

January -  
February

2024



## THE HAYNES

MISSIONARIES TO IRAQI KURDISTAN



## Ministry Update

### *Muslim Outreach*

Apryl and I spent a post-December "Christmas Day Celebration" with a beloved Muslim family. This has become a tradition in our two families and one we cherish with the hope of the Gospel in the forefront of our minds. It has allowed for questions regarding what Christians truly believe that, in other contexts, would not be asked.

It would be an answer to one of our most deeply felt requests that even one member of this precious family would believe. Please pray for the family of Mr. S \_\_\_\_\_. The hearts of the Iraqi Kurdish people are warm toward us as Americans, but they often grow cold at the

mention of the Gospel. It is our earnest desire to see Iraqi Kurds reached with the Gospel.

### *Light of Life Baptist Church*

We experienced some attrition in our small church for the first time! The Lord allowed some trials and as a result some folks are no longer attending. It was quite a learning process for this missionary and for our church.

However, I could not have been more pleased with the behavior of our members and their mindset of continuing faithfulness. The Lord has blessed and brought in others to fill the places of those who left. We have seen no appreciable dip in attendance! Praise God for faithful people.

### *Security Update*

Praise the Lord that there have been fewer airstrikes in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region specifically targeting US forces. Syria, Turkey, and Iran more than make up for the deficit by targeting US friendly targets. There have been grumblings from the Iraqi government regarding the expulsion of US troops from Iraq as a whole.

We praise the Lord that, while they are divided on so many issues, almost all Kurdish political parties are united in seeking for the US to remain present in the Kurdish Region. There are Kurdish civilian casualties almost every week from rockets lobbed by their Muslim neighbors. It is heartbreaking to watch unbelievers killing unbelievers in the name of religion, nationalism, or just plain old bigotry.

Our hearts ache every time we see photos and hear reports of villagers herding sheep or children playing in their rundown schoolyard who, in a single cruel moment, step out into eternity without hope. It is unlikely that we will see political peace in the Middle East, but we are not discouraged because we hope in the Gospel of the Prince of Peace.



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## *The Wife's Perspective*

*We belong to Allah and unto him we shall return... inshallah*

Some recent deaths in families here have me thinking on this oft-repeated phrase in the Muslim world – “We belong to Allah and unto him we shall return.” When a Muslim hears the news of someone’s death, saying this phrase is their first response.

The first Muslim funeral I attended was one of the most intense experiences I have ever had. Men and women gather separately for public grief, so Matt and I went separate ways. I should have thought to bring a friend with me as I was not prepared. I won’t go into all the details, but I’ll never forget it – the wailing, screaming, even fainting and all accompanied by the phrase, “We belong to Allah and unto him we shall return.” But they don’t belong to God. They only belong to Him in the sense that he is their creator, their judge, and ultimately, the one they will answer to. The way we think of the word ‘belong’ - safe and secure in His hand, no man can pluck us out, our eternity sure – no, they don’t belong to Him. They say this phrase knowing they aren’t sure of it. In fact, the vast majority of the times I have shared the gospel with a Muslim, they have insisted that we cannot know where we will go when we die. It would be more accurate if they said, “Do we belong to Allah? And shall we return to Him?”

I’m sitting in a café and in the time I have been typing this letter, three young men have spread the prayer carpet a few feet away from me and made their prayers. These young men will likely have included the phrase “O our Lord give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and protect us from the punishment of the Fire”. They say this with a hope that will someday come up empty.

“Inshallah” is another term you will hear countless times in Muslim culture. It means, “if God wills” and is used for everything – “I will come to your house tomorrow, inshallah”, “They will recover from sickness, inshallah”, “It will rain, inshallah”. I noticed recently it’s sometimes used with the phrase we’re discussing in this letter – “We belong to Allah and unto him we shall return, inshallah”. According to 2 Peter, God *does* have a will for their souls, – He “...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” He has already stated his will concerning their souls! All the prayers and a lifetime of performing the five pillars of Islam will not bring them an inch closer to the assurance we have in Jesus Christ.

As the Muslim month of Ramadan approaches, I would love for you to join me in praying for Muslims of the world. Let’s pray that God would show them the emptiness of their prayers, the hopelessness of their beliefs and that individuals would indeed *belong* to God by receiving his Son Jesus.

*Apryl Haynes*

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