

July 2018

Dear Praying Friends,

It is hard to believe that, in just over two weeks, we will complete our first year of ministry in Dapitan City. It has truly been a wild ride, filled with burdens and blessings. The two months since our last letter have been no exception, and in many ways, they have felt like a culmination of blessings as well as burdens. As is so often the case in the Lord's work, the two seem to be unavoidably linked, and God has used both to carry out His perfect, eternal plan.

Jessa's Homegoing

We started Truth Baptist Church on August 20, 2017. At that first Bible study, sitting towards the back of the crowd was a quiet 18-year-old girl by the name of Jessa Balladares. She showed no emotion throughout the course of the service and quickly slipped out after the closing chorus. Two days later on August 22, our church secretary visited Jessa at her home and led her to Christ, and to my surprise, Jessa was back in church for our midweek Bible study the following day. My initial impression of Jessa was that she hadn't enjoyed the service at all, but as it turned out, she was just very shy. It soon became obvious that Jessa had a sincere desire to serve the Lord. She was extremely faithful to church and was baptized along with two others at our first baptismal service. (This was before we had a permanent church baptistery.) Over the next several months, she grew rapidly and developed into a skilled soul winner. She was truly a blessing to our entire church.

On June 21, I had the privilege of preaching at the funeral of a Christian lady in a nearby city. I preached a message entitled "Hope." The following Sunday morning, I felt led to preach that same message to our people at TBC. At the time, I thought I was preparing them for some event in the future when God would take one of our members Home to be with Him. I had no idea as I preached that morning that the previous day, June 23, Jessa had been struck by a car while visiting her parents for the weekend and was in critical condition at a nearby hospital. I didn't find out about the accident until after the Sunday evening service. The following day, June 25, around 5:00 p.m., Jessa went home to be with the Lord, just two days before her 19th birthday.

The day after Jessa's death, I had the privilege of preaching at the first night of the *haya* ("viewing"). Many of our church members were in attendance; in fact, we actually outnumbered the family on that first night. Before the service, I tried unsuccessfully to start a conversation with several of Jessa's family members. There was very little to be encouraged about as I stood up to preach. I wondered if I could say or do anything to help this hurting family. I spoke a few words of comfort and then preached a simple Gospel message. Jessa's family listened quietly but showed no interest. It wasn't until after the service that we began to see the signs of God's hand at work. It wasn't the pastor's message that touched the hearts of the family; it was the love of our people after the service. I watched in amazement as a group of our young people gathered around Jessa's mom and began sharing the memories they had of her daughter. Our other members jumped right in and helped with the food and then the cleanup afterwards. I was so proud of our people. They showed the love of Christ to Jessa's family, and it made a huge difference!

The following morning, my assistant, Bro. Mico, went to the *haya* early, where he had the privilege of leading Jessa's father to Christ. After they prayed together, Jessa's dad raised his head and, with tears streaming down his face, said, "Now, I will see Jessa again." Mico then went and found Jessa's mother. They talked for a few minutes, and then she looked at him and said abruptly, "Sit down, and explain to me how to go to Heaven." He did, and she got saved too! "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" Thank you so much for your faithful prayers, your support, and your friendship. God is good!

Dividends on Your Investment

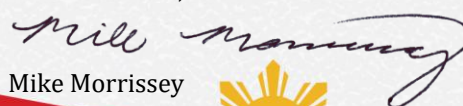
As a relatively fluent Visayan speaker, I have led hundreds of people to Christ using only Visayan. However, once in a while, I run into a situation where I just can't seem to get the truth of the Gospel through the language barrier. Such was the case on Thursday, May 10. I was visiting some of our young people in an area called Palaran when I "happened" to cross paths with Marites, the mother of one of our most faithful young ladies. I had witnessed to Marites once before and found her to be very open to the Gospel but not ready to make a decision. Her Catholic roots were just too deep.

I chatted with Marites for a few minutes, then turned the conversation to the Gospel. For over an hour, I labored to help her see that salvation is a gift of God that can only be accepted by faith. I showed her countless verses. I used every illustration I knew and even developed some new illustrations on the spot, but Marites just couldn't see the truth. It wasn't that she was debating with me; I just couldn't get through the linguistic and religious barriers.

While I was talking to Marites, her daughter Shakina came home with her friend Ana. Ana is also a member of our church and a solid soul winner. Shakina and Ana sat and listened as their pastor tried and failed to help Marites understand the simple Gospel.

I walked out of the house feeling like a total failure. After I left, Ana turned and asked Marites if she could "explain what the pastor was *trying* to say." Marites agreed, and a few minutes later she bowed her head and put her faith in Jesus Christ! What I couldn't accomplish in an hour, Ana accomplished in less than 10 minutes. By the way, Ana is 15 years old and has only been saved a little over 5 months!

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