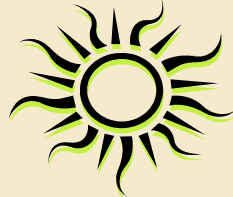




Native



Sons



Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

ONLY IN...

I stopped at a gas station to get something to drink, and as I was pulling up, I noticed these 2 police officers watching a woman smoking while pumping her gas. I saw her and thought, is this lady stupid, crazy, or both, especially with the police RIGHT there! I minded my own business and went inside and got my soda. As I was paying, I heard someone screaming! Like violent death screams! I looked outside, and I saw that this woman's arm was on fire!! She was swinging her arm, running around, going nuts!! When I got outside, the cops had the woman on the ground, and were putting the fire out!! Then they put handcuffs on her and threw her in the squad car. I was thinking, why are they arresting her? Shouldn't she be in an ambulance, not a cop car?? And being nosy as I am, I asked the police what they were arresting her for...He looked at me, dead serious, and said, "WAVING A FIRE ARM." - Facebook, Doug York

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Levi & the boys.
- For more trained pastors and teachers on the Rez.
- Boldness on the part of pastors and Christians to witness and stand for the truth.
- For tribal leaders to come to know Jesus.
- For unity and peace for the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

John & Theresa Flood  
US Missionaries to  
Native Americans

4820 W. Kristal Way.  
Glendale, AZ 85308  
Phone: (623) 518-6775  
Cell: 623-824-2053  
b4theflood@me.com  
www.nativesonsministry.com

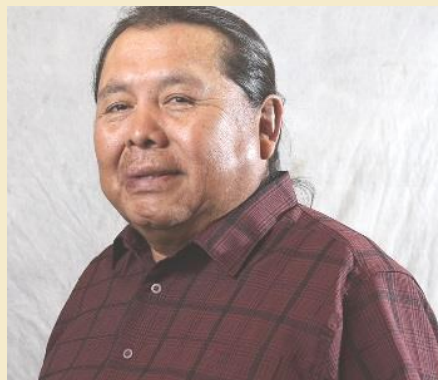
Field Address:  
US Missions  
1445 N. Booneville Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65802  
johnflood@usmissions.org

Delbert wasn't particularly interested in taking the Native School of Ministry courses. However, his wife Ruby (June 23 newsletter) wanted to take the classes and pushed him to join also. Although he did well on the exams for the first few courses, he wasn't reading all the materials. He says, "When I began reading the books, I liked it! I am picking up a lot of interesting points." He says the Bible Study course, which we have just completed, has been especially beneficial. "I am beginning to slow down in my Bible reading. I stop and focus more to see what I can get out of it. I see things in the Bible now that I could teach others." When talking about using what he is learning, he says, "If you are not going to do it, God might take it away and give it to another. If someone asks us to pray for them, we need to do it. If not, God might send someone else."

Delbert grew up in the Cedar Creek Assembly of God, and his parents know the Lord. He remembers spending all night at church sometimes. He was involved in children's church, Royal Rangers, and the youth group. As part of the church choir growing up, he was involved in a concert tour in CA, where they went to different churches and sang Apache worship songs. He grew up playing outside, hiking, swimming, and riding donkeys. At one point, his father bought him a horse, which he thoroughly enjoyed. A little later, his father sold the horse so

that he could buy Delbert a bike. Delbert says, "I liked the horse better!"

Delbert is mechanically inclined. Growing up, he bought junk cars for \$50 and got them running again. Sometimes he kept them; other times, he sold them. He loved to race and show off his cars. He used to ride in rodeos with his father. They did roping and team roping.



Delbert Altaha

Delbert has done carpentry, electrical work, drywall, plumbing, and has experience building homes. He has worked for the water utility company on the Rez. Today, he works for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the Rez as an air quality specialist. In fact, he and Ruby recently attended an EPA conference in Syracuse, NY, as representatives for the White Mountain Apache Reservation.

Growing up, he attended the Apache Christian camp meetings with his family. He recalls experiencing God's presence on one occasion. "I can't forget the feeling. God's sweet presence came over me. However, as soon as I left the church, a feeling came up over me that I was gonna die. I told my mom, and she said not to worry, that it was the evil one. After this, I began praying. Then Ruby's mom encouraged me to read the Bible through." While reading, he says, "I noticed that I stopped smoking weed, and my drinking and partying slowed down. Suddenly, God took me out of it, and I have never wanted to go back."

