

Answering the Call

The Roma of Macedonia

By Lee Giles



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Go and make followers of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do all the things I have told you. And I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Matthew 28:19-20 New Life Version

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Chapter 1 An Email from Grandpa Joe

“All done helping Dad clean up breakfast!” Joshua announced as he bounded into the living room. Dad was right behind him.

“I’m off to work. Come and get your hugs!” Dad squatted and held out his arms. Samuel leapt off the couch and flew into his father’s arms. Peter didn’t wait for him to finish his hug and snuggled his head into his father’s side. Dad let go of Samuel and gave Peter a hug.

“Are you going to be my big, happy, two-year-old boy today?” Dad asked Peter.

“Yes, Daddy,” Peter answered. Dad gave him a smile big enough to make Peter laugh.

Joshua and Rebecca came to get their hugs as well.

“What are you working on there, Rebecca?” Dad asked his oldest child.

“I’m knitting a sweater for baby Anna for this fall. I’m just getting started. I should be done before the weather gets cooler.” Rebecca held up her pink yarn and knitting needles to show how much she had finished so far.

“I’m sure she’ll love it,” Dad responded putting a hand on Rebecca’s shoulder. “Best for last,” Dad chuckled as he went over to the couch to give his wife a kiss goodbye.

“Have a great day. I think we’ll have big news to tell you when you get home today,” Mom told Dad with a twinkle in her eye. Dad smiled and nodded.

“I love hearing all your news at the end of the day. Can’t wait to get back home! I love you all.” Dad gave a wave as he walked out the door. Mom went back to reading to Samuel and Peter who were cuddled up on either side of her. Rebecca kept working on making a sweater for baby Anna who was sleeping in another room. Joshua sat down at the computer to check the email. The first email he read made his eyes open wide.

“Rebecca come quick!” Rebecca carefully put down her knitting so she wouldn’t lose her place. “Hurry! Hurry!” Joshua shouted excitedly.

“Here I am,” Rebecca said as she walked over to the computer. Mom looked up from the book and smiled at her two oldest children now gasping over the email.

“Mom, did you know about this?” Rebecca questioned her mom.

“I don’t know. Why don’t you tell me what you’re looking at?” Mom replied with a laugh.

“It’s a letter from Grandpa Joe,” Joshua began. “He wants to take us on a trip. He’s visiting missionaries next week in Macedonia, and he says we’re coming with him!”

“Oh yes, I remember him telling me something about that,” Mom teased.

“You knew!” Rebecca exclaimed. She turned back to the computer. “We’re going to be flying with Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay to Skopje, the capital city of Macedonia.”

“That’s *scope-yeh*, not *scop- gee*,” Mom tutored.

“*Scope-yeh*,” Rebecca repeated and then continued. “We’ll be staying in the Roma village of Shutka with Lydia and Dan Taylor and their baby daughter Susanna. I remember them! I prayed for them when Susanna was going to be born. I decided I would pray for her every year. She was born the day before my tenth birthday. I’ll always remember to pray for her every year in October when we have our birthdays.”

“Hey, that’s neat,” Joshua thought out loud. “I’m going to ask God to give me a special birthday missionary to pray for every year too.”

“That’s a great idea, Joshua,” Mom encouraged. “Would you two like to know some more about your trip?”

“Of course!” the children agreed.

Mom opened a drawer in the desk and pulled out some papers. “These are your plane tickets,” she began to explain. “You will leave from the Philadelphia airport on Monday, August 28th, and you’ll get there on Tuesday. That means you’ll have to sleep on the airplane.” Rebecca and Joshua looked at each other and smiled as mom continued. “You’ll be there for four days. We’ll be able to write back and forth on email while you are there. You can tell us every day all the neat things you are doing. Now, let’s look again at that email and make sure we don’t miss anything. Then we’ll get packing. We’ve only got a week until the big day!”

Rebecca started reading the email aloud to the others. “We didn’t read this last part before. It says, ‘It will be hot like here in Pennsylvania so pack your summer clothes. Also, pack a gift for the Taylors, the missionaries we will be staying with. It would be a good idea to bring some chocolates too. In Macedonia you give a gift of chocolate to all the children in any home you visit. We love you all! We’ll be seeing you soon! Blessings, Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay.’”

“Presents,” Joshua said out loud tapping his finger on his forehead. “What’s something that would be special, something you couldn’t get if you’re not in America?”

“Something in English,” Rebecca chimed in.

“Something in English,” Joshua repeated as he started thinking again. He sat up straight suddenly. “How about music?”

“Great idea!” Mom decided immediately. “Worship music might mean the most to them. Joshua, why don’t you think about what your favorite worship CD is. We’ll look for it when we go shopping to prepare for the trip. Rebecca, do you have an idea for a gift for their baby?”

“Could I make her a hat? I think I could knit it in a week if I get started soon.”

“Another great idea,” Mom answered. “Why don’t you look through our yarn and see if we have something you could use to get started right away.”

Joshua went over to the family’s CDs and started looking through them. He was trying to decide which he liked best. That would be the one he would buy as a gift for Mr. and Mrs. Taylor.

Rebecca opened a cabinet and pulled out a big bag of yarn. She pulled out a ball of white yarn, a ball of pink yarn and a ball of purple yarn. She squeezed them all trying to decide which she liked best. She was planning for the winter hat she would make for little Susanna.

Mom sat at the desk and took out a pad of paper and a pen. She started making lists. She made one list of the things the children needed to pack. She made another list of the things they needed to buy. At the top of both lists she wrote, “Chocolate.”

Chapter 2 World Books

“Found it!” Joshua exploded.

“What did you find?” asked Rebecca.

“The CD we should buy for the Taylors,” Joshua explained.

“Can I see?” Rebecca walked over to Joshua. He handed her the CD. “Oh, this is a good one. You did a great job picking. Want to see what yarn I picked to use for Susanna’s hat?”

“Sure,” replied Joshua. Rebecca picked up a purple ball of yarn and tossed it to Joshua. “They’ll love it,” Joshua said with a smile.

“Thanks,” Rebecca said and smiled back at him.

Mom turned around from her work at the desk. “Let’s get going on school for today. You two can do your math and reading after lunch. This morning why don’t you get out your world books and start working on adding Macedonia to it.”

“Yes!” Joshua cheered. He bounced to the book shelf and pulled off a blue three-ring binder. “I’ll get yours too,” he called over his shoulder to Rebecca. He pulled a red binder off the shelf.

“I’ll get some paper.” Rebecca walked over to the desk and got out two pieces of plain white paper and two pieces of lined paper. She opened the bottom desk drawer and pulled out a three-hole punch. She carefully lined up the plain paper and placed it in the hole punch. She pressed down. Now each paper had three holes in it. “Joshua, could you go get construction paper from the kids’ room?”

“Sure,” Joshua said as he scooted out of the living room. He was back in a flash with two pieces of green construction paper.

“I’ll put holes in these too,” Rebecca said as she took the paper from Joshua. “Now we’re all set Mom.”

