

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." – 2 Corinthians 5:20

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IMPORTANT END-OF-YEAR ANNOUNCEMENTS:

As we head into 2020 and our upcoming support-raising travels, we need to raise about \$300 of committed monthly support. Would you please consider becoming a [monthly supporter](#) or give an end-of-year gift to our church's [special ministry fund](#), [our support account](#), or [our teammates' support account](#)?



A Kreider Christmas

Have you seen the animated movie [The Star](#), where the Christmas story is told from the perspective of the donkey who carried pregnant Mary to Bethlehem? Our whole family loves this movie, and it is not relegated solely to a December viewing. The premise is that Bo, the donkey, longs to be more than just a mill animal and sets off to join a prestigious royal caravan; that is, until he meets Mary, who loves him and takes care of him. He struggles throughout the movie between his desire to *be more*, and the bond he feels to care for Mary in return, especially on her trek to Bethlehem. At the end, when he observes that even wise kings from afar have come to worship the baby Jesus and recognizes that Jesus is *the King*, his excitement of having been used *by a King*, despite his lowly mill-donkey status, leads him to bow down and worship. God's glory was magnified in Bo's weakness.

We can relate to Bo the donkey. Though we did not seek a royal caravan, we naively and even unconsciously thought God would use us to *do more* through our places of strength. Four years ago, our presentation to individuals and churches consisted of painting a general picture of the Romanian culture, followed by an explanation of how we thought the gifts, talents, and passions that God gave us could be used to help the Romanian church. We thought our

strengths aligned, and therefore we felt fit for the job. We weren't lying, but we have discovered that we were a bit naive. See, after spending only two short years on the field and talking with a number of other missionaries, we've come to realize that in God's Kingdom, resumes are often made to be discarded. We now recognize that we are just lowly mill donkeys who simply carry the King to others in our midst.

In retrospect, this revelation isn't surprising. God almost always discards resumes in his use of biblical characters, or simply passes by the good resumes to pick the candidates with the most sullied backgrounds. There's the stuttering prophet Moses, the barren patriarch Abraham (and Sarah), the fearful and disobedient prophet Jonah, or the youngest shepherd boy David. God also uses the useless rabble of society, like the Canaanite prostitute Rahab, or the foreigner Ruth. He uses the great armies of His people by whittling down their fighting force to nothing, as he did with Gideon. God rarely works through human strength. Instead, He clearly works with the weak, and in the weakness of the strong so that His name may be magnified and praised.

Weakness is a position we're understanding much better today, and so our church presentation has changed quite a bit. We are still thankful to God for the passions and gifts He's given us. At the same time, we have also learned to become thankful for our weaknesses, as it is those which God has been using to grow us and to bring Himself glory. We're still new, struggling parents and have gone through a lot of physical and behavioral difficulty with our children which has left us feeling very weak, yet God has given us a Romanian community filled with several other new parents. So it surprised me when the Lord saw fit to use me to answer other moms' parenting questions, help several young pregnant Roma girls, or work on starting a Mommy Club with other ladies from our church. He's not using me in a place of strength because I'm some perfect parent, but because I'm transparent with my own struggles and lessons. We initially thought we'd be using our passion for apologetics to be working with the younger college generation, but due to circumstances and demographics, God has placed us in long-term relationships with individuals whose intellectual doubts aren't the barrier to their faith. We have been able to become steeped in community not because we could answer everyone's questions and objections in regard to Christianity, but because in our own family's struggles, others experienced our brokenness. We thought we were going to help others, yet in our first two years of living in Romania we have

often been the object of assistance by our community, as we have faced a number of difficulties with our health. Allowing others to serve us and generously love us built and strengthened the various communities we have surrounding us.

