

# Kürdistan

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Dear Pastor,

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*“God’s hand points to a steep and craggy height—it must be climbed—....Despair shakes his skinny hands and glares his hideous eyes on me to little purpose.”*

(Samuel C. Armstrong as quoted by R.E. Speer, 1912).

My wife and I just came home from visiting a refugee Yezidi (Ezidi) family that lives in our village. The youngest son explained some of their culture and religion as we drank coffee. There are three castes within their society. 3s, 2s, and 1s. Each group must marry within their own caste. Should a Yezidi girl marry (or express a desire to marry) outside of the religion, “They will use the weapon. Kill her probably. It is not allowed to marry out” said the son. The Yezidi religion does not allow converts. One must be born Yezidi in order to be one and conversion to any other religion is met with violent opposition. As a Westerner and an American, this thought process is foreign to me. Displeasure, disagreement, and even disowning one’s family can be seen in Western culture but kill a daughter, a sister, a niece....how incomprehensible. If one sits and considers every single obstacle someone within that culture would face in receiving Christ as Savior it would boggle the mind. Change would seem impossible...yet the challenge begs to be met, the mountain must needs be climbed and the truth burns within the Christian to be shared. It is not culture reform, education or media attention that will change the outward actions of Yezidi people, but the change to the inner-man wrought by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the hope for our Kurdish people.

## MINISTRY

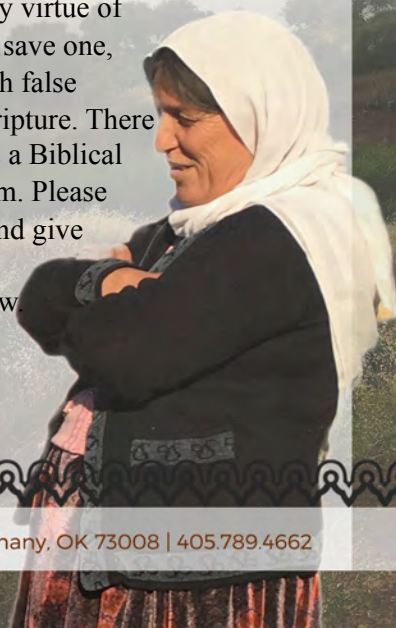
Bro. Dan Rogers, our fellow missionary here in Kurdistan, and myself have begun meeting with a group of believers in the hope of organizing a local, independent, Baptist Kurdish church. These meetings, which are spearheaded by Bro. Dan and a Kurdish believer, are in their infancy and there is much teaching and training to be done. The brethren gave their testimonies of salvation at a meeting in Bro. Dan’s home and it was a wonderful, sweet time of hearing Kurdish believers express what Jesus Christ had done for them. There is often confusion regarding salvation due to the influence of the Catholic, Orthodox, and Assyrian churches. Anyone attending these churches are believed to be Christians by virtue of their parents’ church affiliation and baptism. None of the Kurdish believers attending our meeting, save one, have been baptized. This is a huge blessing as that allows freedom to teach truth instead of un-teach false doctrine. The people have a desire to know the truth and it shows in their questions and love of Scripture. There are a great many cultural obstacles and preconceptions regarding a local body and what constitutes a Biblical church. We are very conscious of the need for clarity in the doctrine of salvation and that of baptism. Please pray that God will provide Bro. Dan and myself with a deep well of patience with these brethren and give Bro. Dan the wisdom he needs to lead the work.

We will be sending out a video update with more information that space here does not allow.

Your servant,  
Matt Haynes



Mr. Hogr (Hoe-grr). This man works at his brother’s market below our apartment. Please pray for his salvation.







# The Wife's perspective

## Pie & Chai

Can I tell you something fun about Kurds? They're insatiably curious. We teach English as a means of staying in Iraq and Matt's most recent class was a class full of Kurdish men. He had a blast teaching them as they often wanted to know the "American way" of things. Here's an example: The traditional greeting between male friends here often involves an embrace and a kiss on both cheeks. Matt's students wanted to know how to greet a man the "American way" so they practiced firm handshakes and a few firm, short handshakes for greeting women. Also for example, they enjoyed playing with the phrase "what's your problem?" and there are many other fun interactions I won't take time to go into. He had a new story every time he came home.

This brings me to good ol' American apple pie. While teaching through the unit on food, they came across the concept of pie. "What is this pie?", they asked so Matt explained what a pie was. For whatever reason, they got super curious about pie, asking about it during several classes, until finally Matt promised them an apple pie.

Kurds despise most forms of cooked fruit (I have heard it described as repulsive) so I made the pie with a little trepidation and a lot of humor at the thought of what reactions would be. For their final party, the table was adorned with beautiful seeds, nuts, dried fruits, chai tea and a very out-of-place apple pie. The reaction of the guys? Priceless. Everyone tried it with the exception of a teenage boy who had the guts to say he was afraid of it. First, they stared at it, pie server in hand, and asked a lot of questions. "How is it made? It is only the fruit inside? It smells good. How do you eat it? I am not that hungry." (I assume the last statement was providing a future escape just in case.) The reactions with the first bite were fairly consistent. Their words said, "yes good" but their faces said something else. There was one man who (I think...) genuinely liked it. It's also possible that he was just the best actor of the group. So to conclude, just for fun, enjoy a few pictures of their first ever apple pie.







My wife with some sweet Kurdish believers.



Bro Dave McDivit (left of myself) and his wife, Cherie, have been used of God to allow us to stay in Kurdistan. Their ministry is such a blessing.



Yes, selfies are a thing in Kurdistan.



Bro Dan and Mrs Cindy Rogers. It is a blessing to serve with those of like faith and practice. Their heart for Kurds is evident in their words and deeds.



Everyone loves the beard!