

Pastor's Corner

“TAKE UP YOUR CROSS?”

A few years ago, my son Matt updated us on his female college friend from another country, who had become a follower of Jesus last semester. Though her Hindu family had threatened to disown her and cut off all college finances, they will still fund her college education. However, they still are greatly upset she had committed her life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Matt's friend has greatly appreciated us praying for her and her family.

In the The Voice of the Martyrs December 2012 magazine I read the following. “When ‘Samrita’ became a Christian, her husband divorced her and she lost custody of her two children. She prays almost every day that she will regain custody, but if faced with the same choice she would still choose Christ. Samrita grew up in a family from a Malaysian tribal group. Her father was an abusive drunk, and she didn't feel loved. So when a Muslim man named ‘Uda’ began paying attention to her, she saw him as her escape. Samrita and Uda were married in 1999, and at first the marriage was pleasant. But Uda soon began abusing drugs and beating Samrita regularly. Although Uda was a nominal Muslim who rarely attended mosque, Samrita became a Muslim in order to marry him. As her relationship with Uda continued to deteriorate, Samrita sought inner peace through a closer adherence to Islam. She prayed five times a day, dressed modestly, recited

the Quran and even planned a pilgrimage to Mecca.

While Samrita was seeking peace in Islam, her father – the formerly abusive drunk – was discovering true peace in Jesus Christ. He became a Christian in 2006 and began gently sharing the gospel with each of his thirteen children, including Samrita. When she visited her family each month, she felt the peace of God and was impressed by the changes she saw in her father. Samrita began exploring Christianity, and in 2008 she accepted Christ at a Christian seminar she attended without her husband's knowledge.

Samrita kept her faith to herself a few years, praying quietly, reading her Bible when Uda wasn't around and secretly attending Christian meetings led by a VOM contact. But when Uda discovered her Bible one day, he cursed her and ordered her out of the house. She was forced to leave without her two children, 10-year-old ‘Lili’ and 5-year-old ‘Faiz’. Uda decided to divorce Samrita.” (pg. 4) Samrita prays everyday that she will be reunited with her children and granted the right to take care of them. “However,” she adds, ‘I am willing to suffer for Christ.’”

In Matthew 10:34-39, Jesus said the following to His followers: ***“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law***

against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” God's grace is not cheap, but very costly.

May Jesus open our eyes to grow in understanding what it means for each of us to carry our cross this Lenten season. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2, and ends on April 16, the day before Easter.

Consider taking these two very important steps this Lenten season:

1 – **Subscribe** to The Voice of the Martyrs magazine. The address is: The Voice of the Martyrs, P.O. Box 443, Bartlesville, OK 74005-0443. The phone number is 800-747-0085 and e-mailing is: thevoice@vom-usa.org.) It's a free subscription.

2 – **Read about** and **pray for** our persecuted sisters and brothers in Christ throughout Lent.

May the persecution of our brothers and sisters in the 21st century make us stronger and bolder in proclaiming in the gospel through action and words, just as Paul's imprisonment made the 1st century believers at Philippi stronger and bolder in advancing the gospel. Prayerfully read Philippians 1:12, 27-30.

From Pastor Tod

COME HEAR OUR “FRIEND IN MISSION” ON SUNDAY, MARCH 27

On Sunday, March 27, come to hear a message from **one of our “Friends in Missions”** who we donated \$1,500 to renew his visa this past summer. Over the past five years, our “Friend” has learned another language to make Jesus known to an unreached people group so this vision John received from God may become a reality: ***“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”*** (Rev. 7:9-10)

Thanks for our prayers and support so our “Friends in Missions” can play a crucial role in this divine vision to become a reality, as we obey Jesus' Great Commission mandate in Matthew 28:19: **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”**

Our “Friend in Mission” hopes also to meet with our leaders and others interested to prayerfully consider deepening our partnership with our “Friends in Mission” by having a “Dessert with our Friend in Mission” at 6:30 p.m. that evening. Come on March 27 to bless our “Friend in Missions” with your presence before he returns to the mission field.