

DECEMBER 2023

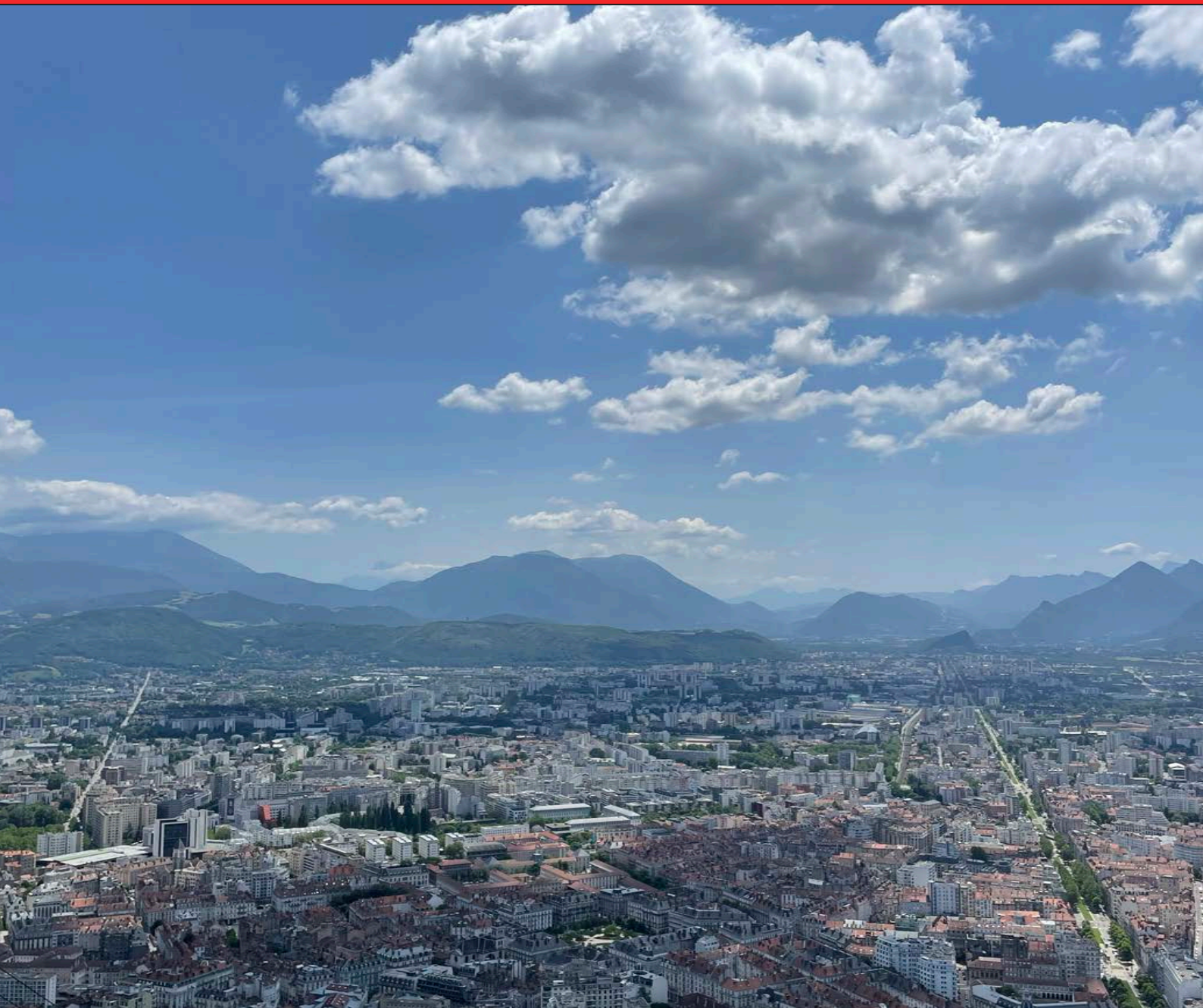
ISSUE 04

#PRAYFORFRANCE



BONJOUR.

