

Even When I don't see it, You're Working

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To: **todd@crosslife.church**



Even When I Don't See It, You're Working

October 2023

Missions can be hard, especially in France. We work faithfully trying to make disciples. There are days when we are giving it everything that we've got, but it feels like we're treading water and not making much progress. In a state of emotional and physical fatigue, you begin to ask yourself questions like, "are we not doing enough?" Often in our moments of frustration God has a way of showing up and reminding us that we are not working for Him, but instead WITH Him. We are not in this alone. As diligent as we work, God is always working more. He is always moving and working in the background. So much of our posture needs to be seeking God and listening to His voice, trying to discern how He is already at work. Much of what God is up to we are simply unaware of. Then in a moment when we need encouraged most, He gives us a glimpse. Here is a recent story of just that:

Every two weeks our mission's cohort meets together specifically for prayer and planning. After our meeting we typically go out to lunch together at a local spot. Intentionally trying to visit different business in our community. Consciously being visibly present in the neighborhood. This specific week we were craving pastrami sandwiches. It's a rare find in Paris, but we discovered of a little place in another part of the city. So, after praying together, we broke our tradition of staying local and the four of us hopped on the metro to go get sandwiches, they were delicious. I could go on, but this story isn't about lunch.

The following week I (Dan) went to go pick up our son Adley from school. Just like every weekday at 4:30pm, I was clustered outside the school building with all the other parents waiting for our children to be dismissed. Suddenly a man approaches me on the sidewalk. His opening line was "Hi, were you at (previously mentioned sandwich restaurant) the other day?" Taken back and shocked I responded "why, yes I was." He responded, "I thought I recognized you."



We then introduced ourselves, his name is Amed*. He is a dad and has two kids attending the same school as Adley. He asked me how long Adley had been going to this school. I explained he started attending 4 years ago. He then replied, "oh okay, last year was our first year here, we started right after we moved to Paris from Washington D.C." (he's originally from the middle east) Inside my heart jumped, "Did you say D.C.?" I chimed in. "yeah", he said, "we lived there a few years before moving to Paris for work." (He works next to the sandwich shop) Inquisitively I asked "where in D.C." He replied, "A town called Bethesda, have you heard of it?" My immediate response was "no way, I lived in Silver Spring (the towns are very close to each other) for a decade before we came to France." A

big smile broke across his face, he had found a kindred spirit. Two dads who used to live in the D.C. area now had kids going to the same school in Paris. Who would have thought? But it didn't stop there!

He went on to ask, "Are you originally from D.C, did you grow up there?" I explained "no, I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, I didn't move to D.C. until after college." Suddenly his face shifted and became stern "oh, I don't know if we can be friends then, you're probably a Steelers fan, aren't you?" Proudly I replied, "you know it!" He mumbled "figures, I am a huge Baltimore Ravens fan (the teams are big ugly rivals), but I guess I won't hold that against you." We both laughed. He quickly jumped in to seize the opportunity, he suggested "you know what would be great, we should get together and watch some football sometime" You see where this is going don't you. I said "man, I would love that! Actually, my family and I host a weekly football night every Sunday. It's a low-key time of food, friends, and football. We're starting back up on October 1st. You should....." Before I could finish my invitation, he exclaimed "YES! YES! I would love that. Thank you so much!" We went ahead and exchanged phone numbers and sent each other a test text message to make sure we got it right. Then the kids were dismissed, we collected them, and went on our way.

When we got back to the apartment I said to Lisa "you are never going to believe what happened in the last 15 minutes." I proceeded to tell the story. We were both shocked and could have said something like "what are the odds", but we've been at this long enough to see God's hand. All these things aligning were no mere coincidence.

Since that day, Amed* and I have been texting back and forth. Tonight, we are launching our "food, friends, & football" nights. We have 24 adults planning to come (plus kids). Most are non-Christians, most live on our street or in our neighborhood and most of them this is their first time. Amed* is coming! He's planning to bring his son and nachos.

Pray for Amed* and our continuing relationship. Pray for all the people coming to our apartment tonight and may they continue to come for the next several months.

Amed* and I had a lot of connecting points before we even met. Dads, Paris, same school, D.C., sandwiches, and football. None of that was our doing. Things that had happened in our lives years before became underlining commonalities. God had been working, even when we didn't see it. Behind the scenes, beyond what I was aware of. However, in those 15 minutes at the school pick up line, it bubbled to the surface and God gave me a glimpse. Though more than a just a glimpse he gave me a reminder. Even when I don't see it- He never stops, He never stops working.

Your Friends In France

Dan, Lisa, Adley, and Ellis Lawrence



Today our ministry cohort launches our weekly Sunday night football gatherings. This is a rhythmic meeting that we will host until early February (the Super Bowl). The above picture is the invitation we sent out.

Our Address:

4 Rue Henri Duchêne
75015 Paris, France

Birthdays:

Adley- Oct. 8
Lisa - Oct. 13
Dan- Mar. 24
Ellis- June 27

Prayer Needs

Praise:

- Adley and Ellis have started the school year off well.
- Continued connections with local neighbors and opportunities to meet new people.
- There is a very large interest in the Sunday night dinner party/ football night that we host.
- Our Visas have been approved for renewal and we have appointments to pick them up later this month.
- Thankful for an opportunity to quickly get away to celebrate Lisa's birthday.

