



FULLY KNOWN MINISTRIES

JANUARY 2024

I don't want to forget what I saw. Time and distance will always try to steal memories, but this time, I resolve to not let them fade into oblivion. That wearying struggle for life, hope and existence I witnessed among the Syrian orphans changed me, and to forget, would be to erase their existence from mine. I don't want to do that.

They are orphans, both of war and other factors, many of whom were born of Yazidi women (a very small, religious ethnic group indigenous to Kurdistan) who were taken and raped by ISIS militants immediately after their husbands were killed before their eyes. Because their fathers are not Yazidi, they are rejected. Abandoned. Unable to obtain either a Syrian or Iraqi identification, they have no hope for a future, and there is no adoption process in place to give them a family to love and provide for them.

Traveling for two weeks through the Middle East, I was granted rare access into Syria with an American non-governmental humanitarian organization (NGO) registered within Syria. An almost impossible region to get into, Syria was an area Teresa and I had been praying about for a long time. Entering Syria from Kurdistan (Northern Iraq), our team of four traveled west, eventually reaching a town in Northern Syria.

After obtaining governmental permission, we visited an orphanage in town to assess their needs. It was there that I saw her. Quietly ushered into the room with a group of children, the staff members didn't mention her name, only that she needed a critical operation, one that will likely never happen where there is no money. She seemed about 13 or 14 years old. She had a vertical scar on her upper lip, most likely from a surgery to correct a cleft palate, and hollow eyes. Later on, as we were saying our

goodbyes out in the parking lot, I saw her timidly following along behind the director of the orphanage. After asking, they allowed us to pray for her. Not understanding a word of English, she wiped away the tears rolling down her face as we laid hands on her and prayed for her. **Tears because no one had ever loved her enough to pray for her, to touch her with compassion.** I wasn't expecting to see that. Everything changed for me that day.

To meet the immediate needs of the orphanage's 23 children, we purchased five diesel-fed stoves for warmth, 2000 liters of fuel for the stoves to get them through the winter, and a few weeks' worth of food and vegetables. The local government provides the orphanage with what they are able, but in an area where the average monthly salary is only \$20.00 USD, what they provide isn't much. We had given all that we had, but in an area completely decimated by war and continuing conflict, you can't just run down to the local ATM and draw out more money.



**A father of the fatherless,
a defender of widows,
is God in His holy habitation.**

—Psalm 68:5—

Learning another NGO had previously committed to supply the orphanage with monthly provision and supplies but later abandoned their commitment because of the dangers involved, Teresa and I have chosen to pick up where they left off. Why are we willing to go and provide where there is significant risk involved? Because **there is a cause**. The kids are reason enough.



In addition to maintaining our present ministry responsibilities of traveling and teaching, and with a schedule and frequency yet to be determined, **Teresa and I are traveling to Syria to love on these children and provide for both their physical as well as spiritual needs. We are going to show them the compassion they need in the world of injustice they live.** As we develop relationships with the children and orphanage staff, we will be better able to determine their needs and communicate that with you. The Lord's command is clear: **"Visit (care for) the orphans and widows in their afflictions."**

We are estimating an initial \$2,000 USD monthly need to build up provision for this orphanage. After the more permanent needs (beds, furniture, blankets, etc.) are

met, the monthly costs should decrease to provide for staple food supplies along with perishable fruits and vegetables. With no existing banking system in this region of Syria, cash money must be hand-carried across the Iraqi-Syrian border. It is such a small amount for those the Lord is so passionate to provide for, show compassion to and protect. If you would like to be a part of this mission, please designate "orphanage" on the memo line of your check or in the comment section for online giving.

Thank you for being partners with us in carrying out the Great Commission. As the Father sent Jesus into the world, so He sends us to make disciples and preach the gospel. We clearly see this endeavor is bigger than anything we are capable of on our own, but we are not on our own. We serve the Lord God, He is our King, and He always goes before us into the unknown.

All our best,

Pat + Teresa

Patrick and Teresa Houghteling



CONTACT INFORMATION

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