

Julia's Journal 2014

Day 1 – Arrival

Dear Friends,

Just a quick note to say that 10:45 Jerusalem time and 2:45 Arkansas time we are all present and accounted for in the Ministry House. Debbie's bag is somewhere out in the airplane world and we are praying that it will arrive intact in a couple of days. Until then we are feeling like a bunch of college girls sharing clothes, etc (thank goodness Debbie brought her toothbrush in her carry on). Jan, Betty and I saw the tour group off at the airport and then took a cab back to Jerusalem. Tony picked up the other girls at the airport. We're off to never never land so that we can be up and at em in the morning!

Blessings from Jerusalem,
Julia for everyone :)

Day 2 – Celebrating Jerusalem Day

It is still May 27th in Arkansas even though it is now May 28th here in Jerusalem (HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FINLEY!) May 27th is Jerusalem Day, the Celebration of the Liberation of Jerusalem in the Six Day War in 1967. While the whole city celebrated with fireworks as we were walking home at 10:00 last night, we had been celebrating with another kind of fireworks, gospel fireworks, all day long. We awoke yesterday morning to a beautiful day overlooking the Valley of Ghenna, the place where the Canaanites sacrificed their children in the fire and the place where the Jerusalem Israelites threw and burned their trash. Jesus also used this Valley as an illustration of fire as He often referred to it when He warned people about being cast into the place where the worm never dies and the fire isn't quenched. What an appropriate urgency the Valley of Ghenna gave us as we set out on our first day of evangelism and Bible distribution. Tony came to get us just as we were finishing up our morning devotional. We went down to the basement of the ministry house and sifted through box after box after box of Bibles in different languages. As he pointed here and there while saying, "German, English, Hebrew, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, etc" We loaded up on Bibles, gospel tracts and DVDs of the Jesus Film and the Magdalena Film (about Mary Magdalene's deliverance and submission to Jesus as Lord and Savior). Both of these films are put out by Campus Crusade for Christ and the enormous stash of Bibles in the basement also comes to Voice in the Wilderness (the name of Tony's church and ministry) through various sources. It is so beautiful to see the Body of Christ working together across the globe for the salvation of people living in darkness. First stop yesterday was the Herodian, the ruins of one of Herod the Great's palaces and the place where he was buried. How could one man be such a brilliant builder and such an evil destroyer all at the same time? I think the total depravity of man is more insidious than we are willing to acknowledge. Loaded down with Bibles and DVDs in different languages, we got out of the car and began the work of sowing gospel seeds. It is comforting to know the truth of the Parable of the Sower as we engage strangers in conversation and give them a Bible, a tract or a DVD in their language. Some of our gospel conversations fall on hard ground and people politely listen but refuse the offer of a free Bible. Others take it and we have no way of knowing whether their hearts are rocky soil, thorny soil or good soil. We know that in some instances the birds will eat up the words we spoke and the thorns will choke out the Word we gave, but we also know that God promises His Word will not return to Him void so some will come to faith in Jesus as they read God's Word in their own language! Please join us in praying this very thing. As we walked around the Herodian and looked at the ruins, we ran into people who shared the story of their ruined lives with us. One man talked about his PTSD that he took home as a souvenir from the Second Intifada. We talked to him about Isaiah's prophecies and God's promises that when the Messiah comes the whole Gentile world will revere and love the Jews. We expressed our love for him and gave him a Hebrew New Testament as we encouraged him to read this "Jewish Book". We met other soldiers and as we pulled the Hebrew NT out of our bags they stuck out their hands saying, "I want one,

I want one!” Jews were not the only ones who wanted the gifts we were giving. Before we even got to the entrance three Arab tourists had taken Bibles and DVDs and while we were walking in ancient tunnels and cisterns we met two Arab buddies who had come to the Herodian because they grew up in its shadow and were revisiting their childhood. These men, who told us they were looking for peace between all people, were happy to hear what we had to say and took the Jesus Film. Oh, we pray they come to know the Prince of Peace by viewing that film! After a couple of hours at the Herodian we came back to the ministry house, cooked and ate lunch and then settled in for a couple of hours of evangelism and discipleship training by Tony. Afterwards we headed out again, this time to the Old City. There we providentially bumped into some tourists but mostly people who live and work in Jerusalem. We gave out Tony’s contact information and invited those who said they were believers to church. They seemed encouraged to have Biblical conversation with strangers and it was a reminder to us to pray for them as all Jesus followers are in the minority here. We experienced gospel fireworks as we stood praying while Tony engaged in a robust discussion with some Pakistanis about God’s definition of “good” (as in no one is good, no not one). We walked and walked and walked some more, sowing seeds through conversation and Bible distribution. The newbies on our team were already courageous and unflappable by God’s grace. One of Tony’s church members, a lovely woman from France (and Holland and Israel) shepherded us and served as a gentle, loving example of how to engage someone in gospel conversation. Her countenance and tone of voice were so inviting. We are praying for God to help us exhibit her same joy and compassion. With Tony in the front and our lovely new friend in the rear we felt like we had God’s glory cloud as our front and rear guard. What I learned yesterday is that there are two kinds of fireworks. One kind lights up the night sky, the other lights up dark hearts. We enjoyed seeing the bursts of color in the sky as we dragged ourselves up the last hill to the ministry house but WE LOVED celebrating Jerusalem Day by bringing the gospel to the very city where God not only promised to put His Name, but actually did it by causing the Valley of Ghenna, the Kidron Valley and the Tyropian Valley intersect in such a way as to form the Hebrew letter “Shin”, the abbreviation of El Shaddai, God Almighty. Thank you for praying for us today as we go hard after it again!
Julia for everyone

Day 3 – Lost and Found

Twice yesterday we had unusual lost and found experiences as someone in our group got separated from the others. Both times God gave perfect peace for the ones that were lost and His solution for the others to find the sheep that had been left behind. The first lost and found came after a long uphill climb when two were not able to keep up with the rest. They became lost at a crossroads, not knowing which way to turn. They waited at the crossroads and were eventually retrieved. The second lost and found came when one was left behind because as we moved on she became heavily engaged in conversation with two people who had shunned our first attempts to give them a Bible. Because our Good Shepherd leaves the 99 and goes after the one this is what she intentionally did. I will tell you about it after I briefly recount the rest of our day. Yesterday morning we left the ministry house loaded for bear with our packs full of Bibles and pulling a cart Debbie brought from Home Depot also loaded to the top. Rachel (Tony's daughter) had come to join us and she wore her Razorback T-shirt because we had plans to meet up with Dick Nelson and his crew who came from Bethlehem (via Turkey and Jordan) to be with us for a few hours. We were to meet them at the Jaffa Gate. Since it took them longer than expected to get to our meeting place we were able to work the crowds of people coming and going through one of the main entrances to the old city. Tony had suggested we look for people examining a map, go up to them and ask, "*Are you lost? Do you know how to be found?*" and then share the gospel. What a great plan to add to the other ways of approach we had already been trying! After experiencing numerous rejections from Italians, Brits and Irishmen, Betty was finally able to have a conversation with an atheist from Ireland. At first he also rejected her approach, but then as she persevered in finding common ground he was won over by her winsomeness, took a Bible and actually told her that he would read it. Susan was able to engage an older French speaking Jewish woman in conversation through the woman's friend who translated. The woman eagerly asked Susan if the book she was giving out was a New Testament as she had been looking for one to give to a friend. Susan gave her one for the friend and one for her to keep for herself. She was ecstatic as she had just recently discovered Jesus as her Messiah. She told Susan that she was being shunned by everyone but wanted New Testaments to give to her girlfriends so that they might read the Word and see that Jesus is the Messiah. When the Jewish friend doing the translating told Susan that she did not want a Bible because she was an atheist, Susan asked, "Would you be willing to read just two chapters?" "Yes" was her answer. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 were Susan's suggestions. As they continued to talk the Jewish atheist suddenly began to ask many questions so Susan began to give her more Scriptures to read. The Jaffa Gate became a great crossroads for street evangelism and Bible distribution! After Dick and his crew arrived we gave big hugs and then headed off through the Arab quarter to a restaurant for lunch. What a fun time we had with Dick's college students, Lisa Gibson, and especially Latham and Becca Chambers, who live and teach in Bethlehem. It was so surreal to meet up with them at the Jaffa Gate and then be able to share a meal and take them to a couple of sights in Jerusalem. One thing that was special to me was that Finley had discipled

the boys and Martha had discipled Becca and I was the beneficiary of the fruit of their labors as we talked about God, the Bible, their mission trip, etc. We even called Finley and passed the phone around to collectively leave him a Happy Birthday message. They were not able to stay with us for church so we parted after taking them to the Garden Tomb. I hated to see them go, especially Latham and Becca, but now they know Tony and I hope they will be able to take advantage of his hospitality in Jerusalem when they are in need of a little respite from their work in Bethlehem. Jerusalem was SO CROWDED yesterday. The celebration of Jerusalem Day lasted from sundown day before yesterday until sundown yesterday. Schools were out, crowds were dancing in the streets, flags were waving and the heavily armed police were out in force everywhere because tensions were high. We were only involved in one little incident that I never did quite understand. Some in our group were detained behind a construction fence on our way to the Garden Tomb. As quickly as they were caught up in a crowd that was being detained behind the fence they were released and joined us on the short walk to the Garden Tomb. Perhaps the construction man was just letting people go through a few at a time. At any rate it did not turn into a dangerous situation, but it did call all of us to prayer as we stood watching them on the other side of the fence. Comparing emotions afterwards we found that none of us were afraid because we are learning afresh to trust God for the outcome of every situation. This brings me back to our lost and found situation where our sister had intentionally stayed behind in order to follow up with two men who were obviously drowning in hopelessness. (They also appeared to be drowning in alcohol as they said they were on their 5th pitcher of beer). The men had on angry, hopeless, Godless T-shirts. On the front was a long list of the world's religions and underneath were profane words mocking religion in general. Their shirts were what drew us to them in the first place, their hopeless demeanor is what caused our sister to stay behind to engage them in more conversation. One of the men was willing to talk one on one. He told her that he felt like God had failed him in the past. She was able to find common ground by identifying with his disappointment from her own life experience but then push the conversation to a higher level by telling what God had done for her when her life situation seemed just as hopeless. After much conversation both men took Bibles and the one who was the most conversational looked like he might actually read it. How comforting is Isaiah 55:6-7 "*Seek The Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near, Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts, Let him turn to The Lord, and He will have mercy on him and to our God, for He will freely pardon.*" This is what we are praying for that sad and hopeless man. After our sister had finished her ordained moment, God brought to her mind that she had Tony's cell phone number. She flagged down a young Jewish woman to help her, the woman eagerly did so by using her own cell phone to call Tony. The ones who were already out looking for her were then directed to where she was and they all came back to church, which was already in progress. At church we were engulfed in praise as we experienced God's answer to our fervent prayers to find her. God was glorified in our asking and glorified in His provision. Our sister was lost but then found. Would you pray with us that those who received Bibles

yesterday would open and read them so that perhaps Jesus might say to them what He said to Zacchaeus in Luke 10:9-10, *“Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

Sending love your way from Jerusalem,
Julia for everyone.

