

McCracken Update from Athens--Feb. 7, 2012

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Dear Praying Friends,

Today, I want to share a couple of stories to praise God for and pray about.

In another day or two I will send a message about an exciting change for us.

* "M" the Tailor was a refugee who came from Iran and met Jesus in Athens. After growing in Him, he went to Holland for a while and joined some YWAM missionaries sharing Jesus with refugees in the Netherlands. Later he ended up back in Greece for a while and told me how the things he learned from the Helping Hands staff not only helped him find Jesus, but they helped him help others find Jesus AND helped him to help others reach out to refugees.

Now, he is in Belgium where he has helped launch a ministry called Open Home, which is a drop-in center very similar to Helping Hands where refugees can come off the streets for hot tea, table games, free literature in their own language, watch evangelistic videos, hear Gospel presentations, make friends with Christians and meet Jesus Christ! You can find it on Facebook with the name Open Home.

Please pray for "M"--that God will continue to use him to reach others with the Gospel, that he can legally settle in a country where he can marry his fiance and get a job, and that he will continue to grow in his intimacy with Jesus.

* This story was written by Helping Hands staff member Kallie Skaife (well worth the few minutes it will take you to read it):

SONIA

Our Dear Family and Friends,

A few weeks before Christmas, an Afghan family appeared at our centre with their children. Four, bright, happy children, children with sparkling eyes.

The older girl Sonia*, a ten year old, and the youngest one, a three year old girl, are carried in a double pushchair.

They were born with muscular dystrophy; they cannot walk.

Sonia is a remarkable child.

What initially drew my attention were her two skinny paralysed legs, but what stole my heart's affection were her exceptionally bright, mature, intelligent and cheerful personality and her quest for life.

Sonia is open to people, aware of herself and the world around her, aware of her disease though not intimidated by it, aware of her pain but without wallowing in self pity.

A gifted mind, and a steady heart, imprisoned by two withered legs.

A quietly assured young woman within a child's frame.

Life is an attraction to Sonia. She has been given a will to live and to fight.

During our Christmas party program, when the Christmas message began, her father was perturbed. He got agitated and did not want to allow his wife and family to listen to what was being said. He a muslim.

Two weeks ago, however, after the gospel message we give on Tuesday's, he came with his wife and asked if we can pray for them.

I was surprised, to say the least, and sat down with them, in wonder, to open the scriptures and pray.

'Surely our sicknesses He Himself bore, and carried our sorrows . . . and by His stripes we are healed. . . ' Isaiah 53: 4-5

'The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. . . to bind up the broken hearted. . . to proclaim liberty to captives. . . to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord. . . ' Luke 4: 18

When the children's class finished, Sonia and the other three children joined us. She got hold of my ear and whispered, '*Isha, Isha*', Jesus, Jesus!

I found out that on that very same day, while we were looking through the scriptures with her parents, she had told Wendy that she wanted Jesus in her life and our colleagues had led her to the Lord!

The following week they came with us to our Sunday morning service.

Father led the whole family to the front for prayer!

Sonia was visibly touched by the Lord, the pain of her little heart and her longing was released as she wept and her body shook.

Last Sunday morning, father brought her again; she wanted to go to Sunday school. At the end of the service, as she was waiting at the front for prayer, she took *David's hand (the one I call 'the swan of God' who serves as an interpreter between the family and the pastor) and said, "As sure as I hold your hand, so sure I love Jesus!"

The father was so moved by the pastor's prayer and the blessing that was pronounced over him that he took hold of the pastor's hand to kiss it and wept.

Sonia also wept and wept.

"All these children run and walk, but what about me? Oh Jesus what about me!"

A broken shell, longing to be immersed in the Living waters.

Sonia has come to Him, she is thirsty to know God and she is bravely asking Him the questions of her life!

"What about me, Oh Jesus?"

She is encountering Him!

Will you join us in prayer for this young woman?

We are asking the Lord for her full healing and for a word that will liberate not only her body but also her heart from her debilitating condition.

Has not the Lord heard the cry of this honest heart?

God has touched her and He will lead her safely into her destiny that has been mapped for her in Christ Jesus.

She has been born and her adventure has just begun.

And we are privileged to have witnessed just the beginning.

Stand with us in prayer for this family.

* = is a pseudonym

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