

October 3, 2017

Dear friends,

“Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Romans 11:33)

So many times these past few months, Nicole and I have been awed by the glory of God.

“The more I read the Bible, the more I realize how wonderful God is.” (A convert who has recently left Islam)

We had the joy of seeing Muslims and non-Muslims being overwhelmed by the mercy and majesty of God in the Gospel and putting their faith in Jesus Christ after repenting from their sins.

One of them, **Ni**, had what she called “a dirty little secret”. She hated Islam. She described her abusive and cruel ex-husband as a product of both the al-Qaeda and the Taliban. She started her search for a God who loved her and the rest of humankind. One night, she saw a lamb presented to her in her dream, then the following nights, she dreamt of a man dressed in white and surrounded by light. She then understood that Jesus could lead her to what she was looking for. She visited our church. Later on, Nicole went to her home and answered all her questions. A week later, Nicole and I went back to **Ni**'s home and had the joy of leading both **Ni** and her husband to the Lord. On the day of the festival of Eid-ul-Adha ('Celebration of Sacrifice', also known as the Greater Eid, which is the second most important festival in the Muslim calendar. It marks the end of the Hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca), that young couple invited us to a restaurant and introduced us to the people there as their parents. **Ni** remarked that she had no problem calling me her spiritual father but Nicole “looked too young” to be her mother. J

In another incident the Holy Spirit confirmed in the heart of a woman from a Muslim background that the biblical God is in the individual business and is concerned with every single human being. After Nicole spoke to a rather large group, one woman came up to her and said: “Thank you for telling us that the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'an are not the same. My sheikh told me that these two books are similar. Yet, what I have read in both books is different. Today you have confirmed in my heart that the Truth is found in the Bible.” From being called Fatima, that woman is now Thelma, a member of the family of the biblical God.

“I wait in hope on the Lord. Yes, I hang on despite the difficulties and the hardship because the God of love, justice, loyalty and steadfastness is there for me.” (A Christian from a Muslim background who is facing persecution in South Africa)

215 million Christians are experiencing high, very high or extreme persecution in more than 50 countries, with women suffering dis-proportionately. Nicole was able to take part in a conference held in Lome, Togo in November 2016 to help Christian leaders from francophone Africa deal with the issues of persecution, Islamization, and terrorism by Boko Haram. At the beginning of June 2017, she joined, at the Leuwen Consultation in Brussels, academics and activists from 23 nations to draw up a document calling the global church to listen in a radical way to Christian women who have been driven to silence by persecution and shame. God is reliable, no matter what.

“All I can do is just pray for you as I am now 95 and I am getting less pension money.” (A very dear friend who has been supporting us financially and prayerfully since we began serving the Lord among Muslims in 1983)

That friend was concerned that we lost another financial supporter again. Indeed, most of our remaining partners have been on this journey with us for decades now. The ones who have gone to heaven have

never been replaced, which means that our support level is very low today. Please pray with us that new supporters will be willing to financially invest in God's work through us!

However, I had to correct that beloved friend on the phone. Prayer is not simply an additional part of her support but rather the most important part. We were reminded of the all-importance of prayers a few days ago. A business woman invited Nicole to have tea with her to discuss about eternal issues. When Nicole left her, it was raining slightly, so she sought refuge from the rain in front of a shop on the main road. As she stood there waiting for the rain to stop, some spice jars in the shop window attracted her attention and Nicole decided to walk into the shop. As she did so, the sales lady behind the counter screamed: "I can't believe it! Is that you? For years, I have been thinking of you. I wanted so much to see you again to thank you for your help and to tell you that God answered your prayers." Nicole recognized **My. My** is from a Muslim background. Nicole counselled her and prayed for her in 1984, when we were young, slim and good-looking and serving with Youth for Christ. Isn't God beyond brilliant? And His power at work in us can do far more than we dare to ask or imagine.

"We are saved in order to love and serve even those who hate us and do every kind of good deed for them." (An Arab Christian who is living in the Middle East)

In March 2017, Nicole and I were encouraged to see how faith survives, and even flourishes in the places of life that are overcome with the darkness of sin, despair, and hopelessness when we attended a summit on ministry in a hostile and hurting world in Beirut, Lebanon. God is powerfully in control.

