

McCracken Family Update—March 2010 (in 5 parts)...

PART 1

Sent: Mar 29, 2010 10:27 PM

Dear Friends,

Thanks for caring about our family and ministry. I am going to send this message out in five parts over the next several days in the hope that everything will be more easy to read in "bite-size" chunks. The points for prayer in the 5-part message are:

1. Update on Ellie
 2. Cody and Kyle's Mission Trip to Tanzania
 3. Dr. "S"
 - 4.. Ministry news from Athens
 5. Greece in the international news
1. The best way to keep up with pics and news concerning Ellie is to visit:

<http://elliebomccracken.blogspot.com>

In summary, though, her first round of HBOT treatments brought minimal results, but they WERE results so we have decided to go ahead with the second and third rounds (which should take us to the middle/end of May). Ellie was also able to get 3 weeks of intensive THERASUIT therapy during the break in Mobile, for which we were very grateful.

Scott is meeting some wonderful people at the Ronald McDonald House who are great examples of love, courage, endurance, and sacrifice and also having the opportunity to pray with some of them. He is also getting some speaking opportunities at churches, schools, and Sunday School classes. Scott is also learning how easily he can become impatient, frustrated, and selfish. He is continually reminded more of why he needs a Savior.

Though it is difficult to be separated for these months from Vicki and the boys, we believe that this is the best arrangement for the family at this time. Thanks for your prayers for Ellie's healing and development, God's financial provision for her therapy and assistive devices we need to buy, and for God to draw each of us deeper into Him

during our time apart as a family.

PART 2

Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 1:17 AM
To: "Scott McCracken" <mccra_sy@iteams.org>
Subject: McCracken Family Update--March 2010--Part 2

2. Cody and Kyle BOTH plan to go on a mission trip to Tanzania this December with other believers who are raising money for the purpose of building a sanctuary for a church there that currently meets under a tree. You may remember that Cody went last December. This is a church they met then and have continued communicating with and building relationship with.

They each need \$500 by May 1st. Cody already has \$480 and Kyle has \$175. They will each need a TOTAL of \$2,000.00 by November to be a part of this mission.

Because these are a bunch of Greek people going from Greece, and not with a specific mission organization (from the States or otherwise), financial investments for this mission are NOT tax-deductible for U.S. donors.

IF you are interested and able to invest in this way, you can make out the check to Scott McCracken (I know, it is a big trust issue here), and (until June) send to:

Scott McCracken
4230 Thigpen Dr. S.
Mobile, AL 36693

Many thanks to those who have already invested!

If you are not able to make an investment at this time, WE CERTAINLY understand and ask you to pray.

Grateful,

Scott and Vicki

PART 3

3. A. Here is what Athens team member Stacie Shopp recently wrote...

Sojourner

March 2010

On the way to work...

He radiates tiredness and defeat as he shuffles along the metro car. He idly plays his accordion. The music pierces the early morning, and someone puts a coin into his recycled coffee mug turned donation cup. I am strangely touched by his sounds, and yet can't quite let my eyes move to his. I find myself wondering, does he have a family? Where did he come from? What are his dreams?

I try not to see him. God sees him.

She fiddles with the buttons on her shiny cell phone. She chatters away with the comatose drug addicted man beside her. Her heavyset body sits solidly on the cardboard boxes huddled around her, and she scolds those walking past. This is her home. This is the filth of Sofokleus, and yet this is her home. I try not to step on her blankets. I pass her every day now on my way into our arched enclave. Who is she? Why is she here?

I try not to see her. God sees her.

The early morning brings a wave of cold tea drinkers into the door. This is the "Jesus Restaurant" as it is known on the street. I find myself pouring tea and avoiding their eyes. I don't want to see them really. Yet I can't stop myself from asking, who are these people? Where have they all come from? Why have they come?

I try not to see them. God sees them.

"For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him. Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?" Ecclesiastes 8

T tells me her story. Her uncle was a communist, the kind that oozed atheism. He cursed God. He died. T never knew anything but this form of belief, and so she counted on her own control and energy to survive. She came to Greece in search of work. It has not been easy she remembers.

Along the way she met a traveler, they began to work together to sell scarves on the streets. One scarf...one euro. Then he began to show signs of mental illness. He was tormented by demons. He was abusive and yet needy. T was driven to seek answers and safety. She was told about Jesus. She came to the "Jesus Restaurant". God found her there.

