

# MATT & APRYL HAYNES

## MISSIONARIES TO KURDISTAN

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Maranatha Baptist Church of Western Oaks | Pastor Charley O'Daniel  
2800 N Divis | Bethany, OK 73008 | 405-789-4662

Dear Pastor,

May – June 2016

*The Lord is not slack  
concerning his promise, as  
some men count  
slackness; but is  
longsuffering to us-ward,  
not willing that any  
should perish, but that all  
should come to  
repentance.*

– 2 Peter 3:9

**“Never adopt or reject any sentiment or rite on account of its long standing or novelty, but test all by the standard.”**

*John Leland (on the Holy Scriptures)*

### **The Kurdish Church Project**

Pastor Behzad has been leading his congregation in Duhok, Kurdistan, Iraq for over 15 years. He has allowed both Missionary Dan Rogers and myself to partner with him in this work moving forward. Bro. Rogers began teaching Baptist doctrine on Wednesday nights with Pastor Behzad translating. This is such a blessing and has facilitated incredible growth of the believers in this congregation. They have come to a Biblical understanding of baptism, church membership and the need to follow Scriptural principles in establishing themselves as a local New Testament Church.



Pastor Behzad and Matt with Bro. Farat's youngest son, Behzad (named for his pastor).

### **Ministry Goals**

- Plant churches that will be pastored by nationals.
- Disciple and train men for the ministry.
- See Scripture accurately translated into the major languages of the Kurdish people.

While the Scriptural procedures for birthing a local, New Testament church are the same across the board, the practical procedures vary country to country. The Kurdish Government, while not overtly unfriendly to Christianity, is nevertheless resistant to new churches being established. The Government and Kurdish Muslims in general treat Christians very well.....as long as they are not Kurdish Christians or converts to Christianity from Islam. Example: My wife and I can easily find housing. Being a Christian is no hindrance to us as it is assumed we are Christians. Pastor Behzad and his family have been kicked/forced out of their home 4 times and counting for no more reason than that he is a Kurdish Christian. This is the reality of Kurdistan.

In spite of the animosity toward Kurdish converts, an amazing opportunity has arisen. The Kurdish Government will allow the church to register as a legally recognized denomination – Baptist. The space of this letter would fail were I to list even half of the possibilities and advantages this would bring to church planting in Kurdistan. Here are just a few:

1. Baptist churches could be legally started from another Baptist church.
2. Baptist churches could be started Scripturally from an existing Baptist church in Kurdistan.



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## Ministry Goals

- Plant churches that will be pastored by nationals.
- Disciple and train men for the ministry.
- See Scripture accurately translated into the major languages of the Kurdish people.

3. Baptist ministers would be allowed in to Kurdistan as workers/representatives of their denomination. This would be incredible as the visa process currently is difficult and tentative at best. Both the Rogers family and ourselves must register under an outside company, non-profit or NGO in order to stay in-country. A legally recognized denomination would eliminate this need because, as Baptist ministers, we would be allowed to reside in Kurdistan as representatives of our denomination.
4. This would solve the visa issue for future Baptist ministers upon whom God places the call to Iraqi Kurdistan.

What a victory it would be to have such a light in such a dark place!

The Kurdish Government requires several things before legal recognition is forthcoming. Namely, they want to see a building and a congregation prior to application. The congregation part is covered (and growing!). We need financial help acquiring land and a building. I will say more on this in our "A Minute for Missions" update next month. Land is limited and the cost is commiserate with the lack of real estate available for Christians to purchase.

This is not an overnight process. We are not so idealistic as to think it will happen right away. We are taking the long view of church-planting in Kurdistan. The reality is that the necessary funds will be some years in the raising and the registration process will be some years in acquiring. We are not seeking immediate results, but rather to leave a Baptist footprint in this place that will last long after our generation is gone. Our desire is that 5 and 10 generations from now there will be Baptist churches all across Kurdistan that can trace their origins to this effort. They will know there were Baptist brethren they never met who thought their salvation worth it. They will know there were Baptist brethren they never met who thought the planting of local, New Testament churches worth it.

If you would like to have a part of this project please put "Kurdish Church Project" on the memo line. If you would like more detailed information please let me know.

In His Service  
Matt Haynes



The daughter of Ghada. She is one of the most faithful members of the congregation.







# The Wife's perspective

RAMADAN —  
“FAITH IS ONLY AS VALID AS IT’S OBJECT.”

We are in the midst of the Muslim “Holy Month of Ramadan” here in Kurdistan. Ramadan is a month in which Muslims daily fast from food, water and various activities from sunrise to sunset. They break their fast at the evening call to prayer with a meal called iftar. Muslims believe it was during this month that God revealed the first verses of the Quran to Mohammed on a night they call “The Night of Power”. It is meant to be a time of spiritual discipline, of deepening one’s relationship with God, extra prayer, increased charity, and intense study of the Quran.

In some ways, Kurdistan is a very different place during this time. Stores change hours, many businesses close, the few restaurants that are open are covered with white fabric to limit view of those eating inside, less socializing occurs during the daytime, traditional Kurdish dancing and picnics (which are typically everywhere) are nowhere to be seen, and white head coverings pop up all over the city streets on girls who typically let their hair flow free.

We’ve also seen different personal approaches to this month by our Kurdish friends. There are those who don’t fast at all, those who don’t fast but don’t admit it, those whose children fasting at an early age and those who let their kids wait until well into their teen years. There are also those who fast on and off according to convenience and (my all-time favorite) those like our friend Samir who, with an ornery smile on his face, said to my husband, “Mr. Matt, I already...not do Ramadan. I must have breakfast.”

Probably most common though are those who fast faithfully. Some of these believe Hell is waiting for the one who forsakes Ramadan and some are simply devoted Muslims who want to please the one they believe to be God. Their faith is real, but the one in whom they place their faith is not real. Their devotion is true, but it’s deeply sad to see such devotion wasted on a false god and such effort put into a false hope of eternity.

Ramadan is one of the “Five Pillars of Islam”. The “Five Pillars are the minimum requirements for paradise and Muslims perform them hoping it will give them a better chance in the afterlife. Though it could be argued that, due to the evening break of their fast, Ramadan is not a true fast, there is certainly a measure of dedication involved while working toward this false hope. I can even respect this dedication, but I still think of a quote from a sermon I heard during Bible college – “Faith is only as valid as it’s object.”

*We* have the true and valid object. The object of our faith is *real* and *worthy* and our prayers fall on *listening ears*. I dreaded Ramadan before it came. I’m not sure why. Perhaps because I hated the thought of seeing a constant month’s visual of the lie that pervades this place and the hearts of these precious people. Instead, God has challenged me during this time. By the outward show of their devotion, He’s challenged me about the sincerity of my own. He’s convicted me to pray more, to increase my *valid* faith and has given me a burden to take the month of Ramadan each year as a special time of personally intervening for my Muslim neighbors.

*“It doesn’t matter how great your faith is if it’s placed in an object that’s not worthy of that faith. On the other hand, unfathomable things can be accomplished with little faith placed in a valid object. Faith is only as valid as it’s object.”*

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Love in Christ,  
Apyl Haynes

