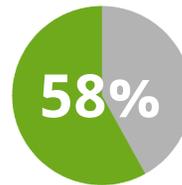


JOURNALS POSTED ON JANUARY 18, 2019

An unexpected friend



STAN SLADE



SUPPORT PLEDGED



GLOBAL

“Could you talk to my son?”

Wow! **That** was unexpected!

The man had seemed upset. When he walked up to my friend Scott, Scott was expecting a tongue-lashing. Instead, the guy asked for... **help**? Amazing! You just never know how the Spirit of God is at work in the people around you!

I heard the story of this encounter last week, while visiting pastors and churches in Colorado and Wyoming, thanks to a lot of great work by Steve Van Ostran, the “pastor to pastors” for American Baptist churches in that part of the country.



Along the Colorado River

I had a wonderful time with Steve and with the churches and leaders that he serves. I met dedicated people and heard inspiring stories of God at work. I was able to share a few stories of my own, and to invite people and churches to join the network of prayer and financial support for the ministry God is doing through me. I am eager to connect with all the churches and individuals God will use to move us from 60% to 100% supported! And I am always eager to hear about how God is at work in other places and ministries.



A Colorado icon: Pike's Peak

Which leads us back to Scott and the man. The imam.

At the time, Scott was pastoring a church in a small town in the center of the U.S. Suddenly, a local business had seen the demand for its products take off, so they looked for a good source of workers in order to expand production. The company found the workers it needed in the Twin Cities. They were eager, both to work hard and to relocate to Scott's small town for the chance to do so. They were immigrants. Somali refugees. Muslims.

As Scott saw this large influx of new and very different folks developing, he knew it would produce challenges for their town. So, he reached out for help to my friend and fellow IM global servant, Walt White. Walt and his wife Jeanine are specialists in helping folks to express the love of God to people who are very unlike them. Like many around the world, Scott found Walt's advice really helpful. He was ready for the conversation when it came.

A young girl from the community of newcomers had had an encounter with Jesus and decided to follow him. She came to Scott for orientation and he began to help her.

This produced a big reaction. Her people were afraid that they were "losing her" to the majority community. Was the majority community preying upon and proselytizing their young and vulnerable members? Something had to be done!

So the imam, the spiritual leader of his community, came to see Scott, clearly upset.

"Are you trying to make this young girl a Christian?" he asked, accusingly.

"Not at all," said Scott. "I am helping her to follow *Isa al-Masih**."

This was certainly not what the imam expected. Then, surprised by Scott, it was the imam's turn to say something surprising:

"Well, in that case, could you talk to my son, too?"

A man who had set off to defend his community was transformed into a fellow father, looking for help. Help, from the one he initially saw as "the enemy."

The key to the change was respect. It is a pretty basic form of love, but it is essential. Scott had respected the newcomers enough to learn about their values and their fears. He cared enough about them to learn at least a little of their language and culture. Rather than attack or destroy their community, he was clearly committed to receiving and serving it. The imam spotted Scott's respect for his community immediately. He recognized that this "enemy" could become his friend. He could be even be a help to the imam's own family.



Scott & Pam Engelhart currently serve in Lander and Ft. Washakie, Wyoming

Overcoming anger and fear with love and respect, making friends of those who might have been our enemies... that is good news. That is gospel work. Paul explains that in Jesus, God tore down the dividing wall of hostility between "us" and "them" (Ephesians 2:14). Based on Jesus' work and acting in the name of Jesus, Scott was continuing to do the same.

Whether we are in Timbuktu or Toledo, Denver or Dakar, mission is truly one. I believe this, and rejoice at the reminder I received from Christ's servant Scott this week. God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). And Christ makes us ambassadors on behalf of his work, called to overcome fear and hostility, wherever we are.

May the Lord make you an ambassador of Jesus' love today. May the Lord empower us all to stand against the flood of fear and hostility that is rising around us. Lord, make us instruments of Your reconciling love.

Blessings,

Stan

* "*Isa al-Masih*" is "Jesus the Messiah" in Arabic.