NEWSLETTER FROM THE ABINA FAMILY IN FRANCE.



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The Isère river near the Grenoble city center.

PROMISES IN THE PROCESS.

*“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered.
“May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then
the angel left her.*

Christmas always brings the feels, and I can’t lie to you: France does Christmas well. The Christmas markets here have magic to them, and watching our kids light up as the colored lights reflect in their eyes is something that warms their parents’ hearts. I love gathering with the church for worship as the stories from some of the Christmas songs we sing become deeper in light of the cross: joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare Him room; let heaven and nature sing. Remembering what the king of kings came to do makes a song like Joy to the World hit a little deeper in my heart.

Remembering is a big part of Christmas, and the Lord had something special for me to remember this year. Here in the last newsletter of the year, I’d like to share that with you. I’ve been thinking a lot about Mary, the mother of Jesus, these last few weeks. I’ve wondered what each year was like for her as Jesus’ birthday rolled around. Historically, Jesus was not born on December 25th, and there wasn’t a decorated tree in the manger (at least I’m pretty sure), but I know Mary remembered the day she gave birth to a miracle baby.

I’m positive that whenever Mary walked near a barn or a horse, the smell brought her back to a cold night when she and Joseph witnessed

the impossible. It seems reasonable to believe that every other time Mary had to ride a donkey, a flashback of her evening ride to Bethlehem shot through her mind. And indeed, once in a while, while lying down to sleep, she remembered the angelic visit and the words spoken between them. As I’ve taken some extra time to remember this story, her last words to the angel Gabriel have dropped anchor in my heart.

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“May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the
angel left her.*

Gabriel was a promise bearer but not the promise keeper. Gabriel, coming in the name of the living God, delivered the promise that Mary would give birth to the Lord Jesus, the World’s Savior. But honestly, Gabriel only briefly expounds on how it would all go down. In fact, after reading about how it all goes down for Mary and Joseph, you can say Gabriel didn’t say anything about how everything would transpire on ground level. He delivered a promise but forgot to explain the process.

And oh, how you and I live in the process. The process is where it all takes place, it’s where everything goes down, and it’s often where I forget the promise. When Mary says, May your word to me be fulfilled, she has no idea what’s ahead of her. Mary doesn’t have the slightest clue about what it would feel like to grow a baby, to deal with the people who would never believe her story and always believe she slept with Joseph before marriage or, worse, someone else. Mary didn’t know about her long journey to Bethlehem and becoming houseguests with farm animals on the most challenging day of her young life. All she had was a promise.

At some point, I wonder if Joseph and Mary, at least in their minds, began to doubt what the angel had said to both of them. Perhaps it was when the sun descended on their journey toward Bethlehem, and Mary first felt the cold on her skin. Or maybe it was when they couldn’t find a clean place to deliver this child, or perhaps it was when three random shepherds showed up in their delivery room. I can’t imagine what the process was like for them, but

I do know they hadn't forgotten the promise. I am the Lord's servant...May your word to me be fulfilled. These words were Mary's response to the promise, but her life reflects her faith in the process.

The Lord has made promises to us in the scripture, and He makes promises to us through His Holy Spirit. He promises to forgive those who call on His name, speak to us, and be near to those who are brokenhearted. But, this Christmas, I cling to the promise that Jesus has said He will never leave or forsake us. It's this promise that gets me through the process. His presence reminds me of His promise when the process feels like too much.

If you read the scriptures, it seems God wants to do supernatural works through natural people like you and me, people like Mary. Do you know what was so special about Mary? Very little. But after her response of faith to Gabriel, God used her simple obedience to bring about the Savior of the World. I don't feel exceptional, and often, I question whether God made a mistake by choosing our family to come to France. I've asked about the journey and the struggles we've been through since arriving. There have been moments that made me resent God and turn my focus and heart away from Him. But even then, I have felt His presence and heard His voice reminding me of the promises He's made to me.