“Good. Now where is Macedonia going to go in your book?” Mom asked in her teacher voice.

Rebecca and Joshua flipped through their binders. Every time they learned about a country they put what they learned in their world books. Each piece of construction paper had the name of a country on it. They kept all the countries in order from A to Z.

“It goes here!” Joshua was the first to find the spot. “It goes in between Holland and Niger.”

“Is that right, Rebecca?” Mom asked.

“Yep. He’s got it right,” Rebecca responded.

“Write Macedonia on your construction paper and put that in your binders to mark the spot where you’ll put everything we collect about Macedonia. Do you remember how to spell it?”

Joshua went over to the computer to check the email to make sure he got all the letters in the right place. The kids placed their green papers in their binders.

“We got that done, Mom. Can I get out the atlas?” Rebecca asked.

“I think that would be a good first step,” Mom answered.

Joshua was already on the job and got the atlas off the bookshelf. He sat on the floor across from the other boys who were playing a matching game. Joshua started flipping through it. Rebecca sat down next to him. She straightened out her skirt as Joshua looked for Macedonia.

“Here’s a map,” Joshua announced. “Macedonia is in Europe. That’s on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean from us. Macedonia’s right above Greece.”

Rebecca had an idea. “Let’s look online for a map. We can print it out and put it in our notebooks.”

Mom spoke up. “Why don’t you finish looking through the atlas first. Find a picture of the Macedonia flag and draw it in your binders. Then you can get on the computer to see what you can learn about the country.”

“All right, Mom,” Rebecca replied. She turned back to Joshua who had already found a picture of the Macedonian flag.

“It looks like a sun!” Joshua shared with Mom. “I have a new idea! We could make this flag out of construction paper. Could we do that, Mom, and put it in our world books?”

“Sure,” Mom quickly agreed to the plan. “Anna’s waking up so I’m going to go get her and take her and your brothers outside for a bit. You can show me your books when we come back in.”

Hearing it was time to go outside, Samuel picked up the game he had started playing and shoved it back on the game shelf. He ran to start getting his shoes on. Peter followed him everywhere he went.

Rebecca and Joshua got to work on their flags. They each took a piece of red construction paper. They shared a yellow piece of paper and cut out circles and strips for the sun's rays. They took turns using the glue to put the sun together on the red background.

"Your flag looks the best," Joshua noticed.

"Thanks, Joshua. I think you did a really good job too. You can be first to show Mom when she comes back in."

"Yeah! Thanks! You can show Dad first when he gets home."

"Okay." Rebecca was happy that she would be able to show her flag to Dad first.

"What next?" Joshua asked his big sister.

"What do we know? Let's write what we can on our papers."

They took out pens and their lined papers. They wrote what they knew.

Country: Macedonia

Capital: Skopje

Continent: Europe

Border Countries: Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania

"I think we're ready to look on the internet now," Rebecca decided. Joshua was the first to the computer and took the seat. "I guess I'll go get another chair from the kitchen," Rebecca said as Joshua started their search.

"Here's the travel website we've looked at before for other countries. It says that the money in Macedonia is called denars. It says the people there speak Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Romany. It also says that almost 70% of the people there are Orthodox Christians and 30% are Muslims. What does that all mean, Rebecca?"

"Which part? All those languages just means that there are people in Macedonia who speak all those languages. Macedonian is probably the language that just about everyone knows. 70% Orthodox Christian means that most of the people living in Macedonia call themselves Christians. We can ask Grandpa if those people really worship God or just say they are Christians because they were born in Macedonia. 30% Muslim means that there are many people there who follow the rules of Islam. There's a lot we don't know still. Tomorrow's Friday and Grandma Kay and Grandpa Joe will be here for dinner. We can ask them then."

"What should we put in our books?" Joshua asked.

“Let’s write the basics for now,” Rebecca started writing and Joshua copied her list into his notebook.

Language: Macedonian

Religion: Orthodox Christian, Muslim

Money: the denar

“We still don’t know anything about the Roma,” Joshua realized. “I’m going to search the Roma now. We’re going to be staying in a Roma village.”

Joshua started his search. He found out that the Roma are from India.

“That means they will have dark skin like people from India,” Rebecca pointed out.

“This article talks about the Roma being poor and being discriminated against,” Joshua told Rebecca.

“Maybe that’s why the Taylor’s picked them to share the Gospel with.”

“Maybe,” Joshua said and smiled at his sister. “I hope we get to tell someone about Jesus when we are there.”

“It’s hard when you don’t speak the language, but the Bible does say that we can share about God by how we live. So we’ll have to try and live like Jesus so they can see Him in us. Can we do it?” Rebecca challenged her brother with a smile.

“Yeah, we can do it. Please help us do it, God,” Joshua prayed.

Chapter 3 The Big Day

Friday arrived and Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay came for dinner as usual. Rebecca and Joshua had lots of questions for them.

Rebecca remembered to ask if the Macedonians really worshipped God.

Grandpa answered. “There are several churches in Macedonia where God is worshipped, but most Macedonians don’t really know God. They say they are Christians out of tradition.”

Joshua was next to ask. “Grandpa, do the Roma call themselves Christians?”

“Almost all the Roma in Macedonia call themselves Muslim,” Grandpa told them.

Samuel and Peter had questions too. Samuel wanted to know if the missionaries in Macedonia lived in huts. Peter wanted to know if they had ice cream in Macedonia. The answer to Samuel’s question was no. The answer to Peter’s question was yes.

“Grandpa Joe,” Rebecca said and waited for his attention. “The Roma don’t have their own country. They left India and split up and live in lots of different countries now, right?”

“That’s right, Rebecca,” Grandpa Joe encouraged. “You’ve been doing your research.”

Rebecca continued her question. “Are there Roma in America? Do they have Roma in the Congo where you were a missionary?”

“Well, Rebecca,” Grandpa began. “The Roma mostly live in Europe where Macedonia is. The Congo is in Africa, which of course you know because your mother grew up there. There aren’t many Roma in Africa except in the countries closest to Europe. There are Roma in America, though.”

Joshua had a question this time. “So the Roma just wandered around until they found homes?”

“In a way, yes,” Grandpa Joe answered. “For a long time the Roma just wandered the world. Many people don’t know that today they mostly stay put. Most people know the Roma as Gypsies, but that’s not the nicest word to use. Shutka, the village we are going to, is the largest Roma settlement in the world. That means more Roma live in one place there than anywhere else. There are about forty thousand Roma in Shutka.”

“Shootka,” Joshua repeated to himself.

The night ended with cake for dessert. Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay got seven hugs each and said goodnight.

Saturday. Sunday. The weekend flew by. The shopping list was checked off. The packing list was checked off. Everything was ready for the big day.

Monday morning came and the house was buzzing. Baby Anna slept through the excitement. Grandma Kay was the first through the door. Grandpa Joe followed with a loud call, “We’re here!”

The suitcases were all set by the door. The family gathered around. Dad prayed for everyone’s health and safety. He prayed that Rebecca and Joshua would be a blessing to the Taylor family. He praised God for His faithfulness. “Amen,” the family chorused when he finished.

