

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

My latest trip to Abu Dhabi (3 or 4 hour drive, depending upon who is driving), was done without my GPS unit. Now this may seem like not too big a deal to you, but getting lost in the desert is not like getting lost in Iowa. Our main goal is to find the place. Second is to not get lost. Thirdly, it's very important to not take a road that would cross a border into one of the neighboring countries. You would think that after making this exact trip, over 17 times myself and a few more with someone else driving, I would have no trouble. It does seem like all that sand and camels looks the same for endless kilometers and yet it appeared not to look the same at all. There is a new mosque going up on the new stretch of road which isn't surprising but it did sure change the landscape .

We got there and back and made our appointments etc.. and all's well that ends well but I feel much more comfortable with a bit of technology at my fingertips.

The very ocean blue of the Arabian gulf is mesmerizing whether you have a passing glance or a bit of time to stare at it. It's so much more beautiful in the actual gulf (west side of the country), where you don't get red tides (a harmful algae bloom), or oil slicks. I'm not sure what the other reason would be for it being such an unusually beautiful blue, but when I leave here I hope I will sometime get to see another place with such white sands and blue water. We are very privileged to have had over a year looking out over that.

Recently and for the first time, I saw a dead camel by the side of the road. It most likely had been hit by a car a few hours before (judging by the stage of rigor mortis). It briefly occurred to me to get a picture but that fleeting thought was quickly replaced by the thought of how much time I would spend in a middle eastern prison after I was accused of hitting it myself if I was caught anywhere near that camel. The value of which tends to increase, along with the emotional attachment, when they catch the one who hit it. I have been known to do many things for a good picture but I do have limits.

In Arabia it's called the Shamal – In Northern Africa it's called a Sirocco. But a wind storm by any other name still leaves drifts of sand that can be very dangerous to drive through, and a cover of sand over everything in the house. It is said that these winds often herald in the hot weather, but we're hoping for a bit more time with the not as hot high 80's weather we have now. The humidity makes it seem like more but the fans blow it away pretty well still.

I got a chance to try authentic "Turkish Delight" the other day for the first time. Let me just say that it is not worth betraying your brother, sisters, or Mr. Tumnus for.

"The Zone" report:

*Our electric and water bill gets stuck in our front gate at seemingly random dates each

month. We always pay it on time but every single bill has a red stamped warning that they will turn the electricity off soon.

*I love electric hand-dryers so I don't have to touch anything to dry my hands in a strange bathroom. In the Dubai airport bathroom, they have a wonderful fast drying hand dryer, but you have to turn on the outlet to use it. (...which requires touching the on switch). It has been in this off position each and every time I've been there.

A new project has presented itself. I've been asked to teach a few Syrian boys about the Bible and Jesus. This seems an unusual request but the parents are Christians. They are concerned that their boys get some teaching in Bible (specifically about Jesus they said) and came to me. I would like to get the mother to join us and be a part of it too, but she is a busy dentist by day. I will be going through the new CLP Bible story book with them, using the -Jesus in every story- Pam method (where my children hold their breath and hope I don't go on for too long). So far so good. But so you can grasp the level of where we're at here, this is one of the questions from the first day: "I have heard there is a greek book, that is only about Jesus. What is that?". I explained to him about the "Injeel" (New testament) and how it is the description of the new covenant between God and Mankind – with Jesus, the Messiah. I told him that we will be learning how the whole Bible points toward this Savior who was born on earth and named Jesus. Exciting stuff really, and these young boys (10) seemed to like the prospect. Anyway, this weekly lesson is every Thursday late afternoon at this point. Please pray for this. It also gave us a chance, well it gave Jacob a chance to explain to his friend (who is a muslim, and was a bit jealous that these boys get to come to our house too) that while the parents of these boys are Christians, these boys who come to our house to learn about Jesus, aren't necessarily Christians themselves, because they haven't made a personal decision to do that yet. This definition differs from what the friend had thought, and what most people think here – that because we are from America, and not Jewish or Muslim, that we are therefore "Christian". The concept of it being a personal decision is a new and strange one.

A quick review that English here isn't necessarily the same as English there:

- If you want people to line up, you will get only oddly blank stares if you tell them to simply line up. You must tell them to please queue up.

- Taking something "into revision" is not the same as altering it a bit. It means simply to review it or to look at it again.

- To "Give way" is to yield and a "diversion" is a detour and "way out" is the exit.

- You'll need to ask for "Petrol" if you want fuel in your vehicle. "Gas" is what you get in your water if you like carbonated water.

May God Bless all of you. Thanks again for reading.
Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam.

" 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." (Psa 61:2)

www.mjohnsonfamily.com/gulfnews/

Photo section:

Last meal of a dead small camel – a blue plastic bag



Scruffy bird standing at attention:



Warren and Lois check out the rules of the desert:



a family tree:



Abu Dhabi blue sky:



South African mosquito killer. (directions in Afrikaaner):



Lauryl, Bethany, and Kim under their sign:



Battleship near our house:



A small preview of heaven: drinking coffee in the sunny morning with Dad and Mom:

