

February 2024

Dear AWR Friend,

A few months ago, I shared with you the story of the miracle my wife Kathy and I witnessed at the start of our mission work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). It was an incredible time in our lives, when as a direct result of God's intervention, our little Lulengele Mission saw more than 100,000 people baptized in what became known as the Kasai Project (see letter from October 2023).

We then moved to the Zaire union office in Lubumbashi, where I eventually became secretary of the union. The president was Pastor Mokotsi Mbyirukira, the first native African union president on the African continent, a great Christian and a wise man. He once said something I will never forget.

### THE BEST ANSWER

We were in the coastal area with the union officers in one of the largest churches in the Congo. Pastor Mbyirukira was speaking when he was asked the following question: "How can you know if someone is a true Christian?"

The pastor turned to the audience and asked for their input. The responses were fast and varied: "Because they pay tithe!" "Because they give Sabbath School offerings!" "Because they study the Sabbath School lesson!" "Because they keep the Ten Commandments!"

To all of these and many more, Pastor Mbyirukira shook his head, "No." He finally said, "If you want to know whether or not I'm a true Christian . . . ask my wife."

It was an amazing answer from an African president in whose culture a woman's opinion was undervalued and polygamous marriages were ingrained. Pastor Mbyirukira was from a remote mountain region of the Congo, but he was a man of prayer and had been transformed by the power of the gospel into the culture of heaven. He had taken to heart the words of 1 Peter 3:7: "Husbands, be considerate . . . with your wives and treat them with respect . . . as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing may hinder your prayers."

I've often thought of his answer, and how I want nothing to ever hinder Kathy's and my prayers or the prayers of our AWR staff. We may get busy as church leaders, pastors, doctors, bankers, businesspeople, farmers, etc., and we may sometimes forget that the person next to us is the one who knows us best, because they see us every day.

Every week we gather with our AWR world staff for a special prayer session. We pray for our worldwide work and for the more than 2,000 radio stations that reach into the farthest corners of our planet. And we also pray for you, our supporters and prayer partners, and for the requests that come in every day.

These times are special to us, and we have felt God's Spirit when we share and pray together. As a result, we've seen some amazing answers to prayer! That's why it's my hope and my prayer that this year will be the greatest year of miracles yet!

Let me share what we are already witnessing in the first month of 2024.

**OVER  
50  
YEARS  
OF MINISTRY**



*Duane (above) during his years in the Congo.*

*Pastor Mbyirukira (below)*



## A CALL TO PRAYER FOR WISAM

If you follow our newsletters, you're familiar with Pastor Wisam Ali, who heads our AWR radio station and center of influence in Nazareth, Israel. His life has been a series of amazing miracles as God uses him to reach the Arab world for Jesus.

Last week, Wisam called me to say he was preparing to travel into the neighboring country of Jordan. Even before the war began, tensions were high in this region of the world, and things have only gotten worse between Muslims, Jews and Christians.

Why was he traveling under such dangerous conditions? Let me explain. Wisam never sugarcoats the truth when airing Bible-based programs. He is straightforward, and the reason for this is that the worst thing you can do to an Arab is to lie or hide your intentions. They appreciate an honest approach, even if it's blunt, and they'll respect you for it. As a result, there is a huge interest in Wisam's presentations. Many Arabs call the station to debate and argue, and for those people, Wisam has no time, and tells them so. That's because there are so many more who call in with a sincere desire to know the truth and learn more about Jesus and Christianity.

For those, Wisam makes time. But so many people call that Wisam has a long waiting list of people who wish to speak with him and study the Bible! Recently, he received a call from a group of nine highly educated professionals in the neighboring country of Jordan who follow the programs on AWR's Arabic station and wanted to know more about our beliefs. "But first," they said, "before we go any further, we want to know something: Do you eat pork?"

Wisam replied, "No, we do not. The Bible specifically forbids it."

Then they asked, "Do you drink alcohol?"

Again, the answer was a negative, and Wisam explained how the Bible teaches us that our bodies are the temple of God.

They were satisfied with the answers and proceeded to explain they had been following the radio programs, but it was very challenging to understand everything, and they needed a face-to-face meeting so he could answer their questions.

Wisam perceived a real interest from the group, so he agreed to travel to Jordan and meet with them at a hotel over the weekend. It was a dangerous trip, and proselytism is prohibited in Jordan, so he called me to ask that AWR pray for him.

Immediately, I sent out an urgent request for prayer to our worldwide staff, and prayers began in earnest. A flood of responses came to our WhatsApp group as people prayed.

## WISAM GOES TO JORDAN

Meanwhile, Wisam traveled to Jordan where the group waited for him at the hotel. He met with them every day for four days, eight hours a day! During that time, Wisam explained our 28 fundamental beliefs, starting with Creation Sabbath. For Arabs, this is an easy one. They believe God created the world in seven days, and when confronted with the Sabbath, they immediately understand its sacredness. Even the Quran mentions the Sabbath.

