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## Merry Christmas from the McCrackens!!

Wherever you are in the world, we hope this holiday season finds you drawing near to the Savior, and the New Year finds you experiencing more of His active presence in your life! We are so grateful for the many gifts of God we receive all year long, especially family, friends, and partners in the Gospel.

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What began as a service opportunity for one of Scott's discipleship huddles has turned into a regular inter-church outreach. On December 30th, 11 churches/groups (and hundreds of kids from CRU) will collaborate in Rockwood to give out food, drink, and prayers for, and with, residents who so desire.

Please pray for good weather, spiritual conversations, and "God-connections".



Fresh homemade tamales made by local resident Rita Casias!

A recent letter from our son Kyle (in Greece):

Dear Friends and Family,

I'm currently sitting in a room, on the roof of an apartment building, overlooking the industrial town of Lavrio. This is where I stay on the weekends, **working in a community center** that is open to all the town locals but is almost exclusively visited by **refugees**, as there are three refugee camps in the area. The main

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I come on Fridays around 11:00 in the morning which is about when we open our doors. The people, mostly kids, begin pouring in, sometimes in waves, sometimes in drops. We have a few computers, a Play Station 4, colored pencils and crayons for them to pass the time, to enjoy themselves and each other, and just to be somewhere during the day that isn't the camp. **I've grown to love these kids.**

Around 5:30 in the evening, I tell them it's time to go. I begin cleaning the center in preparation for the **weekly Bible study** which begins at 7:30. The group is mostly composed of **folks who attend the church where I serve** on Sunday evenings. We begin by singing a few hymns, then someone will share something they've prepared from Scripture to launch us into discussion on the given passage or theme. We then pray together, eat together, and eventually say "goodnight."

Saturdays are a bit more open. Every other week I will **help lead the youth group of the church I grew up in** and continue to attend biweekly. Other Saturdays I've found myself **eatings meals generously prepared by refugee friends, celebrating** the 11th **birthday** of a Syrian girl, and **talking about the gospel and church history** in the local gathering place.

Every other Sunday morning **I will prepare the center here in Lavrio for a group of Arabic speakers** who come to listen to a message about God in their own language. **My job**, usually along with one other person, **is to keep the kids** (sometimes up to **50**) **calm and entertained** while the adults listen to the message. This is probably the most tiring part of the week, but, as I said, I've grown to love these kids. When the message is finished we all **eat together**, then I clean up, and head to the church where I serve every Sunday evening. There the Lord has allowed me to **preach once a month** and **teach Sunday school to the high schoolers** the rest of the weeks.

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opportunities to grow and has also provided for me financially. Huge gift!

Oh boy, we're on page two; hang in there.

Monday through Thursday I try and prepare what I need to prepare for the weekend and dedicate the rest of my time to **working on the Master's in Theology** program I am doing with Union School of Theology. The three courses I'm taking this year are **Biblical Theology, The Doctrine of Scripture, and Theology of the Early Church Fathers**. I'm loving it! It's a great gift not only to be able to learn so much rich and important information, but also to be pushed to think critically and analytically when reading texts, especially when it comes to talk about God! What could be more important and humbling? And to be able to do this in an environment (the **Greek Bible College**) where I'm surrounded by friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, and profound teachers (there is overlap in these three categories), is yet another gift I've been given that I don't deserve. **The program is further solidifying my desire to continue with theological studies and one day, God willing, teach**. There's much more I could say but I'll leave at that.

If you think of me, **please pray for me**. You can begin with **thanksgiving** for all the above reasons (and many more). Please also pray that God will give me **wisdom** in my use of time: that I will reserve time for rest and that I will also be able to give **more to the Master's program** as I feel I'm lacking in this area.

***If you've made it to the end of this newsletter, give yourself a pat on the back.*** Seriously though, thank you for taking the time to read this!

Love you all,

Kyle

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