Green pastures. Peace. Relationship. These promises have anchored me in the process, and as the waves have come and gone, He is the only one who holds me together. When God calls us and shares a promise, He doesn't always reveal the process to us. And like Habakkuk, who demanded an explanation, is given a revelation of who God is, and through that revelation, is able to see God's presence in the process.

My prayer this Christmas is this: I am the Lord's servant; may your word to me be fulfilled. I'm grateful for the example Mary sets for us by her words and actions. Because of her obedience to the promise and faithfulness in the process, she gave birth to the greatest miracle the World has ever seen. If Christmas is about remembering,

I pray that it helps us not forget that God's promises can often lead us to some complex processes, but His presence remains.

France seems impossible. When my human mind tries to comprehend how a secular nation could come to see Jesus, it doesn't add up. But, we've been given a promise: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18) For man, it's impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

I'm reminded there may not be room in the inn for me, there may be kings and powers who look to exterminate what God said I would see birthed, and the people who join with me may not be people I had any clue existed; but if God has promised it, then no matter what the process may be, He will do as He says. What else can we say except, I am the Lord's servant; may your word to me be fulfilled.

Our family is honored to be with you during this process that God has us on here in France. It is not something we forget, and in fact, we think about it every day. Thank you for being one of the ways God encourages and equips us in our process as we travel toward the promise of revival. Our prayer for you this Christmas is that you, too, would anchor yourselves to His promise over your life as He leads you through your own process. May God bless you and keep you.

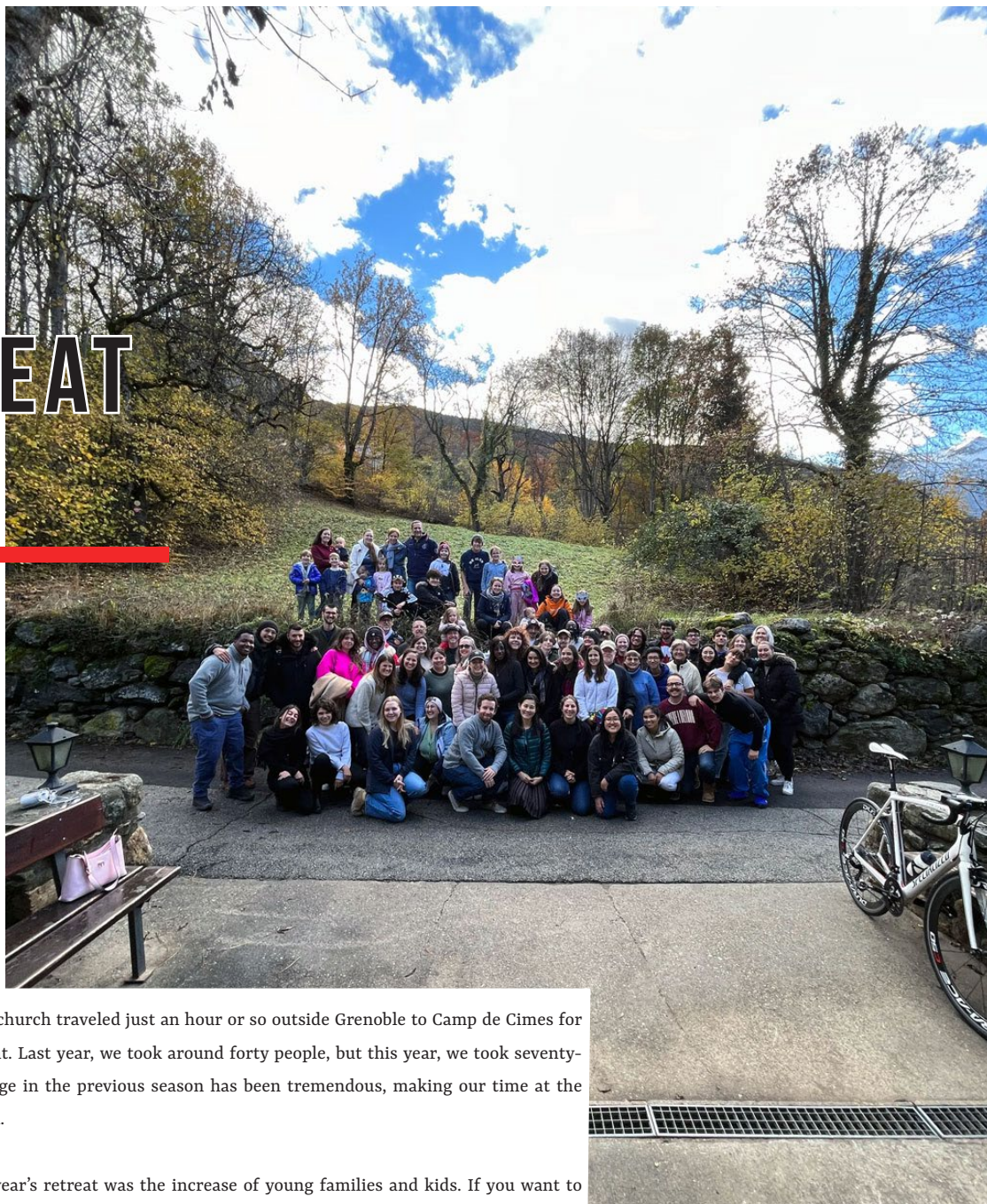
Merry Christmas.

