

Sharing the Good News: God wipes away our tears

Twelve days ago my co-worker, Sam and I had the privilege of having coffee with two Yezidi men and playing frisbee on the grass next to my parking lot. This was more conducive for meaningful interaction than sitting in Tim Hortons! Our visit concluded on a fascinating note. J__ told us that he has an Arabic and English Bible at home and also mentioned he has recently viewed the Jesus video! As we walked to the car, J__ suggested that we meet again soon. One week earlier these same two guys had a long conversation with Sam about spiritual things after enjoying fun, food and fellowship along with 80 fellow Yezidis who we had invited to a picnic event in the park!

These events mark a momentous milestone since Sam started ministering to Yezidis two and a half years ago. With the help of a few coworkers, Sam has shown generous hospitality to these traumatized people. From time to time we've tried graciously mentioning the good news about Jesus but almost always they've been cautious, wary or seemingly closed.

Sam and I met again with J__ and H__ Friday evening, but this time in J__'s home. They explained how difficult it has been during the lock-down to practice speaking and listening to English. Also J__ shared a couple highlights which he enjoyed from having seen the Jesus movie. Finally, we asked if he would be willing to translate a couple wise sayings from Ecclesiastes probing the longing for eternity that God has planted in the human heart. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 and 7:1-5) J__ agreed without hesitation, though it won't be easy since since his knowledge of English is somewhat limited.

In the back of our minds, we are painfully aware of the tears and fears which Yezidis experienced during the infamous genocide of 2014 when the Islamic State attempted to annihilate the Yezidi people in their homeland of Kurdistan. Barely six weeks have passed since the Yezidi Community of London commemorated this defining moment at a memorial event held in Victoria Park. Two Christian friends attended this event along with Sam and his wife.

This vigil reminded us how deeply scarred these survivors are emotionally. Sorrowful shadows linger still over them, calling to mind similar imagery in Isaiah 25:6-9 about the “shroud of death”. God promises he will destroy the shroud of death that hangs so tragically over mankind. He “will wipe away the tears from all faces” eliciting rejoicing and gladness. Please pray as we seek to make the most of this new open door for explaining how “Jesus destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10)

The two passages from Ecclesiastes that we asked J__ to translate read as follows.

A good reputation is more valuable than costly perfume. And the day you die is better than the day you are born. Better to spend your time at **funerals** than at parties. After all, everyone dies—so the living should take this to heart. **Sorrow** is better than laughter, for **sadness** has a refining influence on us. A wise person thinks a lot about death, while a fool thinks only about having a good time. Better to be criticized by a wise person than to be praised by a fool. (NLT, bold added)

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. ... God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

These wise sayings invite us to think deeper, “Why do humans mourn?” and “Do heartache and sadness really have a refining influence?... If so, how?” We know that death and the inevitable separation it causes, evoke deep pain and grief, but death also has an underlying root cause. According to Scripture, it was disobedience and sin that separated our first ancestors from their Maker leading to the consequence of death. However, Isaiah declares an incredible promise, assuring us that God will destroy the root cause of our tears – sin and the shroud of death. What joyous, good news!

Please pray as we continue exploring these beautiful truths with our Yezidi friends, showing their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. Pray too, for a dozen other Yezidis who now want help learning English. A few days ago six Christian volunteers met to discuss how we can make the most of this opportunity. Many of us have had experience in training or tutoring-teaching English. We concluded by establishing plans to hold three weekly conversation circles, each one catering to a different set of needs.

Any comments, questions? Want to help in this outreach? Please write me here: eternityjohn173@yahoo.com