

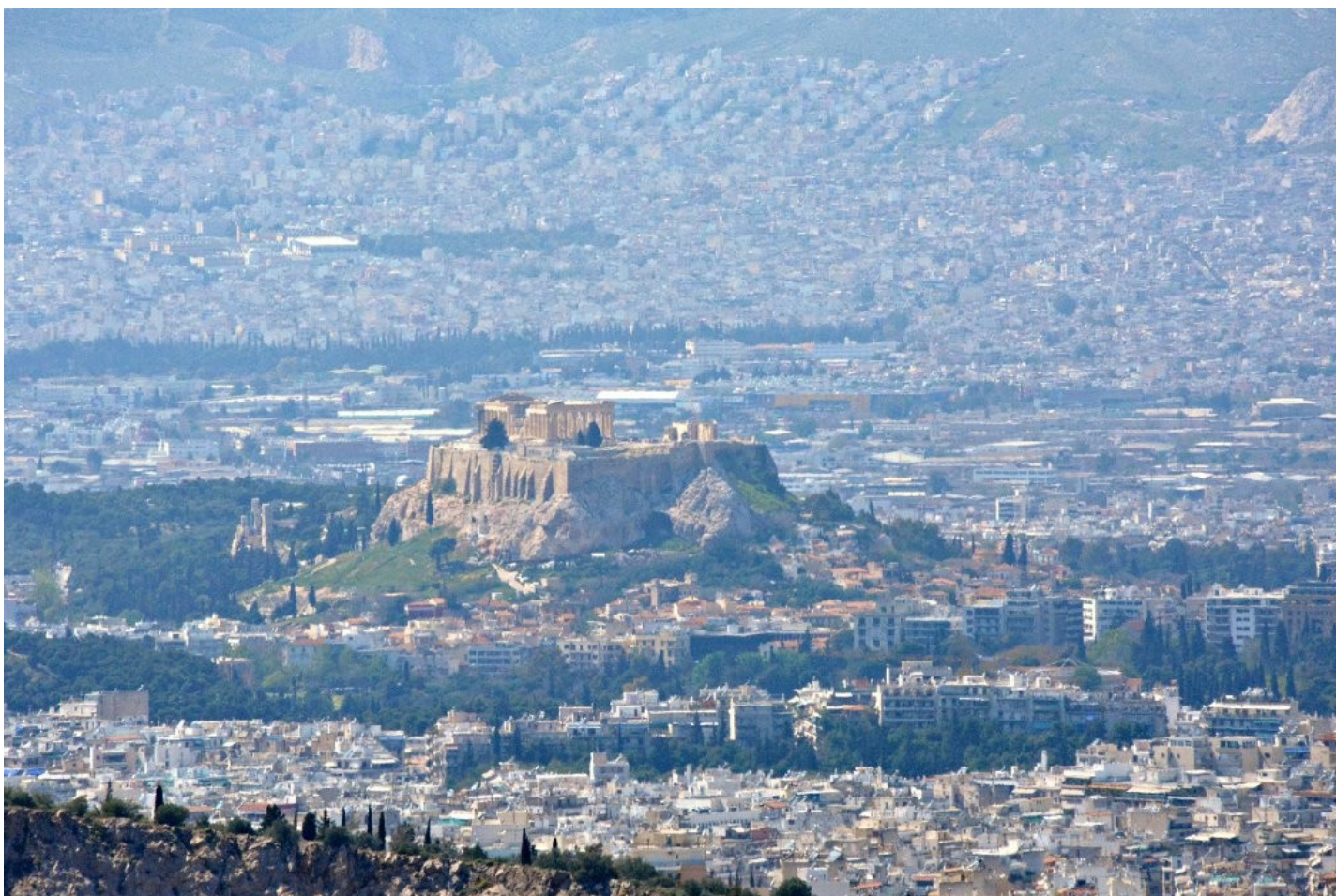
Athens Trip/Mr. Ali Update

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Athens Visit with Mr. Ali

As mentioned in our last 2 updates, our dear family friend of over 15 years--Mr. Ali, a 76-year-old Sudanese man--was **diagnosed with multiple myeloma** and

has been receiving radiation and chemotherapy treatment in Holland and now in Greece. Due to the **thoughtful and generous assistance of two different couples**--one who knows Mr. Ali well and used to serve with us in Athens, and one young couple who just joined our support team less than 2 years ago--I was able to personally visit him this week. Their investment in the trip covered the airfare, car rental, road tolls, meals, and some financial relief for Mr. Ali.