Jordan



Camp de cimes

FALL RETREAT 2023



This last November, our church traveled just an hour or so outside Grenoble to Camp de Cimes for our annual church retreat. Last year, we took around forty people, but this year, we took seventy-five! The growth at Refuge in the previous season has been tremendous, making our time at the retreat even more special.

A unique aspect of this year's retreat was the increase of young families and kids. If you want to shake things up, add some kids to the mix, and you're sure to get some fireworks. Because we had so many littles with us, we had to add a children's ministry aspect to our retreat and shift around our service and meal times. Everything worked out well, and everyone was able to enjoy themselves.

Our theme this year was Cross the Line. We looked at different moments in the life of Jesus where He interacted with someone, told them the truth, and allowed them to cross the line into a deeper relationship with Him. On our last morning together, many people shared testimonies of God's goodness and what they had felt God speak to them at the retreat.

In addition to these things, we added a rhythm of prayer to each day, meeting morning, noon, and evening for service. It anchored us in God's will and intention for our time together, grounded us in prayer, and linked us together in community. We pray that God's work this year at the retreat will continue in the lives of all who attended.

Thank you for believing and for keeping us in your prayers. We know that those prayers are being answered in moments like these.

Above: Our group (minus three not pictured) on our way home from fall retreat 2023.

Below: The amazing team from Hillside Church in Napa, California.

