

June 2023

Dear AWR Friend,

I first met my wife Kathy at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. She was from North Dakota, where her parents were wheat farmers, and I came from Oklahoma, where my parents had a dairy farm.

Besides an education, we went to college looking for a spouse. I needed a wife, and Kathy needed a husband! Things went very well for us, and by the end of our freshman year, we were engaged.

But then the school year ended, and a long, lonely summer followed. Kathy wrote me lengthy letters, and I wrote short ones, but I called her almost every day from the pay phone near our farm. That didn't feel like enough. We were in love and wanted to see each other! So, two-thirds into the summer, I took a long weekend from my summer job mowing grass at the local country club and helping out at the farm to drive the 900 miles to visit her.

I was so eager to see her that I didn't stop—except to refuel—until I reached Jamestown, near her parents' farm. At a filling station, I shaved and freshened up, and then drove out to the farm. It wasn't easy, but after 10 miles of dirt country roads, I saw the sign that said, "The Langs," Kathy's family name.

Was she ever surprised to see me! She'd known I was coming, but never imagined I'd get there so fast! We were young and in love, and passionate about each other, so the miles had flown by for me!

There's an old saying that goes, "Distance makes the heart grow fonder," but there's an even greater truth that Jesus once shared: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21) And my heart was with Kathy. We were in love.

That's what happens when we're passionate about something. No sacrifice is too great. And that's how we feel about Adventist World Radio. We're passionate about what God is doing through this ministry. All around the world, we're seeing signs and wonders, and rejoice at the thousands of lives being changed for God's kingdom.

God is blessing His work at AWR so abundantly that every month I get further behind in sharing the stories that snowball into the office. This month, I had planned to share with you the results from *Christ for Europe*—including another update from Ukraine. The stories have started to come in as our team returns from the different countries, energized by the experience and on fire for God. But we just received an incredible update from the West Bank territory that I just have to share with you first!

WISAM ALI UPDATE — MIRACLE IN THE WEST BANK

This is a story that began almost two years ago. Back in October 2021, I shared with you an amazing update from Pastor Wisam Ali. If you follow our newsletters, you know we began sharing his story in 2018. He was a devout Arab whom God "plucked from the burning," and he is now the only Arab Adventist pastor in the areas of Israel, the West Bank territory and the Gaza Strip. He's also the director of our AWR radio and evangelism center in the heart of Nazareth.

OVER
50
YEARS
OF MINISTRY



Duane McKey and Kathy Lang met and fell in love at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.



Pastor Wisam Ali with a Godpod.

Almost two years ago, Wisam had an unexpected but providential encounter. He was visiting some interests in the West Bank and came upon an elderly couple living in extreme poverty. To make matters worse, they were both ill and in need of medical attention.

If you remember the story, Wisam was moved to compassion by their plight and provided food and medicine for them, calling a doctor friend to help relieve their suffering. But despite these efforts, the wife died of kidney failure soon after, and a month later, the husband died as well.

Wisam wondered why God had guided him to witness this couple's suffering and their sad end if it had all been for naught. But six months later, Wisam received a call from a man in the West Bank asking to meet with him. He was very persistent, and insisted that Wisam come alone.



Wisam had helped to provide food and medicine for this ailing elderly couple living in poverty in the West Bank.

As he was driving to the specified location, Wisam received a call indicating a change of location. This confused him and made him suspicious, as he often receives threats from people who despise him for being a Christian. So he stopped on the side of the road to pray.

You may remember the story. As he opened his eyes, a man was knocking on his window, indicating he should follow him. They drove through the mountains until they finally arrived, where five men waited with faces covered and machine guns at the ready. They apologized for the trouble, but had wanted to make sure Wisam wasn't followed.



Wisam was led to a meeting with a rebel group with machine guns and masks.

The leader of the group told Wisam a story. It was the story of his own parents, and how they had received help from men "who were different from other men." He could not visit his parents, as he is part of a rebel group wanted by authorities. But he said he thanked God his parents hadn't died hungry because of Wisam's help.

"I invited you here to thank you that my parents died with a full stomach. But not just to thank you, but to ask you why you are different."

Wisam had replied, "I worship the true God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Redeemer."

"Don't we all? Aren't we all worshipping the same God?" the man had asked.

And that's when Wisam said, "Give me a chance to share my God with you so you can understand why I am different."

He agreed, and Wisam shared with the five men the plan of salvation—from Creation all the way to God's ultimate plan for mankind. When he was finished, he told the men, "This can't be explained in one meeting. There is much more to share and we must meet again."

The leader readily agreed, and Wisam added a condition: that no weapons be brought to the meeting. We left the story here in 2021. Now, two years later, let me tell you the rest of the story.

MY WAYS ARE NOT YOUR WAYS

During that first meeting, Wisam shared with the leader of this rebel group that he was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. The man knew Wisam's large family and asked him, "How come you come from the Ali family and yet you're a Christian?"

When Wisam told him his story and how God had led him to this man's parents, the man said, "I would like to know more about Jesus, and would like to have a Bible."

