BROWNEWS

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Newsletter of Jeff, Diane, Daniel & Alyssa ~ living and working in the Persian Gulf & Central Asia.

Lent ~

Lent is traditionally observed during the 40 days before Easter (not counting Sundays) as a period of fasting or giving up something to help remember the sufferings of Jesus during his trial and execution. It is not a big tradition for us, but this year we decided to do it, with a twist. Each of us had the other three decide what we would give up for Lent. Diane: sugar. Alyssa: Facebook. Jeff: cheese. Daniel: mobile phone.

When Alyssa's friends at American Academy for Girls, who are almost all Muslims, found out that she would not be on Facebook for *over six weeks!* they were amazed. How could anybody last that long?!?

One Muslim friend of Alyssa's at school said, "You must really love Jesus!" She also said, "I guess it makes sense: after all, Jesus died for you, so you can at least give up something for Him." Hearing that this friend said that was one of the highlights of the Easter season for our family.

And here is Alyssa, portraying a more frivolous side of Easter. Every year, our family has its own easter egg hunt in our apartment. Jeff hides them, and Diane photographs the hunt. They usually end up trailing each other and wrestling for the final few eggs filled with candy.

Flogging ~

Maybe you heard on the news about the public flogging of a teenage girl about a month ago, where the Taliban have taken over a district in northern Pakistan and imposed the Islamic law known as sharia. They accused her of being with a man she was not related to. The man, who was not publicly flogged, claimed he had come to the home where the young woman lives at the request of the family to repair something. When he was seen leaving the house, she was assumed to be guilty. Local people held her down on the ground while a man gave her a lashing. The difference between the Taliban and the traditional Muslim culture of the region regarding women is that the Taliban mistreat women publicly, while normally women are mistreated privately. But that is about the only difference.

When Diane was facilitating a teacher training for rural tribal men, she ran into this aspect of culture. The organizer of the training was a former Taliban fighter who had since chosen to follow Jesus. All the men in the training were also Muslims who had chosen to follow Jesus, but who had very little exposure to what their new faith taught about how to live. At lunch one day of the training, Diane got into a conversation with them that led to this question: You mean we shouldn't beat our wives?

That evening, the organizer and the other men got together to discuss this idea about their wives. Diane sent text messages from where she was staying containing Bible verses and teaching. Diane sent a text, they discussed it. Diane sent another text, they discussed it, and on through the evening like that. The next day at the teacher training, the men told Diane: We will not beat our wives from now on. And what is more, we will tell our wives where we are going and what we are doing, when we go away from home on trips like this one.

This happened some months ago, but in light of the recent public humiliation and beating of the girl that we saw on the news, it seemed good to focus again on the radical difference that Jesus can make in the life of any person.

Camping ~

In March, we went camping with another family for a couple days in Oman. We drove from the UAE out into the desert on a paved side road un-

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til we saw what looked like a promising area, turned off, and headed across the desert. This was not in the sand dune section, but where it starts getting more rugged and mountainous. Below, you can see the terrain as we put up the tent. Behind the camera, the mountains begin. Daniel triumphantly points to a peak he climbed.

New Covenant Community Church
6000 S. 84th
Lincoln NE 68516

News from Jeff & Diane

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Contact Information:

Phone numbers: (home) 971-6-5722153
Jeff: 971-50-8725466
Diane: 971-50-8725472

E-mail: caracasbrown@bigfoot.com

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