

"You intended to harm me but God intended it for good." (Gen. 50:20). Although these words of Joseph to his brothers aren't an exact parallel to the situation we've lived through in the last two months, we do resonate with them strongly. A person wanted to harm God's work here for his own benefit, but God turned his bad intention into strength for the emerging church. The story is sordid and long, one of greed, betrayal and deception, but instead of going through all the gory details I want to tell how God used all of this for His glory.

A man came here to help us, we thought, with discipling some of our friends who were new in the faith. He was someone we'd considered a friend for 6 years, and who had claimed to be a Christian for 20 years. In reality his only interest was in gaining money and status for himself. He started by creating divisions between the English speakers in our church fellowship and the Maninka speakers. He then started to divide the Maninka speakers away from the mission. In the end, what he wanted was more or less every earthly possession the mission owns here in Upper Guinea to become his own. At first I wasn't aware of any of this, but as time wore on, it became clear that these were the man's intentions.

Although it got to the point where we had to threaten the intervention of the police (he was holding the papers to the land recently purchased for a worship/ministry area) he eventually gave up. He has left our area for good. We rejoice that the numerous rifts that were created have been healed. There is a new trust between the English speaking members of our fellowship and the Maninka, there is a renewed vision for how to evangelize people with the Gospel and not false promises (this man had given many). We also dedicated the land to the LORD on Sunday, June 8 for His glory and His work. Every one of the people who had been driven away by this man's false witness has come back and either asked for forgiveness or expressed a desire for a renewed relationship.

Damage was done in almost every place this man went, but by God's grace most of these problems have been healed. One village that I had never visited myself was anxiously expecting things from this man because of a false promise he gave in the name of the mission, but they were very forgiving when I went to see them and still expressed a desire to collaborate. The Holy Spirit has been working in the hearts of one family there for a long time, but fear has inhibited them from expressing their faith openly. The father of this family had leprosy and went to a Catholic clinic in Mali for treatment some years ago. He received the healing he was after, and in the meantime most of his children were struck by the witness of the priests, nuns, and lay people they encountered there. The oldest son in this family told us he is a Muslim but he has more faith in Christ than he does in Mohammed. Please pray for this village, "M.G.", it could very well be the site of a mass conversion if the people are able to overcome their fear.

There were times in this ordeal where we didn't know how it would end; we didn't know what was going to happen to the very small group of believers here. But, praise God, this attack was thwarted! We can rejoice thoroughly with Joseph, that what some intended for evil God has turned into good.

Please pray with us the following requests:

- That the man who caused all these troubles would repent and turn to God.
- Thanksgiving that God kept our fellowship together and strengthened the believers through this trial.
- Prayers for the people in village "M.G." that they would respond in boldness to what they already believe.
- Thanksgiving for the new believers who have a better understanding and renewed commitment to evangelism.
- For our family's continued health, we've all been ill this month with varying degrees of severity.

In Christ,

Tim, Heidi, Philip & Leslie Norton
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