



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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“Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:29b-30, NIV).

Dear Friends,

A Happy New Year to you all! As the new page of the calendar turns, we often ask ourselves, “What will the New Year bring?” We may turn that into a prayer and ask the Lord for specific things without really thinking through how He may answer our requests. On a national level it may be for *peace* or for *quick development*. In a ministry it may be for *fruitfulness* or *numerical growth*. On a personal level it may simply be for *a job!* We have been learning throughout this last quarter that God in His sovereign ways often has more to teach us than just answers to our prayers. He wants to give us challenges, greater responsibility, and above all, opportunities to increase one’s faith (Luke 17:5). Will you reflect with us?

Increase in Madagascar

When new President Ravalomanana speaks about his vision for Madagascar, it always involves “quick development.” The new buzzword is helping gain national, as well as international, support for his new programs. High on the priority list is road repairs—to everyone’s delight!

Development is coming but it is not always “quick.” Is this discouraging the people after a year of unrest and economic breakdown? One would’ve expected Christmas to be like Dr. Seuss’s “Whoville” after the Grinch had stolen all the toys. But even “sparse” finances could not put a damper on people’s spirits. People still found much for which to be joyful as they look to a brighter future! We continue to learn much from our Malagasy friends about patience in waiting for change and improvement.

Increase in Opportunities

Three of the *Rafiki* graduates accepted jobs at a large clothing factory. They have come to us every Saturday to report on their work situation. The Malagasy are very reserved people so we count it a privilege when they come to talk with us. The work has been difficult, “It’s not like at *Rafiki*,” one said. The day is long,

leaving at 6:30 A.M. and returning home at 6:00 P.M. God has always had a good word for us to share to encourage them to continue. One week there was Psalm 121 to help overcome fear. The next week it was to “take captive” troubling thoughts. We take these visits as opportunities to challenge them to increase their faith in God, and we pray with them. Their visits challenge us to grow as well, as we learn to show compassion and understanding and as we seek to help them look to Jesus as the **“Author and Perfector of our faith.”** A fourth graduate bought a manual sewing machine with the money she saved from *Rafiki* and plans to sew at home. **Pray for these women to persevere in their new work and in their faith.**

Increase at Rafiki

David taught both English and the attributes of God during the month of December. A different attribute is taught each day. One day he taught that *God is Impartial*. The same day he asked the girls in English class to think about what Jesus would want them to stop doing. This was regarding John 8:11 when Jesus told the adulterous woman to “go and sin no more.” The girls listed things such as lying, stealing, hating, saying bad words, grumbling, and even included being partial! He then asked, “What should you do instead?” They responded with tell the truth, ask, love, pray, show kindness, use good words—and *be impartial!* We see them learning deep truths about the character of God and we hear them praying those attributes in worship to God.

When the *Rafiki* staff implemented a strict policy of “English only,” the girls took us seriously. An offense resulted in the offender’s name being written on the board. A second offense in the same day meant you would be sent home for the day. When David slipped, the girls directed him to the whiteboard where he also found Don’s name written there from the morning session!

January brings the halfway point of the first term. The eight girls are still motivated and improving their English skills weekly. ***Pray for greater confidence in speaking their new language.***

Increase at BSF

Class sizes continue to grow! We used to pray about the noise coming from people and traffic outside. Now we have a noise problem from all the members sharing during discussion time! The opportunity to study and speak English is inviting, but many find it too difficult. Still, more people are coming from the government and business community.

What keeps us from increasing more?

- University student schedules: they change at the professors' fancy.
- School program students who often go to school until 6 P.M.
- Evening transportation to outlying areas is limited.
- Rain

We always pray for no rain, but if it does rain during the class, an umbrella would be handy to keep off the rain that drips through the roof! David added to his prayer this week that men would be so hungry to study the Bible that they would come despite the rain. The first class night of the year brought rain, but it could not stop 127 men who *are* hungry for God's Word from coming to class. That is 85% attendance and answer to another prayer request!

Julie had increased responsibilities in December as she gave two lectures. God used her to especially minister to some women in troubling circumstances as she taught from John 9 on God's purpose for suffering.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give determination and perseverance to all class members to overcome challenges and obstacles to attending class.

Increase in Family

As most of you know, our family size will increase by one in March. (No, we don't know yet.) This was the greatest way God increased our faith in 2002. Our minds were consumed with asking God what to do. We wanted someone to tell us what to do! But we learned that wasn't the way God wanted to increase our faith. He gave us His peace when we finally decided to return to Madagascar. We were delighted

to hear our girls tell us that it was what they truly wanted as well! Julie and the girls will travel to Tacoma on January 17. They will be staying with her parents and continuing with home schooling. David will join them for the month of March, then Julie and "children" will return to Madagascar in early June.

Pray for our family during our time of separation and transition; for good organization and use of our days. Pray for a safe delivery and a healthy baby sometime the first week of March!

Increase in People

We think the time will pass quickly for David this next quarter. The BSF area team will visit February 14-21. The *Rafiki* Home Office will make its first visit to Madagascar February 24-28. David will be busy showing them some options for a *Rafiki* building large enough to hold an *increase* in students, and introducing them to government and church workers as we seek to *increase* our ministry here. Also in February, the ROS will interview potential students for the six who will begin April 1. ***Pray that these visits will help us to increase our fruitfulness for the Lord in practical ways and increase our faith as we trust Him in new ways.***

Our prayer for you is that you may also see God *increase* your faith in the coming year through the challenges that He brings into your lives, and as you seek to do new things through the Lord at home, at work, in ministry, in your community, or in the world!

In the Name of Jesus,

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NOTE: The *Rafiki* web site has been revised. Please visit at www.rafiki-foundation.org and find information on your ROS, what *Rafiki* is doing, the centers, and the Exchange.