



van Eijden Times

ministering in Tours, France, with European Christian Mission International

June 2014



Have you ever wondered if or how God keeps track of each one of us? There are billions of persons swarming this planet; why would God bother (is he able) to notice or care about the details of any one person's life? The other night I lay awake thinking about this. The next morning, continuing reading through Isaiah, I came to chapter forty and discovered:

God sits above the circle of the earth. The people below must seem to him as grasshoppers! "To whom will you compare me?" asks the Holy One. Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And he counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away. How can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

Even little girls get God's attention. Someday I hope two in particular will grasp that God was thinking of them and providing for them, long before their trials began.

Caroline is not yet born and Sonia is a year old; the year is 2003. I am at home nursing newborn Jan-Willem while Marc is out with youth doing an evangelism campaign in Tours. Part of France's population is succumbing to the deadly heat wave of that summer while our townspeople are hearing, maybe for the first time, the good news of abundant life to be found in Jesus Christ. Serine, already a believer but married to an unbeliever and not attending any church, opens her mailbox to find a simple tract with our phone number on it and the offer of a free copy of the Jesus film. Some campaigners had put it there as they canvassed the neighborhoods of Tours North. Serine's home was nowhere near where we lived at the time, the church hadn't yet found a meeting place near Serine's home, and no one could have known we would one day move to within a couple of minutes' walk from Serine's place...

All Serine needs to do is call and request the video. She does this eventually and Marc makes her acquaintance upon delivering the cassette.

Results of evangelism campaigns are seldom very encouraging. Few people clearly respond and it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure the impact of a week's worth of prayer, gospel concerts, tract distributions and personal witnessing. You may think you are evangelizing, that God is converting people, and that the number of born again experiences recorded at the end of the campaign are the sign of its success (or failure). However, God might be using the campaign for more than that, for things we cannot imagine.

Each time I think of what happens next, I get excited about God's provision, although the coming events prove to be very sad. The year is 2010 and Serine is telephoning local churches, looking for 'Pastor Marc'. She finally reaches us (in the meantime, we have moved without realizing it to a neighborhood near Serine). She

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is dying of breast cancer and would like Marc to pray for her. They see each other regularly but recognize that it might be better for a lady in our church who *happens* to live next door to Serine to become her regular prayer partner. Jocelyne goes there much oftener and becomes intimate with the family, helping Sonia (now eight years old) and little sister Caroline (only three) with their homework, or braiding their hair and just being a friend. Jocelyne invites them to church and Serine, though already very weak, brings a dish to our themed meal of Malagasy cooking in support of a mission school in Madagascar, Serine's homeland. Shortly before Serine dies, she and Jocelyne travel to Madagascar to see Serine's family once more and to tell them goodbye. And now, a few years later, when the pre-teen Sonia seems unable to express her grief at the loss of her mother, Jocelyne has invited Flora from church (who is getting her master's degree in child psychology) to get to know this young girl and attempt to help her open up. Jocelyne, Sonia and Flora have been seeing each other regularly for a couple of months now.

Serine's story is yours and mine, too. We may not see or appreciate yet how God is caring for us and our loved ones, but he is and he does. **He cares.** God calls each star by its name; may Sonia and Caroline one day hear him calling theirs.

Because He cares, please pray with us!

*With our love,
Marc, Jody,
Jan-Willem,
& Jack*

- ✦ **BIG change:** Jan-Willem will start middle school in September. Pray that he will adapt well to the change and that he will enjoy it.
- ✦ **WALK talk:** Jody goes twice a week on a walk, with two different ladies. Pray that the love of Christ will speak to their hearts.
- ✦ **NEW life:** On the first day of our 100-day prayer campaign, a brand new Christian brought her teenage sister to church, because she's interested in the Gospel. Both sisters come from a nominal Muslim background. Pray that the Gospel will bear much fruit in their lives.
- ✦ **BAPTISM:** This summer we hope to baptize at least three people. Pray for the continuation of their transformation and testimony.
- ✦ **SPIRITUAL breakthrough:** We have increased contact with five families through the boys' school. Pray the God will give us an open door to manifest His grace and power in a mighty way.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR LOVE,
SUPPORT, AND
PRAYER !**



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