

January 2018

Dear Praying Friends,

Happy New Year from soggy Dapitan! As we near the end of typhoon season in the Philippines, there has been no shortage of rain here in Dapitan. However, with family members in Maine, Michigan, and other northern states, we are certainly not complaining about the warm rains of Dapitan!

I am writing this letter on January 1, 2018, and it's amazing to think that at this time last year, we were still wondering when we would get back to the field. Now it's been just over 4 months since we started the Truth Baptist Church of Dapitan, and it has truly been amazing to watch God work! In a very strong Catholic city, we have seen over 1,300 souls trust Christ through personal soul winning. God is clearly beginning to undermine the Catholic stronghold that has existed here for decades. Many of the people of Dapitan, particularly the younger generation, are extremely open to the Gospel. They are searching for truth and purpose in life, and when they see the truth clearly presented from the Word of God, they are quick to accept it and be saved. However, Catholicism is still very much a force here. After several months in Dapitan, I can definitely say that there is a cultural stigma associated with attending the "Baptist church," and many people are just plain scared of the conflict that visiting our church would create between them and their Catholic families. In spite of these factors, God continues to bless our efforts. Thus far, we have seen a total of 24 people make the decision to be baptized, and our average weekly attendance hovers in the low to mid-30s. In just over 4 months, God has given us a solid, core group of believers, many of whom are now regularly winning souls themselves. I think that is probably the most encouraging thing to me personally. I recently checked the numbers, and over the last several months, we have averaged about 17 people out soul winning every week! I love it!

There are so many other things that I wanted to include in this letter, but as usual, I have run out of space. In closing, I would like to ask you to pray for our upcoming program. Our theme is "I Want That Mountain." It will begin on January 21 and continue for 4 weeks. I am praying that God will use the program to bring many visitors to our church. However, even more so, I am praying that God would use the program to grow our people in their new faith and show them that God can use them! Thank you for your faithful prayers and support. We are thrilled to partner with you as we seek to reach Dapitan and beyond with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dividends on Your Investment

I had intended to share another story in this letter, but just this morning (January 1), God gave me a story that I simply have to share. New Year's Eve is a big holiday in the Philippines—much bigger than Christmas. It is a day of eating, relaxing, eating, spending time with family, and . . . eating. Unfortunately, as is the case in the States, it is also a night of heavy drinking and partying.

Yesterday morning I was not at all happy to discover that one of our neighbors had rented a karaoke machine—a loud, obnoxious karaoke machine! Our neighbors, whom I will kindly refer to as less-than-polite, used the machine periodically throughout the day at varying decibel levels. However, around 8:00 p.m., the "singing" began in earnest. I say "singing" for lack of a better term, but there was nothing musical about the sounds coming from that stupid box!

Considering the racket outside and knowing that things were just going to get louder at midnight, I opted to stay up and work until the noise subsided a little. Sometime between 12:30 and 1:00 a.m., I put in my earplugs and went to bed. Surprisingly, I was able to go to sleep . . . for a little while. Around 3:40, someone decided that the karaoke wasn't loud enough and turned the volume way up! It woke me up from a dead sleep, and I was not happy! I tried to stay calm, but it was no use. I was mad, and I would not be going back to sleep anytime soon!

About 4:30, I gave up the sleep battle. I decided to get dressed and go somewhere quiet where I could read my Bible in peace.

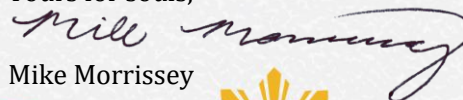
In the meantime, a young man named Carlo was traveling by bus from Cebu City to his parents' home in Zamboanga City. His trip was a lengthy one, broken into two segments. First, his bus would take a 6- to 7-hour ferryboat ride from Cebu City to the Dapitan City port. From Dapitan, the bus would drive another 8 to 10 hours to Zamboanga City.

On board the boat, all the passengers exited the bus and resorted to the passenger areas of the boat. In the course of the long boat ride, Carlo fell asleep. When he woke up, the boat was at the dock, and his bus was long gone. He was in an unfamiliar city in the middle of the night. He decided that he needed to get some cash, so he started walking towards downtown Dapitan, hoping to find a bank with an ATM. He walked over four miles in the dark and finally found the only bank in Dapitan that has an ATM. To his disappointment, he discovered what anyone from Dapitan could have told him: the bank in Dapitan doesn't accept debit cards from other banks. I cannot imagine his frustration! To make things worse, as he left the bank, it began to rain.

At about 5:00 a.m., I opened the front door of my home, frustrated and just a little grumpy. Okay! I was actually really grumpy! As I walked out the door, I saw Carlo walking in front of my house. Trying to get out of the rain, he headed towards the shelter in front of my neighbor's motorcycle parts store.

There under the shelter, I introduced myself and gave him a tract. A few minutes later, I had the privilege of leading him to Jesus Christ! After he got saved, I looked at him and said, "Well, now you know why you missed your bus." Our God is AWESOME! I believe in divine appointments!

Yours for souls,



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Missionaries to the Philippines

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." 1 Corinthians 16:9

