

Dear Praying Friends,

The question is always the same: "Where do I start?" I can't believe that next week is Thanksgiving! Happy Thanksgiving, by the way. 😊 As is almost always the case, I have been trying to write this prayer letter for at least two weeks! However, I'm actually glad that God didn't let me write it because so much has happened in just the last two weeks. For months, we have been in a dry spell as far as visitors and baptisms are concerned. We have faithfully labored but, in truth, have had very little to show for it. Here in Dapitan, Catholicism is still very strong, and the overall culture is very clannish. Like most other places in the Philippines, many people in Dapitan are very happy to listen to the Gospel and be saved. However, the act of stepping inside "the Baptist church" is a big deal, and choosing to be baptized is infinitely bigger! I say all that to give you a little background for the story of the last three weeks. After months of soul winning and inviting people to church but rarely seeing visitors, all of a sudden, three Sundays ago, a mother and her three children just walked in on their own. We had recently been soul winning in their area, but no one had actually talked to them. It was ALL God! The following week, they came back with three more visitors, and this past Sunday, those visitors brought five more visitors! A few of them were already saved. However, for three weeks in a row, God has given us salvations in our Sunday morning invitation! I know that for many churches that would just be "par for the course," but here in Dapitan, that's exciting! Then, on top of that, three of those visitors chose to be baptized this past Sunday! It was all a very encouraging reminder that if we will faithfully plant and water, God will give the increase, and sometimes, just to remind us that it is ALL Him, He gives us fruit from places where we haven't planted or watered! 😊

In the meantime, we've continued to move forward with our Visayan songbook project. After sending our last prayer letter, we began printing and binding songbooks to give to other pastors. Because our binding coils come from the U.S., our stock was limited, and we were only able to print 150 copies. Since that time, we have received very generous love gifts from two different churches to help us with the costs of printing and binding the songbooks. Using those donations, I was able to order an additional 800 binding coils from the States, along with some other materials; and, Lord willing, they will arrive in December or January. In the meantime, we have given a copy of our songbook to 138 different pastors. We already have a list of pastors requesting additional copies as soon as the materials from the States arrive. As of right now, we have requests for a total of 487 copies, and I expect that number to keep growing as more pastors become familiar with this opportunity. In closing, I just want to mention that if you or your church would like to be a part of this opportunity, you could give a small church 20 songbooks for about \$60, and I think it would be a good investment. Thank you for your prayers, support, and friendship.

Dividends on Your Investment

God has really blessed my personal soul-winning efforts of late, but my favorite soul-winning story of the last two months happened a couple of weeks ago on a Friday morning. Aramis Sumalpong, one of the men reached through our Jail Ministry, had been released, so on November 7, I set out by myself to find his house. I had a general idea of its location but knew that I would need some help from the neighbors when I got there. I drove my motorcycle about thirty minutes through the mountains of Dapitan until I came to his barangay. Upon arriving, I saw a man on the side of the road and stopped to ask if he knew Aramis. He pointed at what he called a hill not far from the road and told me that Aramis and his brothers lived in a house at the top. He tried to explain to me how to get there but finally gave up and offered to lead me to the foot of the hill and show me the correct path. What he failed to mention is that we would first have to cross a swollen stream. That was an adventure in and of itself, but through many dangers, toils, and snares, we eventually found our way across! On the other side, he pointed me to a narrow path that went straight up the hill through dense foliage. From then on, I was on my own. Within five minutes of beginning my climb, I was already regretting my decision. I had brought no water, and even under the heavy brush, it was hot! I climbed and climbed and climbed! I'm not sure exactly what determines the difference between a hill and a mountain, but I'm pretty sure that was NOT A HILL! I don't know exactly how long it took me to reach the top, but as I climbed, I thought to myself, I hope they have purified water at the house, or I'm going to die. When I finally reached the top of the hill, I saw the house. It was utterly dilapidated—AND EMPTY! There were three dogs AND NO PEOPLE! So much for my dreams of water at the top of the hill! I must admit, as I began my descent, I was grumbling at God a little bit. My legs were burning; I was hot, soaking-wet, tired, and thirsty—and all for NOTHING!

However, AS IS ALWAYS THE CASE, God had a plan. On my way back down hill, I met one of Aramis's cousins in a clearing, a young man named Richmon. He was on his way up the hill, also looking for Aramis. Though I was still very thirsty, I knew that God wanted me to witness to him, so I started, albeit begrudgingly. About halfway through my Gospel presentation, a group of his friends came up the hill and joined us in the clearing, first several boys and then a few girls. When it was all said and done, I got to lead Richmon to Christ, along with ten of his friends!

Yours for souls,

Mike Morrissey
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Contact Information

Email: mike.morrissey@fbmi.org
Web: fbmi.org/missionary/morrissey
Facebook: facebook.com/morrisseymissions

Missionaries to the Philippines

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