LESSON 4
THE RELIGION OF MADAGASCAR
Native Tradition

The traditional Malagasy sees no separation of the sacred and the secular. All of life is thought of as one piece, one's existence is given by god and thus all of life is, in a sense, sacred. This has two consequences for the Malagasy. First, every event in a person's life is worthy of celebration, birth, naming, engagement, marriage, and finally death. The second consequence is that there is a strict structure on how life is to be celebrated. Customs and rules govern all aspects of the Malagasy life and of great concern is the fady, a taboo or restriction on one's actions.

The most important aspect in Malagasy family life is ancestor worship. In the Malagasy mind, the creator god is not too important. Even though he is considered to be all-seeing, omnipotent, and benevolent, he is removed from the everyday life of the people. In the Malagasy tradition, life is controlled by a hierarchy of secondary gods, former kings and distant ancestors. The most important gods in the Malagasy's life are the spirits of one's immediate deceased ancestors. These gods are concerned intimately with family affairs. Hence, the tomb is the focus of all Malagasy life. This is seen by the ceremonies accompanying burial. The best known of all the Malagasy's ceremonies is the famadihana, “turning of the dead.” In this ceremony a body is exhumed, the bones wrapped in a fresh shroud, the body is paraded, and finally reburied. This ceremony is very costly.

Other aspects of the Malagasy beliefs are the fady and the vintana. A fady is a taboo pronounced by an elder on his deathbed. This taboo would only apply to the family or the village. For example, one village may be prohibited from using cement, while the neighboring village can use cement. Vintana is the notion that fate controls a person's life. The month, day, and time of a person's birth will determine life choices.

Muslims

Muslims comprise about 7 percent of the Malagasy population. The Muslim belief came with the first Arab settlers around 1200 A.D. Most of the Muslims live in the coastal cities and towns of the north.

Christianity

About 40 percent of the Malagasy have adopted Christianity. Christianity came to Madagascar in 1820 when two Englishmen came to the island. Sgt. Hastie and Rev. Jones were sent by the London Missionary Society. They were given a warm welcome by King Radama I and invited to work in Madagascar. Many English laymen and clergy came to help the Rev. Jones with his work among the Malagasy. The church grew, establishing schools, translating the Bible into Malagasy, and setting up preaching stations. By 1825, 15,000 students were in Christian schools. On Sunday, May 29, 1831, 20 Malagasy were baptized into the Christian faith.

King Radama I died on July 27, 1828. His wife, Queen Ranavalona succeeded him. She began a 33 year persecution of the Christians. The queen declared it illegal to be a Christian. Missionaries were expelled from the island, schools and chapels were closed, and Christians were rounded up and deprived of their possessions and homes. Some Christians were thrown into prison to await execution. A young woman named Rasalama was the first Malagasy martyr. She was beaten so severely she had to be carried to the execution site. Despite her injuries, she sang hymns all the way to the execution site. The persecution reached its

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peak in 1849, yet the number of Christians grew. The missionaries had built such a strong base that after they left the people could carry on the work of the church in their absence. The fact that Christians would die for their beliefs so impressed the Malagasy that they were drawn to the church. When the queen died in 1861, there were about 5,000 Christians left on the island. Today, there are millions.

**Lutheranism**

In 1861 the Norwegian Mission Society asked the Rev. Hans Schreuder to visit Madagascar. In April, 1869, Johanesa Ramanjakanoro and Isaia Ramasimanana became the first Malagasy baptized through the work of Lutherans. Also in 1969 a large number of Lutheran missionaries arrived to work in Madagascar. Among these missionaries was Dr. C. Borchgrevink, who became a very well-known and beloved medical missionary.

The first American Lutheran missionary was John P. Hogstad. He was ordained in Hawk Creek Lutheran Church near Sacred Heart, Minnesota in 1887. He arrived in Fort Dauphin, Madagascar, in 1888. He received a warm welcome and baptized his first members only six months after his arrival.

In 1869, another Lutheran missionary from America began work on the southwest coast of Madagascar. This later became the center of the Lutheran Free Church mission. These early missionaries sometimes became discouraged as they worked in a foreign culture, but with the confidence in the Gospel, they prevailed.

The work of the early missionaries built the future of the church. A missionary would arrive in Madagascar and build a house on a hill. Soon a school was started. Next came a school for training of evangelists. As evangelists became available, new areas of the country were opened to Christianity. Soon parishes organized into districts. As time went on there were some 80 districts with over 2,000 congregations.

