



2,000 years ago, after their first ministry trip in Acts, Paul and Barnabas boarded a boat in this harbor (in modern day Antalya). From here, they sailed back to their sending church in Antioch. (Acts 14:25-26)



Dear Friends,

We pray you had a wonderful Resurrection Day on Sunday. As we celebrated this week we also marked our seventh month in Turkey. We have much to rejoice in terms of answered to prayer. All three of us have finally received our permanent residence permits, granting us an initial 2 year stay in the country. It literally took 6 months for all three of our documents to arrive. Thank you for your prayers over the months for this.

With these documents in hand, we were finally able to open a Turkish bank account, and take the steps necessary to purchase a vehicle. The Lord was so kind to provide us a Ford

van. It was exactly what we were praying for, and we got it in just the nick of time. The pandemic has dropped (and for some brands ceased) production of all similar makes and models of similar vehicles. Our van was the last Ford of its kind in the entire country available until later this year. We are thankful for this gift and the tool it will be to serve both our family and others.

Our language study continues. I recently made a switch from my online school to Becca's tutor, a wonderful 65-year-old Christian, Turkish woman. The face-to-face interaction has been such a blessing from this gifted teacher. She continually reminds us that learning the Turkish language is not a race, but rather something that demands patience and endurance over time. "Yavash, yavash," we say in Turkish (*Slowly, Slowly*). Moriah is also learning language...and is focusing these days on hand signs and an ever increasing toddler vocabulary!

We have recently been discouraged because on Easter Weekend, new COVID restrictions came back into place preventing our local church here from gathering. Please pray for us and the churches here. We have been encouraged this year by a handful of friends visiting and passing through our city, and look forward to more coming in the months ahead. We are also encouraged that our good friends Mustafa and Marian will be moving from another Turkish city to Antalya and will be a part of the same church as us. We look forward to this season together. Mustafa and I have been friends since 2013 and have collaborated on a handful of Turkish translation projects.

In the space remaining in this update, we want to share two stories or testimonies of the Lord's grace at work, even in our weakness. We will follow that with some things you could pray for us in the months ahead. As always, thank you for taking the time to read our update, to pray for us, and to pray for the people of Turkey!

Recent Reflections on His Grace in our Weakness



****Note: this reflection was written before the recent weekend curfews came back into***

place restricting our gathering as a church.

The minor-key, Arabic chant from the nearby mosque slowly filled our church meeting room. The Christian congregation has learned to be unphased by the Islamic call to prayer interrupting our Christian worship service. In fact, week after week, the Muslim prayer schedule and our church service collide.

The collision serves as a reminder to me that Christians are indeed “aliens and strangers” in a land not our own. I’ve been reflecting on this weekly experience and I find myself challenged by Muslim religious leaders. They place an incredible priority on reminding their people of their false “good news.” So much so that they proclaim it from loudspeakers five times a day. I’m challenged to spend a bit more time reminding myself (and others) of the true good news of Jesus Christ, the power of God to save sinners like me.

Continuing in my reflection, I am saddened that millions of people in Turkey live under the “spell” of this so-called “call to prayer” in a language they don’t even understand. Many Turks are more secular than Muslim, which further complicates the spiritual fog resting heavy on their souls.

The sense of spiritual need is great, but the Lord is powerfully at work, even when His work seems quiet. We recently learned that in this year to date, over 450 people across our city have requested Bibles from a Christian organization. While that number seems dramatically encouraging to us, we also remember the powerful work of the Holy Spirit when Becca’s friend, our neighbor, asked us about what physical gestures Christians use during prayer. In the Spirit’s orchestration, that interesting conversation led to Jesus, and the fact that the Father seeks worshipers to worship him in Spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

These days, the Lord is encouraging us with the words of Paul, ***“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*** ([2 Cor. 12:9-10, ESV](#))



View of the Lara district in Antalya.



Pics with some of our various friends and neighbors.

An Unlikely Day to Receive Blessing

***“I believe in Jesus and I’m a Muslim,”** said my new friend, speaking very slowly so I could understand.*

*Not exactly sure how to reply with my elementary Turkish, I settled on, **“Ahhhh.”***

Then the Lord prompted me to ask, ***“Well, Mehmet, have you ever read the Bible?”***

“The Bible...four books...Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I have not read them.”