Day 4 – Paradise

Paradise. That's what we all want, don't we? Of course we do. Some seek to find Paradise on earth by building their own kingdoms or by making themselves the center of the universe. Others follow false teachers and preachers who proclaim that your best life is now. Many follow other gods and their rules and religious practices but they live in anxiety because they know deep in their hearts that they do not measure up even as they hold on to a weak hope that their god will find favor with them in the end. Some even perform jihad and blow themselves up believing that their act of terrorism will usher them into Paradise where they will have the pleasure of 70 virgin women. The thief on the cross asked Jesus for it and received His promise that that very day he would be with Him in Paradise. Yesterday we simply drove in a van to Paradise. For several hours we worked the street in front of the PARADISE Market and Restaurant, which is actually a liquor store in Samaria where you can also buy potato chips and pomegranate juice :). As we worked the street, stopping the taxis, the trucks, the cars, and the Mercedes full of Muslim men we offered them the opportunity to find true Paradise in Jesus by giving them Arabic New Testaments, the Jesus Film in Arabic, children's Bible stories in Arabic and the Mary Magdalene Film. It is unbelievable how happy they are to receive these gifts. Every taxi driver that I saw began flipping through the NT and reading parts of it while their customers were in the liquor store. No one threw our gifts out the window. Many asked for more than one NT. When we asked the men if they had children we also gave them the children's Bible Story book. When we ran out of NT (we took well over 100) we gave out the children's Bible Story book and the Jesus Film to everyone and the men began to read it, too. What we learned is that the Paradise Liquor Store was a safe place for these Muslim men. It was safe because they didn't live in the town where the store is located. They live in the surrounding Arab towns. How can you tell? Their license plates are different from Samaritan license plates. As we stand on the sidewalk we look for the green plates. Yellow ones are off limits but any green plate is fair game. Are there liquor stores in the towns where these Arab men live? I have no idea. All I know is that they can come to this one guiltless and unobserved by their peers and that yesterday they received the gift of a lifetime. What of the Samaritans and why are the yellow license plates off limits? Tony has permission to do street evangelism and Bible distribution from the owner of the liquor store as long as he does not give Bibles to the Samaritans. Of course he has found another way to do that and he greeted several Samaritans that he knew personally, including the store owner. One of the most tender moments we experienced yesterday was the unexpected permission to give Bibles to three little girls. It is against the law here to evangelize children, yet the children in this Samaritan town were so curious as to what was going on with these American women who were handing out books to everyone but them. They came and stood by us with big pleading eyes. We tried to talk to them to ask them to go and get their mother so that we could give them a book, but they didn't understand our language and we could not understand theirs. All we could understand is that they had hungry hearts for our gifts and we had no permission to give to them. Finally someone came along that Tony was able to talk to about the

girls. The man confirmed to Tony that these youngsters were Arabs, not Samaritans, and the man gave us permission to give our gifts just as they gave up pleading and headed home. Adair and Jan chased after them down the street waving and yelling and gave them each a children's book, both DVDs and New Testaments for their parents. How many of us have read Bible stories to our own children and grand children? All of us. It is nothing for us to have children's Bibles, Bible story books, Veggie Tales, Adventures in Odyssey, etc, all over our houses. These three little girls now have their own Bible story book and I'm still crying over the privilege we were given to put it in their hands. Please pray for all of the Muslims that received our gifts yesterday, and please pray for the Samaritans too. Right across the street from the Paradise Liquor Store was a Samaritan Synagogue. There was a Menorah on the gate and other Jewish looking decorations. This is the place where they go to pray, believing that they are more Jewish than the Jews and that they know the way to Paradise. Just down the street was the place where they perform animal sacrifices at Passover (a different date from the Passover observed by the Jews). Tony goes to that place on the day of the sacrifice and shares the gospel truth with them about Jesus being the only sacrifice that saves. Keep in mind that this town is less than 5 minutes as the crow flies from Jacob's well where Jesus met the woman looking for Paradise through adultery. We are trusting that just as Jesus went to Samaria to keep His divine appointment with this woman and the people of her town that He will have some divine appointments with the men, women and little girls who received His Word yesterday. If standing on the sidewalk by Paradise wasn't enough of a thrill for yesterday, Tony also took us up on a hiking path on the exact mountain where The Lord met Abraham as soon as he arrived in Canaan. *Genesis 12:6-7 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.* I encourage you to open your Bibles, locate Shechem on your map and read about other things that happened here: Genesis 33:18-19 and Joshua 24:32 and then picture the Israelites as they are about to enter the land promised to Abraham: *Deuteronomy 11:29-30 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, west of the road, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in the Arabah in the vicinity of Gilgal.* As we stood looking at Mt Ebal and Mt Gerizim and as we drove past the road sign pointing to Bethel I realized that there has never been a time when the Jews lived in the Promised Land unthreatened by the Gentiles. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived alongside the Hittites, the Canaanites and all the other "ites". When Jacob's family joined Joseph in Egypt they owned nothing in the Promised Land except the cave of Machpelah where the Patriarchs are buried and the land around Shechem, which Jacob purchased and then gave to Joseph on his deathbed. When Joshua led the Israelites into the Land they were commanded to wipe out the Canaanites, the other "ites", the Philistines and other Gentiles, but they failed. Hence the Old Testament is full of wars between the Jews and Gentiles in the Promised Land. It is just the same

today and I think it will remain that way until Jesus comes. Only then will the prophecies of Isaiah be fulfilled: *Isaiah 60:10-18* *Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kinds will serve you. Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion. Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations – their kinds led in triumphal procession. For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined. The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet. The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Although you have been forsaken and hated, with no one traveling through, I will make you the everlasting pride and the joy of all generations. You will drink the milk of nations and be nursed at royal breasts. Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob ... I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.*

Please pray for the Peace of Jerusalem for it will come when the Prince of Peace comes to restore the earth to Paradise and not until then. Please also pray for the salvation of all people groups living in this land so that they may coexist for the fame of Jesus Name until He returns.

Julia for everyone.

Day 5 – Timing is Everything

Acts 1:7-8 It is not for you to know the **TIMES** or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth

Amos 5:13b ... for the **TIMES** are evil.

Psalms 31:15a My **TIMES** are in your hands ...

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all **TIMES** and a brother is born for adversity.

Esther 4:14 For if you remain silent at this **TIME**, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place ... who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a **TIME** as this?

Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is **TIME** to seek the LORD, until He comes and showers righteousness on you.

These verses that have something to do with timing became very real to us yesterday. As we began the day with a hefty devotional about the Day of The Lord and the wrath to come we knew full well that we don't know when the Time of Jacob's Trouble (The Tribulation) will come (Acts 1:7-8). We just knew that the truths about the future that we have learned through the major and minor prophets have been given to us not to satisfy our curiosity but to increase our zeal for evangelism, because TODAY is the Day of Salvation and we must share the gospel and sow the seeds of God's Word TODAY. By the time that Tony came to get us we were ready emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. I'm glad we were ready because when Tony dropped us off in the Old City and told us to meet him after he parked the car we had to walk through a crowd of demonstrators in order to get there. This was not just any demonstration it was a "Slut Walk". Apparently not too long ago (I'm behind in reading the newspaper:) a judge in Canada ruled that a woman who had been raped had silently asked to be raped by enticing the rapist with the clothes she was wearing at the time. As you can imagine this "Slut Walk" was an impassioned demonstration of Jewish young people, both men and women. They were beating a drum, they were brandishing signs, they were protesting the injustice of the judge's ruling just like we do in the United States. Amos 5:13b the times that we live in are evil indeed and so we worked the crowd. In hindsight I have learned that we could have done a better job at working the crowd. Had we used the demonstration and the judge's ruling as a starting point for conversation I believe we could have had more significant conversations and could have approached everyone with that as common ground (we understand frustration, injustice, crime, etc) Then we could have told them that the Holy One of Israel promises that a Day is coming then all wrongs will be righted ... etc ... I could go on and on because I get it now even though I didn't