In 1950, the Malagasy Lutheran Church was organized as an independent body.

Check out this website for more information about Madagascar: [http://www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)
### LHM – MADAGASCAR

#### Lesson 4 – Lesson Plan – The Religion of Madagascar

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| The students will hear the Biblical account of Pentecost (Acts 2). The students will learn about the religions in Madagascar. The students will write letters and/or make pictures for the children in Madagascar. | With the children seated in a listening center or in their seats, tell the children that today they will hear the story of Pentecost — an event that happened 50 days after Easter. Read to them from Acts 2, a Bible storybook, or the Archbook entitled, “The Coming of the Holy Spirit.”

Tell the children that over the past 200 years, missionaries have been in and out of Madagascar, depending upon the ruler in charge of the island. Today, about four out of every ten persons in Madagascar are Christian, one out of every ten is Muslim, and five out of every ten are involved in ancestor worship. Such a concept can be presented with the paper people by cutting out two sets. Mark four of these cutouts with a cross, one with an “M” for Muslim, and five with an “A” for ancestor worship. Children in the classroom could also be used as a visual, using a group of 10. Ask: “Are there still some people who need to hear about Jesus?”

Write missionary notes. Encourage the children to color, print their own names, copy “Jesus loves you” from the board, or use your own creative ideas. | • Paper
• Pencils
• Crayons, colored pencils if desired
• Bible
• Bible storybook, or a copy of the Archbook entitled, “The Coming of the Holy Spirit” |

### CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, Thank You for our missionaries. Help us to be missionaries, too. We pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit, as witnessed on Pentecost, Your love and Good News will reach those in Madagascar. Amen.
The students will learn some Malagasy traditional religious practices. The students will learn of the work of the early Christians in Madagascar. The students will discover a message in an airplane. The students will write a Gospel witness note to Malagasy children.

Show the children a paper airplane. Ask if anyone in the class has made paper airplanes before. Tell the class they will make a paper airplane today. The boys and girls who know how to make planes can be teachers to the boys and girls who need help. Tell them the airplane will have a surprise for them.

There are three religions in Madagascar. If 100 people came in to the room, 53 would believe in a traditional religion the first people in Madagascar worshipped. Forty people would be Christians, and seven would be Muslim.

The traditional believers believe everything in life is sacred and holy. Because they do, there are rules to follow. One very important rule is the fady (FAH-dee). Fady means you are not allowed to disobey what the leader says. For instance, the leader might say a family cannot watch TV. But he might pronounce another fady for his town. It doesn't seem fair, does it? But that's a fady and people must obey it. The traditional people worship many gods, with the most important gods being the spirits of their ancestors.

The Christians believe in Jesus. Missionaries first came to Madagascar about 200 years ago. The king wanted the missionaries to tell his people about Jesus. When the king died, his wife, the mean queen, sent the missionaries away. She hurt the Malagasy Christians and put some of them in prison. The wicked queen died and her son became the king. He sent for the missionaries and they came back to Madagascar. Many people wanted to learn about God because of the bravery of the persecuted Christians.

Some of the missionaries were Lutheran. A missionary would build his house on a hill. Then, a school would be built. Then, a school for church workers would be built. Those trained workers went out to tell the Malagasy people about God and His love for them. That is how Christianity grew.

In May 2000, Lutheran Hour Ministries opened an office in Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. The office is called, “Voice of the Gospel.” The letters you are sending to Madagascar will spread the Gospel message just as the church workers did 100 years ago. You are the voice of the Gospel, too.

Write the letter, independently or cooperatively.

Activity: Give each student a sheet of 8 ½” x 11” paper. Place the paper vertically in front of you.

1. Take the upper right hand corner and fold it over to the left hand side. Align the sides carefully and crease.
2. Take the upper left corner and fold to the right. Crease.
3. Fold the left side over to the right and crease.
4. Make the wings by folding the left edge back to the center. Turn over and fold the right edge back to the center.

