

McCRACKEN MEMO

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SCOTT'S SIDE

I have **two VERY IMPORTANT PRAYER REQUESTS** TO SHARE WITH YOU. (If you desire any more detailed info about either of these, please do not hesitate to ask).

#1...As most of you know, *I resigned as the director of Helping Hands at the end of December 2001.* (I am still working with Helping Hands and am still the Team Leader of the **IT/Athens Refugee Team**). My primary motivation for this is that I truly believe it is God's desire for a Greek to direct this ministry and as long as I was in the position I didn't believe that anyone else would "step up to the plate". Well, *someone has stepped up to the plate.*

The Helping Hands Board of Directors invited **Zacharias Katsas** to begin a one-year trial period, which started in May, as the **new Executive Director**.

We are excited about how we believe God will use him to take this ministry upward and onward in Greece! **Zacharias is a Greek believer with gifts, abilities, a heart for refugees, and a passion for Jesus that are all so strategic to this ministry becoming "owned" by the Greek Christians.**

We ask you to pray as the Spirit leads, but **ONE MAJOR AND IMMEDIATE** request regards the additional financial needs of Helping Hands. The position is a salaried one, and the Board set the salary as one that is comparable to an average salary in Greece to meet his needs in a reasonable way (\$1475/month). He will be paid according to Greek law regarding taxes and social security (43% of the salary!). However, **as Zacharias clearly understands, IT IS A HUGE STEP OF FAITH BECAUSE THERE IS CURRENTLY NOTHING (ZERO, ZILCH, ZIP) IN THE BUDGET** toward paying this salary. It is a step of faith for him and for the Board, but we believe that **where God guides God provides.**

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Sahar's Testimony

I was born in Iran into a very wealthy family. My father was not religious at all, and his skepticism rubbed off on me. I even had to attend a private high school (made up of mostly Christian students) so that I would not get in trouble at the public high school. My Armenian Christian classmates would ask me questions about my religion, questions I could not answer. I was interested in learning more about Christianity and even attended my friend's sister's wedding just so I could see the inside of a church building.

One day an American woman wandered into the expansive enclosure around our house. I was surprised to see that anyone had managed to get by the four guards, not to mention the guard dogs, that usually watched our gate. She was lost, so I walked her back to the street and pointed her in the direction of the address she was seeking. "Thank you," she said, "and, here, I have something for you." She gave me a New Testament in Farsi, my native tongue. When I asked about her later, no one in the area had seen her or knew anything about her.

The New Testament sat on a shelf in my room for a long time before I finally picked it up one night after discussions about Christianity with my classmates. I began at the beginning of Matthew and read straight through. When I got to Mark, I realized that it was telling the same story, but I couldn't put it down. When I had finished John, I realized it was four o'clock in the morning!

This Jesus character fascinated me, and I wanted to learn all I could about him. One day I telephoned my cousin

VICKI'S VIEW

Kendra passed through her first year of Junior High, complete with three weeks of exams to finish up her year. She managed all seventeen subjects (per semester!) and even passed Ancient Greek, which is a nightmare for even native Greek-speakers! Kendra has been gifted with a beautiful singing voice and has been taking voice lessons this year. *Our first-born will become an official teenager* in September!

We returned a couple of hours ago from **Cody and Kyle's** karate exams. They did wonderfully and received their next belt! Cody will be entering fifth grade in the fall and Kyle will enter third! Cody has a generous nature, and a head for math. Kyle keeps us all laughing with his quick wit and optimism. All the "big kids" are great with Will and he adores them!

William turns four in August and will start pre-school. His quirky approach to life cracks us up! Please pray for his adjustment to school. I think he'll enjoy it, but I expect he'll be a little lost at first being surrounded by only Greek-speakers. Still, we found that this extra year of school was helpful for our other kids in regard to language acquisition. (Mommy will try to adjust to having the house all to herself in the morning for the first time in thirteen years!!! Can you hear my "yahoo!" from here?!)

Scott and I have been so thankful this year as we've seen the Lord bring other Christian friends into our kid's lives. Also, as we've had many short-termers come to help the team, our children have seen young people who love them and love Jesus, and I know it makes an impact!

We are officially on the waiting list for our baby girl from Vietnam! We don't know who she is yet or when she will join us, but the Lord does, and we can't wait to meet her! Please keep the whole process in your prayers!

Finally, Scott and I just want to thank you so much for all of the prayers that you cover us with! We NEED you!

SCOTT'S SIDE (CONTINUED)

#2...Sahar Kamrani Fard is a young Iranian woman who has been volunteering with our ministry here for over 1 ½ years on a mostly full-time basis. Sahar is a TREMENDOUS asset to our team (PLEASE read her testimony).

Sahar is a gifted English teacher, an indispensable translator (both spoken and written), a true servant, a bold witness, a team player, humble, teachable, and a true friend to the refugees. And of course as a refugee herself she brings an invaluable perspective that increases her sensitivity to the others which helps us more relevantly reach out. She works in the kitchen, evangelizes women and children, visits the refugee camp, privately tutors and teaches English classes, oversees language classes, and helps in many other practical ways.