Have I ever really seen her?

I know I have tried not to see her. God sees her.

As she tells me this story now, her tired eyes radiate sorrow, hardship and immobilizing problems. I am overwhelmed and immobilized. Yet then she reminds me, that God whispered to her..."I AM".

T says, "If I had to go through all of this so as to see God, then it is worth it. Would I have come to trust Him if not for these things? Would I have seen His face if not for my struggles and brokenness? All I know is that now I see Him, and He is my Savior".

And so I remember that His Providence and participation in every single aspect of life and hurt and pain and joy is the promise. God sees. All that I try not to see in a day, and try to avoid truly seeing – God sees.

"Then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

So I reflected on all this and concluded...Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink...with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do." Ecclesiastes 8,9

A small café filled with known friends and laughter, of the quiet satisfied type. We sit and share a meal, the kind that goes down deep. We talk. I share, and she listens. We remember God. He whispers to us..."I AM".

I leisurely walk through the bustling city. People are casual after the end of another day, and I remember that things continue on despite the tragedies. He whispers..."I AM".

The sunlight warms the balcony and reminds me Who is in control. The waves crash only so far onto the beach to remind me Who is in control. I am calmed despite the hardship sights of this day because I'm reminded of Who is in control.

He whispers..."I AM".

I still cry at what I see. Yet God still whispers..."I AM".

Amen.

B. Here is what Athens team member Myrna Morley recently wrote...

Rather than do my usual update I thought I would just give you a few "Snapshots" of living in Greece and Refugee Ministry from the last few weeks.

1) I was in the ARC after hours waiting for Kent to be done with a meeting. I heard shouting on the street below and went out on to the balcony. There was a crowd of people gathered around something and I assumed maybe it was drugs. Suddenly out popped a little old Greek man with a spatula and he was handing out cream puffs. Everyone was gathering around reaching for them and if they got too pushy he would yell at them in Greek and hit at them with his spatula to wait their turn.

2) There is a lady "O" who comes to the ARC and can at times be a bit annoying with always wanting something more. However, a few days ago she told Suzie and I that at our last clothing give away she had taken clothes to give to a family with small children who live in her building. She said they have almost nothing and her face lit up as she told of the children's excitement over the new clothes. What a joy for her to be able to give instead of always having to take.

3) We attended two birthday parties in the last couple of weeks. One was Persian and once again we were all called on to dance. I was amazed when "S"s husband who is usually very quiet began to dance for us. He was VERY good. I know refugees miss their own culture and it was nice to see him abandon himself to the music. The other party was for Matthew's (Ilir and Kate's son) first birthday. One of the things we all miss here is our families and it is great to get together for a "family" event like a little one's birthday.

4) I walked into the office at the ARC. Someone was making copies, someone was on the computer, someone was getting a snack out of the 'fridge. In the middle of this chaos there was a quiet little circle as Kallie (our Greek teammate) sat and prayed with a woman who is critically ill.

5) My refugee friend from Romania "E" was trying to tell one of the Afghan ladies something. "E" was speaking Greek and the 9 year old daughter of another woman was translating into Farsi. It is fun to see some of the people breaking across cultural lines to become friends.

6) Our former security guard "M" who worked for the gallery upstairs was out of a job when it closed. Yesterday he came up to the ARC just to say hello and bring sweets for the kids. He grew to love these little ones as he helped carry strollers up the stairs and watched over us all. We miss him.

7) There are some things about Greek society I will never understand. Yesterday a young couple got on the bus with their son who was about 4. The woman was carrying about 6 bags of groceries and the man was just holding the child's hand. An older woman got up and gave the man her seat so he could sit down with the child while she and his wife with all the groceries stood!

When I see pictures in my mind of the last week many of them are beautiful or funny or touching. Some of them are not. I picture the man standing with his pants down injecting himself, or the others who are already high weaving through traffic or leaning against a wall. I picture the people who sleep in boxes outside the entryway, or the prostitutes approaching men on the streets. It is amazing to me that in a beautiful country like Greece, which is surrounded by the turquoise sea and filled with historical sites, amazing food and warm people, there can be pockets of darkness. For many refugees that darkness is the only Greece they see and for many Greeks the darkness is something to be ignored. I am so thankful that God has sent us to be a part of bringing light into that darkness and that the Greek churches are beginning to join in the work. This week one of the local churches is starting a feeding program twice a month, another has opened a clothing room. As God's people begin to take seriously Jesus's words "for whatever you did for one the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" we can begin to push back the darkness. Thank you for being a part of that. We love you all.