**SUGGESTED MATERIALS**
- Globe or world map
- Blackline Master 3-4
- Red poster board or cardboard for child's footprint
- 6 poster board shields for each child
- Paper punch
- Glue
- Scissors
- Yarn or string of different lengths

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### PRIMARY LESSON PLAN DETAILS

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<td>Take the students to a wide open space to “fly their planes to Madagascar.” Try some competitions. Who can fly their plane the farthest? Who can fly their plane the highest?</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Return to class. Tell the students the plane is going to give them a prize. Open the wings and flatten them out. Cut along the crease to take the wings off. Open the plane and see the surprise.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>The children may decorate the cross or write a Gospel message on it. They could copy this one: “Fly this message across the sea. Jesus loves both you and me.”</td>
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### DEMONSTRATE THE “JOY BOTTLE.”

Inflate the balloon and draw a cross on it with magic marker. Deflate the balloon.

Preview this lesson to ensure the compatibility of the bottle and the balloon.

1. Put baking soda in the bottle.
2. Add vinegar.
3. Quickly place the balloon over the bottle. The balloon should inflate to reveal the cross. The baking soda and vinegar made a gas in the bottle. The gas couldn’t stay in the bottle, so it came out in the balloon. Christians are just like the bottle. Knowing Jesus fills us with joy and we just can’t keep the joy inside. We have to let it out by telling others about Jesus. The cross on the balloon is the joy that we share. JESUS LOVES US!

### CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, Thank You for the freedom we have to tell others about Your wonderful love.

Please, be with the people of Madagascar and help us to share Your Good News with them. Amen.
### GOALS FOR THE LESSON

The students will be familiar with the main religions of Madagascar. The students will feel the urgency to share the Gospel message with all peoples. The students will write a personal note to a Malagasy child.

### LESSON PLAN DETAILS

Choose two students to represent the only people in the world who know about Christ. The rest of your class represents the world who does not know Christ. Give the Christians 60 seconds to witness their faith to a non-believer. After sixty seconds, have the Christians and their new converts stand. From the remaining world group, arbitrarily send everyone with a birthday in January to a separate corner of the room. This new group represent the people who will never have the chance to hear about Christ. Play a few more rounds of the game. Each time, allow the new Christians to witness their faith to one of the nonbelievers, also.

Ask the students to think about the repercussions of not sharing the Gospel message with others. Read Matthew 8:12, Matthew 25:41, 46, and 2 Thessalonians 1:9. What will eternity be like for those who do not know Christ?

Distribute the lyrics of “In Not Of” by Avalon and play the song. Allow time for your students to share their reactions to the lyrics, especially in light of the activity they just completed. Stress the importance of all of us doing our part to find people who do not know Christ and share the Gospel message with them.

People of all ages often have difficulty articulating what they believe. Read the following verses from Romans which summarize the journey to salvation: Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, and Romans 10:9-13. These verses may help the children with ideas to use when writing the personal notes.

Today, your students will have the opportunity to share Jesus’ saving love with a child from Madagascar through the notes they write. Before the actual writing, have your students list some ideas of things they could include in their notes. When they are finished, you may want to look over the notes to ensure quality.

### SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- Avalon’s CD titled, In a Different Light
- Copies of the lyrics to the song, “In Not Of” from the CD above
- Materials for writing a letter
- Bible

### CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, Please bless the messages we send and the children in Madagascar. We pray that You would give each of us the opportunity to share the Gospel with unbelievers. Amen
The students will be able to identify the two major religions of Madagascar and note the clear distinctions between them. The students will be able to appreciate the richness of the Christian hymns, especially in the face of trouble and persecution. The students will be able to discover reasons for their own school getting started and the impact that the school has made upon the community through interviews.

