

MISSIONARY #6501

October 2018



Escaping the Fire

Our attention was first arrested by the incessant drone of helicopters overhead. We live in an area where helicopter traffic is not all that unusual, but the intensity of this was beyond anything we had ever heard or seen. I took a walk to the top of a nearby hill to get a better view. The sky was black with smoke, and even from a distance, I could see flames waving heavenward. It was a forest fire just the other side of the ridge from us. The mechanical birds dumping water from the sky seemed to be getting the upper hand, but a steady breeze seemed more ominous than pleasant. I came home for lunch and told the family that I would drive out and reassess the situation after we ate.

By the time a couple of my boys and I got ready to jump in the van, we could smell the smoke even from within our home. What we saw on that short excursion exceeded my wildest imagination. The fire was growing, and subdivisions were being evacuated. We saw some people fleeing on foot with flames leaping up behind them. Most were carrying nothing in their arms—just running—escaping the fire.

We called my wife and told her to gather the kids, Bibles, and important documents; to grab the “bug-out” bags and get ready to hop in the van. By this time, the military was closing the roads, and we had to take a very hazardous back road just to return for the family. Once home, we said a brief prayer together, opened the gates so our dog could escape if the fire made it to our home, jumped in the van, and made our escape. At this point, I didn’t fear for our safety, but I did wonder if we would ever see our house again.

We drove to the facility that we use for services. There we would be far enough to be safe but close enough to keep an eye on the situation. The trip there normally takes fifteen minutes, but this day it took over two hours. The fire had jumped over the highway; and that, too, was closed. The normal heavy traffic was further congested by curiosity seekers and even further by evacuees like us—yet all of this traffic had to be diverted onto windy, narrow country roads. As I drove to our place of refuge, I was reminded so vividly that helping people escape the fire is the very reason we are here.

Eventually, the winds subsided, and the hundreds of firefighters managed to put out the blaze. As a security measure, helicopters continued dumping water all through the night and well into the next day. Our dog greeted us upon our return; and, other than the smell of smoke, everything seemed to be in order.

Pray for us as we continue studying these people and their language. There have been many answers to prayer in recent weeks and even the salvation of someone who has long been on the prayer list. Pray as we continue with the Bible project. I have finally read the entire Bible in Turkish (the fourth language in which I have read through the Bible entirely). I am now going over the New Testament word by word. Pray for a returning team member. Pray for a couple preparing to make a survey trip. Pray for others on deputation. Pray that all of us together will make a difference, having compassion, and that we will save some with fear . . . *“pulling them out of the fire.”*

Missionary #6501 and Family

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