

DON'T BE LATE FOR CHURCH!

Maybe the following story will encourage punctuality among parishioners. It takes place in Togo, West Africa, where I have had the privilege of ministering to a band of faithful missionaries on several trips there.

Brenda Mastin, a missionary with the Association of Baptists For World Evangelism, Harrisburg, PA, writes the following from the Karolyn Kempton Memorial Christian Hospital in Togo:

“How would you like it if at the end of the service to which you were late, a deacon calls out your name as he lists all those tardy people and their precise time of entry? Ouch! (No, before you ask and you may have even assumed that it was yours truly, I actually came in at the same time as our Pastor and so I was safe!)

Our Togolese Pastor is serious about those lazy people who don't get up early enough to walk the two to five mile hike at a decent hour! This actually happened last week at our little village church. Also, that same service, crouched (?), (poised?) at the door (perhaps too embarrassed to actually come in late), was a green mamba snake!! Pastor Theo, who had asked someone else to preach that day, was the one who saw it at the side and asked four men to go kill it, then asked the rest of us not to watch them, but to calmly listen to the sermon please!

It was so hard to keep my eyes fixed on the preacher that day instead of the snake and his whereabouts and I must tell you that I didn't do a good job of it. Not only does our Pastor warn us of the traps Satan sets for us spiritually but also physically. (They did kill it by the way, but I missed it, the one time I was trying to look at the preacher, of course!!)

Some Africans are not the only ones who are habitually late for church. They might have an excuse – the two to five mile walk – but most Americans ride their nice automobiles to church and are still late! I spoke at a church that served donuts and coffee after church. While standing at the door greeting worshipers as they left, I noticed a couple walking toward the church. As they approached the doorway someone said, “You missed the service!” To which the couple replied, “We just came for the coffee and donuts.”

Come to think of it, placing a green mamba snake at the church door *after* service has begun, might encourage worshipers to arrive on time. Coffee and donuts *before* service might well, I'll stop right here!

JdonJ