At every turn, God has illuminated to us how weak we are. In this weakness, I know countless people and churches have been praying for us, and through our Father's continued strengthening and healing of our various illnesses, many have been encouraged and built up in their faith. Because of their participation with us in prayer, many have been reminded that our battle is not with flesh and blood, but with something far greater. And in seeing God's miraculous hand of healing in our lives, the faith of some has grown. The Lord has continued to work through our weakness, using our failures, our life lessons, our vulnerability, and our story to impact the lives of others. *Through our weaknesses, God has manifested his strength to carry the message of Jesus the King to others in various ways.*

Christmas is always a season where we get to ponder the miracle of Jesus, the God man who condescended and left His throne of strength to don the flesh of servanthood and weakness. But the Lord has not left us in our weakness. Condescension was God's most glorious act, as "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" became flesh and dwelt among us (Heb 1:3). He made his dwelling with us not as a king, nor basking in splendor, but as a weak servant who can empathize with our weakness and temptations. As "little Christs" who have Christ's Spirit within us, we must not let the incarnation end 2,000 years ago. It must be alive within us today, the hands and feet of a redeemed body, whose head is the living incarnation, Christ himself. So just like Bo the donkey, we invite you to join with us in bowing down to our Savior who came in weakness, who uses our weaknesses, and delights to give us the honor of carrying the King to those in our midst. Merry Christmas!

With Love,

Derek, Catalina, Elin, Atticus, Denton, and Jemma

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Pray for God to raise up a Romanian pastor to lead the church.
 - Pray for us as we prepare for our traveling season, starting two days after Christmas and continuing until the end of February. Pray for health and patience as we travel as a young family of six all over the eastcoast - from Naples, FL to Lancaster, PA. We have to raise about \$300/month in additional support before we can return to Romania.
 - Pray for the Ebbers family. Derek Ebbers will be leaving Romania in January, and Shannon and the kids will follow him in April after we return to Romania. They will be on Home Ministry Assignment until January 2021, as they report to churches and seek new financial supporters. They must make up a significant loss of financial support before they can return to the field. Please let us know if you would be interested in speaking with us or the Ebbers and possibly joining their support team, as well. Supporting our teammates is an indirect, yet incredibly important way you can support us and all the work being done in Romania. The Ebbers have faithfully served there for 12 years! You can [find them here](#).
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Life in the States Update:

Our Christmas season has been a joyful blessing here in the States. We've been able to meet with many friends and supporters, saw which of our "little" cousins have now grown bigger than us in the last two years, baked an inordinate amount of Christmas cookies with Derek's mom, packed over 400 Christmas letters, and celebrated from afar what amazing things God is doing in Romania - including a wonderful packed-house performance by the Kids Club that Derek helps with when we're there. Denton turned 2 on December 15, and on December 19, Derek and I celebrated TEN YEARS of wonderful marriage with the Lord's help! Perhaps most noteworthy is the fact that we have now gone 7 weeks with no major sicknesses!!! This alone feels miraculous, considering a health streak like this hasn't happened since spring 2017! We are truly so grateful for this protection and mercy from our Lord as Jemma has been so small. We are praying for continued health as we begin our travel

season in just a few days.

We hope to see as many of you as possible while we're Stateside until April 1. Here is our travel schedule. Please reach out and let us know if we're coming near or through your city so we can see you! We'd also love to speak at your Bible Study group, school chapel, Sunday School, youth group, or a dinner party! Let us know how we can help!

Dec 27 – Jan 8: Orlando and Bonita Springs, FL

Jan 12: Westminster Presbyterian

Jan 18 – 20: Redeemer Presbyterian, Charleston, SC

Jan 25 – 26: Redeemer Presbyterian, Valdosta, GA

Feb 4-12: Lancaster and Lebanon, PA

Feb 20 – 24: Nashville, TN

Mar 18 – 20: Chestnut Mountain Presbyterian

Mar 21 – 22: Westminster Presbyterian



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

12/20/2019 - [Why the "Lesser of Two Evils" Ethic is Incompatible with Christianity](#).
(podcast episode) by Derek

12/15/2019 - [Free Will in the Media](#) by Derek

Continuing - [The Case for Christian Nonviolence](#) (podcast series) by Derek

Check us out on Facebook! We post on Catalina's ["From Dacula to Transylvania"](#) album so that you can stay up to date with us. You can also follow [our photos on instagram](#) or check out our [video archive](#). But best, of all, you should let us know if you want to join our secret Facebook Group to get more updates!

Support Account Reminders:

- If you're interested in one-time giving and would rather support projects, we have a project account for the Romanian church which goes towards things like the youth program, elder trainings, etc. The account is **#94978** for the Romania church plant.



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Visit our website:

<http://www.dckreider.com>

To make a donation (Account #14088 for Derek and Catalina), (Account #12140 for the Ebbers), or
(Account #94978 Romania church plant for church projects):

<https://www.mtw.org/missionaries/details/derek-and-catalina-kreider>

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