

MISSIONARY #6501

July 2018



Baptisms in Asia Minor

The field to which God has called us is the very same land in which first-century Christianity enjoyed its most remarkable growth. Within a few short years of the arrival of the good news in this region, it could be said that all of Asia had heard the Gospel. Imagine how many baptisms must have taken place during this exciting time. I have no doubt that they were occurring on a daily basis.

A couple of centuries later, Catholicism got a stranglehold. Later still, another new religion called Islam invaded and took control. At our present point in history (if the *CIA World Factbook* is to be believed), there are only about 4,000 Christians of any stripe in the entire country. That means, spread across a country of about 80 million people, exist a couple hundred congregations of about 20 members each. Many of these do not baptize anyone at all. The handful that do practice biblical baptism typically hold a baptismal service once per year. There is a secluded camp to which these few evangelical churches make their annual pilgrimage to baptize in total a small handful of believers.

We certainly want to change that. Our struggles here have been massive. Team members have come and gone. Visa issues have been a constant battle. The language has humbled us with its complexity. There are services (though fewer and farther between) where there are only team members in attendance. With all of that admitted, we are thrilled to report that our assembly has been able to witness baptisms three of the last four Sundays.

One of those Sundays, the ones following the Lord in believer's baptism were two of our own children. On another Sunday, we saw a Turkish believer from here in our city baptized. Also this month, we had visitors from L__ Baptist Temple. They spent most of their time in another city (a two-hour boat ride away from ours). While there, they were able to lead a few English-speaking Nigerians to Christ. Three of these gentlemen then traveled with them to attend two of our services and to follow the Lord in baptism.

I am reminded of our first years in Germany during which we struggled to reach even a few. Eventually God gave us a vibrant work in which baptisms were taking place every service. Starting over can be difficult; at my age, it can be downright intimidating. But I am so thankful that God has just given our little flock a taste of what it can be like in the future—where baptisms are the norm instead of the exception.

Pray that some nationals who have received Christ, but have not yet been baptized, would soon be willing to take this step. Keep in mind that (rightly or wrongly) many here fear for their lives when making this decision. Pray for others who have heard the Gospel and expressed their interest but have not yet received Christ as their Saviour. Pray for those currently making preparations to join our team in the future. Pray for visa issues to be resolved for all who are committed to staying the course. Thank you so much for all your love, support, and prayers.

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