Mishap to Mission

Felecia Datus
Andrews University
Tony Ponterio Jr., sophomore Theology student at Andrews University, keeps the New Jersey-based mission going.

At the age of 19, Tony sustained an injury during training in the Marines. Although he pleaded with God to heal his shoulders, the prayer went seemingly unanswered and he was discharged. Tony, angered, turned his back on God and the little he knew of him. He had not heard much mention of Jesus until he ended up working as an electrician and became the helper of a man named Paul who taught him about God and his Word. Soon after, Tony gave his life to the Lord and began serving at his local church as a Sabbath school teacher and deacon. However, he craved greater service. “I wanted to do more for the Lord because he did so much for me.”

One Sabbath, Beatriz received a letter from Ghana requesting used books that could be distributed to teach people about God. Tony began to help Beatriz. He collected clothing, shoes, books and other materials from church members and anyone else willing to donate. He would take them to Beatriz who then shipped them to Africa. His regular financial contributions purchased Bibles in Twi Asante, one of the common dialects of the people. Eventually, he visited Ghana with Beatriz and attended the dedication of the school founded as a result of their work. “Africa changed my whole perspective on what it is to be a Christian, practically,” Tony says of the experience.

“It amazes me that he is so involved in mission,” Beatriz says, marveling at the young man’s willingness to serve so unselfishly. Beatriz suffered a terrible car accident years ago that left her unable to read or write and, as she gets older, serving has become more difficult. Knowing this, Tony handles the tasks that involves writing and reading, including receiving emails from the mission workers in Ghana and reading them to Beatriz. Because of his steadfast dedication, over 1,000 persons surrendered their lives to Christ in Ghana and the school established caters now to more than 400 students.

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