

Karaoké Night, Chez les Baka.

Nathan and I were excited to hear Likano starting up tonight around the fire. We were inside our house, having just put the kids to bed and checking email. Likano is the Baka story telling style where one person leads the story by singing, chanting or animatedly delivering a story while the rest of the group claps, adds “woo-ooo” at the appropriate times and sings the chorus to the story. We shut the computers, grabbed long sleeves and a voice recorder and went outside. Within 2 minutes, we knew it was drunken-Baka karaoke night.

I stayed for a few traditional Baka songs, saw a tipsy Mama Lendo dance while holding on to a wall so she wouldn't fall over and heard her husband Sanda yell “MOUFF” and “You'd better watch out” to anyone who got too close to his bottle of alcohol. They asked Nathan to get his camera to record them. It's amazing the endearing things that come out when there are no inhibitions; Sanda yelled at everyone to sing slowly because his SON, Natan (my Nathan), wanted to hear it well. When they started taking requests...I decided to go back inside.

They made up an impromptu song about Nathan and added drums to it, something to the effect of, “Natan, Natan-o, Natan, my child, my child-o”. They started singing Baka style songs to the Creator God, then Baka style songs to Jesus (a lot slower than normal...swaying to the music). I heard, “God, he is big and does good to us”, “Jesus, Jesus, he died for our sins on the cross”. Then they started on French “church” songs that they've heard on the radio and they've heard various times when the women from the Baptist church in Bertoua (closest city about 45 min drive) would come and sing, “Your praises, your praises, your praise we sing Jesus, Alleluia”.

Then I heard some discussion outside, but didn't know until Nathan came back in a few minutes later what was going on. Apparently, after singing “church” songs, and ending each one with a hearty “AMEN” they felt a great need to close in prayer. Someone even suggested a sermon, but they argued over who would be the one to preach it. Finally someone said that they were too tired to hear a sermon, so that ended that.

Honestly, it hurts. It hurts for so many reasons. I hurt for them. I always think of them as sheep without a shepherd, as it talks about in the Bible how Christ had so much compassion on people. I hurt that they've lost a lot of their “Baka-ness” to alcohol, religion (what others have told them they need to do) and a hopeless despair about the future. I hurt that they sing songs to the Creator God that have no meaning to them, a powerless force. How many times have I held up my hands and cried out to God in the past month to come with power and reveal Himself to the Baka! I hate that we've been here, and others before us, for years...yet where are the changed lives?

This past month that our family has been back here has been so busy. We are without house help and without a tutor for the kids. I've been going from 6:30am until after 9pm non-stop most days setting up the house, cooking from scratch, washing dishes, cleaning, home schooling the kids, planning meals and creating shopping and to do lists while Nathan has been taking over the rest of the chores that I can't get to like washing the clothes, hanging them to dry and making needed repairs around the house like fixing lights, electric systems and water systems. We've had equipment problems and computer issues, a broken washing machine, car troubles.... We've been here 3 ½ weeks and we are already exhausted and discouraged, hoping but not believing that it will get any better or any easier. There are so many things we want to be doing OUTSIDE, WITH THE PEOPLE, but it's not happening. Sure, we know that it will take some time to get set up and back in the swing of things, but we are anxious to move forward.

Right now the noise outside is dying down. I think most of the kids have gone inside the house and are sleeping. I only hear the slow talking, moaning and arguing voices of the adults mixed with a few slow choruses that sound like the Baka version of “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”.

Please pray for the Baka, pray for us, pray that God will come with power among these people who desperately need hope and a Savior. Pray that we will be useable vessels and our lives will be poured out for the sake of the Baka coming to trust the Savior and gain the hope that we personally hold on to, unswervingly.

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