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<td>In a small group, allow three minutes to compile a list of the superstitions of which they are aware. Introduce the idea of animism as a religious belief based in superstition and ancestor worship. On the board, write “10 Commandments” on one side, and “Fady” on the other side. Discuss some of the differences in the ways that animists and Christians view these issues, see Blackline Master. As you go from category to category, either explaining the animist practices yourself or letting the students read the guide sheet, encourage them to draw contrasts and comparisons between the two religious belief systems, using Scriptural back-up whenever possible. Read out loud the story of the martyrdom of Rasalama and Rafaralahy, connecting it with the discussion of the history of Madagascar yesterday. King Radama had welcomed the first two missionaries to Madagascar in 1820. The church grew, establishing schools and preaching stations. By 1825, 15,000 students were in Christian schools, learning about the Lord Jesus. But when King Radama died in 1828, his wife, Queen Ranavalona, took over and began a 33-year persecution of the Christians. First, she declared Christianity to be illegal, then she threw all the missionaries off the island. To her surprise, the converts rather increased than decreased, and enjoyed a little rest, for the queen had supposed that their religion would depart with the missionaries. They were, however, constantly exposed to danger at any hour; but in a letter addressed to one of their late missionaries, in 1837, they expressed themselves in the following terms: “By the strength of God, we shall still go forward, and not fear what may befall us. But we will go in the power of the Lord; and if accused by the people, we will still go straightforward, for we know that if we deny Him before men, Jesus will deny us before His Father; but if we confess Him, He also will confess us, when He shall come in the clouds to judge the world, and present them that are blameless before the Father for ever.” As there were now no Christian schools (they were illegal, also), the Christians taught those among them who could not read, each taking a few pupils. Rasalama, an excellent young woman, was among the queen’s victims. She was put in heavy irons and beaten, but continued singing hymns. Her firmness amidst her sufferings astonished her persecutors, which they ignorantly attributed to witchcraft, and supposed that the missionaries operated by some secret charm on the minds of the Christian converts. Rasalama had been confined in the house of a man in office, named Ramiandrovola, who was savage and cruel. From this house she was freed only to prepare for execution the next morning. She was put that afternoon into irons of a peculiar construction, not</td>
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• Hymnals
• Blackline Master (Religious Beliefs Comparison)
Dear Father in Heaven,

Thank You for the gift of Your Son, who died in our place. Help us be witnesses to those in Madagascar. Help us share the wonderful news of Your love with them. Amen

Closing Prayer

Lesson 4 – Lesson Plan – The Religion of Madagascar

JUNIOR HIGH LESSON PLAN DETAILS

intended so much for security of the prisoners as for cruel punishment. The irons consisted of rings and bars, so fastened around the feet, hands, knees, and neck as to produce the most excruciating pain.

At the appointed time she was led to the place of execution, singing many hymns by the way. Passing by the chapel where she was baptized, she exclaimed, “There I heard the words of the Savior!” On reaching the fatal spot, she calmly kneeled down, committed her spirit into the hands of her Redeemer, and in that attitude was speared to death, the executioners, three or four in number, standing behind and by the side of her, and striking her through the ribs and the heart. The pain would be momentary, the release triumphant, and the bliss that followed immortal. Her body was left to be devoured by the wild dogs that frequent all places in Madagascar where criminals suffer. When some friends went some time afterwards to the exact spot where she was killed, they could find a few bones only, lying about where they had been scattered by the dogs.

The next martyr was a young man named Rafaralahy. This devoted Christian had built a house in a hidden spot, for the purpose of giving those in slavery a place that they might meet together for religious conversation and prayer. They were discovered by the treachery of a backslider, and imprisoned. Rafaralahy was put in irons, and was urged to give up the names of all his fellow Christians in order to be pardoned, but he refused. In two or three days he was condemned to execution; and on arriving at the place, he requested a few moments to commit his soul to the Savior. He then rose from his knees; and when the executioners were preparing to throw him down on the ground, he said that there was no need for that, as he was now ready to die. He then laid himself down, and was immediately put to death. His friends were allowed to bury the body with their ancestors, but his property was confiscated. Thus, died the second martyr of Madagascar. In him the Christians lost a hospitable, generous, and devoted Christian brother, willing to divide his property among the persecuted church, to share the dangers of worshipping the true God, and to lay down his life in the cause of the Redeemer.

Tell the students that despite persecution like this, the Christian church grew. Ask them why they think this may have happened. The fact that Christians would die for their beliefs impressed the Malagasy so much that they were drawn to the church despite the danger.

Talk to the students about the power of song and hymn when in a dangerous or difficult situation. Using their hymnals, ask them to select three hymns that they would sing if being led away to die for Jesus. They would be in public, so others would be able to hear what they were singing. Ask them to explain why they selected the ones they did.

Notice that the establishment of Christian schools was really important in getting the Gospel to the people. Invite your principal or a school board member, or a teacher who was around when the school began to come and be interviewed about why this school was established. You’ll also want to ask him or her to reflect on the impact the school has made to individuals and the community.

Take some time for the students to write notes to children in Madagascar. Guide them so they know how to share their faith in Christ Jesus, making sure that they are clear and focused in their abilities to share God’s saving message for all people.
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<td>What’s your guide to living or rules to follow?</td>
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<td>What’s the significance of the tomb?</td>
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<td>Who is God?</td>
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