

# West Africa: Riding an emotional roller coaster

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We have been “yala-yala”-ing a lot for a couple of weeks. That’s the local word meaning to walk around leisurely and talk to everyone you encounter to show them they are important to you. They do this a lot. So, now we have become more a part of their community, and we get to do it as well, and it affords us the opportunity to tell stories about Jesus.



Day-in and day-out visiting with villagers in West Africa gives Rachel Scott the opportunity to show the love of Christ. (Go Now Missions Photo) One evening, we were making a circuit of the compounds at the far end of our village. We left one

compound after an hour and a half talking, feeling really discouraged. We want them to know the truth so badly. It seems like they're trying to understand, but something is in the way. As we walked through another compound after this encounter, we stopped to talk at an old woman's house. Soon, a large crowd gathered around us, including two of her nephews who were visiting from the city to help plant during the rainy season. One son was very interested as we told the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, asking many questions and wanting to know more. The other son didn't say much but quietly listened behind us. We left feeling slightly more encouraged as the first son promised he would come later to talk more.

But this evening proved to be a real emotional roller coaster as we went to the chief's house. We have told him several stories and presented the gospel several times before this. He always told us to come back and talk more, and little by little, he could think about becoming a Christian. Well, it seems he finally became comfortable enough to tell us that he was never going to become Christian. Even though he really enjoyed our stories and couldn't deny the truth of who Jesus is, he is in charge of a Muslim village and must lead his people accordingly. This is especially crushing, because the collective culture of the village means the people will follow the will of the group, and in most instances, the will of the chief. Several times we've heard people say: "I like this Jesus person. So, if the chief becomes Christian, I will become Christian." The only thing that we could find solace in at this point was knowing he had heard the truth, and it was now in God's hands to soften his heart to the truth of the gospel.

By the end of the day, we were exhausted emotionally and physically—as usual. As it grew late, we took our baths and waited for dinner to be finished, sitting in companionable silence. So, I started to pray. I asked God to reveal himself to someone in the village. I asked him to soften the hearts of the chief and the other people we had talked to this evening and send us

one who wanted to know more.

As we finished our dinner and began our nightly singing and dancing with the kids, someone came up to our translator, Mary, and told her someone wanted to know more about Jesus. This was unbeknownst to us as we were busy leading songs, but as it grew late, the kids went off to bed, and I struggled to keep my eyes open. Then Charlie walked up. Mary told us he was the one who wanted to know more about Jesus, and we recognized him. He was the nephew of the old woman who had sat quietly behind us during our story while his brother had asked all the questions and promised us he would come. So, we walked Charlie through the gospel, and he accepted Jesus into his heart right then and there. God not only had answered my prayer, but also had done so before I had even thought to pray it.

He was overcome with happiness after making his decision and kept saying, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." He knew he had finally found what he was missing. We have been sowing seeds widely in our village, praying that some would fall on fertile soil. It was an important lesson to learn that you never know who God is preparing for you. All we are called to do is go and tell.

It would be easy for God to have prepared the chief for us, but instead he has chosen people like Charlie. But just to show the sovereignty of God, we found out later Charlie is also our chief's nephew and the son of the "big chief" in charge of seven villages in this region. God's plan is not for us to understand, but we know it will bring him the most glory. So, while we are continuing to pray for the salvation of our chief, we are rejoicing in the decision of his nephew and asking God to strengthen him so that he might reach this village.

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