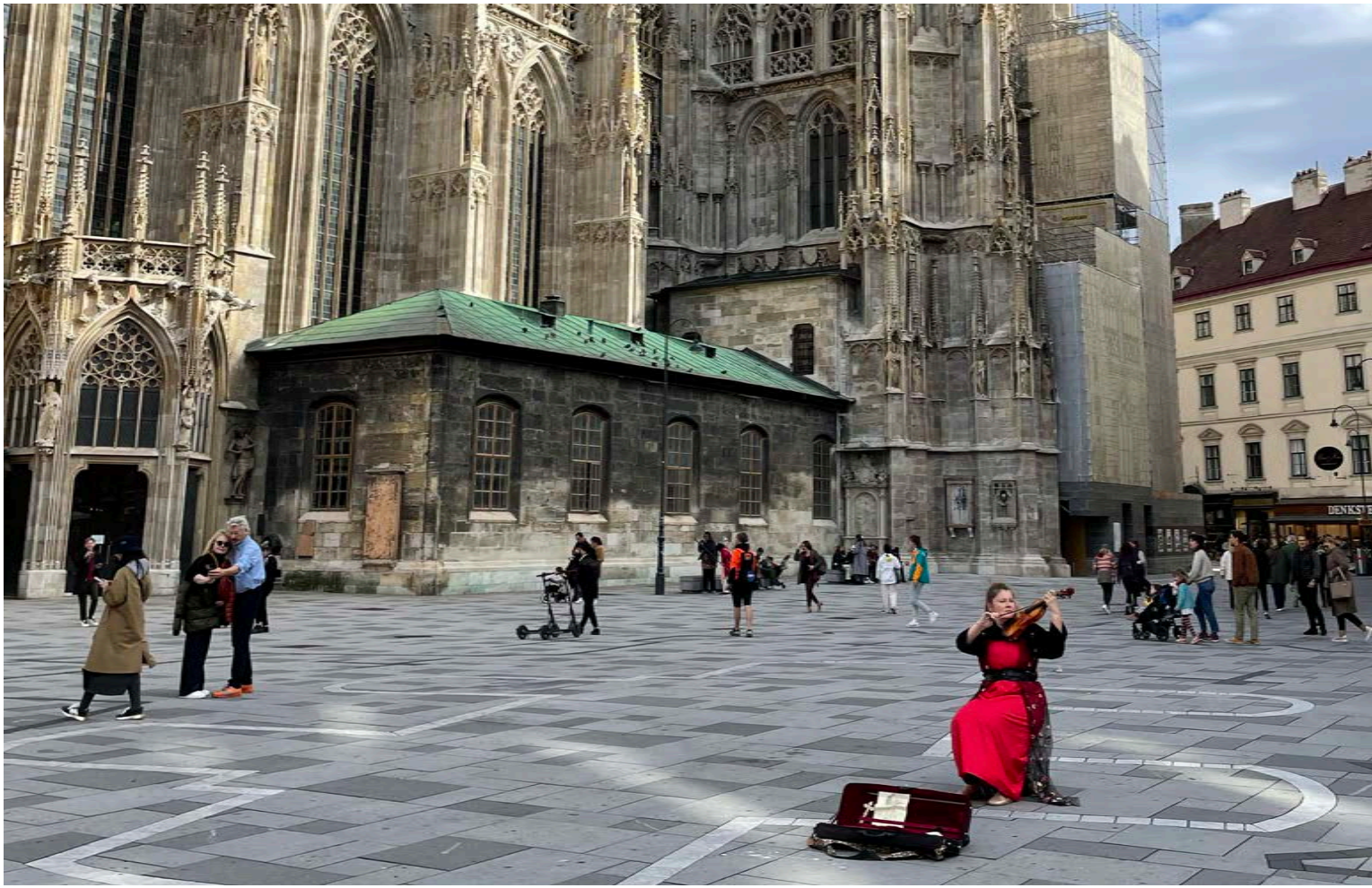
HOSTING OUR FIRST MINISTRY TEAM.

This last fall, we had the pleasure of hosting a ministry team from Hillside Church in Napa, California. It was the first time our family hosted a group from the States to partner with us to minister to the people in our city and to help with some needs at Refuge church. As our teams met over Zoom and prayed together, we knew God was setting something up to bless the families and children who had recently started attending our church.

The Hillside team came and completely revamped and redesigned our children's ministry spaces and helped us expand into the next available room. They painted, cleaned, and helped create new spaces for kids to learn and worship Jesus. It was a blessing to have so many hands to help, but more importantly, it was humbling to be surrounded by people who had such a heart for kids. The kids at Refuge were overjoyed to see the new spaces and loved all the work that had happened.

