

The *Olsen Outlook* February 2009

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Dear Friends,

Have you ever had an ongoing struggle in your life for which there seemed to be no end in sight? That is the place we are in right now. We vacillate between hope and feelings of defeat.

It has usually been during hopeful periods that we have written you our letters, and thus we haven't brought this struggle up to you before. Having received a very vulnerable prayer letter from some friends who labored in Turkey while we were there, we are now prompted to open up to you. Having your prayers in this matter would be of great benefit.

We need your prayers for Ryan and for our relationship with him. He has charmed many of you with his bright, creative, rambunctious personality. We are so thankful to have his spark of life in our family! However, there is also a side to Ryan that takes its toll on us. We find ourselves feeling very confused and helpless as parents.

Ryan is intense, and sometimes that intensity gets him into a lot of trouble at home and hurts those around him. He struggles with irritability and distraction. The distraction keeps him from following through on instruction from us, and the irritability flares up when he is frustrated or when his plans and ours or his siblings don't match. We feel helpless when he has a creative idea that he is struggling to implement and his frustration spirals out of control even while we are trying to help him. It is very difficult for us to maintain our patience with him at times.

We're in the process of getting professional help to determine the roots of Ryan's intense anger and to know how better to parent him. We have a lot of clues and ideas about what is going on, but haven't been able to adequately deal with his outbursts. Things have really escalated in the past 4-5 months and we're very concerned that he could hurt himself or someone else when he is out of control.

We started with our family pastor, whom we continue to consult. In December, we took Ryan to our family doctor to rule out thyroid problems and other medical causes. We met with a therapist in December, and she referred us to a Christian psychologist. He will meet with us on February 24 while Ryan is at school. Then he will make some incognito observations of Ryan at school to rule out or confirm ADD or ADHD. There are other factors and considerations, too, such as his allergy to Red 40 food dye.

We feel a bit like failures as parents, because Ryan doesn't have these episodes at school or at church. In fact, Ryan's teacher recently commented, "I just can't tell you enough what a delight it is to have Ryan in my classroom." She has become aware of what is happening at home and is very supportive. She has seen his distractibility at school, but only hints of the anger.

Certainly, there is a spiritual side to all of this. Ryan has received Jesus as His Savior and is open to spiritual instruction, but he is very

young. How do you teach a seven-year-old boy to trust God with such intense feelings? He may understand the concepts when he is calm, but applying them when he is raging is quite a challenge. That is the challenge of the Spirit-filled life for all of us, is it not?

We are praying for wisdom and insight, patience, healing and peace. We also pray for minimal long-term effects on family relationships. It's hard for Emily and Michael to be patient with Ryan, too, and Ryan often finds it difficult to have a two-year old brother.

As is our prayer for all of you, we pray that our children would know Christ's sacrificial love in their hearts in a deep, experiential way and that His love would transform them from the inside out.

HOW IS MINISTRY?

As you can imagine, using our home as a base of outreach is a bit tricky because of uncertainty about how Ryan will deal with interruptions to his normal schedule and the excitement of having guests. Despite that, God has been faithful to provide us with opportunities to minister to internationals. We have been vulnerable with some of our international friends so that they can see us trusting God for this situation and see us making our family a priority.

"Kerr" came recently for dinner and brought "Hank". We had a great Turkish evening together. These single guys really enjoyed being with our family. Kerr, who borders on interest in spiritual topics, had teary eyes when he left and warmly expressed his desire to be with us more. Hank is eager to discuss things. In fact, he came during fellowship time to meet our pastors and set up a meeting with Bryan, our family pastor. He is interested in fostering mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians, but we see this as an opportunity to gain a platform among a wider audience of Muslims for showing Christ's love.

Kurt also had an Egyptian friend sit with him at church in December. They meet weekly for English practice. "Henry" was full of questions. Nanette has visited his wife "Amanda" and young son in their apartment. After Kurt gave them a special version of the film "Jesus" to view in Arabic, we had them over for coffee. They hadn't viewed it yet, so we will set another time to discuss it after they watch the film.

**A DYNAMIC, SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT IN
LINCOLN
IMPACTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
WITH CHRIST'S LOVE
BY LINKING THEM WITH CHRISTIANS
WHO SHARE THE GOAL OF MAKING
DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.**

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