get it yesterday. Jan did get to say her peace to a woman who asked her *“Have you ever heard of a “Slut Walk”*, and Jan said, *“Yes, have you ever heard of Jesus?”* As their conversation progressed the woman professed her atheism to Jan and said that she did not want a Bible because she did not want to change. Oh well, we pray to happen upon another “Slut Walk” or reasonable facsimile because the times that we live in really are evil. On the other hand, we live into Psalm 31:15a every day that we are here. Yesterday we had a particularly wonderful providential encounter with a soldier named Shalom. What a great name! This Jewish IDF man was actually from Colorado and had moved to Israel to be in their military. God gave me courage to approach him even though he had a Yarmulke (Kippah) on his head, signifying that he was a religious Jew, not a purely secular Jew. I talked to him about his work in the IDF, expressed our appreciation for him, promised to pray for his safety and victory, told him I would ask the God of Israel to do for him what He had done for Joshua, David and other Israelite soldiers and then gave him what I described as a “Jewish Book”, written by his ancestors. I told him he should read it because his life was always in danger. When he looked at the “Book” big tears came into his eyes and he said, *“I’ve been looking for one of these! I was going to buy one of these!”* We asked if he would like to have more than one, suggesting that he might give them to his friends. He took four. Happy Happy Joy Joy! My times were in God’s hands as even 2 minutes one way or the other and I would have never met that young man. There was another soldier at the same intersection too, and I went out into the median to approach him, determined to walk across the street whichever way he went. His name was Israel (another great name!), he also wore a Yarmulke (Kippah) and he also took a New Testament in Hebrew. God is so good to direct our every step. There were many other Scriptures given out in Polish, Hebrew, English, German, etc., during this short time that we had to work the outskirts of the Old City before coming back to the ministry house to prepare for Tel Aviv. As we walked back to the van I happened to be in front of the line next to Tony, who always leads our pack. We were within two minutes of getting to the van when Tony spied a man and two women sitting on the grass underneath a tree near by. Later Tony told us that his heart sank when he saw this man, his wife and sister in law because this man absolutely hated Tony. For many years (? 20) this Muslim man had screamed and screamed and screamed at Tony as he did street evangelism inside the Jaffa Gate, the place where this man is a shopkeeper. Often Tony would stop what he was doing to protect a tourist from this man because he was dishonest, evil and would do all that he could to rob tourists who happened into his shop. The man was intentionally evil and dishonest. Stopping to greet him as he sat under the tree was not what Tony wanted to do, but our mentor and shepherd for these few weeks listens to the Holy Spirit and obeys. (I’m sure he doesn’t perfectly listen or perfectly obey but he did yesterday). Tony killed his fleshly desire to avoid another confrontation with this man and led us straight to him. We all sat down on the grass and after Tony had warmly greeted this man he began to engage him in conversation. I am so glad that Tony followed God’s principle found in Proverbs 17:17 (a friend loves at all times) because had he not done so, he would have missed a blessing and encouragement from The Lord Himself. Tony had no knowledge of what had been happening in this Muslim man’s life this past year. The

man had been in a terrible motorcycle accident and was subsequently in a coma for eight months. When he woke up he had been changed. Gone was his anger and hostility. Gone was his dishonesty and greed. Gone were many things. He and Tony talked for a long time. As they talked Adair buddied up to the Muslim sister in law, engaged her in conversation and gave her a Jesus Film DVD. Those of us sitting close to his wife shared our snacks with her and she shared her bread and (? something we couldn't identify but we ate it). In the end it was time to go and we made our way back to the van. On the way I said to Tony, "*I would have like to have asked that man why he thought God had saved his life*". Don't ever say such a thing around Tony unless you mean it because he will make you do it. Tony got a Bible and a Paul Washer Bible Study in Arabic out of the van and told me to run and go do it. I did the deed. I was so blessed. The man, Ibrahim, told me that he believed God spared his life because there was something he was supposed to learn. He had been studying all the world's religions since he came out of his coma. I gave him the Bible, the Bible study and told him that Tony said these two things would help answer his questions and that Tony would meet him for coffee so they could go through the Bible study together. I gave him Tony's phone number and told him to call him. He said that he would. Then he told me that he was a sinner and he seemed to indicate that it was bothering him. I asked him what he did with his sin. He told me he looked up and asked for forgiveness. I told him that the books Tony gave him would help him deal with his sin. Dottie was with me and together we encouraged him along and then we had to go. It was a brief encounter but a blessed one and we wonder if perhaps he has already been regenerated and is just waiting for the pieces to fall in place and come to faith in Jesus. It will be a great victory indeed if an angry, dishonest Muslim man is turned into an honest follower of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. I tell you I am not making this stuff up! Who could make up stories like these? I have a big imagination but the encounters we are having are way beyond my imagination. What about the Esther verse? How did that apply to us yesterday? It applied to us as we were challenged down to the depths of our being by a Korean man that we shared a meal with before we headed to Tel Aviv. Every Friday afternoon members of Tony's church and members of other churches come to the ministry house to share a family meal (there were about 25 of us), a Bible study and then load the van, pile in the cars and make the trek to Tel Aviv to share the gospel and distribute Bibles. At our end of the table was a lovely 30 something man from Korea. We asked about his life, his family, etc – just regular get to know you stuff. In the course of the conversation we learned that he has a wife and a new baby and has only been in Israel about three months. He pastored a church in Korea for about four years before being sent by his church to Jerusalem. He is enrolled in Hebrew University for the explicit purpose of learning and becoming fluent in Hebrew in order to share the gospel with the Jews. I asked him, "*Are there any Jews in Korea?*" He said, "*No*". Do you see the implications of our conversation? This dear young man has left his country, his church, his friends, his family of origin to never return again except for a visit now and then. He has come to Israel to learn Hebrew in order to share the gospel with the Jews. Oh my! Do any of us have that much love for Jesus' ethnic brothers that we would leave our lives and our country in order to become fluent in Hebrew in order to

Speak to the Jews in their heart language? I am guessing that he might not have ever even met a Jewish person until he moved here three months ago. **How many Jewish people do you know? What are you doing to meet Jewish people? How are you training yourself to share the gospel with a Jewish person?** In light of Romans 1:16 *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile”* we must ask ourselves these questions. The priority of Jewish mission is seen throughout the whole New Testament. The gospel has come to the Gentiles in order to make the Jews jealous for a relationship with the God of the Bible, the Holy One of Israel. God’s whole plan of salvation is wrapped up in the Jews since He made a Nation out of Abraham and brought forth both the Bible and the Messiah from that Nation. Satan tried but failed to thwart the first part of God’s plan (the Lamb of God becoming Incarnate to Redeem His people) but he failed. Satan is trying to thwart the second part of God’s plan (the Lion of Judah returning to earth to reclaim His planet) and he will fail in that, too. Yet, we have been born and born again during the times of the Gentiles. We have been commanded to go and make disciples of all nations for the fame of Jesus’ Name. Our churches zealously go about obeying the Great Commission, but truly truly, do our churches intentionally evangelize the Jews (one distinct people group) as seriously and intentionally as they evangelize the Gentiles (many distinct people groups)? Even if you don’t interpret Romans 1:16 and Paul’s plan of intentionally going to the synagogues first as he fulfilled his calling as the Apostle to the Gentiles as a priority of Jewish mission, do you just ignore the Jews as a people group out of apathy or the poor theology that I was taught as a child? My best friend from the time I was five years old was a Jewish girl who lived in my town. I practically lived at her house during my junior high and high school years. When I asked my pastor and my parents about telling the Cohens about Jesus I was instructed to never mention His Name in their house because 1. It was offensive to the Jews and 2. God had another plan for the Jews. When I finally began studying the Bible for myself (in my 30’s) I realized there is NO other NAME under heaven by which men might be saved. I realized that Jesus came first to the House of Israel and He instructed the disciples that after the Holy Spirit came upon them they would be His witness first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria and then in the ends of the world. The point is this. God will see to it that the Jews are evangelized because He promises that in the end all Israel will be saved (Romans 9-11). We can take up the charge to take the gospel to the Jews along with the Gentiles or we can not, but the Koreans realize Jewish mission is so vital to God’s big Plan of Redemption that they have sent their most beloved pastor away from themselves and to the Jews in obedience to Jesus’ Great Commission. I was convicted and humbled to the dust yesterday as I saw one man give up life as he knew it because he realized that like Esther, he was born for such a time as this. *Hosea 10:12 It is TIME to seek The Lord.* Many people, in fact most people, don’t seek The Lord. What are Jesus Followers to do about that? Well, when people don’t seek The Lord, we are to go out and seek them in order to tell them about Jesus and introduce them to the Word of God where they can get to know what God says about Himself, man’s sin, Jesus’ deliverance and man’s right response to the gospel. We sought many non seekers last night giving

away at least 500 pieces of literature and Bibles in Russian, Hebrew, Hindi, Turkish, English, Spanish, French, Tigrinya, Arabic, Chinese, Nepalese, and others we can't remember at this moment. These people did not know that it is TIME to seek The Lord but we know it and so we were about His business in Tel Aviv as we await Jesus' return. Will you please share the gospel with some non seeker today? Will you please get a stack of Bibles and be prepared for your providential encounters because the times are evil, your times are in God's hands, and He has set a time when He will return?