PART 4

Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 3:08 PM

To: "Scott McCracken" <mccra_sv@iteams.org>

Subject: McCracken Family Update--March 2010--Part 4

3. Dr. "S" from Pakistan, an important political figure about whom we have written before, is still praying for his family to be safely delivered out of Pakistan and for them to come to know Jesus too. Here are a few excerpts written in recent days about Dr. "S"...

...On Friday, Kent picked up our friend Dr. "S" and took him for a drive down the coast for a few hours. Later, we had a fun dinner laughing and joking. Afterward we moved to the living room with the intention of watching a movie but ended up just visiting. I was talking with Dr. "S" and he said, "Many days I feel as if I am losing

my mind but when I am here with you or with Brother Kent, I have hope." It has been a year since he came here and he worries constantly about his wife and 4-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son. Please continue to pray for him for courage and peace, and that he can be granted asylum.

...The next morning we picked up Dr. "S" our friend from Pakistan who is a new Christian...Dr. "S" had never been to church before so asked us to explain what would happen there. We explained the order of the service and since we go to a church that has communion every Sunday we explained about how it symbolized what Jesus did for us on the cross and was a time to pray and remember that. As I sat next to Dr. "S" that day I felt tears welling up as I shared communion for the first time with this new believer.

After church Dr. "S" said, "I have no words to tell you what I am feeling. When I went to the Mosque the Imam always was holding himself up as higher than everyone else. Here everyone is alike. At the Mosque the Imam would not allow anyone else to speak. Here many people spoke and prayed. At the Mosque the Imam would be speaking of God who is terrible and angry and wants to punish us. Here you talked of God who loves us. At the Mosque no women would enter. Here there are women and men and children worshiping together. I liked this very much".

He also said he liked how friendly everyone was to each other and to him. It was really neat to sit He has also talked to Kent about being baptized.

...(FROM DR. "S" TO ME, TUES. MAR.30TH)...

Dear brother Scott McCracken

Yesterday my wife had an interview in the Greek embassy at Islamabad. My wife just informed me she has been called again for another session of interview today...

...she had encouraging interview and HOPES she will get the visa in couple of days or weeks. This was her impression about interview, but we need to remember our Lord Jesus and His blessings to have everything smoothly, as hardships and agonies have been enough to bear for so long.

...so let's hope soon they will be evacuated from that indefinite zone of agony and barbarism with God's blessing and the prayers of all the brothers and sisters who have been asking God for a long time for help and resolution to my continual miseries.

Yeah, it would have been so wonderful to have u here at this great occasion of Easter!!! I'll be missing, and do miss, u a lot all the times!!!

HAPPY EASTER!!! MAY THE LORD SHOWER HIS UNLIMITED ETERNAL BLESSING UPON U, UR FAMILY FRIENDS, RELATIVES, AND ALL SISTERS BROTHERS IN CHRISTIANITY.

AMEN !

FAITHFULLY ,

"S"

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR THIS DEAR BROTHER AND FOR HIS FAMILY STILL IN HIDING FROM THE TALIBAN IN PAKISTAN.

PART 5

5. Greece in the international news...

Pray for the Greek people as the economy has affected almost every family. Unemployment is over 10% and as austerity measures take effect, estimates are that unemployment will increase to as high as 20%. Tax hikes are also hurting the average citizen (and ex-pats like us). **For example, gasoline jumped from \$5.20/gallon to \$7.20/gallon in one day. Utilities immediately went up as well.**

If you made it this far in our 5-part update, THANKS FOR CARING! If you pray for us, THANKS FOR PRAYING! If you ever make a financial investment in our life/ministry, THANKS FOR INVESTING.

Due to economic hardships in the U.S., we have recently received notification from individuals and churches that they will either need to discontinue their support or they may need to soon. We are feeling the economic hardship from both the U.S. and from the Greece side. **HOWEVER, GOD IS OUR SOURCE and we continue to trust that WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES.** If you have allowed Him to use you in helping to provide for us, THANK YOU! WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL!

Thanking God for you,

Scott and Vicki

WE WISH YOU A BLESSED AND HAPPY EASTER WHERE EVER YOU ARE IN THE WORLD!