Needs:

- Continue to pray for our boys as they navigate school in French.
- Our "Food, Friends, and Football" ministry that we are launching tonight. That it would build a community of people over the next 5 months. May God use it to love people and reveal Himself to them.
- At the end of October we are having our annual Alliance Missions Field Forum for all the workers here in France. We will gather for 5 days. It will be a time of discussing identity and vision. Looking deeper into who God is calling us to become.
- This fall is very full. There are lots of ministry opportunities. Also, we have 3 short term missions teams scheduled to come. Pray for our team as we plan and host.
- The olympics are coming to Paris summer 2024. We are praying about how we can leverage this once in a life time event for kingdom work.
- We are praying that God would continue to grow our team. We need more workers here in Paris, join us in asking God for the right additions.

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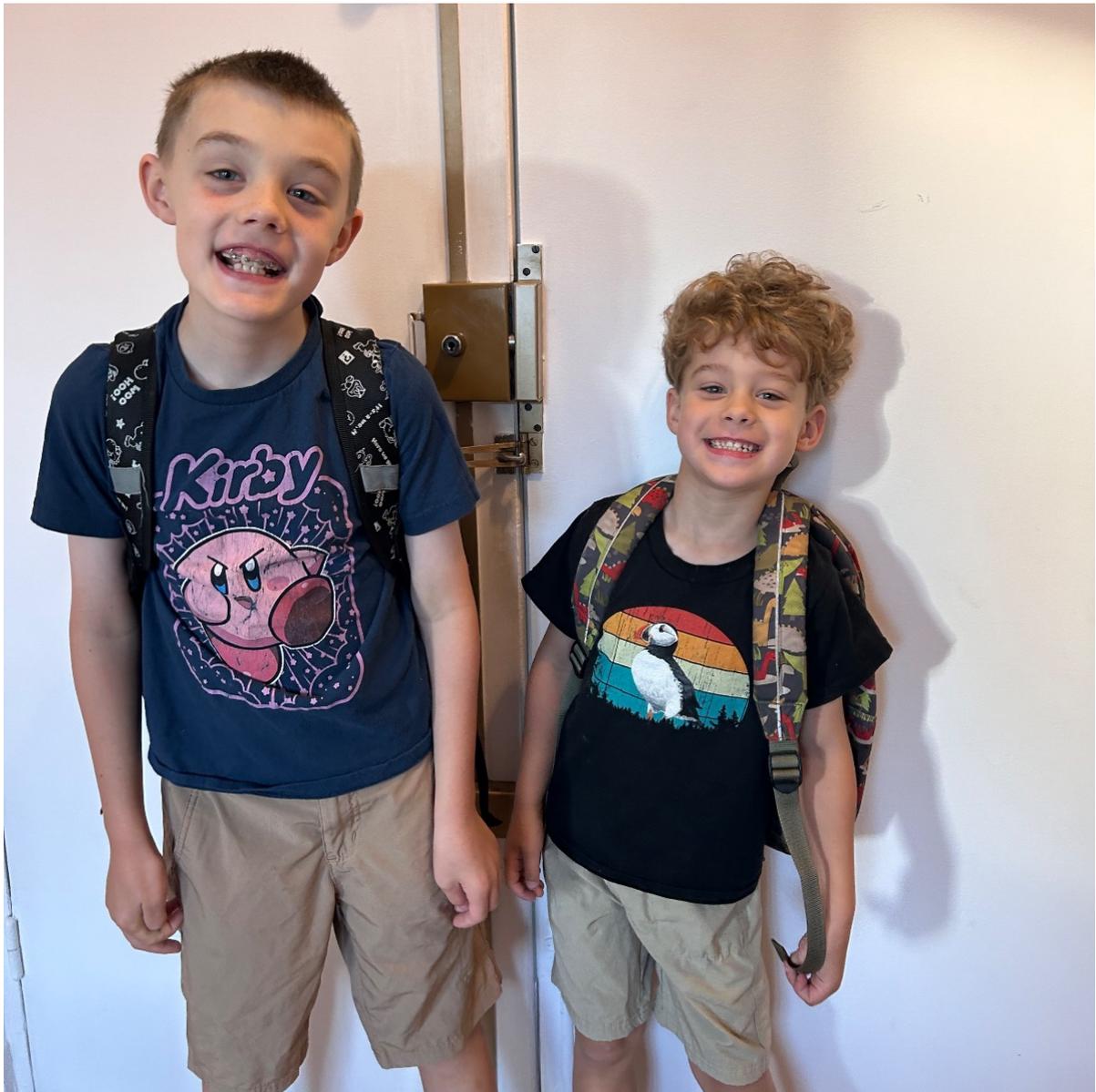
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Right before school started, we all spent a day at the Paris zoo together. Tons of fun!



In September the boys started back at school. Adley began 5th grade and Ellis has started kindergarten. We are thankful that they are back at the same schools as last year and they were excited to see their friends. They are both doing well.



We are thankful for new opportunities to connect with our neighbors in September. Lisa spent a day with an older lady, they baked bread together. In France there is an event called "Apero" it's a social gathering time themed around snacks, just before dinner. We've been able to host several of these this past month.



Lisa has a milestone birthday coming up in October. So instead of a big party we were able to get away for a few days with some very dear friends. We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to visit Capri, Italy. Perks of living in Europe.

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