Julia for everyone (from the Epicenter of the Universe)

Day 6 – The Great Debate

Because yesterday was the Sabbath we were to have an easier day, sort of :). Tony didn't come for us until 1:00 so we were able to wash clothes, sleep a little later and have a longer devotional and prayer time. I'm so glad we were able to do that because we needed the breather and especially the devotional and prayer time to prepare for the Great Debate that, unbeknownst to us, was to come. The beginning of our time in the Old City was routine (even that is a relative term). We engaged people from all over the world in conversation and gave them Bibles. We have been surprised at how many Polish, German, Italian, Spanish and French speakers there are in and around the Old City. Some are tourists but some also live here. When we encounter someone who lives here we give out Tony's cards and invite them to church. Last night two young women from Mexico who took Spanish Bibles came to church! It was wonderful to see them. We made our way through the Jaffa Gate and into the long alley way that leads to the best Falafels in town. Tony ordered for us as we stopped to meet and greet two German women who were already seated outside at one of the tables. It wasn't five minutes before a man (? mid 40's) from Canada came close enough to our table for us to begin chatting with him. I honestly can't remember how the conversation began. I just know that it turned into the Great Debate. At home people debate all the time: "boxers or briefs" / "toilet paper roll up or down" / "Democrat or Republican" / "Premillennial or Amillennial" / "Calvinist or Arminian" / "Vegetarian or Carnivore", etc. Some of those topics are hefty, some are shallow but people enter into a debate over those things, or anything, because they have an opinion. Sometimes people's opinions are based upon Truth, sometimes they are based only upon perceptions or personal preference. John's (the man from Canada) ideas were based upon science (he is a physicist), human reasoning, personal experience and religious research. He was like a younger Art Hobson only more personable. His father was something like a Greek Orthodox (he wasn't quite clear) and his mother was an Anglican. Yet, they decided not to influence him for Christ and instead gave him a Quran and a Bible and told him to study and make up his own mind. We were so glad that Susan (a physician) and Tony (a theologian) were with us. Even though we were robustly laughed at for our faith ("*You REALLY believe this???*") and challenged down to the core to defend it, I was so glad to have been at the table where he sat down and joined us for lunch. I have no idea how long we debated "the existence of God" / "the justice of eternal punishment" / "the need for a Savior" / "transcendence and immanence" / "wealth, poverty and the goodness of God" / "Western materialism" /; I could go on and on. We actually did go on and on and then after church last night Tony bumped into him again on Ben Yehuda Street. It was so strengthening to have church in between the debates. While most of Jerusalem was waiting for the first three stars of the night to appear (signaling the end of the Sabbath) we were worshiping Jesus by singing in Russian, Hebrew and English. Tony preached from Joel 2. You may want to read the whole chapter for yourself but here is the gist of it: *Joel 2:1-3, 11-14a* "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on My holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the Day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand – a day of darkness and gloom; a day of clouds and

blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come ... The LORD thunders at the head of His army; His forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey His command. The Day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing ...

After enjoying a little fellowship time with Tony's church members we picked up our book bags and headed off to Ben Yehuda with an urgency brought on by God's Word. In the midst of meeting and greeting all kinds of people Tony bumped into John. Soon we got the word that we were to meet up the street at the 5 shekel (\$1.50) a cup coffee shop because that's where Tony and John were headed. Jan and I went with Josh and Rachel (Tony's fabulous 20 something children) to get pizzas while everyone else went to claim tables up the street. By the time we got there (it was after 10:00pm) Tony, John, Susan and Steve (a member of Tony's church) were going strong on part 2 of the Great Debate. All of us chowed down on pizza and Susan later filled me in on round two. One main topic of debate was the age of the earth and the age of man on earth because he wanted to evaluate whether or not we were credible based upon his "irrefutable" scientific conclusions. Another topic was the power of God to deliver people from a lifestyle of godlessness and sin. Susan was able to talk to him on a scientific level ($E = mc^2$ / mathematical relationship between energy, mass and light) telling him that God had enough energy to speak the universe into existence (Hebrews 11:3). Susan thinks he is searching and realized we were convinced in our faith. He wondered if a devout Catholic, Muslim or Jew were as assured as we were. Susan left him with the thought that True, Biblical Christians are the only ones who have a sure hope or firm assurance that their sins are forgiven and their eternal destiny is heaven. He has firm beliefs but absolutely no hope. Please pray for John from Canada, the physicist who now lives in Brussels. We hope that he gave his email to Tony after Josh took us home so that we can hook him up with physicists/scientists believers willing to debate him via email. What a day! We dragged our bodies into bed after 1:00 but we are up and at em' this morning, ready to go hard after God again today, following Him wherever His providence leads us.

Blessings from Jerusalem,
Julia for everyone

Day 7 – The Cost of Discipleship

I've learned a lot about the cost of things since I've been in Israel. Plane tickets cost to fly across the ocean. Meals, archeological sites, tour buses, guides, souvenirs, gasoline all cost. Those things cost money. Vineyards, fruit trees and crops, milk and cheese, beautiful buffet lines and falafel restaurants, construction and maintenance of housing, taxis and buses all cost. Those things cost labor. The IDF, the Israeli Air Force and Police Force all cost. Their service costs years and sometimes life itself. Then there is Christianity. Tony, his family and church members experience a Cost of Discipleship that we only read about in books. Yesterday we got to experience one of the lesser costs both while we were giving out New Testaments in Hebrew and then afterwards when we went to church. Yesterday Tony took us to a military base near Tel Aviv and dropped four of us off outside the gate on a sidewalk. He took the others to the very entrance of the base on a sidewalk outside the guard house. The four of us did a meet and greet for all of the IDF soldiers (guys and girls) walking to and fro down the long road to the base. The rest did the same thing with the IDF soldiers walking to and fro from the base itself. Most were willing to talk to us and I do believe they were encouraged by our genuine appreciation for their military service. Susan's son was a Marine. Dottie's son is currently a Marine. All the men in my family have been Marines. Aunt Julia Ann's husband was career military and retired as a Colonel in the Air Force. We know a little bit about the cost of service from a wife, sibling and mother's point of view. We were able to speak to that and express our heartfelt thanks for all that they do to keep not only Israel safe but also the world when war involves Israel. We also know that just like any military service, their lives are on the line and could be snuffed out at any moment. It was our delight to give them Hebrew (and sometimes English) New Testaments, explaining that this Book was written by Jews and is about the Jewish Messiah. Some politely thanked us and declined the offer of our free gift, others gladly received it and I think others received the gift because they couldn't understand our English very well so they just took it because we handed it to them. Some took and then gave back because their peers put up such a fuss and made their interest seem wrong. One took a Bible and then tore it up. Another took one and we later found it on the ground in the dirt. We are praying like crazy that the day will come when those soldiers will open their Berit Hadasha (New Testament), read it, see the Jewishness of it and come to know Jesus as their Messiah, just like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did. All was going well until the Police arrived. I have no idea in this world who called them, but someone did because they came to find out about our missionary activity. Whew! Tony to the rescue! Of course he never lets us out of his eyesight so he was right there to talk to the policemen. They spoke in Hebrew to each other so I don't know what they said but soon one of the young men made a phone call and then they left. My guess is that Tony explained the law to them and told them we were not breaking it. I am also guessing that the young policeman called his boss to double check and found out it was true. Without another word they just got in the car and left. One lovely thing that happened during this incident was when a religious Jew (Kippah on his head) that Susan was engaged in conversation with actually walked over to the policemen in our

defense. He had taken a Bible before the police arrived and he kept it even though they came. We were all very encouraged by his response. Since it was about time to leave we began packing up and as we were doing that the next wave of opposition came. A religious Jewish man from the Anti Missionary Society appeared and began giving Tony the “what for” in Hebrew. Of course we could not understand a word he was saying but I doubt that he was telling Tony thanks for handing out New Testaments and encouraging the soldiers to read about Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Tony just laughed and took it in stride. Opposition is good, he said, because Jesus promised it to those who follow hard after Him. We came back to the ministry house, ate a family meal that Dona had made for us and then headed back to church for the Sunday evening service. As we stood outside the gate waiting for whoever had the key two then three Jewish Anti Missionaries came to protest our activity at the IDF base. News travels fast! The late arrival was a young twenty something man who was very argumentative. He told us that he had spent four hours with a professing believer (of 9 years) that day and by the time he was through with the young man he had renounced Jesus as the Messiah. He was asking Tony questions about the Trinity but he didn’t really want to know the answers. Tony said that he was a good example of how Jesus cautioned the disciples to not throw their pearls before swine. The other two Anti Missionaries were very courteous. I was caught up in a conversation with one of them as he was bound and determined to prove Jesus was not the Messiah from Matthew’s genealogy because it says in *Matthew 1:16* “and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.” He was reading from my Bible. I didn’t tell him anything he didn’t already know. (Joseph was not Jesus’ biological father in fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 promise that the Messiah would come from the *Seed of the Woman*.) When he laughed at me and said that was just a Christian’s interpretation (using Christian as a synonym for Gentile) one of Tony’s church members (Stephen) jumped into the debate. The night before Stephen had been masterful in making his points to John from Canada on Ben Yehuda Street. He pointed out from a genealogy in 1 Chronicles that Jesus’ right to David’s throne was legal because it came through Joseph’s adoption of Jesus, something permitted and lived out in the Tanach (Old Testament) according to the Law of Levirate Marriage. This was a brilliant defense and so invigorating for me to see and hear in action. When Tony appeared and signaled it was time to head into the church Stephen stayed outside and continued the debate with the Anti Missionaries. All of this (compounded by the debate with John from Canada) showed me that one of the costs of discipleship is hard core Bible study, not only for intimacy with Jesus but also for witnessing about Jesus. My guess is that the majority of people in Israel who come to faith in Jesus come because 1. they read God’s Word for themselves and 2. someone was willing to spend time with them and endure the debate that comes from opposing theological world views. Of course we know that “*No one can come to (Jesus) unless the Father who sent (Him) draws him ...*” – *John 6:44*. Oh, I pray that many in the Anti Missionary Society would suddenly be drawn to Jesus through one of Stephen’s or Tony’s loving debates. As we processed the gospel opposition we have experienced over the last two days we realized that we are behind in our ability to debate. Our expectations of what occurs when you share the Gospel have been

influenced by our Western, American mindset where Christians (up to this point) are not followed and hounded by Anti Missionaries or investigated by the police. Anti Missionaries do not stand outside our churches and threaten to kill us or our families like they do Tony's. We are not chased down the street by men who take our Bibles and tear them up. Our Christian lives are not hard, not lonely, and not dangerous. We are not paying the same cost of discipleship that Tony, Dona, Josh and Joel pay. I think there is something wrong with that. I know this will eat at me for a while and I welcome the wrestling with God about it. I also give thanks that we've been turned in to the police again and been taken to task by the Anti Missionaries again for I know that God will use this to help us understand that we should never want to live out anything less than the full cost of discipleship for "*... unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be ...*" – John 12:24-26a

Julia for everyone

PS: Tony preached from John 17 last night after being accosted even as he was walking into church. Please read it and you will see that his strength and stamina comes from Jesus Himself. All I can say is "*Glory!*".

