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Hello from Athens, where spring is in the air, wild flowers are starting to bloom, and new life is all around!

## The Word continues to spread

Recently I called a refugee friend, “Sarah”, who moved from Greece to Sweden several months ago now. During her time in Greece she studied the Bible for many months, but wanted to see or hear Jesus in a dream before she would turn from Islam to Christ. Interestingly, the Afghans in her small town community in Sweden all think she’s already a Christian. They keep telling her not to be afraid, but just to admit she’s a Christian now.

Sarah said that one man came to her asking questions about Jesus. I’d mailed Sarah a New Testament in Farsi when she first moved to Sweden, which she gave to this man. She told him she wasn’t a Christian, but said “I taught him everything you all taught me”. This man believed what Sarah taught him and three Sundays ago was baptized in Sweden! Another Afghan woman in Sweden had a dream in which Jesus appeared to her saying He was God, but in a human body. This woman asked Sarah what she thought about this dream. Sarah replied, “This is the dream I’ve been waiting for. I’m not a Christian, but if I had that dream I would be.” Praise God! Sometimes it’s difficult to pour time and energy into people, never knowing what will come of it. This news from Sweden was so encouraging to me—*Sarah remembered what she’d been taught and is sharing it with others!* Please join me in praying that one day soon Sarah too will come to faith in Christ.

## Left behind

In the past month our team here has seen a disturbing trend among some refugee families. It is quite common for refugees to split up their families, sending part ahead to another country to then apply for asylum for the entire family.

Now, however, we know of several families who have either completely left a child behind *or* untruthfully claimed the other parent isn’t in Greece. If the government is involved, then these children are then placed in the care of hospitals or orphanages until they can be united with the parent in another European country.



Visiting an Afghan girl at the hospital

The desperation of these parents is leading them to unimaginable choices. It’s a game families are playing, trying to get their children further into Europe by abusing the system. The children are the ones who pay an emotional price (not to mention the struggling Greek social services who look after these children)—forced to lie about the whereabouts of their family, cut off from seeing a parent who is living in Greece, placed in the care of a governmental system with no guaranteed positive result, and unable to communicate fully with the all-Greek world they are suddenly thrust into.

One such family that has done this is an Afghan mullah (Islamic religious leader). We’d heard rumors that these children were lost somewhere in Europe, without either parent. Last month though I was at a local hospital visiting another young girl in this situation. There, on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of a public hospital, were three of the mullah’s children.

### Mission to Unreached Peoples

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They weren't sick, or lost in Europe, but placed in the hospital as a holding place by the Greek system who believes they are without a parent in Greece.

Our God, though, often uses hopeless, difficult situations for His glory. In the case of the mullah's children, a couple of Greek Christians saw their stay in the hospital as an opportunity from the Lord to have an influence in the lives of these children. They visited these children, continuing to talk to them about the Lord, building on things the children learned at an evangelical camp last summer. And two weeks ago the oldest son of the mullah expressed interest in faith in Christ! *Praise God for the seeds of faith planted in this young boy! And pray they will be watered and grown*, especially since the children have been moved to another facility and we have again lost contact with them.

Just this week I learned of another child close to my heart who has been left behind by her family. "Melissa", around 9 years old, has been in Athens for about 2 years. Her father and mother are living in a northern European country, with siblings scattered around Europe. As allowable in Islam, Melissa's father has two wives. Melissa was left behind in Athens over a year ago with her father's first wife, while her parents continued on the refugee highway. The first wife is mostly blind from cataracts, and was tossed aside by her husband. Melissa and this woman formed a unique pair, with Melissa helping her caretaker get around, and this woman being the motherly figure in her life. Now, however, this woman decided to try to make it further into Europe, leaving Melissa behind yet again.

*Please pray that this young girl will find her stability and identity in Christ.* There is a possibility that she may be reunited with her parents in another country—please pray that they will welcome and love her. My heart breaks for this girl, and the many others in her situation. *Join me in asking God to care for, watch over, and be close to these dear children. Pray also that this trend of refugee families abandoning children would be stopped.*

### Stories of hope

Among the heart-wrenching stories, there are also glimpses of hope. Already this year, among others, we've seen a blind man and a child with muscular dystrophy come to faith in Christ. Despite the hardship of life as a refugee with a disability, both of these new believers have joy and a desire to serve others. An Afghan friend (the one who cooked the rice for the Christmas parties) and her family received acceptance to move legally to Germany, giving them hope for making a new life somewhere. This so rarely happens among refugees, so it was a cause for great joy, but also a very tearful goodbye.

Throughout this ebb and flow of refugees passing through Athens, the Lord is at work, drawing people from darkness into His light. Thank you for being an essential part of this ministry through your prayers and giving! I'm grateful to be on this journey together.

~Christy



**Fun at our weekly Shower Day for women & children**