

Dear Friends,

We want to wish you a Spirit-filled Easter, with hopes and prayers that you will experience more of the active presence of our risen Savior this year.

In a previous email update I mentioned the Afghani woman whose husband was killed by his brothers for having a Bible in the house. Part of her fuller story is attached (written by teammate Kallie Skaife). It is a long story but one of the best you will read anywhere or any time.

Grateful for you,

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17<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Our dear family and friends,

Hundreds of things have been happening in the last two months and it has been so busy that it seemed we came home to sleep only!

I will try nevertheless to share with you a couple of stories, in the coming weeks, that have greatly touched our hearts and might relay to you some of the hundreds of projects God is working on among us here in Athens.

#### **WITHOUT WORDS.....**

"B" is a tall, noble Afghan woman with fine features and a face that portrays a most fine personality.

I first met her a couple of weeks before Christmas.

It was at 5 o'clock, one Sunday afternoon when she appeared at the little bible study for Iranian and Afghan women that I lead, at Helping Hands.

On introduction she buried her head into her arms on the table in front of her and just wept before us.

We found out through my translator on Sundays, that she had very high levels of sugar in her blood and was full of fear as to what will happen to her three children if she became ill enough to be hospitalised.

We prayed for her.

She was quiet and although she and her children carried visibly a deep and angry sorrow, she kept to herself.

She was not willing to be known.

Next Sunday she is back again.

We are studying the various names of God revealed in the Old Testament.

Today we are talking about El Elyon, God Most High.

I watch her from the corner of my eye. I feel that she is drinking the words. Later in the evening, during the Persian Fellowship meeting, I find myself sitting next to her and I feel again that her spirit is drinking the words quietly.

At the end of the evening she is in great agitation. Her blood sugar levels have reached 3.5 mg and she is not at all well. We decide with Jimmy to take her to a hospital as she is in danger of becoming comatose if the sugar levels go any higher.

We arrive at the casualty ward of a hospital that is on night duty.

The emergencies of the night are packed like sardines in a tin can, and we are given an appointment ticket with the number 186!

The night is young....

I realise that the wait is going to be long and we decide that Jimmy should go home and catch some sleep as the next day Nea Zoi has outreach in the downtown brothels.

Suddenly a young lady approaches me and ask if I would like her appointment ticket as she has decided to wait no longer.

Her ticket is number 96!

Aha! It is the Lord!

Within a few minutes it is our turn to be called and the doctor hands me a long list of 101 tests that need to be done in order to round up a diagnosis.

I approach the hospital cashier and the lady responsible asks me if I have medical insurance. 'I have none madam.'

She lifts her face to look at me and after a long gaze, amidst groans, quarrels, smells, arguments of desperate patients, desperate relatives and desperate cashiers, against any hospital rules, she stamps the prescriptions and hands them back to me!

'You will not pay anything tonight madam...'

Aha! The Lord is here! He has come before us!

My hair stands on end and my heart is filled with anticipation.

The night is pregnant...

It is past midnight.

As we have to wait over 3 hours for the test results, I ask her if she would like to go for a walk outside around the block, as walking is said to help bring down sugar levels.

We walk arm in arm and I feel deep down in my spirit her sorrow and God's longing to make Himself known to her.

But there are no more than 30 words between us. I barely speak Farsi and she barely speaks English.

We are in need of an interpreter.

We are hardly out of the reach of the hospital, when under the bright and crisp winter sky, she decides to open her heart and reveal her story.

*"..... My husband.....very good engineer....20 years together....communist... every day angry.....then changes....very happy...loving....I ask him why.....he tells me on 25th December his Afghan friend explains about Christmas.....2006 he reads book from India.....about Jesus.....*

*..... My husband loves Jesus.....read Book every day.....every month goes Kabul.....meet 30 university people.....they talk about Jesus.....in secret.....*

*.....two of them disappear..... the rest disperse.....*

*.....My husband.....has four brothers.....they are Taliban.....they hate Book.....his mother 90 years hates the Book.....everyday they shout..... 'this Book out of house'.....*

*....One day.....April 2007 .....four brothers kill my husband with their hands.....at home.....my children watch him die.....*

*...His family say that I gave him the Book....they hate me....I sell my rings and come through Iran to Turkey and to Greek island Kos....our boat breaks.....the police fish me and my children out of the water....the police cry....."*

April 2007, Kantahar, stronghold of the Taliban, is watered by the blood of a faithful martyr. Unknown to men, known unto God.

She weeps quietly under the starry sky and I weep with her, praying the words and longings that are rising in my spirit.

Our hearts are poured out to one another, all that is to be known is known without being said and our friendship is sealed for life.

Hearts speak their own language and the interpreter is the Holy Spirit.

'...You are my sister..., I want your God be my God...'

We are standing on a pavement and despite the language barrier, we both know, unmistakably that our lives as women have met and that we have met Jesus right there on the bench of a bus stop in downtown Athens.

It is 3 o'clock in the morning.

She is back at Helping Hands in a few days, asking which name of God she missed last Sunday!

