

MARCH/APRIL 1996

"Do you know where I can get some work?"

"Please, I just had an operation--see my scar? Can you give me money for medicine?"

"Do you have any more blankets? I am sleeping in the park."

"Please don't misunderstand. I'm not asking for myself, but I have a friend who has two daughters and she is looking for a place to live. Can you please help?"

"I'm sleeping on the streets. I was playing my guitar to make a little money so I could eat, but someone stole my guitar yesterday."

"I'm not complaining. I have my health. I have freedom. Yesterday I found a used razor in the street so I was able to shave."

Every week I am barraged with questions like these at our Tuesday night evangelistic soup kitchen ministry (**Meals of Love and Hope**). Every week I am overwhelmed with the needs and overwhelmed by our inadequacy to meet them. It's hard enough when I think in abstract terms like "the poor", or "the refugees", or "the homeless". It's much more difficult (in fact I'm crying as I write this) when I have to tell my *friend* Angelo, or my *friend* Bakir, or my *friend* Sherwan, or my *Christian brother* Nawzad, "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I can't do anything else for you. I'm so sorry. Let me pray for you right now." Of course, often when I pray for someone and send them off empty-handed I am reminded of **James 2:15-16**. My heart just about breaks. Some times I just want to serve the soup and run away before anyone personally approaches me. Other times, I just want to try hard not to think about it. But it seems that there is something not quite right (Christ-like) about that either.

But there are other opportunities and other questions that encourage me...

"Most of these (70-85) Kurdish Muslims are not coming for the food. They are coming to hear the message." --Nazad, a former Muslim (now a believer) from Kurdistan

*"I am a Muslim but I want to become a Christian. Please, can you tell me how?"
--Shaheen, from Iran (spoken to me as 5 other Iranian friends pressed in to hear my answer)*

"We would like to start a Kurdish church. We would like to invite our Muslim friends who are true seekers so they can ask questions. We want you to be our pastor. Can you help us?" --4 men from Kurdistan, only one of whom is a believer--the others are Muslim seekers

"Please, do you have a Bible in my language?" --a common request

- * **The 75 Kurdish people who stayed for the Jesus video after last week's meal**
- * **The 3 1/2 hours I spent Saturday night answering good questions of some Muslim seekers**
- * **The smiles, the spiritually hungry eyes and faces during the preaching, the handshakes of gratitude on their way out into the cold night, and the sense that we are being faithful to what God has thus far called us**

These are some of the things that encourage us to keep on, to keep praying and waiting on the Lord to provide the other resources for a more effective ministry (i.e., people, money, and a ministry facility).

Every Tuesday night we feed between 110-165 refugees and poor Greeks. Most of the people coming are Arabic (most of them Muslim Kurdish refugees). However, other countries are represented, including: Iraq, Poland, Romania, Iran, Russia, the Ukraine, Albania, Pakistan, Palestine, Lithuania, Hungary, Georgia, Armenia, England, and Greece. What a way to reach the nations for Christ as we share the Gospel through testimonies, music, drama, and preaching God's Word!

Praises and Prayer Requests

* In our last letter we asked you to pray for **Tony**, an Albanian seeker close to the Kingdom. **Tony accepted Christ** shortly after that letter was sent out! Praise God, and please pray for his continued growth!

* We are continuing our pursuit of **language studies and local church integration**. We believe that the Lord has finally led us to a Greek (evangelical) church that we will be able to call "home". Please pray for our language acquisition, the development of relationships and the mobilization of Greek Christians into refugee ministry.

* **HELPING HANDS** will elect a new president of the board of directors this month! The Lord led us to Fevos Papadantonakis and his wife Joy who I know are going to be great assets to this ministry. Also, on April 6th, **HELPING HANDS** will sponsor a benefit concert to promote our ministry among Greek Christians and raise some funds for our soup kitchen ministry.

By-the-way, it costs about \$130 per meal on Tuesday nights. We are praying for God to raise up churches that will sponsor at least one meal every month or two. Please join us in praying for this. Also, we need better translators on Tuesday nights, and a better system of follow-up.

* There are many more need-meeting ministries that we would like to establish in the near future as we continue to share the Gospel through proclamation and demonstration. **We would like to start English and Greek language courses, a coffee bar ministry, more nights of serving food, ethnic fellowships, a sleeping shelter, etc.** However, the facility we are currently using is

only available to us this one night each week. **Please pray that the Lord will provide: more helpers (both lay volunteers and missionaries), more funds, and a multi-purpose ministry facility.**

We appreciate you so much. Your prayers, finances, and letters mean so much to us. You are invaluable members of our team. Thank you for your sacrifice for the advancement of God's Kingdom.

In the Vine and
In the Vineyard,

Scott McCracken and Family