Day 8 – Fish on the Other Side!

John 21:3-11 “I’m going out to fish’, Simon Peter told them, and they said, ‘We’ll go with you.’ So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing ... (Then the Resurrected Jesus called out to them) ‘Friends, haven’t you any fish?’ ‘No,’ they answered. (Jesus said) ‘Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some’. When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish ... Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

What an interesting day we had yesterday as Jesus withheld and then gave opportunity for us to be fishers of men. Before I tell you about it I want to tell you something new that I learned during the first two weeks I was here (while I was teaching on a tour). When we were up in the Galilee at a place that commemorates Peter’s reconciliation with The Lord and his reinstatement to lead the Apostles we learned from our believing Jewish tour guide that 153 fish really does have a significance even though it is not apparent to non Hebrew speakers. Every Hebrew letter has a numerical value; hence, 153 has a Hebrew meaning. It means, “I AM THE LORD”. When they hauled in the catch and the fish numbered exactly 153 it was another confirmation that the Man they were talking to was the Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ! Of course this wasn’t the only time Peter had been told to throw his net on the other side in order to prove to him that the Sovereign LORD was in charge of whether the fish were or were not caught. This principle proved true for us yesterday too. We were only able to see it as we reflected upon our long and wonderful day. Our first stop of the day was Yad Vashem, (the Holocaust Museum, named from *Isaiah 56:5 “a memorial and a name”*). Last year when Tony took us there it was an amazing experience of handing out Bibles to IDF soldiers, tourists, others. We were freely giving God’s Word and people were freely receiving it. This year I only gave out 4 Bibles. One to a woman sitting on a bench smoking a cigarette, one to an Arab IDF soldier (Tony said he was probably a Druze, a religious sect of Islam that is very secretive, tribal, and rejected by most Muslims because they are Israeli sympathizers.), an Arab taxi driver and a Jewish woman from Memphis who was in Israel on holiday. I totally put my foot in my mouth with her as for some reason I was blind to her Jewish features so I asked her if she was a Jesus Follower. She replied, “No, I’m Jewish!”. Gulp! I am amazed that she actually took the Jerusalem Bible I offered her in English. I am praying that being a polite Southern woman will work to her advantage in salvation as maybe she will not only take it, but actually read it! After I gave her a Bible our little group (sans Tony who just dropped us off to fish on our own) convened to exchange notes. No one else was having any success either in giving out Bibles on the outskirts of the Museum. As we talked about it we decided that perhaps it was because we were all good Southern women too, meaning we never want to offend, never want to embarrass, never want to bring on confrontation. We were all raised to get up, put our make up on, and live throughout the day as if everything is roses and sunshine. Of course that’s not reality. We know that now because we have been matured in Christ, but we also are realizing that subtle cultural

norms can inhibit evangelization. **How many times have you NOT confronted sin, brought Biblical perspective to a circle of gossips, or shared the Gospel because people in the South have an unwritten code of behavior and you live by that behavior instead of living zealously for the advancement of God's Kingdom?** The only way to get out of our cultural inhibitions is to read God's Word over and over again, especially Acts and the NT Epistles where we see the Gospel colliding with Jewish and Gentile culture and tearing it down in order to bring God's people in line with the Lordship of Christ. As we got over our fear of just walking past the security guard with bags of Bibles in our hands, walked into the Museum but then were hit with some unnamed closed doors again. We were being greatly inhibited inside ourselves to the giving out of God's Word. Whether the closed doors came from our flesh, an unsuccessful fight in spiritual warfare, or even by the Holy Spirit's expressed action – we could not discern the reason for the lack of approachability since it had been so different last year. Tony came to pick us up and we moved on to the Israeli Museum. We looked at a big outdoor scaled replica of Jerusalem and the City of David during the Second Temple Period, the Shrine of the Book where the Dead Sea Scrolls are housed and the Israeli Museum that displays artifacts from the Dawn of Civilization all the way through the Ottoman Empire. Again, at these places we had small success in engaging people in conversation and handing out Bibles. Susan gave a Bible to a man who was a tour guide for students. Betty gave out two Bibles in the bathroom. Someone else gave a Russian man a Bible in Russian. He was extremely grateful and couldn't believe it was a NT in his own language. That was about it for evangelism, although we did have a great time seeing the museums! This sightseeing was enjoyable, but not as much as it would have been before we met Tony. Over and over, he reminds us that the Great Commission say *"Go into all the world and make disciples"* –NOT– *"Go into all the world and sightsee!"*. By this time, I was becoming increasingly ill and feverish with my asthma. I choked on a piece of bread or falafel or something the other day and haven't been able to shake the damage that it did, so I did the right, but emotionally painful thing and asked Tony to take me home. His wife, Dona, brought Aunt Julia Ann and me back to the ministry house to recoup and the rest went in the van to a street just up from the Hebrew University. There is a hospital on one side of the street, a coffee shop on the other side and an exit/entrance to the student's living quarters. When the girls got home and gave me a report, I could see that it really was a "fishing for men" experience where God had told us to "put your nets on the other side" to show us His Sovereign control over all things, even street evangelism and Bible distribution. The girls left bummed out and returned invigorated! I was in bed but I could tell by the tone of their voices and the excited pace of their conversation that they had many stories to tell. Here is their report: Many received Bibles very joyfully! There was a girl from Philadelphia who was so happy to receive a NT. She said she had read the Bible some when she was a little girl. There was a couple, originally from South Africa, who were happy to receive a gift of God's Word. The girls gave out Bibles right and left in Arabic, Hebrew and English. There was even a girl from Singapore who were just here for 3 weeks. She received a Bible too and was invited to BSF in Singapore! (Yea for the BSF website!) She was enthusiastic to converse about God's

Word, but the Jewish friend with her was not. Jan thanked the Jewish woman for God's promises and prophecies given to the world by the Jewish people. She softened somewhat, but still would not receive a Bible. We are praying that the woman from Singapore will come to know Jesus (if she doesn't already) and take up the challenge to share the gospel with her friend long distance via social media. Rachel (Tony's daughter) gave Bibles to 4 Armenian girls (not to be confused with Arminian). Armenia is a country, a people group with a strong Christian heritage. They were first evangelized by the Apostles Thaddeus (Judas son of James) and Bartholomew and were some of the first Christians in Asia Minor. The Armenian girls had stopped to ask for directions. As our girls chatted with them, they were delighted to take Bibles in two different languages. (Later as Tony was taking the scenic route home our crew bumped into them again and gave them a BIG caution because they were in a dangerous part of town.) At the Hebrew University a young Jewish man wearing a Kippah was offered a NT as he walked by our witnessing place. When he opened it he exclaimed "Is this a New Testament?" One of the girls said, "Yes, and it includes the prophecies from the TeNaKh (OT) that link to Yeshua". He replied, "Oh, this is very good! Thank you for this! Good luck with what you are doing!". One woman who took a NT came back and gave the girls some food. When two other young ladies approached, one received a Bible and then tried as hard as she could to convince her friend to take one too. All of these divine appointments were so encouraging to us. The girls had to get more Bibles out of the back of the van because young people, as well as older people like professors, were all happily receiving Bibles. Yes, there was still a few brush offs. Just one example was a woman who turned around after Jan had approached her, shook her finger in Jan's face and yelled "You are breaking the Law!". Hmmm? Tony has told us that we are not breaking the Law as long as we don't give any materials to anyone under 18 (we had expressed permission in Samaria to give to those three little girls). Could it be that the Anti-Missionary Society's opposition, the appearance of the police and verbal remarks of Law-breaking by many like this woman are nothing more than a grand opportunity to apply *Acts 4:18-20 and Acts 5:29*? "*Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard ... 'We must obey God rather than men!'*". It is not currently unlawful to hand out Bibles and do street evangelism in the United States, but a day is coming when it may be labeled "hate speech", "verbal terrorism" or some such nonsense, and then it will be against the Law. **When that day comes, this training will have served us well. Will you, blog readers, trust in God and obey Him by boldly sharing the Gospel rather than obeying men who tell you not to?** If I were to sum up yesterday, I would say that God taught us that sowing Gospel seeds is not about numbers, except the Hebrew number 153. We had divine appointments at Yad Vashem and the Israeli Museum where the appointments to acceptance were few and the appointments to refusal were many. Up by the Hebrew University, the numbers were exactly reversed. We need to get over the way that Americans measure success if we are to become skilled evangelists like Tony and his family. We must stop looking at the number of fish we

catch or don't catch on either side of the boat. We must just obey the LORD, remembering that when we are fishing for men, He is the Only Number that matters: 153 – "I AM THE LORD."

Julia for everyone.