I take her to our small office and as there is hardly any vocabulary between us I try to help her find, in a Farsi Bible, the appropriate passage from Genesis 16.

She reads aloud.

...'Woman, where are you coming from and where are you going? Go back and face your life... I know your mistress...I know your misfortune... I know the child you are carrying...I have a name for him and a future... EL ROI the God who sees!'

Her face lights up.

'*Very nice, very nice,*' she says.

I turn her to the 91 Psalm.

She reads the first couple of verses and looks up incredulously. Then she reads a couple more and looks up incredulously. Then a few more.

As long as I live I will not forget her look, it is the look of a starved man who has just discovered an enormous cream cake and is savouring the first cherry on the top of the cream!!!!

Or even of a man born blind who opens his eyes for the first time and sees a world lit up by the warm light of the sun!!

I point her to Psalm 42. 'As the deer pants for the waters so my soul longs for You...'

'*Very, very nice...*'

She begins to weep.

Psalm 43. 'Why are disquieted oh my soul, hope thou in God'.

She is like a thirsty land drinking the long longed for rain, in front of my eyes.

Psalm 23. 'The Lord is my shepherd...'

She lifts up the Book to her lips and kisses the page in her tears.

'*I understand...I understand these words!*'

It is an open heaven for Bani and the Holy Spirit is explaining to her the scriptures!

I cannot speak Farsi and she cannot speak more than 30 English words!

The following days, every time she comes to Helping Hands, we shut ourselves in the little office and I try to help her find in a Farsi Bible scriptures that come up in my heart.

Psalm 37. 'Do not fret about the evildoer....cease from anger....'

'*I was angry when I come to Greece, because my husband dies..... I hit my children.....*'

John 8. 'Woman where are your accusers...neither do I condemn you...'

She weeps and hugs the Book...

And the week days follow, there follow other scriptures.

Isaiah 61. 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good tidings to the poor...'

Isaiah 53 '...He was wounded for our transgressions...'

'*Is this Jesus?*'

The crucifixion from the last chapters of John.

'*I believe... I believe...I see...*'

John 3. Nicodemus and the need of a second birth.

'*I believe...I want...Jesus my God... Your God ...my God...my eyes open...*'

And so this dear woman, in a jam-cramped-cluttered-full of interruptions office, lays hold of Gods salvation, without hardly any words of explanation, hardly any conventional evangelism! I watch her being led through all the stages of a new birth by the precious Holy Spirit alone!

She makes me understand that she wants, on Sunday morning worship, (she has been coming with us the last two weeks), to stand in the front and say to everybody, '*I believe, I believe, I believe!*' When I point to her the scripture in Romans 10, 9, 'If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth...', she laughs, '*like me*', she says! She is radiant.

On Sundy mornings ,at the fellowship we attend, she weeps at the beauty of the songs. She brings another young Afgan family with her '*who want Jesus too*' and another Afgan widow with a 14 year old girl who came to the Lord two weeks ago! "B" 's two daughters have '*also taken Jesus*'.

Two Saturdays ago at her own request, together with two other Afghan men, she went through the waters of baptism!

"B"... a widow from Kantahar, without a covering, bereaved of a beloved husband, bereaved of protection, bereaved of family, ( her own mother would not give her shelter for fear of reprisals from the Taliban), bereaved of country, bereaved of dreams; a woman refugee in crowded Athens, is beaming. Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to her and she is taken up with His beauty. And this is but the beginning of her journey.

Our God is a Spirit. He is free to do whatever He wants, whenever He wants with whoever He wants. No existence that has been created by Him can limit him. He is not limited by words because by His Spirit He can explain the depths of God to the spirit of man. His word is not bound to human explanation and does not need human defending.

It is humbling but utterly true.

Our dear brothers and sisters, it is becoming clearer than the sun that we are swimming in a ministry that has come from God and has not to do with us.

We are reaping a harvest that we have not sown!

I wonder whose endless tears of intercession, the blood of which martyrs has reached the throne of God and has released these floods of grace, borne in His Sacred Heart for these people from the foundation of the world? It is a humbling and breath-taking question.

In front of our eyes and in our generation the Lord is breaking the spirit of Islam, as he has done earlier with the spirit of communism. The Lord is gathering the 'travail of His soul' and He is satisfied. And we are intoxicated with just tasting a glimpse of His great joy.

Please uphold this ministry in your prayers. There is a ripe and vast harvest. Ask the Lord of the harvest to sent labourers.

Could we ask you to continue to pray for us; we seem to need God more than ever before.

I long so much to speak Farsi quickly. "B" is my teacher. Will you pray that I will be given the grace I need to learn a new language at this stage of my life?

And will you remember to pray for this dear woman, "B"?

That the Lord will heal both her and her little boy from diabetes, that her two older daughters, 9 and 14 will be healed from their sorrow and memories, that He will establish her socially and spiritually in a Christian community and that she 'will be fashioned as a corner pillar fit for His palace'.

We send you all our love, Jimmy and Kallie Skaife