He was looking at Wisam's Bible, so Wisam said, "I cannot give you mine, but I promise to bring you one next time." Three of the men also requested a Bible, and said they, too, wanted to know more about Jesus.

Wisam tells what happened next in his own words:

A few days later I got a phone call saying they were waiting for me. This time, when I arrived, there were six men wanting to hear more. After each visit, the number increased until we were 14. Today, when I met with them again, there were 21. They bring their weapons but set them aside and also remove their face coverings and allow me to see their faces.

They are still on the run from the government, but they are all receiving Bible studies and are faithful to God and have decided to help me distribute Bibles and books!

A few months ago, a whole family decided to be baptized—a man with his wife and two children. God is doing a wonderful work among the people in Israel and Palestine. We have distributed 300 copies of the Bible, but not randomly on the street. These are requests we receive from people who want a Bible.

THE GODPODS STRIKE AGAIN

But that's not all! Two years ago, I received 50 Godpods from Adventist World Radio. I distributed some in Nazareth, and some in the West Bank. Last Sabbath, a Muslim family from the West Bank called. They had been listening to the Bible in Arabic recorded on the Godpod, and for the last two years they've been following our programs on YouTube, along with Cami's Unlocking Bible Prophecies series and Duane's Earth's Final Countdown meetings. I went to visit them to confirm how well they knew and understood our fundamental beliefs, and it was amazing. They knew everything!

This family of eight: two brothers and their wives with four of their children, said, "We have given our lives to our Lord Jesus Christ and are ready for baptism."



THE MIRACLE BAPTISM

The date for their baptism was this past June 3, and Wisam asked our AWR team to pray, as the area where these people live is well-known for crime and lawlessness.

All the arrangements were in place for what Wisam called "the miracle baptism in the West Bank." To make the baptism safe, they had rented a small villa with a swimming pool, and Wisam invited as witnesses two Arab church members.

It was a difficult journey to the baptismal site. The political conflict in the West Bank is raging, and almost every day, there are shootings from both sides—Palestinian and Israeli. It is prohibited for all Jewish people and tourists to enter these territories, and it has become dangerous for Arabs living in Israel as well.

On the baptismal Sabbath, there had been attacks from the Israeli army on the West Bank, so to cross from Israel to Palestine, it was necessary to go through numerous checkpoints. The soldiers made Wisam and his friends take several detours to avoid areas of conflict.

When they finally arrived, the eight candidates were anxiously waiting and praying. After a short sermon and prayer, they proceeded with the baptism. It was an emotional time for everyone. To see parents and their children being baptized brought tears to everyone's eyes.

WISAM CONTINUES TELLING THE STORY

Suddenly, in the middle of the baptism, we started hearing loud noises and automatic weapons being fired outside the house, followed by loud screams throughout the neighborhood.



It was a conflict between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian people just outside the rented house! We later learned that several people were injured and a child was killed.

It was so symbolic to think that inside the house, lives were being saved by the blood of Christ, and outside, for no good reason, people were being killed and covered with their own blood. These people did not have a chance to know Jesus. They never had a chance to experience the love of God, nor the opportunity to hear about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

After the baptism, we had to wait for the gunfire to end before venturing out. On the way back, we were detained by the Israeli army and interrogated on the reason for our trip to the West Bank. My friends had come up with an idea of what to say, but I wouldn't accept it. I was ready to share with the soldiers the miracle of the baptism we had just witnessed. The Israeli soldiers were shocked and amazed to hear that Muslims were being converted to Christianity. They shook their heads in wonderment, but they let us go.

We praised the Lord for this miracle, and for the eight souls who were baptized. Now we are thinking about how we can keep them strong in the faith and give them a chance to worship like other Adventist church members. Our plan is to start a mission project and have a place where we can meet with others who have been baptized in the West Bank to worship on Sabbath.



Wisam and his team were detained by Israeli soldiers on their way home.

FUTURE PLANS

What an inspiring testimony! We are now working with Wisam to establish a center in the West Bank where those who are receiving Bible studies and making decisions for Jesus can meet and worship on the Sabbath. We're also preparing to supply Godpods and Bibles in Arabic. The demand has increased dramatically, and we believe the words of Jesus when He said that before His return, the Earth will be lighted with the knowledge of truth—and that includes Israel and Palestine! Everyone must have the opportunity to know the truth and make their decision!

Yes, it takes resources to support the work in Israel, Palestine, and in so many different places around the world. But just like Kathy and I had a heart for each other, we at AWR have a heart for mission, and what better place to put our treasure than where our heart is? Thank you for joining us in this adventure of faith, for placing your treasure where the moth and the rust can't destroy, and where the rewards are eternal.

Yours in the Blessed Hope,


Duane McKey
President



P.S. I've attached an update on our radio towers in Guam. You may have heard of the recent typhoon that devastated the island, but despite setbacks, God is good, and our "steel preachers" still stand! If you want to help with the restoration project there, your support will be greatly appreciated!