

DE LANGE NEWSLETTER

Church planting catalysts with Pars Theological Centre in Europe and beyond

November 2023

“According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope...”

1 Peter 1:3

Pressed but Not Crushed

“The Show Must Go On!”

Wikipedia says this phrase originated in 19th century circus culture to describe the importance of a circus troop to not panic nor stop the entertainment, even when things go array—such as an elephant running loose or a trapeze artist missing a catch. Paul said something similar to his protégé, Timothy: “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). The good news that we know and have believed is so critically needed by all people and our Lord’s commission is so absolute, that there is never justification to say or think, “For at least today, I am not under obligation to be ready to give a reason for the hope that we have.” I am not saying that I do not affirm times of rest; I am not denying the importance of Sabbath. But our Lord himself made clear that though he called his disciples at times to “come apart and rest a while” and honored the Sabbath perfectly, he was also ready to make exceptions to heal and announce the gospel. His

mission was never fully put on hold.

Our lives since the middle of September have been upended by Angie’s back issues. It was getting worse for months, but since then she has been unable to drive, lift anything heavy, sleep well, or sit for more than a few minutes. It has become an all-consuming issue. Yet, the gospel is still needed and despite being hugely distracted, both Angie and I still have the joy of being right in the place of God’s call for us to help facilitate the growth of the gospel and the Lord’s church among a Middle Eastern people group who are also suffering so severely in many areas of life (economically, politically, and spiritually). We do not preach, teach, and serve from a place of strength, but as D. T. Niles put it: “Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.” This health problem has helped us not forget that we, too, are beggars.

Despite our distractions, Angie led the work to host a historic conference in early October of 135 Christian leaders of our people group from across the globe who came together in London for five days and left in a spirit of unity, agreeing to form an ongoing alliance for the purpose of a common Christian witness and mutual encouragement and

collaboration. Throughout her pain of recent months, she has also continued to mentor her mentees. I have continued to facilitate conferences, including Pars Theological Centre’s first North American spiritual formation conference in Vancouver, Canada in late September. And then, despite the government of the country in which we host our conferences suddenly denying travel permission to our refugee students simply because they are studying at a Christian institution, God allowed us to hold our final 2023 conference in earlier November. It went well and was a huge blessing to those who participated. Additionally, I am grateful for the chance to again preach in the church of our Middle Eastern people group in London this Sunday.

There is no reason ever to not be ready to testify to the love of Jesus. Though it’s hardly worth mentioning in comparison with Angie’s health issues, we also have had ongoing challenges with our vehicles properly functioning. Last night after being stranded at our homeschool group when our car again wouldn’t start and I had called for the assistance of a car locksmith and engine immobilizer expert, we ended up not getting the car to start—despite him being well qualified

and trying everything imaginable. As we worked together, I learned that he is Romanian Orthodox, but does not anymore have much to do with the church. As he graciously drove my son, Elijah, and me to drop us off at the train station, I shared the gospel with him. It has been my experience that people like him,

though they have had some connection with Christianity, are still quite muddled in understanding the essence of what the gospel says and calls us to do in response.

I hope I have offered you a glimpse of what has been happening with us and our ministry lately. A summary of it might be what Paul wrote: "We

are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair... Therefore, we do not lose heart" (2 Cor. 4:8, 16). The gospel of our Lord Jesus will not be silenced and must not be. It is the honor of us all, no matter our circumstances, to seek his Kingdom and testify of his unimaginable love. -Ray

Pray without Ceasing

Not to focus on the unpleasant but because it has been another significant part of our lives this fall that Ray did not mention in his article, I will share about our bout with illness. Ray, Cora, Elijah, and Lydia were all down for weeks with high fevers and chest infections. I was semi-quarantined, as I could not imagine how much greater pain my back would have given me if I had had the coughing fits they were experiencing. For several nights, as I lay in my now normal sleeping position on the living room floor with my legs supported on the couch listening to them hacking upstairs, all I could pray was, "Lord, have mercy."

He did. Everyone is now on the mend, and Anna and I seemingly did not get what they had. The nerve blocking medication I am on as I wait for treatment has started taking effect, and I can sleep through the night. And yesterday, the

mystery of our car not starting was finally solved: a faulty starter wire.

As Ray wrote, what has been happening to us personally has been very distracting, and I would add that it has made whatever we do feel much more difficult or almost impossible. I am reminded our struggle is not against flesh and blood and we need to pray without ceasing. In addition to what we have written about our own trials, leading up to the October conference the director of Pars and the main visionary and leader for this new evangelical alliance for our people group was in the hospital for a lung infection and continued to struggle with it during the event. Another one of our senior leaders became ill during that conference and was so sick for weeks afterward that he had to cancel teaching at our November Pars conference in the Middle East. As Ray mentioned, for the first time ever, students who wanted to

attend that November Pars conference were denied travel permission because it was a Christian conference. And, just a few days ago, we learned that one of our in-country students died suddenly at 45 years old. The circumstances of his death are still unknown, but it is especially significant because he facilitated learning for a group of our students there as he was the only one with a computer.

If I had more space I would also tell you of how we have experienced God's care in these months and how I trust Him even more because of His nearness through these trials. All praise to Him. I will leave it at that so I can squeeze in a link to an article about Pars' recent graduation and its ministry in *Christianity Today* [here](#). We are so grateful to be part of this work, and we thank you for your support.

-Angie

PRAY WITH US

- Praise God for His sovereignty over all principalities and powers.
- Praise God for His care for His people, even in the midst of trials, and for the love of the body of Christ for its members.
- Please pray for spiritual and physical protection for Pars staff and students.
- Please pray for provision for Pars' operational needs.

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