Rebecca and Joshua hugged their little brothers and their mom. Dad carried out the suitcases to the car. Mom held her hand over her heart as she watched Rebecca and Joshua climb into the car with their father and grandparents. It was an hour before Dad returned with an empty car.

“Are Rebecca and Joshua on the airplane now?” Samuel wanted to know.

“I want to see the airplane,” Peter starting repeating, running to look out the window.

“I don’t think they are up in the air yet,” Dad said gently. “I couldn’t stay with them until they got on the plane. I stayed with them until they got their luggage checked.”

“What does ‘luggage checked’ mean?” Samuel asked.

“That just means they take the suitcases to put them on the plane,” Dad explained. “The man at the counter was surprised that Joshua was only eight years old but had traveled overseas before. He acted like an old pro.” Dad shook his head, chuckling.

“Well, Dad, now what do we do?” Mom asked with a sigh.

“Well, do you think you’re up for going out for ice cream?” Dad offered. “Or, would you like me to take the boys and you girls can relax here?”

“Ice cream sounds great,” Mom decided.

“Ice cream! Ice cream!” Samuel and Peter called out, jumping around the room.

Rebecca and Joshua weren’t going to get ice cream, but they were just as excited. They were getting on the plane and settling into their seats. Rebecca sat next to Grandma Kay and Joshua sat on the aisle. Grandma Kay held Grandpa Joe’s hand as the plane took off into the sky.

After Rebecca and Joshua were served dinner on the plane, they started talking about what they thought it would be like in Macedonia and what they thought the Roma would look like. Joshua was the first to make a guess. “I think the Roma women will have their heads covered because they are Muslim. A lot of Muslim women cover themselves when they are outside.”

Rebecca disagreed. “I think they will look like the pictures we have seen of gypsies. The women will wear long, flowy, colorful skirts and will wear big gold hoop earrings.”

“I guess we’ll know soon,” Joshua said.

“I guess we will,” Rebecca replied.

Eight hours passed and while everyone on the plane slept, the plane started to land. Their plane didn’t land in Macedonia, though. It landed in Germany, another country in Europe.

“Why did we stop here, Grandma Kay?” Rebecca leaned over and asked her seat neighbor.

“There are no planes that go from America to Macedonia,” Grandma Kay explained. “There are planes from Germany to Macedonia though. One more plane ride and we’ll be there.”

“We get to go on another plane, Joshua,” Rebecca told her brother. She knew he would be thrilled. They had been on planes several times before, but planes always excited Joshua.

The grandparents and grandchildren sat together waiting to get on board their next flight.

“Grandpa Joe?” Rebecca turned to her grandfather.

“Yes, Rebecca?” Grandpa Joe looked eager to help.

“Could you teach us some words in Macedonian?”

“Well, I do know a little. I try and learn as much of the languages as I can in the countries I visit. And I’ve had to travel to lots of countries for my job at the missions agency. Here are two good ones to know. The first is *zdravo*, rhymes with bravo. That’s how you say hello. You try and say it.”

The kids tried to sound like Grandpa Joe. They said *zdravo* to each other and shook hands like they were really meeting each other and saying hello.

“What’s the second one, Grandpa Joe?” Joshua asked eagerly.

“To say thank you to someone you say *fala*. Like “Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa la...” Grandpa Joe started to sing to teach the kids how the word sounds and to help them remember it.

Rebecca got out her notebook she had packed and took notes.

“Do the Roma speak Macedonian?” Joshua asked his grandfather.

“They know the language,” Grandpa Joe began, “but in their homes they speak Romani, a whole other language.”

“Can you teach us some Romani?” Rebecca asked.

“No, I haven’t learned any of their language. The Taylors will be happy to teach you though.”

“Okay,” Joshua said and got out his notebook too. They wrote in what they had learned about the Roma.

People group: Roma

Origin: India

Religion: Muslim

Language: Romani

The family boarded their flight to Macedonia. Rebecca and Joshua looked around and wondered how many of the people were from Macedonia and going home and how many people were visiting like them. They sat quietly looking out the window as they took off from Germany and landed in Skopje, Macedonia.

Chapter 4 The Arrival

The children weren't phased when they exited the airplane down a ladder onto the runway. They had done that before. They were surprised though to see how small the airport was. There were only two rooms. In the first room they got their passports stamped to show they were allowed to be in the country. In the second room they picked up their suitcases.

"Are there really only two rooms in the airport, Grandpa Joe?" Rebecca asked.

"No, there are four. Two coming and two going. These two rooms are for the people arriving in Macedonia. They have two rooms for the people leaving Macedonia too."

Rebecca and Joshua giggled quietly to each other.

"I don't see anyone with really dark skin," Joshua noticed.

"The Roma are poorer than most other people in the country," Grandma Kay instructed. "They would have less money to be able to travel by airplane than others."

Rebecca understood and nodded.

"I don't think I see any Roma, but I think I see Americans," Joshua blurted out when they walked out of the airport. "Is that Mr. and Mrs. Taylor waving at us?"

Grandma Kay answered, "Yes, it is. And that's Susanna laughing at her parents waving their arms."

Dan and Lydia Taylor wore big smiles. They were younger than Rebecca and Joshua's parents. Susanna was ten months old and liked to laugh. The Taylors knew Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay. That's what they called them too. Everyone at the Answering the Call missions agency called them Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay. Everyone loved them and they loved everybody.

Joshua and Rebecca sat behind Susanna in the van. They wanted her to get to know them so she would play with them. Grandpa Joe sat up front with Mr. Taylor.

Eventually, the van stopped at a red light. Little children ran up to the van on both sides. They held out their hands and put on sad faces.

"What are they doing, Grandma Kay?" Joshua asked.

"Those are Roma children begging for money," Grandma Kay answered.

Mr. Taylor rolled down his window and said something to the boy on his side. The boy started washing the side window where the baby was. The girl on the other side ran to

the front of the car and rubbed a rag on the headlights. The boy ran back to Mr. Taylor's window. He gave him a few coins. The boy smiled and started talking to Mr. Taylor. Soon the light changed and the boy waved as the van drove off.

"Was that Macedonian?" Rebecca asked Mr. Taylor.

"No, that was Romani," Mr. Taylor said. "That's why he was excited to stay and talk to me instead of trying to get money from other cars."

"Why were they begging?" Joshua asked Mrs. Taylor.

"Their parents probably don't have jobs. They send their children out to get money," she explained.

"Are all Roma poor?" Joshua questioned Mrs. Taylor again.

"No, they aren't all poor. But, in general, no matter what country they live in, they tend to be poorer than other people. They often aren't given jobs. Many of them haven't been to school or only went to school until they were about thirteen years old."

Rebecca and Joshua looked at each other. They knew they would be in school until they were adults.

"Look, Rebecca! A horse and cart!" Joshua exclaimed.

"They decorated the horse with red tassels," Rebecca pointed out. "What's on the back of the cart?"

