

Dear Friends,

War in Gaza!

Gaza exploded into gunfire and bombing November 11 after an elite Israeli reconnaissance unit in civilian vans entered and was stopped and searched at a Hamas checkpoint a couple of miles from the border. We don't know exactly what happened because the details are under a strict gag order by the Israeli military. At some point, however, Israeli troops opened fire on the Hamas gunmen.

The Israelis fled, calling in airstrikes for cover. One Israeli officer and seven Palestinian gunmen were killed.

In response, Hamas and other armed Palestinian factions “launched a massive three-day attack on Israel . . . firing some 500 rockets and mortar shells at Israeli cities and towns near the Gaza border and leading Israel to the brink of war” (Judah Ari Gross, *The Times of Israel*, November 27, 2018).

“With air-raid sirens wailing from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, and after a Palestinian anti-tank missile blew up an Israeli bus, seriously wounding a 19-year-old soldier, Israel retaliated with airstrikes and tank fire that grew steadily more destructive,” hitting “scores of military posts and weapons caches across Gaza . . . and the group’s military intelligence headquarters. . . . It was the heaviest fighting between Israel and Gaza since their war in 2014” (David M. Halbfinger, *The New York Times*, November 12, 2018).

In the midst of all of this, my friends in Gaza asked me to postpone my November 13 visit to them for a day or two. Finally, I was able to enter through the Erez Crossing on the 15th.



On the Palestinian side of the passage between Israel and Gaza.

This visit was different than any I had ever experienced because it came after the publishing of my book *Pastor from Gaza*. I prayed and committed my life to the Lord, wondering if Hamas saw and read my book and, if so, what they thought about certain things I said concerning evangelism. I was nervous as I reached the Hamas checkpoint.

They questioned me as usual, but it was all routine, and I gratefully continued into the warzone.

Every visit to Gaza is worse than the previous one, and every time I am devastated by what I see and hear.

I told you last time what it was like. Now, it is even worse. The poverty is unprecedented. The income of 90,000 men and women has been cut in half. More than 65 percent of the young people

are out of work. Drug addiction is soaring. On this trip, I visited my cousin in his pharmacy in Gaza City. In just one ten-minute period, several drug addicts knocked at the door with fake prescriptions and were turned away. In addition to drug addiction, divorce and prostitution are increasing steadily, as is theft. Thieves broke into my parents' house at least twice.

Little wonder that chronic worry and anxiety are the major epidemic diseases in Gaza, even among some Christians.

We visited so many people in their homes to pray, encourage and counsel them. We led devotions with the school teachers, preached and taught in the church and to a small group of theological students who study at Bethlehem Bible College.



As always, we helped many families with food, medicine and other necessities. But this time, there was so much need, such desperate need, that I spent more money than I had budgeted.

God never ceases to amaze me, the way he can bless people in the midst of the worst conditions and circumstances. I noticed on this visit that more people are beginning to open up, to hear and accept the message of the Gospel. God is using the Internet, social media and personal contact to help people put their trust in Him.

The entire week I was in Gaza, I stayed in the apartment of the pastor of Gaza Baptist Church, where we encouraged people and ministered together.

Surprisingly, it was more difficult for me to leave Gaza than to enter. I left early in the morning to go to the Erez Crossing, only to be sent back by the Israelis, saying I had no permission to leave, despite my US passport.

There were many difficult moments over the next couple of days. Finally, the Lord opened the gate

with the help of my friend, Pastor Bill, and the prayers of so many of my friends.

I am in Jordan now until November 29, ministering to the Iraqi refugees. When I return to the U.S., I will send you another short report.

For now, thank you so much for your generosity and your love of and in Christ! You already covered the shortage we experienced for food coupons for our 5,000 Iraqi refugees. This was a wonderful encouragement for me. Please thank the Lord with me for the fruitful ministry in Gaza and for my personal safety. Thank Him for covering the shortages for the Iraqi refugees.

The United Nations has declared that the worsening conditions in Gaza will make it uninhabitable by 2012. Malnutrition is taking a terrible toll, as evidenced by the teeth of this precious 12-year-old girl. We are helping her, but she still has a long way to go.

Please pray for Pastor Hanna Maher and his family as they continue to minister in Gaza. Pray for your brothers and sisters in Gaza and for other believers who are not known by many, if you understand what I mean. Pray for the people we ministered to in Gaza, both Christian and Muslim.

Finally, I hope you will order a copy of my new book, *Pastor from Gaza*, on Amazon. It is the story of my life, growing up and ministering in one of the most unique areas in the world. It is about the fires of persecution, the balm of forgiveness and the God who walks beside us through the flames.

May I also ask you to help me promote *Pastor from Gaza*? Just contact me, and I will be happy to send you as many copies as you believe you can sell in your church or community.

Thank you so much for your partnership and for standing with us to minister to our brothers and sisters and to reach the lost in Gaza and in Jordan! We cannot do it without you.

If you are able, as this amazing year closes, you can send a gift through PayPal at www.cm2g.org or to:

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