The team devoted themselves to planning a weekend to bless kids and parents. They provided an evening for kids on a Friday night so parents could go on a date. They redesigned the rooms, but most of all, they hosted a carnival on Sunday for kids to bring their friends. It was incredible! There were carnival games, prizes, face painting, and even our first jump house! They impacted the congregation and were such a blessing to the families at Refuge church.





24/7 PRAYER CONFERENCE

24-7 Prayer is an international, interdenominational prayer movement, with a vision to revive the church and rewire the culture through non-stop night and day prayer.

When we came to France nearly two and half years ago, we knew the Lord was speaking to us about prayer, but we could have never guessed what the Lord had in mind. From reading a book called *Red Moon Rising* by Pete Greig years ago to starting 24h1 prayer gatherings at Pilgrim Coffee House in Grenoble to participating on the International 24/7 Prayer team, it has been an incredible journey.

We have accepted the role of 24/7 Prayer directors for France and have actively been meeting with people all across France who want to see a prayer move happen in this country. We hope to see more prayer rooms open nationwide, and we are excited to equip and encourage those on the journey. You can read more about our trip by [clicking here](#) or find out more about 24/7 Prayer by [clicking here](#).

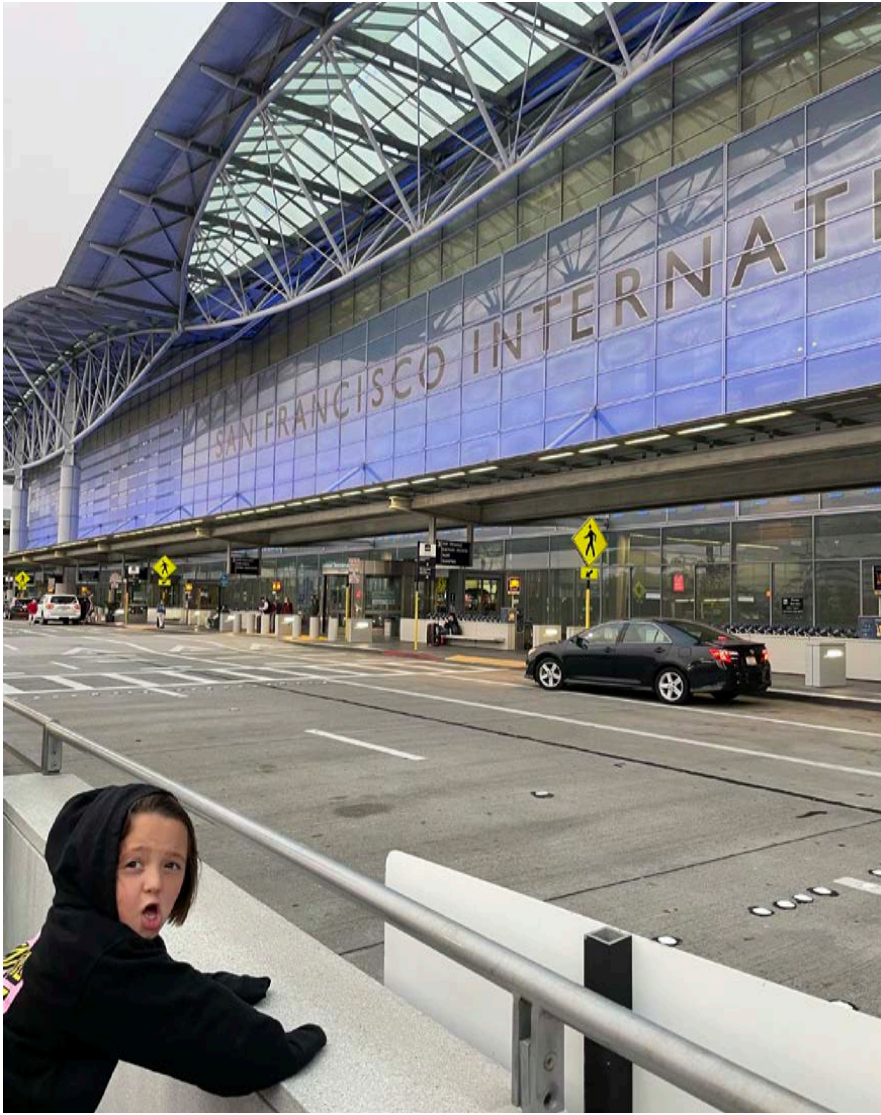
Last October, our entire family, along with our friends and ministry partners, the Cline family, and a few friends from France, traveled to Vienna for the 24/7 Prayer conference for Europe. This conference is designed to bring together leaders and prayer teams from across Europe to share and report on what God is doing worldwide and in those specific nations. Earlier that year, Jordan had been invited to Waverley Abbey in Farnham, England, to participate in a leader's roundtable discussion. It was now invited to share what God has been doing in Grenoble, France.

