

## Summary of five year ministry in Istanbul

Greetings to you, brothers and sisters!

Even though I have continually written updates and am aware that you know our ministry and lives very well, I thought it reasonable to give you a summary of our five years of our ministry (a few days ago we hit the 5 year mark) here in Istanbul, thanking you in advance for reading this lengthy detailed letter.

### GIVING THANKS

- First of all, thank you for being with us from the very beginning in this difficult journey of our ministry. Thank you for believing in us and recognizing the call that the Lord had placed upon us, by the laying of hands and the send off to this rather difficult task.
- Thank you for your continued support financially, morally and spiritually always encouraging us with your letters and prayers.
- We truly feel privileged that the Lord has always surrounded us by you all, faithful brothers and sisters.

### OUR BEGINNINGS

- For those of you who have experienced something like this maybe it is unnecessary to describe how difficult the beginning was here. Although we knew a couple of people who helped us, very soon we learned that we had to do everything ourselves. The first 2 years, we mostly studied the language. I was almost 35 years old at the time and learning a new language was very difficult. I worked very hard, studying night and day, reading and starting to converse with my neighbors. Quite often, I paid people to be my conversational partners. It was a very costly endeavor.
- We were lied to and cheated many times at the beginning, from unsaved people and also FROM the so-called brothers and sisters. A lot of times, their lies and deception had moral consequences but sometimes also financial. We were being taken advantage of, sometimes without even knowing it, but sometimes I allowed it just to prove and see if they would see something different in us, and prayed that the Lord would use the situation for them to turn from their wicked ways or that I would gain a friend.

### COLLABORATION

I moved here with one principle in mind: I AM NOT THAT PROUD THAT I WOULD DO SOMETHING ALL BY MYSELF IF THERE ARE ALREADY BROTHERS THAT I CAN WORK TOGETHER WITH, BUT I AM NOT AS NAIVE AS TO THINK THAT I AM WILLING TO WORK WITH WHOMEVER JUST FOR THE SAKE OF MINISTRY. When I moved here, I had full intentions to work together with other brothers, and I have had my eyes open to look for people who were interested to do

the same work. Unfortunately, this kind of brotherly love and collaboration never happened. We found ourselves oftentimes trying to get close to others who we thought had the same intentions of ministry, but were either turned down or at times asked to leave and not get close to them. There were also some of those who wanted to work with us but to be honest their life just did not reflect the life of a saved person. Unfortunately there are many of those kinds of workers here. So in the last 2 years, we have been working with a church where the pastor values us and has fully engaged and trusted us with the ministry of the Word and other ministries in the church.

## FAMILY MINISTRY

The Lord was so gracious with us that He allowed us from early on, before we learned the language well to get to know a lot of people. This was so unexpected not only from us personally but other native leaders and pastors were surprised from the connections we had made. In our neighborhood, we are known by many people with our full identity as Christians. Minimally 3 times a week (sometimes even everyday of the week), we had gatherings at our house of anywhere [from 4-21](#) people at one time, when people came and stayed at our house discussing things [from 6 pm till midnight](#) and in some occasions we have had people over till 4 in the morning. When we got to know these people at the beginning they told us that they had a real hatred for our type. Never had they imagined that we would take the Book and read for hours. Many times we have been offended and insulted directly in our face. We went before the Lord with tears and fervent prayers and heard us. These people who hated us and called us all kinds of names, for whom just touching the Book was a grave sin, would come and read the Book themselves for hours and insisted that we would pray for them. They never left our house without praying and have seen the Lord work in their life. People here are very thirsty for love and this is exactly what we have shown them. We have tried to love them unconditionally and have held their hand in every situation. Many times I have traveled up to 700 km to show them our love and support with our presence. We have seen people in tears when they hear our prayers for them. Many of them have expressed with their own mouth that they themselves have been praying in the name of Jesus for quite some time now.

It has been very difficult to open my home to strangers who come in and dine with us when I am the foreigner and I do not know who these people are or what they might do to my family. It was very difficult to travel with my family for 500 Km and go and stay with another family for 14 days in a strange place when they requested our presence.

## STREET MINISTRY

- For almost a year and a half, we have been out on the streets giving out the Book, tracts and pamphlets, sharing the Good News and praying with people. There were days when we shared with up to 30 people. The street ministry was very difficult and dangerous and many days we were insulted, called names and even threatened with violence. The Lord truly protected us.

- Every acquaintance we have had, by God's grace was turned into a witnessing opportunity. We have shared with store salesmen, the car salesman, the person whose car I scratched in the parking lot, the bank associate who helped us get our bank account, all the parents at my son's school, the pharmacist, our car mechanic, our house painter, my barber, etc. We have shared with everybody that crossed our path.
- I have attended many different courses; like a computer course, a native dance course etc, with the only intention of getting to know people and building relationships. I have also shared with large groups of people where you do not know who is listening and the potential for your life being in danger is greater.

## INTERNET MINISTRY

Understanding how important social media is for many people nowadays, I started using Facebook and Instagram as a platform to reach out to people. This effort surpassed my expectations. Immediately, I gained many followers who liked the verses I was sharing and I started communicating with them through private messages and sometimes openly until the morning hours. Amongst all the threatening and name calling, there has been some genuine interest from various people. Lately, I opened a website with the most commonly asked questions and would direct people there for some basic information. There have been some that have requested a copy of the Book and I have mailed it to them.

## WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Nevila has had two groups of ladies with which she met several times during the week. At first, they were very skeptical and many times have insulted her, but after they got to know her, they started wanting to spend time with her and developing very strong relations with her. Women here love Nevila. They come to the house to spend time with her, they go out to eat together, they cook and learn things together, they go out to the park, etc.

## THE LAST DAYS

The last months have been very challenging for all of us. Everything we were involved in has come to a complete stop. Everything has shut down. People were locked inside and even lately they are very hesitant about meeting with people or even going to someone's home. We started meeting with couples who wanted to meet with us outside in open places. We have been doing this at least twice a week.

## OUR VISION

The leaders of the country here do not like people like us and of our type. They have started kicking people like us out of the country, about 150 until now, and they are not renewing their visas to stay and live here. They have also done this to people who were currently on their visas and even some who were married to natives and even some who have had children born

here and have their citizenship. Things are very unpredictable and anything could happen. We understand that anything could happen to us from now on partially because of the virus and partially because visas are not renewed. The renewal of our visas has always been questionable even in the previous years but especially now, it is highly uncertain. Many of the local churches are suffering the consequences of this situation and are left without leadership and technical support as many have been forced out of the country. WE are trusting the lord to be very flexible with whatever might come our way in the future. We are willing to accept whatever the Lord has for our future and will gladly make necessary adjustments. We are praying that the Lord will reveal his plan for us and whatever his plan is, we will follow.

LASTLY

Everything we have encountered has been difficult from the beginning but we know it is worth all the tears and the ridicule, the sufferings and the hardships. We rejoice in the fact that the Lord has used us in a small way to share our lives with many people. Our life is meaningful because we have shared the Word with a lot of people. If we are not involved in sharing the Word, then our lives are meaningless and worthless.

Thank you for your prayers and support! We love you very much!

With love in Christ Jesus,  
Ariol, Nevila and Endi