Day 9 – Eyewitness

We trust in the accuracy of the New Testament for many reasons but one of the reasons is that we have confidence in the Apostle's eyewitness accounts of Jesus. (1 John 1:1-4). Yet, we also trust in Luke's account even though he was not an eyewitness to the life of Jesus. (Luke 1:1-4). We trust Luke's Gospel because he thoroughly interviewed eyewitnesses who knew Jesus personally and then compiled those interviews into his Gospel account. All that to say, today I am writing as a compiler of eyewitness stories because I stayed home ill all day yesterday. I am praying that my stories are accurate, God glorifying and give you ways to pray for the ministry of Voice in the Wilderness (Tony's church and ministry). Yesterday was Pentecost, (also called the Feast of Weeks), the Jewish Feast that commemorates both the giving of the Law at Mt Sinai and the harvest. God is precise in His instructions and timing for all of the Jewish Feasts in Leviticus 23 because all of them have something to do with Jesus. Taking the Bible as one Big Story, you might remember in Exodus 32:28 that about 3,000 people were killed by the Levites after the giving of the Law and the Golden Calf incident. Then in Acts 2:41 on the Day of Pentecost, The Holy Spirit descended to earth, emboldened Peter to preach the Gospel, and the Church was birthed when about 3,000 people were given new spiritual life in Christ. Yesterday our team was out and about in the very place where 3,000 souls were harvested (in a saving sense) and the Church was birthed on the first Feast of Pentecost after Jesus' ascension. Even though evangelism is so very hard here we have to believe that God is still at work harvesting souls in salvation now before He returns to harvest them in Judgment in the future (Matthew 13:29-30). If we did not believe this down to our core, we would not come. We would not do street evangelism. We would not hand out Bibles and challenge the recipients to open and read just a little bit. We would not show them the connection between the prophecies in the TeNaKh and Yeshua. We would be at home going about our own business. It is only by God's grace that the LORD has convinced us that Isaiah 55:11 is true and so we persevere, believing that souls will be saved because the Word of God does not return to Him void whether it is yesterday (on Pentecost), today or tomorrow. One of the first things that happened yesterday surely tested our crew's confidence in approaching strangers in order to give them God's Word. A woman from England was approached (I don't know who made the initial approach) and Tony was quickly taken up in debate with this unbeliever who turned out to be a politically motivated, pro-Palestinian Journalist. No one could be more a-political than Tony. He acknowledges wickedness on both sides of the cultural, ethnic, and political divide. He has searched the Scriptures to find examples of how Jesus handled the divisive politics of His day and He came to the conclusion that Jesus was very apolitical. Jesus did not buy into the Israelite's demands for Him to get rid of the Romans. No one seemed to understand that when Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God His promises were for a future fulfillment. He plainly told Pilot that His Kingdom was not of this world. At His First Advent, Jesus came to call men to repentance (Matthew 4:17) and to die for His people's sins so that they could receive God's grace of repentance and come to faith in Him as the promised Jewish Messiah-King. If the

political climate was so volatile in Jesus' day, why should we be surprised that it is volatile in our day? The volatility of the ethnic, religious, and political divide sometimes brings about robust discussions. This was the case between Tony and the unbelieving English Journalist. She was highly offended when he said that Palestinians need Jesus and she told him that we should be tolerant of other religions because Israel is a land of other religions. She said we should not force people to believe one way. When she parted our group there was anger in the air. Susan, who has a way with such situations, did followup and was invited by the woman to Ramallah. It's a shame that we don't have time to go, although the woman would not like it if we did because we would not want to talk about politics, we would want to talk about Jesus and everyman's need for a Savior from sin. She needs the Savior too. Later as our crew walked the streets of the Old City they bumped into her again. Heads and hearts had cooled somewhat and Tony was able to give her a more accurate understanding of both the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Islam, since the Islam she described was not in agreement with the Quran. Please pray that people over here will quit making Nationalism an idol and that missionaries will leave politics behind and concentrate on man's need for a Savior, the Good News of the Gospel, and the necessity of bowing to the Lordship of Christ. One of the next people that they met was a very liberal pastor from Colorado who had come here to work for peace through politics. He was also in the pro-Palestinian political camp. He was planting trees, raising money for a children's program, and doing many other things, but he did not believe in sharing the Gospel. Tony tried to talk to him regarding how to witness about Jesus to Muslims, but he never would admit that this is what he needed to do. The third experience of "hard soil" evangelism (Parable of the Sower – Matthew 13:1-23) came with a group of wealthy British students who were visiting Israel on their "gap year" of doodling around the world between High School and college. One of the boys was really into Stephen Hawking. I found this interesting because yesterday's Jerusalem Post had a big article titled "Stephen Hawking has a theory on how England can Triumph" (in the World Cup). According to the article it seems that "his expertise in black holes has now qualified him to help England's soccer team climb out of the World Cup hole it's been stuck in since 1966." If this weren't so sad it would be funny, but it is not funny because this British young man was a Stephen Hawking follower as sure as I am a Jesus Follower. Susan, the scientist, met him where he was and used the same Scripture and reasoning (Hebrews 11:2 & E=MC²) that she used with John, the physicist. I think the fact that Susan was a physician influenced the young man for Christ as he took a Bible from her in part because his mother was a radiologist. When Tony told some of the students a Rhyme that he has often adapted for different evangelistic situations (" *One Day you will die and stand before God in the sky and the Truth you won't deny*), one young man clearly understood he was speaking of God's judgment because he got so mad. Tony's friend, Marie, said we should not be upset because her missionary experience has proven that sometimes the ones who fight the most are the ones who should give us hope as often God is at work, breaking down their anger and rebellion towards Him. I am so glad that we can't mess up the Gospel nor can we improve the Gospel. *Romans 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the*

salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” At some point Tony bumped into the Chief of Police and introduced him to Jan. Given all of the hostility and people who have pointed fingers in our faces shouting “You are breaking the Law!” Jan was eager to ask him, “What is the Missionary Rule here?”. His response: “There are only two rules. 1. Don’t interact with children and 2. Don’t give anyone money”. God was so good to give us the reinforcement that what we are doing day in and day out is not against the Law in Jerusalem. At the falafel lunch place where we have eaten and engaged people in conversation several times, the owner said she wanted to come to Tony’s church. I hope she does. As our crew walked around the Old City handing out Bibles, they bumped into some Muslim evangelists. Tony spoke truth to them too, bearing their anger in love. They also ran into some Jehovah’s Witnesses doing their thing and Tony gave them some materials. I think that he has ongoing conversations with the Muslim and JW evangelists. After exhausting the supply of Bibles they were carrying our crew came home. Dona had made dinner for us (Don’t she and Tony ever sleep?) and after a late dinner we gathered round and Tony taught us from the Book of Ruth, the text that is always taught on Pentecost. It is true that here that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. **Would you join us in asking the LORD of the harvest to send out more workers into His harvest field (Matthew 9:38)? Would you also consider working your harvest field by giving a Bible to someone today, explaining to them that it was written by eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life?**

Julia for everyone

Day 10 – Satisfaction

Any time my family plays “Name that Tune”, my husband ALWAYS wins. He can name every band, every song, every composer, every singer, every time. He knows who sings, “*I can’t get no - satisfaction ... I can’t get no - satisfaction ...*” but do you? If you aren’t familiar with the Rolling Stones you should have been with us last night in Tel Aviv! After a busy day, which I will tell you about after I recap the evening, we went to church (Tony was preaching from Galatians 3) and then about 8:30 we loaded up the van and headed to Tel Aviv for the concert. Susan and Betty were at home praying for us and I’m glad they were as their prayer for something as simple as a parking place was answered! The parking for Razorback games looks like child’s play compared to what we encountered, yet God truly went before us. As Tony was trying to make it through a parking lot behind a gas station he had to maneuver the van around a curve doing a ten point turn between two cars with just inches to spare. I covered my eyes and prayed. We were all praying! As soon as he made it past the danger zone, low and behold a car that we had watched pull into THE ONLY parking spot available, suddenly pulled out, opening up a spot for us. Yea God! We still had to walk a little ways to the concert, but it was totally doable. Tony and his friend, Bill, made several trips carrying boxes full of a book called Betrayed. This is the same book that we gave out last year at the Barbara Streisand concert. Written by a Jewish man, Stan Telchin, it tells the story of how he felt betrayed by his daughter when she came to faith in Jesus. Wanting to prove her wrong he began to search the Scriptures beginning with Matthew and progressing through the New Testament. With increasing understanding he came to faith in Jesus. As his wife and younger daughter studied the Scriptures for themselves they did too! Armed with this great testimony in Hebrew we marched ourselves through the park toward the concert. We made a staging area out of a little rock wall and stuffed the hundreds of books with a flyer that challenges the false but common teaching that entrance to heaven is gained when your good deeds outweigh your bad ones. Even stuffing the books was a toe-tapping fun experience for me since the music was loud enough to hear from where we were. There were about 40,000 people at the concert. We did not wait until it was over to begin handing out the books since there were so many people already milling around the outskirts of the stadium. “*Matana tova*” (Very good free gift) sounds so strange coming from American Gentile lips, especially with a southern accent! I’m glad we were able to get in a little practice in approaching people before the floodgates opened. Oh my! Have you ever stood facing 40,000 Jewish people heading to their cars and tried to tell them that Jesus is better than Mick Jagger? We worked the crowd until the crowd was gone and then we went and worked the small crowds of people that were lying down on the grass passing time until the traffic jam eased up. As the throngs of Jewish people flooded past us we could not help but sense how different we must have looked to them. One of the results of Jesus’ death was that the wall between Jew and Gentile was broken down, but of course these unbelieving Israelis don’t know that. Some gladly took the book. Most looked at us with eyes that said, “Stop invading our space”. All I know is that I stood there in a flood of unbelievers and prayed that God would cause the ones of His choosing to

take the testimony and I have to believe that He did that. Dottie said that she had the same sense of God's sovereignty as she stood facing the crowd. She said, *"I thought about how in that crowd God would call some into His kingdom and some He would not. It is a vivid picture that will remain in my memory."* We packed it up and headed home about 12:45am and crawled into bed around 3:00 or so. What an end to an already great day – yet, you still need to know about the beginning! I stayed home in the morning because I wasn't well enough to do both the Rolling Stones and the Old City, but nine (including Tony's friends, the Kirks) headed in late morning. There weren't many people out and about because Pentecost didn't end until sundown, but this was actually an advantage because the less crowded atmosphere provided more opportunities for conversations with strangers. Debbie offered Chinese NT to a tour group of Uighur people (Muslim Turkic people group in NW China) who were on a religious pilgrimage. I have never thought about Muslim people coming here to see the Dome of the Rock and other things, but obviously they do. Live and learn! Learning how to do street evangelism is what Debbie has done, because when these Uighur people refused her offer she kept looking right at them with a big smile on her face. After one person came back to ask for a NT, Debbie sat down on a parking post to wait on others. The smile never came off her face. Eventually others came over and she was able to give away three NT and one children's Bible in Chinese. Astounding!!! Aunt Julia Ann talked to four American college students from Oklahoma. They were not from an Evangelical church, but they were studying Messianic prophecies with someone in Jerusalem. One student admitted he had never heard them before and asked for a Hebrew NT. As our group kept talking to these young people another accepted a French NT and the two others took NTs in English. A believing Jew from Germany took 3 NT in different languages for her friends. Passing by a restaurant, Susan offered the young Jewish host a Hebrew NT. Even though he declined the offer, he came up to her a few minutes later asking for a NT in Russian because a young Jewish woman in the restaurant asked him to get her one! Soon that girl's boyfriend wanted one in Hebrew! I think God circled the wagons around the restaurant host because he finally gave in and took one too. Susan was able to speak frankly to him about Yeshua as she gave him a Hebrew NT. Other conversations / debates about the historical accuracy of the Gospels occurred, one with a man from Australia and the other over a picnic lunch in the shade at the Christ Church Guesthouse! When everyone returned to the ministry house I could tell it had been a great morning of evangelism. How could I tell it was great even before anyone told me a single story? I could see that unlike Mick Jagger, they were able to get true satisfaction by obeying the Great Commission. It showed on their faces. Even without the Rolling Stones in the background we are learning that street evangelism, Bible distribution, Gospel conversations and following hard after Jesus makes for toe tapping fun!

