

Ministry Updates

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Taste and See ([Psalm 34:8](#))

In Greek mythology, the Titan **Atlas** carried the weight of the cosmos about our world on his shoulders. **Atlas** bore the unbearable so others could live life unburdened in their space, as seemed usual. The role of Joseph in the birth and early childhood of Jesus reminds us of **Atlas**. Although [Joseph's role](#) was born of privilege and not punishment, he bore the burden to raise and protect Emmanuel, "God with us," during His early life. Imagine the stress experienced when the angel told him to flee for Egypt to save Jesus' life. For whom would he work? Where would he find adequate lodging and food? A decade later, what words can express the stress of thinking he'd lost a 12-year-old son only to see him in the temple holding court? What challenged him as he humbly taught God Himself to be a carpenter? For these thoughts and others, Joseph remains one of the most unsung heroes of the Christmas story, forgotten by the many getting on with life. Throughout history, countless heroes have worked tirelessly and sacrificed much for their Savior, families, and communities. So when some homestead water pipes froze during the frigid time this week, despite pipe warmers and insulation that Verlin placed years ago, it reminded us of those working the holidays as nurses, snow removers, and other servants of goodwill. They missed Christmas and family time to make life more tolerable for the rest of us. We are grateful, like you. Jesus shows up in many shapes and sizes, unlike **Atlas**.

Come and See ([Psalm 66:5](#))



Cara 31 years ago with Deb!

Debbie enjoyed gathering with our children on Saturday to celebrate Christmas and attend church together, visiting her parents and sister for Christmas Day dinner, participating at our daughter Cara's 33rd birthday celebration on Tuesday, and returning to her parents Wednesday evening through Saturday morning. Since Debbie's sister Laura lives close to the senior Paynes, many activities like assisting with doctor visits rest on her shoulders. So when Debbie is in Tennessee, she gladly seizes the opportunity to give her sister some breaks while enjoying the privilege of spending time with her mom and dad. She also met with her accountability partner and pursued requests with the supply company working on getting Verlin's 5-year replacement CPAP machine.

Verlin got to stay at home in Bondoukou. Besides EOY reporting, repairing a faucet and water heater there, he visited during our FWB church's Christmas activities. During a planning meeting for a demonstration farm, he had the opportunity to influence another in conversation. In one of our more exciting developments, he saw a decision taken as a firstfruit of government by the people for the people, becoming seen as extending the Kingdom of God over which Jesus reigns. Local villages have often sought blessed Christians to become chiefs, but the path has led many away from God due to perceived obligations of sacrificing to local gods. Verlin has had three talks with believers trying to find solutions. Finally, this generation may find one. The conversation built upon years of business plan development revealed that this Discovery Bible Study (DBS) revived believer will not accept the title of chief. Instead, he leads the community to develop a constitution and by-laws in concert with local authorities to permit his decision to be the last word, but for a non-believer to carry the title of chief commensurate with the responsibility of doing the pagan rites. It's a separation of powers! May Jesus be lifted up ever higher in the New Year! [He sustains more](#) than the imaginary **Atlas**!

Prayer & Prayer

☞ Thank the Lord for the thaw restoring life-giving resources to many, like water at our Cookeville home and Debbie's opportunity to spend some time with her parents. Pray for Eddie and Sandra Payne (her parents) to enjoy stabilizing health with increasing strength during 2023.

☞ The pastor of a church in Bondoukou recently indicated his intention to begin using Discovery Bible Studies (DBS) in the church's midweek cell groups that meet around town. Pray that they effectively implement the change, that believers will grow in their faith, and that many other souls experience salvation in Christ. Also, pray for the Ivorian teen using the Bible as the text for his English club.

☞ Continue to pray that Debbie will receive special permission to pick up Verlin's new CPAP machine when it arrives, as was granted to our son for her machine. Some aspects of life and ministry are more challenging while on two continents. Ask the Lord to give us wisdom for those situations.

Your partners in the Gospel, Verlin & Debbie

Last weekly: [Prepare – 221224.PDF](#)
Prior videos: [Snapshots The Great Story](#)
2022 Q2 Report: [Someone Greater –
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2022 Budget: [CHSC-0118 ANDERSON-Budget 2022](#)
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