Our family had such a great time together, and it was the first time we'd ever attended a conference like that together. Joss introduced herself to as many people as possible and left carrying gifts from people worldwide, not kidding. June prayed in French at a cathedral where protestants and Catholics came together in prayer for a move of God's Spirit across Europe. Jadwin and Jordan spent a lot of time looking for new foods.

Left: Violinist playing in courtyard of St. Stephen's Cathedral.

Left: Jordan sharing about Grenoble at 24/7 Prayer conference.





DETAILS.

1. When: June - August
2. Who: The entire Abina family.
3. Where: We will be in Northern California area but will be traveling around to visit different churches and to be with supporters.
4. Why: We need to raise support for our next term here in France. We are hoping to renew our current supporters and add more to our team.
5. How: We would love to connect with you for coffee or in person somehow. If you'd like to connect, email us at jordan@prayforfrance.com



OUR RETURN TO THE STATES.

This photo of Joss was taken in August 2021 at the San Francisco International Airport; much has changed since then. Not only has our little Joss grown, but our family has been molded and shaped by the hand of God since being here. We have so many stories and testimonies that we would love to share with you. We would love for you to look at your schedule from June to August and see if there's a day we could grab lunch or coffee together. We have much to share and can't wait to celebrate with you.

If you want to connect, email me at jordan@prayforfrance.com, and we can schedule a time. Those three months will go by fast, so I hope we can find time to be together. In addition, please

pray for us as we return and try and get this fundraising done in a shorter time. Our whole goal is to get what needs to be done quickly so we can put our kids back in school and get back to our church.

Thank you for being so supportive and we look forward to the next season together.

RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT.

One of the most remarkable aspects of God's work is that He designs it in such a way that it must be done with the help of others. It is extraordinary to watch and see how God provides and brings people together. We can't do this work without your prayer and financial support; thank you so much for partnering with us and being part of the Pray For France team.



HOW TO GIVE:

1. Visit prayforfrance.com/give
2. Click the GIVE link
3. Type our account number into form box | Account # 2739191
4. If making a one-time gift, enter amount and click GIVE NOW
5. If making a monthly commitment, enter amount and click SET-UP NEW RECURRING SCHEDULE

ALREADY A SUPPORTER?

Visit your account at <https://giving.ag.org/>

1. Check that your giving has continued.
2. Check that your payment information is up to date.
3. Check that the amount you'd like to be giving is accurate.

HOW TO GIVE BY MAIL:

1. Make checks payable to Jordan Abina
2. Write our acct. number in the MEMO | Account # 2739191
3. Mail to: 1445 N. Boonville Ave. Springfield, MO 65802-1894
4. We will send you a giving receipt

WHAT MATTERS MOST.

*Everything I once held
dear, I count it all as loss.*

Just over a month ago, my daughter June turned 13 years old. She is a beauty, both inside and out, just like her mother. I was caught off guard by a wave of emotions and feelings as I looked at this blossoming young woman who, on the day she was born, fit into the palms of my hands. I processed through the reality of how fast time passes and have found myself looking through our old family photo albums wondering where all these moments have gone. If I'm being honest, I feel like I was 13 years old, like, 2 years ago; when in reality, it was much longer than that.

