

September-October 2023



THE HAYNES
MISSIONARIES TO IRAQI KURDISTAN

Inconvenience should never be a deterrent to obedience.

- a Baptist preacher

Dear Pastor,

Kurdistan, Iraq
Light of Life Baptist Church

•October 7th

Many supporters and friends reached out to us and inquired after our health and safety. We greatly appreciate your care and concern. It encouraged us and brought us comfort knowing so many were praying. Some are no doubt aware that nothing in the Middle East (M.E.) happens in a vacuum. As of the end of October there have been around 38 rocket attacks targeting US interests in Syria and Iraq. Some of those attacks have occurred in our capital city, Erbil.

Friends, we are not going anywhere, by the grace of God. If we left the M.E. every time a new war started or an attack occurred we would never get anything done. God called us here. Our lives are his to with as he pleases. He has the right to tell us to leave, but he also has the right to say, "Stay." The M.E. needs preachers to come, but it also needs them to stay. Unless God makes something else clear we are here to stay.

•Church Update

5 new members were added to the church!! We praise God for this wonderful addition to the local church. This family served, and continues to do so, in every area possible prior to becoming members. No job was too small or too lowly. They evidence a spirit of service, surrender and a desire to grow closer to the Lord.

Please pray for this precious family. They come from a Catholic background and have faced persecution in the form of job loss and family ostracization. Yet, throughout all of their struggles, they have remained faithful.

More first time visitors

We have had visitors in almost every service! We have no website, no facebook or online presence whatsoever, but the people keep bringing people. Pray that these visitors will come to faith.

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

Matt & Apryl Haynes

(405) 468-6500 | news@kurdishmissions.org

SENDING CHURCH

Maranatha Baptist Church
2800 N Divis, Bethany, OK 73008

PRAY WITH US

•For the Salvation of Souls



This young Muslim boy came to our "Family Fun Night." Pray that the Gospel preaching he heard that night finds fertile ground in his heart.

•For Consistent Church Growth



New members signing the Church Covenant!!

****Urgent Prayer Request****

*Our church is facing its greatest challenge to date. The circumstances of the Devil's attack are quite serious in nature and we would covet your prayers.

We desire to do only those things that would please the Lord and result in his glory.



The Wife's Perspective

An Arranged Marriage of Sorts

One of the thoughts that comes to mind when people consider Muslims and the Middle East is that of the arranged marriage. A strange and even possibly abhorrent thought to many of us as foreigners, it is a common practice in the Middle East. Many in Muslim societies do not even meet their spouse until shortly before or at the moment of marriage. Others (more common in our region) are set up by mothers or aunts choosing suitable partners for their sons. Sought after girls are beautiful, healthy, skilled in cleaning and cooking, from “good families”, and without perceived spot on their reputation. Those marriages that are not arranged are referred to as “love marriages”. Think on that for a moment.

Tragically, countless arranged marriages never grow to be love marriages of their own. At best they are more of a partnership - one to add as many children as possible to the Islamic world and meet society's many expectations. Occasionally, however, Matt and I sit down with a couple and discover that, though their marriage was arranged, they did indeed come to love. What a breath of fresh air these stories are! Love blossomed even though it did not seem possible.

It may or may not be interesting to you to know that I never wanted to live in the city in which we now reside. Though it was not something I ever verbalized, of all the places we visited in Kurdistan on our survey trip, this was the one I firmly disliked.

Yet God has a funny way of helping us love the things we might perceive as unlovable (after all, He has a lot of practice). After literal years of planning to move to Erbil (the capital city of the Kurdish region here in Iraq), God changed our destination city two weeks before we arrived to live here! I was in shock. After two years of imagining my daily life there, picturing what ministry would be like, and mentally preparing to live in Erbil (I am convinced most missions preparation is mental and spiritual, not physical), we were moving three hours northwest to Duhok - a city that felt to me like it was on the backside of nowhere.

Fast forward almost eight years to last week. Matt and I were driving home from a few much-

needed hours in nature when we entered the Duhok city limits and in the quiet of my mind I heard the thought, “I love you, Duhok”. It struck me how much my affections have grown and changed which was followed by laughter as I realized my second thought - falling in love with this city has been a bit like an arranged marriage for me! The place that I would not have chosen for myself, that felt cold and distant, the place that felt unlovable is now beloved to me. The idea of having to part with it would break my heart.

This example of learning to love Duhok city has similarities to what many of us missionaries experience with the people we serve. When I first arrived in Iraq, I found the people themselves (unlike our city) easy to love. You will often hear new missionaries say, “They are beautiful people!”, “The culture is fascinating!”, or “I just feel such a connection with them!”. These sentiments, though not necessarily bad in themselves, are not where true love lives. No, it is when you see the ugly side of a culture, people do things to break your heart, or you find yourself still foreign despite years of living in a place that true love has the chance to emerge.

Greatest of all, of course, is the service that does not require the love of a people for faithfulness – when people are simply not enough to motivate our service, yet obedience and love of our Master keeps us laboring. But I think there is something to be said for the choice of love regarding the gospel. When the experiences are not incredible and the people are not lovely and the dark side of culture rears its ugly head, you discover that real love is found even in the presence of imperfection. This is how God loves me and that is how I want to love the people to whom we are called.



*View from our home
City of Duhok*

Apryl Haynes