Julia for all

Day 11 – Grace upon Grace

John 1:16 From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another

Matthew 10:8 ... Freely you have received, freely give.

Because it was nearly 3:30 am before we went to bed after working the Rolling Stones' Concert, we slept a little later yesterday morning, did some laundry, and regrouped before Tony picked us up around noon. We had planned some girl time with Tony's wife, Dona, and his staff member, Lisa, over lunch in the German Colony. Lisa not only does the Russian translation during church but also leads free tours for Russians to the Garden Tomb and other religious sights. She does this as an outreach for Voice in the Wilderness and it is helpful to new Russian immigrants as well as some Russian tourists who are often connected in some way to the Russian Jews who have immigrated here. Because the tours are free, Lisa is not hindered from sharing the Gospel. Everything at Voice in the Wilderness revolves around the giving of the Gospel! In addition to all that I have already mentioned, Voice in the Wilderness also has a place of refuge for women in need. Dona runs this ministry in conjunction with a church in Finland that helps to fund it. There are many women here who need help. Some have no family, or need to leave abusive families. Most are women on the fringe of society, the cast outs, and the ones with no support network. The women who stay at their "women's house" come from various ethnic backgrounds. Dona works with other local churches to receive referrals. When women move in Dona helps them access the social services that are available to them. Right now she is praying for a Christian Hebrew speaking House Mother to live in the apartment as that will provide more stability for the women and it will help Dona to have someone walk alongside her in ministering to "the least of these" women. With Bibles in hand we hit the streets of the Old City late in the afternoon. Before we had walked a half a block from the place where Tony parked the van we were already giving Bibles away. A Jewish taxi driver took the autobiography, Betrayed, from Adair through the window and then he saw that Susan had more books in her hand. He asked what she had and when offered a NT in Hebrew he said he wanted to read that too! Praise God! We walked around the corner to Notre Dam, a beautiful hotel and conference center owned by the Catholic Church. Tony has made friends with several of the Catholic priests and when we bumped into one of them Tony gave him some Spanish Bibles to give to some of the guests. We went to the top floor to take a peek at the stunning view of the roofline of the Old City. We stood and talked briefly about Josephus looking down from Mt. Scopus and seeing the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, but then we were back to the business of evangelizing as we introduced ourselves to two Hebrew speakers who both wanted Hebrew NTs! We could tell God was giving us favor. Tony stopped to greet a person who was the head of another Christian organization in Jerusalem. It was sad for us to hear that this organization requires volunteers to sign a pledge saying that they will not share the Gospel while they are on duty with the organization. I'm glad that we have not been

inhibited in that way. Since we have been the recipients of God's free gift of saving grace how can we not freely give the Gospel and God's Word to everyone willing to listen and receive? There were so many last night who were willing! Outside the New Gate Tony chatted with people from Jordan, gave them his contact info and invited them for coffee. We met Germans inside the New Gate and invited them to church. We followed an Arab woman inside the door to her apartment complex and because she was not being watched by anyone outside she joyfully took a NT and the Mary Film in Arabic. When we got to the end of the road and had to decide whether to turn right or left a man suddenly appeared, saw what we were doing and told us to turn left since the other road was nearly deserted all the way to the Jaffa Gate. We know God sent him to tell us that because we had divine appointments with nearly everyone on the "left road" that is usually less traveled. How many times do you think that knowing Spanish would come in handy in Jerusalem? Lots! Could any of us speak it? No. Rats! The Spaniards were the only ones that we could not convince to take our free Bibles. I think they thought we were trying to sell them something. So much for my "A's" in Spanish in High School and College. We stuck our hands through shop doors and gave Arabic Bibles to shopkeepers as we walked by. Adair wrapped her loving arms around a young mom with two children and prayed for her because she told Adair that she was afraid her husband was going to take her son away (not her daughter). Tony gave her his contact info and told her about their safe house for women. She took an Arabic Bible, a Mary Film and an Arabic Children's Bible. We approached everyone we met on the left hand road and nearly everyone received a free gift. The only people in the Old City who are not approachable are the Orthodox Jews. It breaks my heart that they have believed the 2,000 year old lies handed down since Jesus' Resurrection. It breaks my heart that they don't realize that the NT was written by Jews. Some Jews don't even know that Jesus is Jewish. To them the term "Christian" is synonymous with Gentile and they want none of it. However, Susan was able to make a heart connection with a young, religious Jewish woman as we exited the Jaffa Gate. They talked for a long time, even through a language barrier. The young woman was so conflicted. I was watching them talk and you could tell that she wanted to take a Bible but she was afraid to. As Susan shared the Gospel she said, "You believe it?". In the end she was too afraid to read the truth so she would not take a Bible but she did give Susan a great big sisterly hug. We are praying to bump into her again while we are here. Jerusalem truly is the cross road of the world. Every day we have seen so many different people groups. We watch people push their babies in carriages. We see people hurrying home with their groceries to make dinner. We've even seen the set up made by a young Jewish man (complete with drummers) who was about to propose to his girlfriend. With so many people and all of them being strangers to us, I'm tremendously glad to know that their salvation is not up to us. From the fullness of God's grace we have all received one blessing after another and one of the greatest blessings of our lives has been to give and give and give grace upon grace in the form of the Gospel and God's Word to total strangers in Jerusalem. **Since you have also freely received God's Grace in one form or another, won't you also freely give God's Word and the Gospel to someone at home today?**

Julia for everyone.

Day 12 – Stewards

Matthew 25:14-30 The Parable of the Talents

In the Parable of the Talents Jesus told the story of a Master with three servants. Before the Master went on a journey He gave each servant a specific number of talents with the expectation that the servants would be good stewards of the Master's money. One servant received five talents, another two and the third one. The point was not the number of talents the servants received; the point was that each received something and all were to be good stewards. Two of the servants proved to be faithful stewards; one proved to be unfaithful. The unfaithful one did not purposely do evil. He just did nothing. By doing nothing with his God given opportunities, the unfaithful servant sinned by robbing The Lord of the service He was due as the Master. Because the five and two talent men served their Master well with the opportunities they were given, the Master gave them a greater capacity for service and responsibility in His kingdom. This shows us that the Christian's life after death will not be sitting on a cloud playing a harp and taking it easy. Eternal life will be a time of ever-expanding joy filled service to Jesus, our King! This also shows us that it is not a profession of faith that proves a saving relationship with Jesus; it is fruitful stewardship that proves it. The one talent man did not know Jesus at all. In Matthew 25:24 he called his Master a hard man. In Matthew 25:25 he thought the Master would not judge him for his poor stewardship. He was so very wrong. Matthew 25:26-30 the Master called the poor steward wicked and lazy and threw him into the outer darkness.

I preface Day 12 with these Biblical truths about stewardship because we have certainly been given a unique Gospel opportunity that we did not want to squander. Trying to make the most out of our opportunity began even before we left Northwest Arkansas. When Jan asked Tony if there was anything that we could bring him from the States he asked for ESV Study Bibles that he could give to pastors all over Israel. Many pastors here don't have the resources to buy study tools plus there is so much theological confusion over here that a good solid study Bible would be helpful to any pastor. Between the tour group that Jan brought first, the girls that joined us to work with Tony and a generous steward from home, we were able to bring 100 ESV Study Bibles in our suitcases. I have watched Tony begin to give these to a couple of pastors and I have heard him talk on the phone with others to set coffee dates to give out Bibles. The recipients of these Bibles will be overjoyed with the wealth of study tools they will now have at their fingertips. This past Friday gave us another day full of opportunities to share the Gospel and give away Bibles in different languages both in the Old City and in Tel Aviv at the Friday Night Bible Distribution. In the Old City we met a family from Switzerland who told us that they had no religion because they didn't need one. They said that Europe is fine just as it is and has less crime than the United States. We smiled when their daughter went against the family grain and accepted a New Testament in German. On our now familiar trek around the Old City we met a soft spoken, kind older Jewish man who told us he knew Yeshua. He said

