



THE HAYNES

MISSIONARIES TO IRAQI KURDISTAN

"Victory against God is unattainable and rebellion against God is unreasonable."

A Believer, 2021

Dear Pastor,

January - February 2021

Gospel Opportunities

In our previous letter, I mentioned several Gospel opportunities and am so excited to share one of them with you.

While Apryl and I were waiting for our visa paperwork, we were ushered into an office several flights upstairs (the higher up the office is in the building the more important the office). We were introduced to the ranking officer in the room and sat down. We would discover later that he was a colonel. Before he said, "hello" or any of the 55 typical Kurdish greetings (mild sarcasm here, but, seriously, Kurdish people say hello and goodbye for almost 30 min) he asked me in English, "So, are you a pastor or what?" Talk about getting caught off guard. As we are determined never to hide who we are and what God has called us to do, I answered, "Yes sir. I am." He coyly replied, "You teach English while you live here, huh? I guess that is killing two birds with one stone." I told him that is exactly what we are doing and the conversation went on from there. As we spoke God gave opportunity to witness and we took it. All of the men in that office stopped what they were doing and listened for almost 45 minutes. We sat in the office of the Ministry of Residency in a Muslim country and talked about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I thought I was dreaming. These things happen to missionaries, but they happen to other missionaries! During this conversation Apryl leaned over and whispered, "I don't care if we kicked out or arrested for what is happening right now. I am behind you 100% and you just keep telling them."

The colonel has since visited our home and had the Gospel presented to him three times. Please pray for Colonel B. There are other Christians praying for his salvation even here in Kurdistan. It was no accident that we met him that day and no coincidence that he has been on the heart of other believers.

Plans and Needs

PRAY:

Our emergency and vehicle fund were fully covered! Thank you for your generosity and response to those needs.

As always, we ask for your prayers that God would make us effective in the ministry of the Gospel.

Matt & Apryl Haynes

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SENDING CHURCH

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The Wife's Perspective
Ramadan - "The Holy Month"

Ramadan is the month in which Muslims hold a daily fast from sunrise to sunset and put special emphasis on prayer and alms. I've written about it in years past. Observing it is one of the "Five Pillars of Islam". Moving back on the calendar about two weeks each year, Ramadan 2021 started just a couple of days ago. I always anticipate how much the atmosphere will change during Ramadan. I wake up the first morning knowing that the mornings and sunlight hours will be strangely quiet and things will come alive beginning at sunset and then all through the night. Around sunset, the markets open, you hear women preparing food in their houses, children begin to play in the streets and after supper young men hang out at cafes all night eating and smoking.

Foreigners in the Middle East often leave during the month of Ramadan and I understand why they do. It's a scarce time for visits with Muslims. You might be invited to partake in an Iftar meal or two (their meal to break the fast), but for the most part opportunities to spend time with local people dwindle drastically. I tried to squeeze visits in with ladies at the last minute before knowing I won't see them much for the month. One of them told me that their family is "more open-minded than other people here" so I should visit one day anyway. I will certainly do so, but on the whole I am aware that very little contact will be happening.

Some foreigners find it a depressing time and I understand that too. There is an atmosphere of false religiosity in the air as Islamic principles are strictly observed and many Muslims who hold casual faith the rest of the year become suddenly serious about tradition. Businesses are closed, people sleep in very late and hang around lazily during the day. The month can understandably feel long, but I really try to take it as an opportunity. I like to think that while Muslim neighbors are praying, fasting and dedicating themselves to an invalid object of faith, the few missionary workers laboring in the Muslim world are using it as a time to pray, fast, and dedicate ourselves to truth and the True God. What an opportunity every year to spend real time interceding for Muslims! Though they may not know what for, they are *seeking* during this time! We can ask that as they seek the Holy Spirit casts doubt regarding their faith and draws their interest and questions and longings to the person of Jesus Christ!

Whether you know a Muslim or you don't, I would love to ask you to pray with me for the remainder of this month. I know the few people trying to win Muslims in this part of the world are serious about their labors, their prayers and their love for this needy and deeply blind people, but there are few of us so we really crave the extra prayer support! The month of Ramadan is a great opportunity to intercede! If you choose to pray, *pray specific prayers*. I'm asking God to prick their hearts during their times of prayer, to make them question their faith, to give them courage to turn their back on family, society, their jobs, their security (whatever it takes) and accept Jesus at last. I'm asking Him to specifically draw the Kurdish people we have shared the gospel with so that the words of truth they've heard would replay in their ears until they cannot ignore it! If you would like to email me, I would be happy to give you names to pray for of Kurdish people that we are trying to win to Jesus. What if through prayer Christians refused to let Ramadan be about a false god and made it about the power of the God of the Bible and the truth of Jesus?

Apryl Haynes