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The LONGS To Madagascar





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Bonjour and Salama Ireo from the Big Red Island of Madagascar!

Normally, when we do our updates, I always try to be positive. The truth is, we are so excited about what God is doing here that I typically want to focus on the positive things that are going on. Now don't worry, Vala nor I nor anyone on our team is discouraged in any way. We are seeing God move in an awesome way here, and because of that, we are seeing the enemy attack our new church plant in order to keep people from hearing the gospel and turning to the Lord. So, I want to share a few stories so you can better know how to pray for us and our team.

We started this new church plant a little over year ago. As a matter of fact, we just celebrated our first-year anniversary as a church a few Sundays ago. We started by doing outreaches to kids and those who want to learn English. These outreaches have been great tools for us. With our first church plant in 2020, we found kids' ministry to be a great outreach tool. Kids are the key to the home, and in a communal society, the home is the key to the community. So that is how we started our second church. Before our launch date we started a Saturday kids' club. Then, we went and did follow up at the homes of the children who came and invited their parents to attend service. We had 47 that first Sunday, and from there the church began to grow.

Then we started hearing a rumor about us that was going around some of the neighborhoods. "Those missionaries just want your kids so they can steal their organs." At first, I laughed, but then one day a lady showed up to church and she had been beaten by her husband. He beat her because she was coming to the church where they steel kids' organs. I know the family who started that rumor, and they don't know that we know they have been propagating falsehoods about us because we have treated them with love and kindness. As for the lady who was beat up, she kept coming with her teenaged son and daughter. They have accepted Christ and I baptized the teens in our first baptism service in April. Then, she, along with five others who have come to Christ recently, were baptized last month.

Then, the enemy hit us with another rumor just before our first baptism. One of our teens that was led to the Lord in January wanted to take part in our first baptism service, and his mother, who has been to the church on a few different occasions, said that he could not be baptized because someone at her work told her that we have the symbol of Satan on the church. I have no idea what that was about, but for whatever reason, she still allows him come to our church. I have to be honest and say that rumor really got to me. I was actually pouting about it to the Lord on one of my morning runs. As I was complaining to the Lord, He reminded me that people did the same thing to Him when He was in the middle of His earthly ministry.

That young man, whose name is Fandresena, was extremely upset because his mom refused to let him be baptized, but he has not let that keep him from serving at the church. As a matter of fact, he not only serves with kids' Bible club on Saturdays, but he is also in training to help with worship, and he has become my guide for follow-up visitation. Addresses here are not at all like back in the States, so finding where people live to do follow-up visits is very difficult. We will let Fandresena know ahead of time who we want to visit the next week and he gets with them to find out how to get to their home. It has been a privilege to watch this young man grow spiritually.

These are just a few of the stories over this last year where the enemy has tried to discourage us, but it is obvious that the enemy is attacking because God is moving! This last month we had 6 people saved, so we are planning our third baptism service soon. Just know that when we say, "Thank you for praying for us," we mean it. It means a lot to us and the ministry that the Lord has for us in Madagascar.

Thank you for praying for us, and know that we are also praying for you.

Phil and Vala Long

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MISSIONS

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10