The greatest portion of time was spent on Jesus. They wanted to understand His nature, His death on the cross and His resurrection. It was challenging for them to grasp how God became flesh and died for mankind. Also, they struggled with the Trinity, and how God is one God, but manifests Himself in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



*AWR prayer warriors from around the world were earnestly praying for Wisam's safety.*

The state of the dead and what happens at death fascinated them. They wanted to know where Jesus went when He died, and what happened after His resurrection. All excellent questions and a very interesting discussion.

Another huge interest was prophecy. For Arabs, prophetic signs and dreams are very important. But time had run out and Wisam had to leave. He agreed to meet with them over Zoom for their next meeting for an in-depth study of prophecy. But he was also honest with them and said: “I will give you two months. For two months, we will discuss prophecy, and if after that time you don’t make a decision, I won’t spend more time. Many more people are waiting to hear the truth. But if you make a decision, I will return and we will hold a baptism.”

## MIRACLE AT THE BORDER

On the way back to Israel, as Wisam arrived at the border, his papers were checked, and when the officer noticed his name, he ushered Wisam into an interrogation room. To his surprise, they told him they’d had him under surveillance and showed him a video of him at the hotel.

They said, “What was your business in Jordan? Were you proselytizing? Are you a missionary? Did you come to preach?”

Wisam responded honestly. He had traveled to meet with a group that had some questions and had invited him to come. No, he had not come to preach, but to hold an honest discussion with a group of professionals and answer questions.

Then the officer asked, “Do you believe Jesus is God?”

Wisam replied, “Is your question to know what I believe, or do you wish to understand the truth?”

The officer replied, “I want to understand from you—do you believe Jesus is God?”

Wisam replied, “You have said it. Would you like to understand the truth?”

The officer didn’t respond, but instead called his supervisor who came and said, “We want to know the names of the people you met with.”

Wisam said, “I don’t need to give you their names. Just ask your informant who recorded the video. It’s obvious he was there.”

The officer insisted, and again Wisam replied that he should ask his informant. Then the officer said something astonishing: “The video only shows *your* face when you enter and exit the room where you met with them. We can’t see any of the other people’s faces. Give us their names! Tell us who they are!”

Wisam replied firmly, “I can’t help you. If your informant was unable to get that for you, I won’t either.”

To his surprise, they suddenly ended the interview and let Wisam go, admonishing him “not to do any mission work next time.”

As Wisam told me the story, he said, “Duane, I was so surprised they let me go and didn’t stamp my passport barring me from entering the country again. And I was amazed they couldn’t see the people’s faces on the video! The informant only had my name. We were there for four days and they never bothered us during that time. They could have come at any time. It’s a miracle!”

Then Wisam added something that touched all our hearts when I shared it with our AWR staff: “I was not afraid when they were interrogating me, because I knew you were all praying for me.”





Yes! There is power in fervent, unhindered prayer! What a privilege to take everything to God in prayer!

## THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK

There is so much more to share from Wisam's work in that part of the world. Yesterday, he called to let me know the 500 Godpods in Arabic had finally arrived—and they're all spoken for already! Half are reserved for the West Bank. Many people have been waiting for a long time!

Wisam also shared the sad news that a group in the Gaza Strip with whom he had been studying the Bible before the war was killed in a recent attack. They had been hiding in a Baptist church when it was bombed. His voice broke when he said, "I take comfort knowing they were all seeking to know Jesus. Even though they didn't have a chance to understand all truth, they wanted to, and God will judge them by the light they had received."

Wisam shared many other interesting stories, including a Pentecostal pastor who came to the radio station last week, but that will have to wait until next time!

## A LUTHERAN PASTOR IS BAPTIZED IN PNG

I would need several more pages to report on so many other events taking place. In a few weeks, we'll begin the evangelistic series in Rwanda, and then the massive evangelistic event in Papua New Guinea with more than 3,000 preaching sites. There has been an astounding amount of prework in PNG, and the results are already being felt.



*In Papua New Guinea, a Lutheran pastor and his wife made decisions to be baptized as Seventh-day Adventists.*

Last October I shared with you the story of the Sunday church in PNG that changed its name—because they all became Seventh-day Adventists! And now, this past Sabbath, a Lutheran pastor and his wife were baptized after attending one of the Bible study groups. After the baptism, when an appeal was made, 78 members from the Lutheran, Baptist and Foursquare churches came forward! God is doing amazing things in PNG and I can't wait to see what He'll do in 2024!

Yes, there is power in the "effective fervent prayer!" My prayer is that this year, more than ever, AWR will be a ministry of prayer and action, and that nothing will hinder our prayers so that thousands will come to know Jesus and make decisions for eternity.

Thank you for joining us in this adventure of faith. We count on your prayers and support. It is only as we work and pray together that we will see more amazing answers to prayer! Thank you for making such a profound difference.

Yours in the Blessed Hope,

*Duane McKey*  
Duane McKey  
President



*Wisam in Nazareth with our Godpod representative receiving 500 Arabic language Godpods.*