Though Delbert grew up in church and a Christian home, like many, as a teen, he did not walk straight with the Lord. He says, "I drifted from church for a time, and I am not proud of it." He fell into drinking, smoking pot, and partying. He says, "I drifted from church but always went back. I never really left, and I did not want to." He enjoyed good Bible teaching and experiencing God's presence in church. "I would always go back to church on Sunday and Wednesday. It was a habit I learned from my parents."

He says, "Being in the world, it hooks you. If you are not careful when you are young, it will hook you. You can do

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Theresa and I are well. When you receive this newsletter, I will be in the New York City area, where I will be itinerating in September. I will touch base with ministry partners and seek to raise new support to replace the inevitable trickle-off.

Theresa continues to enjoy teaching preschool, though she comes home tired from dealing with children more energetic than she. Teaching has become much more challenging due to COVID, with more children with underdeveloped learning and life skills.

The Native School of Ministry on the White Mountain Apache Rez continues to go well. We slowed the study pace down for the 6th course, Understanding the Bible, so I could add additional information to the book materi-

als and give the students time to dig deeper into God's Word. All of the students have been exceptionally enthusiastic about this particular course. A friend is teaching the classes for me while I am away.

Please keep Levi and the boys in prayer as the divorce proceedings are prolonged and have become contentious.

Caleb and Erin are doing well. They have recently begun discussing moving away from Atlanta and its craziness. They hope to move to the country in Tennessee in a year or two. They continue to forge one-of-a-kind blades and periodically do raffle fundraisers for needs that they see. Their most recent fundraiser was for a man with

two children whose wife died in a car accident to pay for funeral costs.

As always, thanks for all your prayers and support!



as you please, especially if you have a job and money. The world grabs at you, and it grabbed at me. I did a lot of bad stuff. I stole many cars and was in lots of fights. I know what it is like to get beat up, and I know what it is like to go to jail. I have suffered many cuts, bruises, and broken bones. One time, a guy hit me in the head with a gun. I blacked out and woke in the hospital. One side of my face paralyzed. Luckily, somewhere along the line, I heard a message on hell. It caught my attention. I did not want to go to hell. It caught me and held me back. Today, I encourage my son not to do the things I did. I want him to be ten times better than me.”

Delbert has been to many places and says, “I see how other Natives are. I think about Daniel and how he did not want to worship the false idols.” Daniel refused the king’s food because it had been offered to idols. “There are a lot of Natives that are like that. They pray, sing songs, and light sage (to Native spirits), and want me to join them, saying, ‘It’s all the same god.’ I always say, ‘No, I want to do what the Bible says.’ Like I say, I have surrendered everything to God—my actions and thoughts.”

“My eyes gave me problems for a while—looking at things I shouldn’t. Now I see God’s creation and its beauty. I try to look at people, not on the outside but inside. Some people look mean but are nice. I like being around people, talking to them, and getting to know them. I like people. Sometimes I hesitate and don’t know what to say, especially if there is death or sickness, but I like people.”

Delbert admits that growing up, even though he learned about Jesus, he didn’t really understand, and it didn’t take. When he rededicated his life to the Lord, many things changed. However, he continued to buy lottery tickets and go

to the casino. Delbert was diagnosed with highly aggressive prostate cancer about a year and a half ago. It had not spread, “but it was beginning to creep.” He thinks he might have had it for 2-4 years before being diagnosed because he had been experiencing a lot of pain and taking a lot of Tylenol and ibuprofen. The doctor did not hold out much hope for him. He says, “I did not want to die. I broke after leaving the doctor’s office. I called our pastor, and we prayed. I called Ruby, and we prayed some more. I found another doctor and was lucky. Surgical technology, medications, and treatments give a way out.

Last May, he went to the hospital in Flagstaff to have the cancer removed. Ruby wanted to stop at a Dollar store to pick up some things on the way. He says, “I went in, but could not walk, so I returned to the car. They took the cancer out, and I tried to stay positive. I turned to the Bible and prayer. I began looking for and meditating on God’s promises. Psalm 118 was especially helpful. I found it good to declare the praises and promises of God. When I had my last radiation treatment, I praised God for being cancer-free. Getting cancer really brought me back down to earth. I was reading the Word, focusing on God’s promises. I got my prayer life together and was meditating on God’s Word, singing songs (to God), and memorizing Scripture.” At one point, Delbert dreamed he was in a crowd of people. Someone in the crowd yelled. “That’s Him.” Then, “out of nowhere,” Jesus sat beside Delbert on a bench. He says, “I couldn’t see His face. I asked if I could lay my head on His lap. When I did, I felt all the weight lift off me. Then I felt peace.”