His condition has many symptoms so, along with his current chemo treatments, he is often in pain and very exhausted, has weak bones (has broken 3 ribs and a collarbone doing nothing strenuous), and spends much time fitfully sleeping.

He has no appetite and when he forces himself to eat or drink it is difficult to keep it down. He has always been thin but is like a toothpick now.

He was in bed the whole time I was there, speaking very weakly and softly. The first 3 days, we could converse for about 40 minutes before he would need to take a 2-hour nap. The 4th and final day, we could talk for about 2 hours before he would need to sleep. I was with him in the mornings and/or afternoons but by evening he was ready to only sleep for the night.

We talked about many things and shared memories (his memory is WAY BETTER than mine). He is trying to figure out what to do as he really needs someone to help care for him. Please pray he will have the wisdom to know what to do.

Each time I left him (for one of his nap breaks or for the night) he would stretch out his hand and ask me to pray for him. His primary requests were not for healing (though I do pray for that) but that God would open his spiritual eyes (because he cannot open them himself) and that God would help him to have faith (because he cannot seem to do that on his own).

As is our custom as friends who love and respect each other, we had honest conversations about spiritual matters. Most of our conversations were re-hashing many topics we discussed over the years. Over the last three days we talked about the **4 Things That God Does Not Know** (1. God does not know a sin He does not hate, 2. God does not know a sinner He does not love, 3. God

does not know a better plan of salvation than the one He offers, 4. God does not know a better time to be saved than right now). The last hour or so of my final time with him on day 4, I only read scripture to him (without discussion or explanation). I read Isaiah 53 and selected verses from the Gospel of John, chapters 1-11), and then prayed with him a final time.

Every day, more than once, he would tell me to thank those who made my trip to see him possible, and to thank all those who are praying for him. While he has not yet decided to follow Jesus, he still desires our prayers for God to help him make that decision. Today, I received this message from him:

"I am glad you arrived safely home. You can not imagine what was effect of your visit to me physically and spiritually. No words can express my gratitude."



Other Athens Opportunities

Because time with Mr. Ali was my priority of my 4 days in Athens, I did not let my other friends in Athens know I was coming (other than Ilir and Kate Cami, who I stayed with, and our son Kyle).

But because Mr. Ali slept so much I was able to surprise a few people and connect with some others by phone. I was also unable to connect with some that I tried to contact but could not reach.

I was hoping to connect with Dr. Joseph but could not. I was hoping to make it to St. Andrew's at Sina Street but could not because the city was roped off for a race they were having.

I was able to eat a couple meals with Kyle and his girlfriend (who I LOVE). I was able to talk a few minutes with Jeff Baldwin and Argiris Petrou at the Bible College. Kyle and I had a nice condolence visit with the family of our beloved Greek "mother" who passed away a few days before I arrived. We had a really nice visit with our next-door neighbors George and Charlotte. I surprised some of our colleagues at Helping Hands and had a good chat with individuals on the new Leadership Team. I was warmly welcomed by the Glyfada Christian Center church on Sunday morning. And I was able to share in a WONDERFUL Persian meal with the Camis and the Lankhaars, prepared by Papa Kamrani. It was a short, but sweet, visit.

It was so encouraging to hear how God is using former teammates Kate and Ilir, and Sahar and Arno to launch their new medical ministry to refugees "One Heart". You can learn more at: www.oneheart.gr





Papa K

Sahar's parents Papa and Mama K are some of the most loving people I have ever met, with big servants' hearts. Additionally, they are great at communicating through my favorite Love Language--FOOD! Not only food--PERSIAN FOOD! And the VERY BEST I HAVE EVER TASTED!



Leon and Lloyd

One day when I was in Athens, returning to Mr. Ali's from my lunch (and his nap) break, I heard

someone calling my name. Leon and his son Lloyd were just finishing lunch in area of Athens where they never are at any other time and happened to see me walking by. What a great surprise this was, and how enjoyable to spend a few minutes catching up! Leon and his wife Laura (Gregor Menga's sister and brother-in-law) are from Albania and accepted Christ back in 1991, I think, and were involved in many of our earlier life and ministry activities. In a city of 6 million people, to meet up in a place where none of us usually are, was a nice "God-surprise"!

Look for our upcoming March update for more ministry info!



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