"Those are empty plastic bottles," Mrs. Taylor answered her. "They collect them from trash dumpsters and sell them to those who recycle bottles."

Rebecca looked thoughtful.

The van passed lines of stores. The things being sold were piled out on the sidewalk in front of the stores. People dodged the traffic to cross the street between the two rows of shops.

"Are those Roma women?" Joshua wanted to know. "The ones with their heads covered with scarves. They are Muslims, right?"

"They are Muslim women, but they are Albanian," Mrs. Taylor informed him. "The Roma are mostly Muslim, but they don't cover themselves like these women. We're about to drive through a Roma area. Everyone you see there will be Roma."

Joshua and Rebecca focused their attention out their windows. The van turned and they went up a hill. The houses suddenly looked different. They were small and cramped.

They were built right up against the street with no yard. There were several bright blue ones.

They saw some little children running around wearing nothing at all. They saw a grandma squatting up against a wall. Her hair was wrapped up in a white scarf. She was wearing a purple and black velvety-looking skirt. On her feet were black slippers. They saw a woman standing in the street holding a hose. She seemed to be cleaning the street. The water rushed down the hill. There was a man sitting on a carton behind a cardboard box set up as a table. He was selling candy from his little stand. They all had black hair and dark skin like they were very, very tan.

“They don’t really look like we thought, huh?” Joshua whispered to his sister.

“They are sort of dressed normal,” Rebecca responded. “Some of the women are wearing long skirts and gold earrings though. But, no, it’s not really what I expected.”

At the end of the winding street the Roma neighborhood ended. They drove past lines of tall apartment buildings which looked like big blocks of cement.

“That Roma neighborhood wasn’t very big,” Rebecca remarked.

“That was actually a pretty good sized community,” Mrs. Taylor corrected. The Roma are scattered everywhere. That’s what makes Shutka, our neighborhood, special. There are more Roma all together there than anywhere else in the whole world even though some other countries have millions more Roma than Macedonia. In just a minute we’ll be there. See if you can tell when we’ve arrived in Shutka. By the way, the word Shutka means trash.”

“Trash?!” Rebecca and Joshua exclaimed unbelieving.

Chapter 5 Shutka

“We’re here, aren’t we?” Joshua was the first to notice they had entered Shutka. Mrs. Taylor had given them a big clue. He figured it out by the mounds of trash lining the road. Dogs roamed through the garbage for their lunches. Across the street from the trash piles were three enormous houses.

“I thought the Roma were poor?” Rebecca questioned no one in particular.

“Many are poor, Rebecca,” Mrs. Taylor explained. “But, there are many Roma who live in other countries where they can make more money. They come back to Shutka and build these big homes. Many of them are empty. Because this is the biggest group of Roma in the world, many Roma in other countries have family here and like to come here to hold their celebrations like weddings. They may live in their home for a month each summer or two and that’s all. It impresses others, though, to have a big home, even if they don’t live in it.”

“Seems like a waste of money,” Rebecca decided.

“Well, Rebecca,” Mr. Taylor responded this time. “The Roma don’t live for God the way we do. They spend money on many things that we think are foolish. One of the most important things to them are their celebrations. They spend more money than they have on their parties. But it’s important to them. It makes their lives worth it. That’s why we’re here. To show them there’s something better to live for. God can give their lives importance and meaning.

“When you minister to people, you need to remember where they are coming from. You can’t just tell them it’s silly to spend money on big parties. We need to work within their culture. We need to show them that they have a reason to celebrate in Jesus.”

“Thanks for teaching my grandkids, Dan,” Grandpa Joe said with appreciation. “They are eager to learn from you about the Roma and about missions. I think they’re eager to play with Susanna too. I hope they will be an encouragement to you while we’re here.”

“Guests are always an encouragement to us,” Mrs. Taylor said and smiled at the children. “When we get to tell someone new about the job we are doing here, it reminds us of the importance of the work. It gets us excited to keep going.”

“Then we’re extra glad we’re here,” said Grandma Kay.

The van was moving very slowly now down bumpy roads. There were huge holes in the road making the van dip and bump as it slowly plodded along. Rebecca thought their car was going to be hit as another car squeezed past them on the narrow street. There was no room to pull over to let someone pass. The houses were right up against the street. They splashed through a big puddle. A teenage girl in jeans and a tee shirt was hosing the little cement area next to her home. The water ran out into the street.

“That’s the second woman we’ve seen with a hose,” Rebecca told Joshua. “We should find out why.” Joshua nodded.

“Later we’ll ask,” he added. Rebecca nodded. The van was slowing down. Mr. Taylor pulled the van off the road into the dirt.

“Here’s our stop,” he called to his passengers.

Another huge house stood before them. It was three floors high. There was a fence around it with a cement “yard” in front of the house.

“Don’t get too excited,” Mrs. Taylor commented. “We live on half of the first floor. The rest isn’t ours. We share it with our landlord’s family.”

Mrs. Taylor was the first to the door behind her husband. He opened the door and slipped off his shoes. Mrs. Taylor did the same. “Welcome,” she said and gestured for the rest to enter.

Everyone followed suit and took off their shoes at the door. They walked down a narrow hallway covered with a blue rug. They saw the bathroom on one side of the hall. They walked into the room on the other side. Inside was a dining table, a desk, a couch, coffee table, cabinets and a green rug on the floor.

“Why don’t I give you the full tour now?” Mrs. Taylor sparkled as she began showing her home. The first room was open to the kitchen which was more like a narrow hallway. The house had one more door. “This is Susanna’s room,” Mrs. Taylor said as she came into the room. There was a crib, a bookcase, a box of toys, a wardrobe, a soft chair and another rug. Along two walls were mats. “Those will be your beds,” Mrs. Taylor told Rebecca and Joshua.”

“Perfect!” exclaimed Joshua. “It’ll be like camping!”

“Good,” Mrs. Taylor said gently.

Grandma Kay was sitting at the desk when the children came out of the other room. “I’m writing your family an email to let them know we arrived. Why don’t you each write something as well?”

Rebecca let Joshua go first. Joshua wrote about the plane. Rebecca wrote about the Taylor’s house. Rebecca checked their email before she got out of the computer chair. “There’s a message from mom and dad,” she reported. She read it out loud. She clicked on “reply” and wrote, “We love you too,” before clicking on “send.”

Mr. Taylor spoke up. “We’d like to take you for a little walk. We’d like you to meet someone too. You have an invitation to join a party tomorrow. We need to introduce

you to the host family. They are neighbors of ours. They are very excited you will be at their celebration.”

“What kind of party is it?” Rebecca asked right away.

“An engagement party,” Mr. Taylor answered. “I don’t think there is anything like it in America. You’ll find out soon enough what it’s like.” Mr. Taylor let out a little laugh.

Mr. Taylor led the way again this time out the door. The group of Americans started walking down the street.

“Rebecca, look!” Joshua tugged on Rebecca’s dress with excitement. “Do you see?”