Because of his cancer, Delbert became serious with the Lord in a new way. He notes that sickness can help push people to God. “It makes

you want to be more obedient and serious with God. No more playing around.”

The previous pastor, Pastor Martinez, asked Delbert to lead the men’s group. He wanted to say “no,” but accepted. “I started, and I was able to penetrate their hearts, telling them that Jesus, eternity, and heaven are important. I try to instill Jesus in them. I have nothing to offer but Jesus. He hopes to do a men’s conference this October. He also is working to get the men involved in community evangelistic outreach, including praying for others. He says, “I want a group of men who can spread seeds, not just men who come in and go out and get little out of it.” Delbert told me he has been using what he is learning from the Native School of Ministry when he teaches the men. They are enjoying what he is teaching and are digging deeper into God’s Word.

Delbert says he feels he is developing a closer walk with Jesus because of taking classes. He also looks at what is happening in the world and on the Rez and states, “The stakes are high. We need to be out there praying for people. I am not afraid anymore. I see individuals and look at the heart. I say, ‘Come on, Holy Spirit, let’s go reach those people.’ I am trying to spread some teaching around. There are a lot of needs. We need to get grounded in good Bible stories and spread the Good News around.” He says, “It is not fun and games anymore. We need to be straight up for Jesus; anything else is the world. If we are faithful, then God will be faithful back. We are required to be obedient and humble, to live faithfully, and not judge others. This is my big picture. I am getting to know more about God through these courses. Eternity goes a long way. We are involved in something big and exciting, and I get excited talking about it.

## Native Syncretism

Syncretism refers to the mixing of spiritual beliefs. It is often connected to mixing Christian beliefs and practices with other spiritual beliefs and practices.

Delbert mentioned being asked multiple times to join in Native dance and song rituals but refusing to participate. He rightly recognizes that there is a difference between the God of the Bible and the spirits that are worshipped in Native traditionalism. I have talked with numerous Native people who say, “It is all one god,” including a recent hitchhiker who claimed to be a part of an Apache Assembly of God. Interestingly, he told me about bad dreams involving snakes and demonic things. He also mentioned that he was seeing medicine men and engaging in traditional Apache spiritual practices. No wonder he has demonic dreams.

Historically, ministers and missionaries have told Native people that there is nothing good in their culture, including their language and foods, and that God can use nothing in their culture. This is not true. In Revelation, John saw people from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue in heaven (Rev. 7:9; cf. 5:9). John saw and recognized different languages and various cultural differences

among God’s people in heaven.

However, the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that we cannot worship the True God and idols. This will cause problems every time. Discussing what can be used in Native cultures to worship God is controversial. Apache and Navajo Crown



**Apache Crown Dancers**

Dancing is out of bounds. The head-dresses (crowns) dancers wear represent mountain spirits, and the dances are meant to call upon them for help. One friend of mine who was a crown dancer before giving his life to Jesus mentioned that he was transported into a “different world” (i.e., the spirit world) when he put on the crown. He was literally transported into and energized by the demonic realm. Crown dancing for Christ is out of bounds. However, King David danced before the Lord, so using the Native two-step in worshipping God with dance is not necessarily a problem. A lot of this has to do with the direction of our worship. Are we worshipping God, or is our focus elsewhere.

Another common practice in many Native cultures is the use of smudge sticks. Sage is one of the

most common herbs used in these bundles. Sage is burned to purify things, places, and people.

Smudging involves wafting the smoke over someone or something to bring purification. Cooled ash from the smudge stick is



### Smudging

sometimes applied to a person or thing. Richard Twist suggested in his controversial book One Tribe, Many Nations that smudging was a legitimate substitute for anointing with oil. It is not. In the Bible, oil is used to set people apart to God, and when used in prayer, it represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Smudging is used to call spirits to come and cleanse. Cleansing is through the blood of Jesus, not through the burning of herbs or other spirits.

Many Native Christians have warned me that some churches are inviting Native dancers to come and minister. However, these Christian Natives are doing traditional Native spiritual dances and ceremonies. This is syncretism. Know the meaning of the rituals before allowing them.