

At a glance:

- Dreams of Jesus
- Language progress
- Team leaders' visas: Denied

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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! We hope that you all had a fantastic holiday season. May 2024 be filled be a year marked by joy, growth, and shining the light of Christ to those around us.

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### Dreams of Jesus

In our weekly team meetings we have a "community sharing" time where we all share about new people we've been meeting, spiritual conversations we've been having, and then seek prayer and advice from one another. I (R) recently shared the mix of encouragement and discouragement I've been feeling in spiritual conversations. Spiritual conversations seem to come up faster, deeper, and more frequently than I expect and yet sometimes can still seem to fall flat or not progress in the way that I hope. We of course want to be faithful to plant seeds and recognize that it can take a long time for someone of the majority religion here to come to faith but we'd be lying if we didn't say we also feel hopeful (as I think we should!) everyday for big spiritual "ah-ha!" moments with those that we are engaging. We recently prayed with our team for all of us to continue faithfully planting seeds, and to trust the Lord even when we don't get to see fruit as quickly as we'd like.

Then the very next day our teammate goes to meet her language tutor for class and the tutor mentions how her best friend had just told her that she had a dream about Jesus saying he was going to save her. And then a few days later the language tutor herself had a similar dream where people are praying for her in her bedroom (where our teammate and her meet for class) and her best friend tells her that Jesus is going to save her too. WHAT!!!

Firstly, please take a minute to pray for these two women and for wisdom for our teammate as she engages with them. Secondly, what an amazing reminder that the Lord is working here in amazing ways. I had connected our teammate with this tutor after I received a random friend request on Instagram from this woman promoting her tutoring business - we had no idea about the spiritual encounters waiting on the other side. We pray that many more would be having dreams of Jesus in our city and we ask you to pray with us that we would encounter them and share the good news with them. We also ask that the Lord would be revealing himself through dreams to the friends and neighbors we already have relationships with as well!

“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” John 4:35

### Language Updates

We are both still continuing to actively grow in our ability to speak and understand the local language. Right now we do this through a lot of self study, online videos, flash cards, and watching TV shows in the local language. The TV shows here have a reputation for being waaaay dramatic and that reputation is very well earned, ha! I (R) have begun to work through a Bible study with a believer online in order to grow my spiritual language and to be able to better engage in the spiritual conversations we mentioned above, and to hopefully one day get to work through these Bible studies with new believers or seekers! Please pray for us as we seek to share the Gospel in the local language with those around us. Please pray for open doors and open hearts and specifically opportunities to share bits of Scripture. We trust that His Word never returns void (Isaiah 55:11) and that it is what possesses real authority (Luke 4:32).

### Visas: Denied

We are really sad to say that our team leaders were just denied their residence permit renewal. Foreigners are required to leave the country within ten days of a visa application denial, so they left the country earlier today and will come back on a 90-day short term visa. Please pray for them and our team in this process. We all felt really hopeful that they would get a renewed one- or two-year tourism visa, and results from other workers in different parts of the country made it look promising that our team leaders' visas would be renewed, which would indicate a renewal for us as well when the time comes. Pray that we would trust that the Lord's plan is good and that He will guide our leaders and our team in this season.

Their visa denial strongly indicates that our visa reapplications will also be denied if we reapply for the same tourism residence permit, which is what we have applied for and received since we first arrive nearly three years ago, so we are also praying for how we should proceed as our reapplication for renewal approaches in a few months (June).

Will you please join us in praying for wisdom and discernment for a way forward for us and our teammates? Also prayers for peace and a clear path as we will be expecting the birth of our third daughter around the same time we will be needing to renew our visas.

### Reflection

As we reflect on the last couple of months, two passages come to mind that we hope can encourage you all as well. Let us all remember that Jesus is good, He is kind, He sees us, He is at work around us, and He is worthy of all honor and praise!

”But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always

carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

"And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today." Luke 5:26

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Thank you for taking the time to read these updates and to pray for our family, team, and community!

Grace and peace,  
A+R+J+M+G