Rebecca looked ahead down the street. A gaggle of geese were being walked down the street by an elderly man with a long walking stick. The loud honking carried over the other street noises. A car rumbled past. Huge bags of onions were tied to its roof. Music from a stereo blasted from someone’s house.

When the group got to a street crowded with stores, Grandpa Joe asked to go to the exchange office. “That’s the money store,” he told the kids. “I’m going to buy denars, Macedonian money, with my dollars from America.” When he came out of the store, he showed Rebecca and Joshua the money he got. The bills had 10, 50, 100 and 1000 written on them.

“1000!” Joshua shouted.

“Ssh! Don’t tell everyone how much money I got,” Grandpa Joe corrected. “1000 is only the same as twenty dollars anyway.”

They walked on past a small convenient store, a music store and a butcher shop. Mr. Taylor led the others into one of the shops. There was one young man behind a counter. Under the window was a stove. Hamburgers, hot dogs and French fries were cooking. There was little room to stand so Rebecca, Joshua and Grandma Kay went back outside to wait. The men soon returned with a bag of food and drinks.

“We’re going to head back home to eat,” Grandpa Joe directed.

Rebecca and Joshua took in the sights on the walk home. They saw little kids running around in their underwear carrying bottles of water which they dumped out on each other. Mr. Taylor warned the children to stay away from all the stray dogs they saw. They also had to avoid all the puddles in the street.

“Why are the streets always wet?” Rebecca asked Mrs. Taylor, who was pushing Susanna in a stroller.

“They like to keep things really clean,” Mrs. Taylor explained. “They clean in front of their homes with water every day.”

When they had almost reached the Taylor’s home, they were greeted by a neighbor.

“This is the family that is holding the engagement party tomorrow,” Mr. Taylor informed everyone. Rebecca and Joshua shook the woman’s hand. The neighbor kissed Mrs. Taylor on both cheeks.

While walking the rest of the way to the house, Mrs. Taylor told everyone that the neighbors had invited them to the party.

“The party will be tomorrow from four in the afternoon until around midnight,” Mrs. Taylor said. “Your bodies will think that’s ten in the morning until six in the evening. It’s six hours earlier in America than here. Maybe that will help you stay awake for the party. But I don’t think we’ll stay until midnight.”

Rebecca whispered to Joshua to change his watch to read six hours later. It was one in the afternoon in America. They changed their watches to say it was seven in the evening.

Back home they ate their hot dog sandwiches. The hot dogs were on huge buns and had French fries on top of them covered in ketchup and mayonnaise. After Susanna was asleep the kids had a time of prayer with their grandparents and the Taylors. The Taylors went into Susanna’s room to sleep. Grandma Kay and Grandpa Joe slept on the couch which pulled open into a bed. Rebecca and Joshua curled up on the foam mats covered with shiny, smooth material. They went to sleep to the sounds of music and dogs barking.

Chapter 6 What's For Dinner?

There was excitement on the Taylor's street the next day. Several families were preparing for the party. Mrs. Taylor went with her neighbors to get her hair done at a hair salon. She came back with her hair in curls on top of her head. Susanna stared at her. She wasn't sure who it was at first. Mrs. Taylor announced they were all going to another neighbor's house for dinner at three o'clock.

At three Rebecca and Joshua followed the Taylor's over to their neighbors with their notebooks in hand. They entered through a metal gate and walked across the cement area in front of the house. Rebecca stayed close to Grandma Kay. She was worried about being pecked by the three chickens milling around on the cement walkway in front of the house.

A woman dressed in a long black skirt and yellow t-shirt came out from the house. She stood next to a string of peppers that were shaped like bananas hanging on the outside wall of the house. She shook hands with everyone. Joshua remembered to say, "Zdravo." Mrs. Taylor kissed the woman on both cheeks. Everyone kicked off their shoes outside the entrance. They stepped into the home onto a thin red rug. Every inch of the floor was covered with rugs.

The woman took everyone into the house's other room, which had a tablecloth spread on the floor. A younger woman stopped placing plates on the tablecloth to come over and greet the guests. A boy, smaller than Peter, hung onto her pant leg. Grandma Kay handed the boy the chocolate bar she remembered to bring.

"This is Erika," Mrs. Taylor introduced the young woman. "She is a believer. So is her husband, who's not here right now. His name is Adam. We can go ahead and sit down at the plates."

Mrs. Taylor sat down, and Erika brought a plastic rattle over for Susanna to hold. Rebecca stayed next to Grandma Kay and Joshua sat with Grandpa Joe and Mr. Taylor on the other side of the spread. The older woman who had greeted them sat down with Mrs. Taylor and began inquiring about the guests.

Erika finished setting out plates and glasses and started bringing out the food. She brought out enough small loaves of bread for everyone to have their own loaf. She brought out a salad of tomatoes and cucumbers with grated cheese covering the top. She brought out a pot of food that looked mysterious to Rebecca and Joshua.

"What is that?" Rebecca asked her grandmother.

"Let's ask," Grandma Kay answered in a whisper. She looked at the older woman and pointed to the pot. "What's in there?" she asked with a big smile.

The older woman responded eagerly and began demonstrating with her hands how the dish is prepared. Mrs. Taylor translated.

“The dish is called *sarma*. Ground beef is cooked on the stove top with onion and seasonings. Then it is mixed with rice. You take a handful of the mixture and roll it up in a leaf of pickled cabbage. The rolls are then put in the pot, covered with water and boiled.”

“Sounds delicious,” Grandma Kay said.

Adam came in the room with his father. They greeted everyone with a handshake. Adam asked Grandpa Joe in English with a strong accent, “How are you?”

“Just fine,” Grandpa Joe said slowly and clearly .

“Welcome to our home,” Adam said, again in English.

“Thank you,” responded Grandpa Joe.

The Taylors explained that Adam was a young leader in the church started in Shutka. They shared Adam’s testimony with the group of Americans as well. Adam had an uncle in the church and had been to his house to visit his cousin at times when there were Bible study groups in his home. He sometimes listened to the discussions and was interested. But he decided that he was young and wanted to just live and have fun and could study religion when he was older. Soon after he had a dream where he saw Jesus come to him and tell him to follow Him. Adam decided to give his life to following Christ.

“Wow,” thought Rebecca. “Did Erika have a dream about Jesus too?” she asked.

“No, Adam told Erika about Jesus and she decided it sounded good,” explained Mr. Taylor. “They were soon to be married when Adam gave his life to Christ. She followed him in his decision. There are others in the church though who came to Jesus through dreams. There are others who were healed miraculously and then believed. One woman was healed of cancer. God can work around the fact that there are few missionaries here to evangelize and to disciple the people here.”

“God is good!” Grandma Kay exclaimed.

“God certainly knows how to take care of His children,” Grandpa Joe added. “How do their families feel about them being Christians?”

Mr. Taylor relayed the question to Adam and then translated his answer. “At first they threatened me that bad things would happen if I became a Christian. Sometimes it was very hard to go against them. Now though they accept me and don’t give me a hard time. My family celebrates Muslim holidays and observes Muslim traditions which can be hard. The money I earn goes to the family and they use it to celebrate these Muslim

holidays, and Erika has to work to cook and clean to prepare for those holidays. Things like that are hard. Our son knows how to pray, but sometimes we catch him copying the Muslim prayers where you bow with your head to the ground.”

