

Reaching the nations through Athens...and beyond...

January 30, 2013

Last week I (Scott) had the honor and privilege of visiting a very special couple in a neighboring country. This couple is special for a number of reasons...

Reason #1: The young man "M" came to Christ in Athens several years ago, grew in the Lord, and became a good friend and brother in the Lord (his short story is below)

Reason #2: After immigrating to Canada, he met, fell in love with, and married a beautiful and godly pastor's kid

Reason #3: They left Canada a couple years ago to share the Gospel in a country neighboring ours. They have buried their lives in a very sacrificial way to build up disciples and make disciple-makers. They are pastoring TWO churches and they are running a residential community-based discipleship training school (where they live with the students).

What a joy it was for me to see not only how God is using "M" to bless others, but to understand what a wise, balanced, sensitive, Kingdom-oriented, sacrificial, giving, servant of God he has grown into!

Mike Mahan (who, with his wife Elisabeth helped us in discipleship ministry in Athens for 3 months before returning the USA yesterday) traveled with me, and we were privileged to teach classes at the school regarding discipleship and marriage & parenting, as well as preaching at both churches and leading seminars in both places.

Due to security issues, I cannot include photos or details but "M" and his wife "S" have given me permission to attach their latest prayer letter. I hope you will read it, be encouraged, and make a (worthy) prayer and/or financial investment in the very GREAT work they are doing among refugees from "M"'s country (as well as some who come out, get trained, and GO BACK).

THANK YOU FOR THE PART YOU HAVE PLAYED THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS AND/OR FINANCES TO HELP US REACH THE NATIONS THROUGH ATHENS AND BEYOND!!!

Grateful,

Scott (& Vicki) McCracken

"M" is a remarkable young man who used to own a successful restaurant, and enjoyed a prosperous life in a Middle Eastern country. By 2003 he had become so discouraged by the political and economic situation in his homeland that he and his wife of eleven months set out on the "refugee highway" in search of freedom and a better life.

"M" and his bride traveled together to Turkey but were unable to find a smuggler who could take them any further. The young disillusioned Muslim found it necessary to send his wife back to their native country to live with her family until he could find a way to emigrate to Canada. They agreed that as soon as he was settled and able to buy an airplane ticket for his wife, she would join him in the west.

He eventually crossed the mountainous border between Turkey and Greece on foot during the night. After his arrival in Athens, he intended to hire a smuggler to sneak him into Norway and then on to the “promised land” of Canada. But God had other plans for his life. . . .

After spending three months in a refugee camp, "M" found his way to "Helping Hands" where he received a Bible and heard the Gospel for the first time in his life. He began attending the Persian Christian Fellowship where he heard messages about the Son of God who died for his sins, and he experienced the love of Christ in the lives of believers he met there. After several months of seeking and examining the *Good News* that he had been taught all his life to reject, he received Jesus Christ as his Savior.

In the months following, this young believer remained amazingly cheerful and solid in his faith in spite of a series of agonizing trials. In the early part of 2004, "M" underwent surgery to remove a cyst from his tailbone. During the ensuing months, he suffered a number of complications and infections. The cyst continues to be grow back even after removals, and it is very painful for “M” to sit for any length of time, in class, in a car, on a plane, anywhere.

Partway through the time-consuming and patience-demanding process of applying for a visa to emigrate to Canada, "M"'s wife informed him that she had decided to divorce him and never wanted to see him again because he had become a Christian!

In spite of these and other heartbreaking setbacks, "M" completed the six-month "Athens Intensive Ministry School" and graduated from the Greek Bible Institute in June, 2006. He served as the founding pastor of the Persian Christian Community, where more than 50 former Muslims came to faith in Jesus Christ in the first year. Regarding his trials and losses, "M" has said that, like the Apostle Paul's testimony in Philippians 3, even after losing everything that he had valued in his former life, he is convinced that when he came to know Jesus Christ he gained something infinitely greater than marriage, home, business and family.

"M" has truly “counted the cost of discipleship” and God is using him to disciple disciple-makers, continuing to advance the Kingdom beyond borders. He has led his mother, brother, and sister to the Lord, and they have been baptized by him in the country where he now lives and ministers along with his beautiful Christian wife.