“We actually have 66 books and together they form the Bible.” Wanting to leave him with something that would point him to the true Jesus, I said, ***“John is a very important book. You should read it.”***

“We can read it together.”

“Sure,” I said with a smile under my mask. ***“Let’s do that Mehmet.”***

This conversation with Mehmet was a high point on an otherwise low day for me. The night before I struggled with my toddler who couldn’t sleep. In my heart I grumbled and with my mouth I complained.

Later that day, waves of discouragement swept in.

-Am I really learning the language fast enough?

-Am I really adding to the advance of the gospel here?

-Am I doing something significant?

-Am I keeping up with _____?

-Why did I grumble and complain again last night?

Like the fool, I entertained such questions that unfortunately looked to me as both the subject and the solution.

On this day, when I was painfully aware of my weaknesses and flaws, the Good Shepherd graciously and kindly brought Mehmet into my life.

Mehmet is a package delivery man, for a local company like FedEx. He was just finishing a delivery to our apartment building as my family and I arrived home. On the main door of the building was a package slip with my name. However, the slip was from the Turkish post office, not Mehmet’s company. About to clock-out for the day and perceiving that I could use some help, Mehmet took the slip and offered to drive me to the post office.

We made small chat on the drive. He knew some English vocabulary and the Lord blessed my elementary Turkish.

He asked me what I did. I told him I was a pastor in America and that I was presently helping a church in Turkey. I told him that my primary job responsibility right now was to learn Turkish. He thought all this was great and his questions started rolling.

-Are you a Catholic priest?

-Do you know such and such a pastor who went to prison in a different city?

-Have you tried giving your baby carrots to help her teeth?

It was during this pleasant conversation that Mehmet told me of his belief in Jesus, or rather the Muslim version of Jesus.

I came away from that time reminded of the kindness of the Lord. He faithfully orchestrated the entire thing, from the placement of the package slip, to the timing of Mehmet's shift, to the conversation about Jesus. Meditating on this, I'm reminded: we moved to Turkey for Mehmet and for people just like him. Sovereign Grace Church Dayton commissioned and sent us here to proclaim the true Jesus, the one and only Savior, to such people who only know him as a good prophet.

This really is an incredible and joyous privilege, something we remain amazed at. How kind of the Father to use broken vessels such as us, and to give us the Holy Spirit, so that we can make much of Jesus in this unreached land.



Report on our Last Update's Prayer Requests

Thank the Lord with us for answering these requests from our last update:

- Our 2 Year Residence Permits are in hand!
- We were able to purchase a car
- The Lord has sustained us in health and in language learning for the last seven months.

Prayer Requests

We would cherish your prayers for these specific requests (and anything the Lord may bring to mind for us)

- **For Turkey:** Please never tire of asking the Lord to work among the unreached Muslims of Turkey. Please also ask the Lord to work among the churches in Turkey.
- **Our witness:** Specifically before our neighbors who have become very dear friends. Also with my new friend, the package delivery man. Becca has a friend from another Muslim, Central Asian country. We long to see these friends come to faith in Jesus.
- **Our local church in Antalya:** Has been unable to meet for any consistent length of time since COVID began in March 2020. This has been extremely difficult. Additionally, it is going through a leadership transition this year. Please pray for Antalya Protestant Church and please pray that churches across Turkey could begin gathering again soon.
- **For our Family:** We have found the last 7 months to be challenging to our joy on a number of fronts, ranging from COVID weekend curfews, to MoMo's sleep troubles, to the physical strains of adjusting to a different country, to the spiritual burdens of living in an unreached region. Would you ask the Lord to sustain our joy in him, in the gospel, in our family, and in the work he has called us to.
- **For our continued language learning:** Specifically that in the next 6 months, we will grow much more comfortable and fluid with our elementary Turkish.



We work in a sensitive area where information about us online could jeopardize our ability to serve.

****Please refrain from posting information about us online or on social media without talking with us first.****

Thank you for serving us in this way!



Thank you for taking the time to read our update. Though we can be slow to reply, we always love hearing from you. Feel free to reply to this email or send a note to markandbecca@protonmail.com

For the Sake of His Name,
Mark, Becca, and Moriah