“Please,” Erika said with a gesture to let everyone know to start eating.

“I’ll pray,” Grandpa Joe offered. “Thank you, Father God, for this food, for your constant provision for all our needs, for your love and grace, for calling us Your children. Please bless this family and use them to bless this community to the glory of the name of Jesus. Amen.”

“Ameen,” chorused Erika and Adam.

“Ameen, is that how they say amen,” Grandpa Joe told his grandchildren.

Rebecca started writing in her notebook.

Muslims sometimes become Christians through dreams and healings.

Food:

Sarma, ground meat and rice rolled into a cabbage leaf and boiled

Salad, cucumber and tomato in chunks with grated cheese on top

A whole loaf of bread for each person!

As the family began eating Erika brought in a bottle of what the kids thought was soda. She poured each person a glass full. Joshua picked up his glass and started to drink. Immediately his face scrunched up, and he quickly covered his mouth with his hand. He swallowed with a grimace.

“What is that?” Joshua asked his grandfather. Adam’s family laughed when they saw him. They knew it was an unusual taste for Americans but that some really liked it too.

“Was it sour?” he asked chuckling.

“I’m not sure if it was sour, but it sure wasn’t sweet! I thought it was soda.”

“Well, it is soda,” Grandpa Joe told Joshua. “Original soda. It’s soda water. We like to call it bubble water. It’s soda without the sugar or flavoring. They drink it a lot here. People like it.”

“I guess people can get used to anything,” Joshua added.

“I’m not so sure I want to try it, let alone drink enough to get used to it,” decided Rebecca.

“Try it once, and I’ll let you write Mom and Dad about what it’s like,” prodded Joshua.

“No, thank you,” replied Rebecca. “You can tell them. I already know what it’s like. I saw your face! I think I’ll start with the salad. That’s mostly recognizable.”

The family ate and made sure Erika and Adam’s mother knew how good the meal was.

Rebecca took one last look around their home before they left. She wanted to remember everything from the vases of plastic flowers everywhere to the old black and white photographs on the wall.

Chapter 7 The Party

Mrs. Taylor came out of the room to oohs and aaahs. “How do you like my penguin pants?” she asked her amazed audience.

Her “penguin pants” were shimmery white pants that ballooned out and came down to her ankles. The bottom of the pants were trimmed with silver sequins. She also wore a white blouse with very wide sleeves. The blouse was trimmed with silver thread. Over it all she wore a long blue vest reaching close to the floor. The vest was embroidered in silver with pictures of birds and flowers. Her hair done up on top of her head in curls completed the fantastic look.

“I love the pants!” Rebecca piped up. “Is everyone going to be dressed like you?”

“Not everyone. Only the women will dress this fancy. The men just wear regular clothes but try and look nice. The married women will wear some sort of get up like this one, but they are all different. The unmarried girls won’t wear them. They won’t receive an outfit like this until they are getting married themselves.”

“I can’t wait to see what everyone else looks like,” Joshua whispered to his sister. “Is it time to go?” he questioned the group.

“It’s about time,” Mr. Taylor answered. “And don’t worry, you all will look just fine in your regular clothes. People wear what they have. They know you don’t have clothes like these.”

Rebecca noticed Mrs. Taylor slip on special sandals while they were leaving the house. They were covered in blue sequins. Mr. Taylor pushed the stroller this time while the gang walked to the party. Rebecca thought it was funny to see someone dressed up so fancy walking through rocky, muddy streets.

The children noticed more and more people. Some were dressed like Mrs. Taylor. “They must be going where we’re headed,” they thought and gave each other sideways glances.

The group turned the corner and saw a mass of people standing around two huge speakers which towered above them. Between the two speakers was a band of teenagers playing drums, keyboards and guitars. One held a microphone and sang in Romani.

“Here we are,” Mr. Taylor told the group. “It’s going to be louder when we get to the other side of those speakers. It will be hard to talk to each other. Any questions before we go over there?”

“Yeah, what do we do?” Joshua asked with wide eyes.

“Just stay together.” Mr. Taylor told him with an encouraging smile. “Here we go!”

The troupe walked in single file past the crowds of onlookers. It was certainly loud on the other side of the speakers! Rebecca couldn't help but hold her ears. Grandma Kay took hold of one of her elbows. Grandpa Joe held onto Joshua. Mrs. Taylor came and gestured to Grandma Kay with her head to come with her. She nodded and the three ladies walked out into the middle of the street to join the other women already dancing.

The dance was a long line of women and girls holding hands. They walked in a certain rhythm: forward, backward, side to side. Rebecca couldn't get the hang of it and kept stepping on Mrs. Taylor's feet and bumping into Grandma Kay. Everyone smiled at her though.

There were other girls in the circle. Some were younger than Rebecca. Two of them wore dresses that looked like little wedding gowns. There was one older girl in a real white wedding gown.

Mr. Taylor and the other men and boys stood off to the side and watched. Mr. Taylor yelled in Joshua's ear to tell him the girl in the wedding dress was the girl who was engaged. She was 18 years old and met her husband-to-be just this past week.

After awhile Grandma Kay and Rebecca joined the boys for a break. Mrs. Taylor eventually joined them, after almost two hours. The music stopped after about three hours of playing without a break.

"Is the party over?" Rebecca asked Mrs. Taylor. "Everyone is leaving."

"No, that was just part one. Now we eat!" Mrs. Taylor answered and rubbed Rebecca's back. "The people are just going home to change their clothes. They will be back. The women will change into evening gowns. I'm going to change too. Let's head home."

An hour later the Taylors and their American guests were back on the same street with the band and other guests. There were now long wooden tables set up in the street. Mrs. Taylor was wearing a dress she had used as a bridesmaid in her brother's wedding several years before.

Rebecca and Joshua had gotten more used to the loud music by now. They sat next to each other at one of the tables. Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay sat on either side of them. Grandma Kay poured drinks for the kids. On each table were bottles of soda pop. The children didn't recognize any of the bottle labels. Their soda was yellow. They later learned it was pear flavored.

Soon waiters brought out plates of food. The plates had salad made of thinly shredded cabbage and sliced cucumber, beef that looked like sausage, and a scoop of beef stew next to mashed potatoes. Rebecca liked the salad. Joshua liked the stew. Neither were too sure about "the meat sticks" which is what they called them. The next day they learned they were called *kebaps*.

A man with a microphone went around to each table and person by person collected the gift of money offered to the bride-to-be. The man took the money and then announced over the speakers who the person was and how much money he gave. The children couldn't believe it!

The children went home with their grandparents before the cake was served. It was after ten at night; they were tired. The party ended with more dancing and finished after midnight. Rebecca and Joshua were long asleep before then.

Chapter 8 A Visit to the City

When Joshua woke up to the bright sun shining through the curtains, he saw Rebecca already dressed and reading something.