Then add God to the mix. The timeless one. Is the Lord young? Is He old? Has He ever felt like the time had just passed Him by? When Jesus was on earth, and perhaps closing in on His 30th birthday, I wonder if He asked, where has the time gone? It encourages me to know that in the person of Jesus, God being outside of time, added human nature to His divine nature and felt the pull, and maybe the sting, of time.

In the 13 years that my daughter June has been alive, there have been so many things that happened. 9 days before June was born, the San Francisco Giants won the first of the 3 World Series that I would be able to see. My wife and I couldn't have ever seen the life that was unfolding in front of us, we couldn't have

dreamed it up if we tried. Only in time, and with faith, do we get to see the things that God has in store for us. From that day in a hospital room holding little Junebug we've preached hundreds of sermons, spoken to thousands of people, cried with family, and laughed with friends. We've seen wars and have aided the pain in different parts of the world. We've been successful in many ways and have failed miserably in others. All in the blink of an eye.

Just this week, I was listening to the album *Eight* by Brooke Ligertwood. In a collection of music she gracefully weaves her musical prayers together, some new and some old. In her song *Lead Me To The Cross*, there's a line I've heard so many times before, but the Holy Spirit lit it on fire as I listened. She writes:

Everything I once held dear. I count it all as lost. Lead me to the cross.

I picked up my Bible and flipped to find those words as they were written by the Apostle Paul so many years ago, a time long passed. He writes in *Philippians* 3:

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:7-11

So much time has passed and so many precious moments have taken place, but in the end, it all comes down to Jesus. I had forgotten this. Not purposely forgotten, but passively. Like a mother whispering the words I love you to her son, he hasn't forgotten, but the words remind him of what's always been true and always feels right repeating. I have had so many gains as

Right: Jordan and Vanessa in Nice, France. Heading to Vienna for the 24/7 Prayer conference.







Paul puts it, but the object of my faith and the treasure of my life is to be known and to know Jesus. He is what matters most. And in Him, I've come to see that I am not lucky, instead, I have a loving Father who in His good and perfect will has allowed me to hold a newborn baby 13 years ago and a baby boy not longer after that. Over the span of time I have been blessed and I have also gone through times of pain, but Jesus remains.

In "Answers to Questions on Christianity" God in the Dock, C.S. Lewis writes: "Christ said it was difficult for "the rich" to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, referring, no doubt, to "riches" in the ordinary sense. But I think it really covers riches in every sense—good fortune, health, popularity, and all the things one wants to have. All these things tend—just as money tends—to make you feel independent of God, because if you have them you are happy already and contented in this life. You don't want to turn away anything more, and so you try to rest in a shadowy happiness as if it could last forever. But God wants to give you a real and eternal happiness. Consequently He make take all these "riches" away from you: if He doesn't, you will go on relying on them."

June turning 13 has caused me to feel how much time has passed, to see how God has done in my own life, and through His word I'm reminded again, that He loves me. Whatever has transpired in my life, you must know that it is all because of Jesus, there are no natural explanations for the moments that have transpired since giving my life to Him. Even now, I'm listening to I've Found Jesus

"Whatever has transpired in my life, you must know that it is all because of Jesus, there are no natural explanations for the moments that have transpired since giving my life to Him."

by Delirious? In my basement in the city of Grenoble, France. I'm thankful for the time that's passed, thankful to be known by Jesus. Thankful for those who pray and support my family; never will I ever be able to fully express my gratitude.

Last night in church, in a silent moment in communion, I heard the Holy Spirit say to my heart, I'm with you, I'm still with you. What is the passing of time if Jesus is with us? Is He not ushering us into where time will no longer be a thought? I pray we can echo the words of Paul and pass the time with courage.

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