"You are just like your ancestor Genghis Khan. You ride over people." (Allain when he was knocked down by a bicycle)

In our ministry among Muslims, the spiritual battle is real. Nicole and I have learnt to apply God's Word against the enemy as we are so aware that all spiritual victory is essentially bound to the Word of God. These past few months, we have been sensing that we are under spiritual attack. There is of course the case of Nicole's health. The enemy has also used the high crime rate in Cape Town. Some people have tried to force our garage door and our side gate open without success, until Saturday 23rd September. On that day, we were woken up by our next-door neighbours very early in the morning because water was gushing from a pipe from our property. Some thieves managed to saw off the hinges of our side gate. They lifted it and got access to the property. They then stole a brass tap and its copper piping, not very valuable things but so much water was wasted. Cape Town is in the midst of a critical water crisis because of a long period of drought. Capetonians are asked to reduce their consumption of water and the daily water allowance for each Cape Town resident is 87 litres. As a result of the theft, we are expecting a very high water bill including a penalty for excessive water usage. Sigh!

Another thing that has seemed strange - we have had many near miss accidents as well. Once I was hit by a very fast bicycle in the parking lot of a supermarket. My body was sent rolling on the ground by the impact. It took me a while to recover my senses. A lady helped me get up and led me to the pavement. As I sat there feeling my old bones and painful body, I asked the shocked young toothless rider who knocked me down his name. When he said: "Shakier Khan", I thought of the similarity between Genghis Khan and him. I then told him: "Fortunately, I am ready to die at any time because I know my eternal destination, heaven. But what about you?" His answer "Only Allah knows" gave me the opportunity to share the Gospel with him. Somewhere in Cape Town, Shakier Khan, a young man without his front teeth, needs your prayers. Please pray that he will understand that God's love is so big it pours out on people in unexpected ways, even through an old missionary made to roll on the ground.

“Reading the New Testament is quite an experience. I never encountered a person like Jesus. If only people who call themselves Christians acted like Jesus!” (A Muslim who accepted to read the New Testament)

There is no such thing as an average Christian. Every one of us can and should play a role in God’s mission here and now. God’s mission and calling are for all of us. Therefore, as members of the Bridge Team, my colleagues and I are trying to give local congregations, through training, a compass to navigate their neighbourhoods, particularly the Muslims communities, towards the Gospel. At the MANI (Movement of African National Initiatives) Consultation held in Addis Ababa in 2016 for the African continent and at the regional one held recently in Johannesburg for the Southern African countries and the Indian Ocean Islands, leaders sought to answer the question: “How do we help local congregations to understand what it means for them as followers of Jesus to be missional in a fast changing, pluralistic and humanistic world?” Please continue to pray that local churches will stop embodying a culture of social restraint, risk aversion or fear! Pray that they will be willing to put themselves out of their comfort zones and deal with people (ie. Muslims) they ordinarily might not engage with. Pray that they may remember that, with God’s help, their prayers, courage, and actions may change the course of history!

“One step at a time Lord Jesus! Please help me get to the clinic one step at a time!” (Nicole’s prayer when she had to walk to a medical clinic for more tests).

Nicole’s health has been a matter of concern since her trip to Togo last year. She has had so many bacterial and viral infections and some inflammation in her body, from bronchitis to gingivitis and everything in between including a blood shot eye and rapid weight gain. That day, when she had to walk to the clinic, although her feet were very painful, she could not take any pain killer tablets because of the fasting tests. Our doctor is still trying to identify the cause of her problems. All we know is that whatever she has is not contagious, that she has strong heart muscles and that her thyroid is functioning normally. I praise God for Nicole’s resilience, and I thank you for your prayers and for your help towards her medical expenses. And yes, even though Nicole is not in good health, she has not neglected her ministry. In a few days, hundreds of academics researching Islam and practitioners serving among Muslims from around the globe will gather together in Thailand for the V5:9 Abide Bear Fruit Consultation. Nicole has been invited to represent the network “When Women Speak” and has been asked to facilitate the Women’s Ministry Panel Discussion. Please pray that the delegates will hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and remain at the center of God’s will! Pray also for their protection as security is always a concern with anything related to Islam! Nicole also needs your prayers for wisdom, discernment and good health as she prepares for the conference. She is looking forward to worshipping God and learning together with an experienced collection of researchers and practitioners. God’s plan for our lives are carried out through His control of circumstances and situations.

“Not to us, o Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 115:1)

God is in total control of our ministry through His Holy Spirit. Our part is to live a passionate life that draws others to Jesus Christ. We are grateful to the Lord that you are making that possible with your prayerful and financial support. Our heartfelt thanks to you!

Love and blessings,

Allain and of course Nicole