

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

It's pitch dark when the first wailing call to prayer sounds at around 4:45 AM. If I listen closely I can hear 4 or maybe 5 going at about the same time, all within a kilometer of our home here. That first call is optional. The men can go to the mosque to pray, or wait until the 7:00 am call. That makes 6 prayers in all, 5 of which are the necessary ones. I won't go into all the detail of it, as it is arduous, but this is a religion for the men. Women don't go to the mosque, the devout pray at home. Those who are disillusioned by the fact of a younger, more beautiful wife in their husband's life, may not pray at all. But who will know.

A remembered conversation with one of the children this week – He wanted to understand why Jesus said that it is harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. It was puzzling, and a suspicious verse to him, since he happens to know a rich man back home, who is godly and good and kind. These things can be puzzling until we look at who Jesus was talking to, and that particular aspect he was addressing (as evidenced by the rich man's response). To one person He tells to go and sin no more; to another, He says you must be born again. All true. But the illustration from here was an easy one to relay to my son. Picture a man here, especially an oldest son – He is given a large house, sometimes a car by his own government. In some of the emirates (where there is oil) he will be given an amount of money each year, all for merely existing and being a Muslim. If he leaves to live in another country or converts to a different faith – he loses his riches. This is a very strong hold on them as they can go nowhere else on this earth and maintain the same standard of living they can have here. It would be much easier to put their camel through the eye of a needle than to give up their riches, their homes, cars and lifestyle (and relatives and birthright), to follow Christ. This is a sad reality. We can talk when we are able, about Jesus Christ, we can explain who He really is, give them an Arabic bible, we can love our neighbors with the love of Christ, we can live an honest and godly life before them, but in the end, they must make a decision like we all must. Only for them, it would be a hard choice indeed.

These are my thoughts running behind the everyday duties of life that run their cycle each day with the same regularity as anywhere (only minus a dryer and with weird food). With all 9 of our children here, I feel less fragmented than I have for a few years I think. Yes, they are growing up. Each of them loves the Lord with their own personalities and gifts. Each of them are so different, which always has meant that I don't know any more than the mother of 1 or 2 really. I have reason to reflect on these beautiful children, since it is evident they will begin the migration out of our nest just as quickly as they came into the world, every couple of years (but no pressure!). The 5 oldest ones all went shopping today in Dubai (without their parents this time). Which meant not only did I get out of shopping, but I got to do some things with the 4 younger ones that are hard to get to when they are all here.

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“The Zone” report:

- a clarification is needed about the Hardees, McDonald's and Dunkin' Donuts signs all over town. What Ben's friend was saying about them, was that because Fujairah has nothing (in the way of restaurants, or shopping places), they put signs up that imply there are the same famous places that other cities have, so that it appears Fujairah isn't as primitive as it is. Sorry to be too vague in the last letter about this important issue but it did allow me to cheat on the number of items here ;-)

- There is an object d'art is down the street and to the right from our front gate. I have always marveled about it, but never remembered to take a picture until now. Other than star trek, where they found a silicon based life form – I don't believe rocks have ever come in a form that grows on a wall. And yet, this is apparently supposed to look like a rock has grown up and over this wall quite naturally. It doesn't seem like this art form has caught on. I will stick with my ivy. See enclosed picture for growing rock.

- When visitors come and comment on how very different everything is, we have to think about that for awhile. This explains the lack of inspiration of late, in "logic-free" items. Some very illogical and odd things now seem very commonplace and ordinary to us. I put this here as just a surreal tidbit of where we're at in our heads (as someone hands me a piece of blueberry mint xyletol gum...).

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With all the children here, it makes for quite a bit more music around the house, which is a happy thing. I can tell who is playing by their style, and choice of music. One plays classical, another plays classic love songs, another plays amazing runs of guitar music with lyrics he begged from me or his sister (to write). The little girls still like to do rounds of kookaburra and Jesus loves me (Patch the Pirate style) but I can sing big person songs with the older ones. Always a pleasure.

We will attempt to visit our favorite coral reef later this month (if God Wills) before school begins in earnest. Not that lessons of math and reading haven't been earnestly gone through but the morning together doing everything else has not yet begun. That will be when I give up my own piano playing again, and any dresses I make get way more plain. It's probably better for me to be busy.

Thanks for joining me briefly for this letter. We appreciate your prayers, thoughts, and letters! We pray for our friends, relatives and church family daily. Specifically, if we know of the needs.

The weather is hot, but we are managing to stay cool. :-) mostly.

Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam

<http://mjohnsonfamily.com/GulfNews/>

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Psalm 61:2

The "growing" rock on the wall.



Modern Dubai road



Modern Dubai camels



Brahma bulls on their way to the Friday bullfight



It sure is a beautiful world





the all of us



till next time.