“What is that?” Joshua asked.

“It’s a note from Mom and Dad. I found it in the bottom of my suitcase. There are pictures from Peter and Samuel. You must have some too hidden in the bottom of your suitcase.”

Joshua dug down to the bottom of his suitcase and pulled up a pile of papers.

“These are so fun. Let’s ask to write an email to tell them thanks.”

Rebecca and Joshua quietly opened their door out into the main room. The grown ups were all awake and sipping tea or juice.

The kids showed off their letters and pictures and got permission to write an email.

“What do we get to do today?” Joshua asked eagerly.

“Well, we do have something planned. How about a bus trip into the city?”

“Yes! I’ve never been on a bus!” Joshua jumped up as if they would leave that moment.

“Well, good,” Mr. Taylor laughed. “Your grandpa and I will stay home and get some work done. Mrs. Taylor will give the rest of you a bit of a tour.”

Mrs. Taylor picked up where Mr. Taylor stopped. “We should get going in about half and hour. We’ll eat breakfast and then walk up the hill to the bus stop. I have bread ready for our breakfast so we can eat as soon as everyone’s ready.”

The family gathered and blessed the food and began to pass the fresh bread around the table. They were rolls shaped like crescent moons and filled with jam.

After breakfast the men volunteered to clear the table. Grandma Kay and Mrs. Taylor got kisses as everyone headed for the door. Susanna got to ride in a backpack. She giggled from her perch.

The group walked up hill to the bus stop at the end of the street. There was no way of knowing it was a bus stop. There were no signs, benches or other markers. There were two men waiting there as well.

The first bus that came zoomed past without stopping. Mrs. Taylor let them know that bus wasn't the number they needed. The next bus slowed to a stop with a loud screeched. Mrs. Taylor ushered the kids and Grandma Kay in first and then followed. She paid the driver and joined the others in a row of seats along the wall of the bus. Mrs. Taylor handed Grandma Kay a ticket.

"May I please hold my ticket?" Rebecca asked.

"You don't get a ticket. Kids get to ride free. You won't have to pay for a couple of years yet."

Rebecca looked around at everyone else holding their ticket. She hoped she really didn't need one as Mrs. Taylor explained that sometimes policemen got on the buses to check for tickets.

Each time as a stop neared people stood and made their way to the doors. They had to hold onto the seatbacks to keep from falling. At each stop several people would get off and others would get on.

The children watched the people on the bus. They watched the teenagers and the old men. They smiled at the other children, who didn't smile back but stared instead.

Finally Mrs. Taylor said their stop was next.

"It's too dangerous to stand up before the bus stops. There are others standing so the driver will stop for them to get off. When the bus stops, head for that door there." Mrs. Taylor pointed to the middle set of doors. The bus had three sets.

The bus screeched and stopped and Mrs. Taylor acted as mother hen and kept everyone together and got them out the door.

"The drivers aren't very patient here. I got you out first to make sure they didn't close the doors on any of you. It happens sometimes."

Rebecca's eyes were wide thinking about getting shut into the bus with her family already on the outside. She was thankful for Mrs. Taylor's knowledge and experience.

The kids had been so focused on the bus that they hadn't noticed the tower looming up next to them. Joshua was the first to notice.

"Can we go up there?" He pointed to the walls of an old stone fortress which sat on a hill in downtown Skopje.

"That's exactly where we are going."

The children felt like soldiers marching across the drawbridge. They stopped to look down into the moat which no longer had any water in it. The children ran their fingers along the stone wall as they passed through the huge gate.

“You are free to run ahead if you like, kids. We’re going to head down this path here.” Mrs. Taylor pointed along a walkway.

The kids ran until they reached a circular tower.

“Let’s go ask if we can go inside,” Joshua said.

Rebecca was the first to turn around and dart back to the adults.

“Excuse me, Mrs. Taylor,” Rebecca started when she got their attention. “Can we go in that tower down there?”

“You can go in carefully. Stay inside though. You can walk right out through the doorways in the tower out onto a ledge, but don’t. There are no railings to protect you from accidentally falling. From inside the tower you can look out over city.”

“Should we wait for you, Grandma?”

“Yes, why don’t you.”

“Okay.” Rebecca smiled at her Grandma and thought about how neat it was they were here together all the way in Macedonia.

“Joshua!” Rebecca called to her brother. “Let’s go along these stepping stones.”

The pair counted as they skipped from stone to stone up to the wall. Joshua thought of a question and turned back leaping from stone to stone.

“What are those little windows for in the wall? They are hard to see out of, but I know I’ve seen pictures of castles with those same things.”

“They aren’t for looking out. That’s why they are so small,” answered Mrs. Taylor. “They are called arrow slits. They are for shooting out arrows. They are small so arrows can’t shoot back in. This fortress is nearly 1500 years old. Over the years it’s been rebuilt and added to. Let’s go up in here first and look out over the city.”

Everyone walked up the few steps into the circular tower. There were three open doorways where they could look out. The kids looked out of each one wondering what it looked like more than 1000 years ago. It must have been very different from what they could see now. Out one doorway they could see the tall downtown buildings. Out another window they saw the Vardar River. Through the third window they saw red

roofs crowded together and counted seven tall skinny towers popping up above the houses.

“Each one of those things you see sticking up is a minaret. A minaret is part of a mosque,” Mrs. Taylor explained when she noticed the children looking in their direction. “Do you know what a mosque is?”

“It’s where Muslims worship their god.” Rebecca knew the answer. “It seems like a lot of mosques,” she sadly noted.

“There are new ones being built. And new churches being built, but not many that glorify God. There’s a lot of work to be done here.”

Mrs. Taylor saw the kids glum faces.

“But nothing is impossible for our God!” Mrs. Taylor turned the children to face her. “He can do all things. You can make a big difference too. Pray for Macedonia every day. Pray for our family too and for more workers to come and share the good news about Jesus!”

Rebecca and Joshua nodded, “We will.”

“Good. Let’s do some more exploring.”

Grandma Kay put her arm around Rebecca as they walked down the stairs of the tower. They walked all around the fortress and finally back out across the drawbridge.

The tour continued with a picnic lunch on Mount Vodno. On the top of the mountain was an enormous cross that was lit at night. They spread their picnic blanket out halfway up the mountain in the middle of a pine forest. Susanna was happy for the chance to crawl around and play.

The bus home was more crowded than the way there. Several people stood to make room for the children and women to sit down. Grandma Kay was thankful for her seat. She thought to pray for the city as she watched it go by out her window.

The group made it home in time for Susanna to take a nap. Grandma Kay thought a nap sounded like a good idea too. Rebecca and Joshua talked about the morning as they wrote down all they could remember in their notebooks.

Chapter 9 True Missionaries

After dinner that evening everyone enjoyed sitting around and hearing the Taylor's stories about their first arriving and learning the language. They talked about the friends they had made and the heartbreaks they had already experienced.

Once Susanna was in bed Mr. Taylor announced a surprise for his wife. "We're going to get to go on a date, sweetheart."

