argentine youth leaders (and friends) have flown up to help our church pull off an outstanding and life-changing youth event called "EJE."