She has been "officially" accepted into the **International Teams** family and an account has been set up in her name. **Being from Iran will make it more than likely that God will provide her financial support through believers from abroad.** PLEASE pray and do whatever the Lord leads.

Investments in either Zacharias' or Sahar's ministry can be made out to **International Teams** and sent to:

International Teams, 411 W. River Rd.,
Elgin, IL 60123-1570

with a CLEAR INDICATION that it is for HELPING HANDS (designated for Zacarias Katsas) OR for Sahar Kamrani Fard's account.

People living in Europe may send their check to:

International Teams/UK, PO Box 11
Brecon, Powys
LD3 9WJ
United Kingdom

(again, clearly indicating who it is for)

I make these appeals with no shame or embarrassment, but rather a complete confidence that investing in either (or both) will be a worthy investment that will pay great eternal dividends in the advancement of God's kingdom among the nations!

God bless you for the vital part YOU play on our growing multi-cultural team!

IMPORTANT: IF YOU HAVE E-MAIL ACCESS AND WISH TO BE ON OUR PRAYER UPDATE LIST, PLEASE E-MAIL US AND LET US KNOW!

SAHAR'S TESTIMONY (CONTINUED)

and told her I wanted to talk to her about something interesting. I stuck my New Testament and a book criticizing Islam, which my friends at school had given me, into my bag and left for her house. I would always take a cab when I went to see her, but this time I walked. **I was stopped by the religious police, who investigated my bag. Then they immediately arrested me.**

When my father found out, he went to the police station and talked to the guard on duty. "How much do you make in a year?" he asked the young soldier. The guard told him. "How would you like four times that amount right now?" The guard released me.

Since we had been to Greece before on vacation, it was not very difficult to get a tourist visa. My father gave his half of his factory to his partner. My father, mother, and I got on a flight to Athens three days after I was arrested.

Life suddenly became very difficult. We lived with my uncle's family and worked in his restaurant. Three months after we first came to Athens, I realized I would never be able to return home. Around that time, my uncle cheated my father out of his money, and one of my cousins in Iran died. **I was tired of living and tried to kill myself twice, but both times I was interrupted.**

The next day, after my second attempt, I passed by the First Evangelical Church of Athens and saw the cross and remembered why I had come to Athens in the first place. I came home and announced that I would be attending church that Sunday. To my surprise, both of my parents said they would come with me. From that day, the three of us attended church every Sunday, starting with Sunday school at ten o'clock.

Even though I went to church every Sunday, I was still afraid to change my religion, afraid of being the only Iranian to stop being Muslim to become a Christian. But one Sunday I met an American woman who said that she knew a lot of Iranians. I didn't believe her, but accepted her invitation to her English class at the **Athens Refugee Center**. The place was packed full of men, and I was scared I was the only woman there! Then the office door opened and one of the women who worked there asked, "Can I help you?" She took me to the English class, and, yes, there were many Iranians there. Afterward, the teacher introduced me to an Iranian who had converted from Islam to Christianity. **I finally realized that I was free to listen to my heart.**

When I got home, I prayed and said, "Okay, God, I've heard everything, now show me the truth. Which one is right? Show me who you really are." **I fell asleep and had a dream, someone was telling me, I told you that I am the Truth and the Life and the Way. No one comes to Father except by me. I woke up and cried and knew which one was true.** In the morning I called my pastor and asked, "How can I get baptized?"

I continued coming to the English class at the **A.R.C.**, and when my teacher left to return to America, I took

over her class! In fact, I was getting very involved in volunteering at the **A.R.C.**, despite telling myself I didn't need to go there anymore. Something inside me wouldn't let me stay away. It was there, working with other believers, that I discovered what it really meant to be a Christian, through their example.

I believe God has a call on my life to bring His truth to my people. Right now I am doing that by translating, teaching English classes, and developing relationships with Iranians (and Afghans) here in Athens. Refugees are more open than people living in their homeland. But one day, when there is a second revolution in Iran and the government finally changes, **I want to return to my country and tell people about Jesus.** If they could only read the Bible for themselves, I am sure Iranians would see the truth about who God really is, just as He revealed Himself to me.

UPDATES

LOST COIN is the ministry we started to women in the sex industry. This summer it will be branching off as a full-time team of its own led by Emma Skjonsby and Jennifer Roemhildt. Even as recently as last week, two more women prayed to receive Christ!

THE REFUGE... The Helping Hands Board of Directors has decided that, instead of purchasing an old building to renovate for The Refuge, we will buy property and BUILD a customized facility that will house ALL of our ministries under one roof (including shelter for up to 100 refugees). We currently have about \$20,000 of the \$500,000 will need to raise for this project

THE RUSSIAN TEA ROOM has seen an increase in attendees, MANY people have come to Christ in recent months, a Russian believer has caught the vision for helping lead the ministry, AND a local Greek church wants to partner with us in this specific outreach!

OUR TEAMMATES... Nader (from Iran) and Ella (Filipina), are still trying to raise support so they can BOTH be full-time team members

Financial Contributions: Write checks to International Teams, and specify for the McCrackens account,

OR for "The Refuge" account,

OR for the "HELPING HANDS" account,

OR Nader Mohajer's account. Thank you.

Send to: International Teams
411 W. River Rd.
Elgin, IL 60123-1570 USA