that he probably read 2,000 books before he came to faith in Him. This dear man took Russian and Hebrew Bibles from us to give to his friends. Another Jewish man said he had read just one book, the Bible, and had also come to faith in Yeshua. He was so glad to be able to talk to Tony about The Lord and to receive a NT in German. We met another man, Yousef, who was overjoyed to receive a Russian NT because he said he is seeking answers. An Arab restaurant owner (on our daily route) asked us to please stop leaving Arabic NTs on his tables because he now had a big stack. We told him that his customers must have left the Bibles and we asked if he wanted us to take them off his hands. He said, "No, I will just keep the stack and pass them out to new customers!" In Tel Aviv Tony took Dottie into a spice shop to give away Hindi Bibles. The women who received them had NEVER seen a Bible in their own language. They were so thrilled to get one! One of the best things about the Tel Aviv Initiative is the fact that we get to work with several Korean believers who come to Tony's church. They are so faithful, so hard working, so wise, so winsome and inviting. Week after week, year after year they walk alongside Tony to evangelize legals and illegals who flood the streets in this poor section of town. I don't know that I've ever met anyone more joyful than these Korean Missionaries. Two African pastors came up to Tony and visited with him. He asked them to come back next Friday because he had a special gift for them (the ESV Study Bible). I wish you could have seen the smiles on their faces. After the whole team had given out almost all of the Bibles we headed home too pooped to pop. It takes Tony's van plus several other cars to get everyone to Tel Aviv and back. It takes the ENTIRE garage at the ministry house to warehouse the thousands upon thousands of Bibles that Tony has for distribution. Sometimes different ministries know about Voice in the Wilderness and they give Tony Bibles. Other times Tony hears of someone who has printed but then stored Bibles in one language or another because they have no way to distribute them. Putting Bibles in Tony's hand is a good Kingdom investment since he really is a good steward of all of his resources. I am sad to say that not every Christian ministry here in Israel can be called a good steward. Just in the two years that I have come I have witnessed some missionaries from other organizations being lazy and self indulgent. The Holy Spirit probably let me see this to chastise me because sometimes I am lazy and self indulgent too. Tony said there are a lot of scandals over here involving Christian missions and he cautioned that the way missionaries present themselves at home and how they actually live on the field doesn't always match up. When I asked him to give me an example he talked about three different Christian organizations that present themselves on the Internet and through different channels as being Gospel-centered, yet, they don't give out the gospel. One organization in Jerusalem gives financial aid to Jews, but tells its volunteers "if you want to do evangelism this is not the place for you". Another organization gets people all over the world to give money for the salvation of the Jews but then makes its volunteers sign a pledge that they won't share the gospel while they are on duty. There is a third organization that is also just a humanitarian aid organization even though it has the name "Christian" in its title. Certainly there is not anything wrong with humanitarian aid! Jesus had a lot to say about divesting yourself of material things and taking care of the poor. What is wrong is not being a good steward of your God given opportunity to use

humanitarian aid as a Segway into sharing the Gospel. It's a terrible thing to feed and clothe someone on their way to hell because you are more concerned with their physical wellbeing than you are their spiritual wellbeing. This may sound harsh to you, especially since we have all heard the old adage, "Preach the Gospel and if necessary use words". Is that old adage really Biblical? It seems to me that it is always necessary to use words since Romans 10:14-15 admonishes, "*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'*" Since eternal life will be a time of ever-expanding joy filled service to Jesus, our King, shouldn't our lives now be ever expanding in Gospel endeavors as God gives us more and more opportunities to work for the advancement of His Kingdom? If God begins to expand your heart towards Jews and Gentiles in the Middle East and your church does not have an avenue of Gospel partnership for you to participate in then please consider checking out Voice in the Wilderness. This is both a local Christian congregation in Jerusalem and a ministry in the Middle East with work in Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, etc. You can read more about it on their website: voice-wilderness.com Tony Simon's testimony is on the website, plus their doctrinal statement, ways to get involved through prayer or evangelism training, and how to donate to their ministry.

1 Corinthians 4:2 "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful"

Luke 12:48b "... Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."

Whatever opportunity you are given for the Fame of Jesus' Name today, I hope you will seize it even as you continue to pray for us to finish strong before we head home on Wednesday!

Julia for everyone

Day 13 – Final Thoughts

On our last official day with Tony (Saturday) we piled in the van, left the cool breezes on top of Mt. Zion and headed south to the Egyptian Border to hand out Bibles at a refugee camp. Mile after mile we drove through the beautiful Israeli desert. We passed several IDF Bases and could see tanks, meager looking barracks, and even firing ranges currently being used for training. We stopped at the ruins of a Nabatean city called Shivta that was built on the spice route during the Byzantine Era. We saw the remnants of a church and a baptistry and I thought about meeting these unnamed desert Christians in heaven some day. While we were briefly looking at the ruins Tony engaged some other tourists in conversation and we gave away a Hebrew and English NT. Back in the van we passed mile after mile of uninhabited land. There were no people and no animals that I could see, although I'm sure there must have been desert animals somewhere. As we drove along I thought about the 12 Tribes and God's decision regarding the allotment of the land. Some received the lush and beautiful land around the Galilee. Some received land by the sea shore affording them commerce. Others received land by the Jordan River, giving them some protection on one side, plus life-giving water. Then, someone received the desert. As we drove along I wonder how the Twelve Tribes dealt with jealousy when David had not yet been born to write *Psalm 16:5-6* "*LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.*" I can't think of another verse in the Bible that has corrected my thinking as much as this one. Even when God gives His children the desert they are to say that their boundary lines are pleasant and delightful under His Sovereign Rule because He is always good to give His own exactly what they need for their maximum spiritual growth. As I thought about the fact that desert times and places are good for us I had to smile because I was also passing telephone poles and electrical lines – a sure sign of civilization. Even in our desert places God makes us know that we are not alone or abandoned. We seemed alone on the highway but we weren't. Suddenly men on motorcycles appeared out of nowhere! They were loud and fast as they raced each other, disappearing as quickly as they had come. While Tony dodged pot hole after pot hole on the desert road I prayed for the tires on the van! Finally we got to the border of Egypt where there was a long military looking fence as far as the eye can see. The border was closed for Shabbat, but that did not matter to us because we went off road at this point (still praying for the tires) and drove to the Refugee Center. It was not at all what I expected. I had a tent city in my mind, but what I saw was a very nice little town with a fence around it. There were Quonset huts (Aunt Julia Ann counted 28), and other buildings. We did not go inside but could tell there was water and electricity and Tony said there was also good medical care for the refugees that lived there. We parked the van next to some picnic tables with over 100 men eating lunch provided by a church in Tel Aviv. We unloaded the boxes full of Bibles, put them on one of the picnic tables and then watched as the men came to see the gifts we had brought for them. There were Bibles in English, Tigrinya, Amharic and Arabic. Tigrinya and Amharic are spoken by the refugees from Eritrea, a country that borders Ethiopia on the north. I am sad to say that until last

year I didn't even know this country existed. The refugees from Sudan speak Arabic and English. Tony explained to us that the refugees came to Israel in many ways. Some came by boat, others by airplane and still others came through Egypt and climbed over the border fences. He said that many who try to flee to Israel don't make it, especially if they come through Egypt because the Egyptian soldiers are known to use them for target practice. Most often women do not come with the men since it is much more dangerous for women to live a refugee life. At one time there were some women who tried to come but they were kidnapped and abused along the way until Israeli soldiers rescued them. The Sudanese and Eritreans come for jobs and a better life, much like the people who leave Mexico and the Marshall Islands to come to Northwest Arkansas. At one time the refugees went straight to Tel Aviv, but the refugee population became so large and disruptive that the Israeli government offered \$2,000 to anyone willing to go back to their countries. Some took the offer but many did not. The ones who would not go home were relocated to this specially built camp along the Egyptian border. Many are still able to work in Tel Aviv because they had cars and possessions in their cars parked all around the picnic tables. The Israeli government has gone to a lot of trouble and expense to provide for these people; I hope they are grateful! I know they were grateful for the Bibles in their own language. Tony makes the long drive to the border and back at least once a month to engage the men in conversation and give them Bibles. Before leaving we walked all around through the crowd making sure that everyone that wanted a Bible had one. Then we headed home, stopping on the way to get something to eat about 3:00. Saturday night church was a balm to our soul. Liza, Tony's multi-talented staff member, led worship, playing her guitar. The vibrant congregation sang *Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior*; simultaneously in Russian and English. We also sang *Sing Hallelujah to The Lord* in Ukrainian, Russian, French, English, German, Korean and Hebrew, the languages spoken by those in attendance. Guests from Moscow shared a song with us and Kang, a Korean man, whom we have grown to love, sang a Psalm in Korean accompanied on the piano by Chino, another Korean friend! Sunday night Chino led worship using his guitar while one of his sons played the violin and another church member, Stephen, played the piano and the djembe. It is a small congregation but a talented and passionate one. Tony shares the preaching (when needed) with a man from the United States named Albert who is here doing translation work for the Trinitarian Bible Society. All of these lovely people and more are becoming our friends. We walked back to church on Sunday night to say good-bye to them. We gave big long hugs but it was hard to say good-bye. The last few days have been spent at the Christ-Church Guest House just inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. This has helped us to recharge and get well as all of us have been ill with an upper respiratory infection of some sort. Those of us who brought antibiotics have shared with those who did not, plus we were able to buy antibiotics over the counter at an Arab pharmacy..... so, The Lord willing, we will come home to our families in reasonably good shape. Tonight Jan and I are having coffee with our long time Jewish friend, Ronit. We have a New Testament for her in Hebrew that opens with a chapter that connects the Old Testament (Tanakh) prophecies with Jesus (Yeshua). We have other gifts as well and pray that someday the Holy Spirit will open her eyes to the

Biblical truths we continue to tell her. Will you please pray for her salvation as well as the salvation of all who received a Bible from us these past two weeks?

Thank you for taking this journey of faith with us! I hope that the insights we've shared as we worked with the Simon family and Voice in the Wilderness Church doing street evangelism and Bible distribution have increased your desire to share the Gospel and Word of God with someone at home. One of the biggest things I've learned this trip is that our eyes should not be fixed upon the Mt of Olives, the Kidron Valley, the Temple Mount, the Sea of Galilee, or even the Jewish, Arab, or African people who live here. No matter where we are, our eyes should continually be fixed upon Jesus alone. When our eyes are truly fixed upon Him, we will want to give the Good News through God's Word to all people both Jews and Gentiles. I pray that when we get home on Thursday we will continue to follow hard after Jesus just as we followed hard after Tony as he follows Jesus. I also pray that God will help us to evangelize the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in Northwest Arkansas because the time is short until Jesus' return.

Julia for everyone