

## KSA Prayer Journal

May 28<sup>th</sup> 2011

### Riyadh: ‘Hubbly-Bubbly’ place

**“A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too I see is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”**  
(Ecclesiastes 2:24-25, NIV)

We decided to go with some brothers who were visiting from Latin America and visit one of the ‘Hubbly-Bubbly’ (water pipe) coffee-recreation places in Riyadh. These are establishments where men meet to relax, eat, drink, smoke water pipes, talk and watch TV. The water pipes (called *shisha* here or *nargila* in Egypt) are filled with fruit flavoured tobacco, and are traditionally shared between two to four men. This is done in enclosures where you can sit on the ground on cushions, Arabic style, or tables & chairs are also available.

There is a part of town where there are a whole row of *shisha* cafes next to each other, and on this week night we found an unusually large number of cars parked a long way along the road. We ended up at a large establishment that had water ponds and fountains. There were also thin plastic overhead pipes giving fine sprays of water to cool the customers. It was a hot night, and we walked around looking for a free enclosure to sit in. We found one where there was a young Saudi man (N\*) who invited us to sit with him. He was from another city, having moved here to work in the capital- it seemed he was lonely, and quite happy to talk with us (he had very good English). It seemed unusually busy, with a lot of young men present, and then we found out it was the night of a big football match – Barcelona versus Manchester United. In all the enclosures we could hear the match being watched. The atmosphere was quite festive, with lots of cheering when a goal was scored.



A selection of dips & other tasty food



Arabic coffee & dates

We ordered some tasty food: some bread and dips, soft drinks, and a selection of barbecued meats- chicken and lamb. After this we asked for some traditional Saudi coffee and some dates (this is traditionally served to guests whenever they first arrive at a Saudi house or at a reception hall for any celebration).

It is common for young men to meet here. A sad fact of life here is that married Saudi men often spend all evening here, till 3-4 in the morning. This can have a serious affect on family life, as the husband won't see the wife or children for long periods during the week. Also at public places like this, we can see how segregated life is here- men gather separately without women, and the women spend a lot of time at home. At home, if one visits, one will be taken into the male *majlis* (sitting room), and the women won't be seen. Only male relatives can see the women. So, apart from shopping trips to malls, and eating out at the family section of restaurants with their husbands, women are isolated from men a lot of the time. We hear that in some households, the nanny may end up doing most of the child-rearing.

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We prayed for Saudi family life, and we prayed for the lonely young man we met. We asked God to give him opportunity to meet with us further and an opportunity to hear the gospel.

Ask God to bless family life here in Saudi, to help marriages, and to help the parenting of children (absentee fathers can be a sad fact of life). Ask the Lord to arrange encounters for Saudi men at Hubbly Bubbly places and other public venues with expat. Christians, so they can hear the Good News.

### **PRAYER**

“Father in heaven, you are the model of true fatherhood. We pray for Saudi men to be good fathers and husbands, and to consider their wives and children, to spend precious time with them. We ask you to strengthen and protect marriages. We pray that children may know the security of loving parenting from mothers and fathers who spend much time with them. Lord, please arrange encounters for Saudi men with your children who are living in this country, so they may encounter your son Jesus. Lord, as Saudi men seek entertainment and escape from daily life, we pray they may get a hunger for true fulfillment and satisfaction which only comes from knowing you. We pray for Saudi women, that you raise up women who can speak your word into their lives, or, in their isolation, we ask that they may encounter TV or radio broadcasts from Christian channels, or dreams and visions from you. Pour out your spirit on the families of this nation, and reveal yourselves to heads of households, to husbands and wives, and to Saudi youth.

We ask this in the name of your holy son Jesus.”

Amen.