



Phil & Vala Long

Taking Life to the forgotten people of Madagascar

Mad 4 Life Ministries

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

www.Mad4Life.org

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Dear Pastors and Prayer Partners,

Salama from "The Big Red Island" of Madagascar! This morning during our family Bible time, Gabe asked, "Did you know that Thanksgiving is next week?" Vala and I looked at each other and said, "No, we did not." It's not just that we are busy studying language, culture and helping our NGO with English classes, which helps us maintain Visas to stay in the country. I mean, we are busy doing those things, but I think the main reason we had forgotten that we are almost to Thanksgiving and Christmas is because for our whole lives, Thanksgiving has come when the weather changes and it gets cold, but here, it's getting hot and rainy. I guess it's another example of culture shock that no one thinks about until you experience it. Speaking of language and culture study, I want to share with you a word we have recently learned. The word is "fianakavina". It is the Malagasy word for family. It very well may be one of the most important words and concepts in the Malagasy culture. I know we like to think "fianakavina," or family, is important to us as Americans, but the Malagasy take "fianakavina" to a whole different level. Love for family might be one of their greatest strengths. When someone in the family needs help, no matter how extended the family member may be, there is no question of whether you should help. It is a cultural obligation; an obligation that, if ignored, could bring on persecution from the family group, or worse. That is why "fianakavina" is also one of their greatest weaknesses. If you have something and a family member asks for it, you are required to give it up, so it is very difficult for people to save money or get ahead. Even if someone becomes a follower of Christ, without the consent of the head of the family, they risks severe consequences. One of the greatest fears for the Malagasy in the region we now live is to be estranged from the family unit. The concept of "fianakavina" is extremely important to consider in how we present the Gospel here.

On a personal note, I want to share two things going on with our "fianakavina". First of all, at the end of September, I received a Facebook message from a boy named Matthew asking if I could call him on the phone. This is the second time this young man has messaged asking to speak with me on the phone. The first time he asked if he could start seeing my ONLY daughter Tabitha, so I knew when he messaged me the second time he was not wanting to chat about the St. Louis Cardinals. He asked if he could marry my ONLY baby girl. Vala, of course, was excited, but I had some serious questions that had to be answered before I was going to give him my ONLY daughter. However, after answering several questions and passing three FBI background checks, he received my permission and he proposed a few weeks later. As of right now, they are planning on getting married in May.

While we are thrilled about Matthew and Tabitha's engagement, we also want to inform you of something more serious in nature concerning our family. Some of you may remember in our letter from January of this year I asked you to be praying for my Mum. She was diagnosed with cancer in three different areas of her body. At that time, the doctors had told my Dad that if she did chemotherapy, it would extend her life about a year and a half. However, a few weeks ago, after another scan, it was determined that the chemo was not working. She was on hospice for the last couple of weeks and last night we received a phone call that her battle with cancer is over. The positive thing is that she was at peace because she knew that when she closed her eyes for the last time on this earth, she would open them in the presence of Jesus. We had already purchased a ticket for me to go home to be with my family, hoping I would make it before she passed away. I will fly to Kansas City today and return to Madagascar at the beginning of December. Please pray for our family as we grieve our loss Thank you all so much for your prayers and remember, we are always praying for you.

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Praises & Prayer Requests

- (Praise) Tabitha's engagement
- (Praise) Container arrived safely with all our belongings
- (Prayer) New language study
- (Prayer) Phil's family as they grieve the loss of his Mum