"Really?" Mrs. Taylor looked at Grandpa Joe and Grandma Kay.

"Really. We set it up already. I'm ready to go when you are."

"I'll change in a flash!" Mrs. Taylor was gone and back as fast as she promised. "Thank you so much for giving us this time. We haven't been on a date since Susanna was born."

"It's no trouble for us. We enjoy quiet evenings. And we get to spend time with our wonderful grandchildren."

Rebecca and Joshua couldn't help but smile at Grandpa Joe's comment.

"Have a great time," Grandma Kay said as she walked the couple to the door. "We'll be okay."

Mrs. Taylor waved as the two walked up the hill to catch the bus downtown.

Grandpa Joe turned his attention to the children. "Now, there are a few things I'd like to do while they are gone. We could do some cleaning, like the top of the fridge and things like that. We could also wrap the presents we brought for them. And, we could write them a letter to thank them for welcoming us into their home. Let's pray for them now and then decide how to get the rest of those things done."

"May I please clean?" Rebecca asked, not waiting until after prayer.

"We'll decide in a bit, okay?" Grandpa Joe reminded her.

Rebecca nodded and sat on the floor with Joshua near her grandparents. The group prayed for the Taylors and for the country and for the Roma. There was a lot to pray for. They all really wanted to see the Roma of Macedonia following Jesus as their Lord. They prayed for more workers to join the Taylors who wanted to serve God more than anything else.

When the group said their "amen"s, Grandpa Joe took the first job assignment. "I think I would like to write the thank you letter. Rebecca would like to clean. Grandma?" Grandpa Joe looked at his bride asking what she would like to do.

”I’ll take wrapping,” Grandma answered and looked to Joshua. “What do you think you would like to do?”

“Well, Mrs. Taylor said today that we could help a lot by praying. Could I write prayer requests for the Taylors on an email and send it to our family and the friends we write emails to?”

“That’s a wonderful idea.” Grandpa Joe put his hand on Joshua’s shoulder. “Let’s all get to work.”

The team divided up and got to work in the kitchen and living room. Susanna slept in the other room. The kids were asleep by the time the Taylors tiptoed into the room.

“Thank you so much,” Mrs. Taylor said and gave Grandma Kay a hug. “We had a wonderful time.”

The next morning started early for Rebecca and Grandma Kay. The two of them snuck out together to walk to the little store around the corner. They bought eggs, bread, cheese and juice to make breakfast for everyone. Once they got to work in the kitchen preparing everything, it didn’t take Mrs. Taylor long to figure out their surprise.

“What a treat. What are you making?” Mrs. Taylor saw the ingredients they had out.

“Scrambled eggs with cheese and cinnamon toast. Nothing fancy.” Grandma Kay winked at Mrs. Taylor. “You go ahead and take some extra time reading your Bible this morning.

Mrs. Taylor gave Grandma Kay a squeeze and went back into the living room.

The family enjoyed the breakfast feast and talked about the plan for their last day together. Grandpa Joe addressed everyone at the table.

“Today I’m going to spend as much time as I can talking and praying with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. Grandma Kay would like to spend some time with Mrs. Taylor as well. Can you two play with Susanna this morning? It’s okay if she wants to be with her mom sometimes, too.”

“Of course,” Joshua responded.

“We’ll be so happy to play with her all day! She’s so cute and fun to be with.” Rebecca started making faces at Susanna in her high chair.

“Great. And I hear Grandma Kay and Rebecca are going to be making our dinner today as well. That will be a big help so Mrs. Taylor can be with me to talk about everything on their minds. Let’s all pray together before we start the day.”

Grandpa Joe prayed for everyone. By now they were feeling very much like one big family.

Grandpa Joe, Mr. Taylor and their wives sat around in the living room talking and laughing and asking and answering questions while the kids played as quietly as they could in the other room.

The day passed quickly and happily. The family opened their presents and were excited by the thoughtfulness of their guests. While Susanna took her nap, the children joined the adults for a time of prayer. Then Grandma Kay and Rebecca cooked a simple dinner of chicken and vegetables. The kids emailed home one more time and told their parents they were excited to be seeing them in another day.

Grandma Kay suggested that they all should get their clothes ready for the next day and get everything packed up completely. They had to leave for the airport at four the next morning. Rebecca and Joshua organized their things for the trip the next day. Joshua asked Rebecca why their mom had packed a couple of long sleeved shirts that they never wore. Rebecca thought that Mom had just wanted to make sure they were prepared. Joshua thought it was strange and wondered.

Mr. Taylor listened in as the children were talking.

“Do you remember, Rebecca, how we were going to show people Jesus by how we lived? I’m not sure anyone noticed our lights,” Joshua said, a bit discouraged.

Mr. Taylor piped in. “You children certainly do shine Christ’s light. You have been a big encouragement to us and a big help. Our neighbors have been wondering why you are here and what you have been doing. When we tell them, they can’t understand why you would come all this way when you aren’t even our family. That gives us a chance to share about God’s love and how they can be part of God’s family. Anyone who is truly following Jesus will always make an impact where they are, even if they can’t speak a word.”

“We did do it, Rebecca!” Rebecca smiled at her happy brother.

“Thanks for encouraging us,” Rebecca thanked Mr. Taylor. “We really wanted to share the gospel with someone. We know we would need to learn the language in order to really explain to someone about Jesus. But we’re happy to show people love and make people curious to learn about God.”

“You two are true missionaries,” Mr. Taylor declared.

Make Your Own World Book

Gather together:

A three-ring binder

Lined loose-leaf paper

Construction paper

Pen or pencil, marker

Why not start with Macedonia?

1. Choose a red piece of construction paper since Macedonia's flag is red.
2. On one side of the construction paper write Macedonia on the top and side edges.
3. On the other side of the paper construct Macedonia's flag. You can see it online at www.hebrews110/countrytour/maps.html
4. At the top of one loose-leaf paper write Macedonia.
5. Start writing one fact about the country on each line. Here are some to get you started. There are other facts that you can learn from reading this book.
Capital: Skopje
Population: 2 million
Ethnic groups: Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Turks
Religion: Orthodox Christian, Muslim
Official language: Macedonian
Currency: Denars, 50 denars = 1 dollar
6. Create a new page with prayer requests.
7. If you like, you can add a separate page for words you learn in the language.
8. Add new pieces of paper as necessary.
9. As you add new countries put them in your binder in alphabetical order.
10. Use the internet to learn more about the countries as well as library sources and missionary books and letters. Here are some websites to get you started:
www.hebrews110.com, www.macedonia.co.uk

Currency Converter

50 denars is about the same as 1 dollar.

A bus ticket in Macedonia costs 30 denars. What does it cost in dollars?

A pound of tomatoes costs 13 denars.

Dinner at a restaurant costs 300 denars.

A bottle of maple syrup costs 570 denars.

A two liter bottle of Coca-Cola costs 65 denars.

A two liter bottle of local soda costs 10 denars.

A newspaper costs 15 denars.