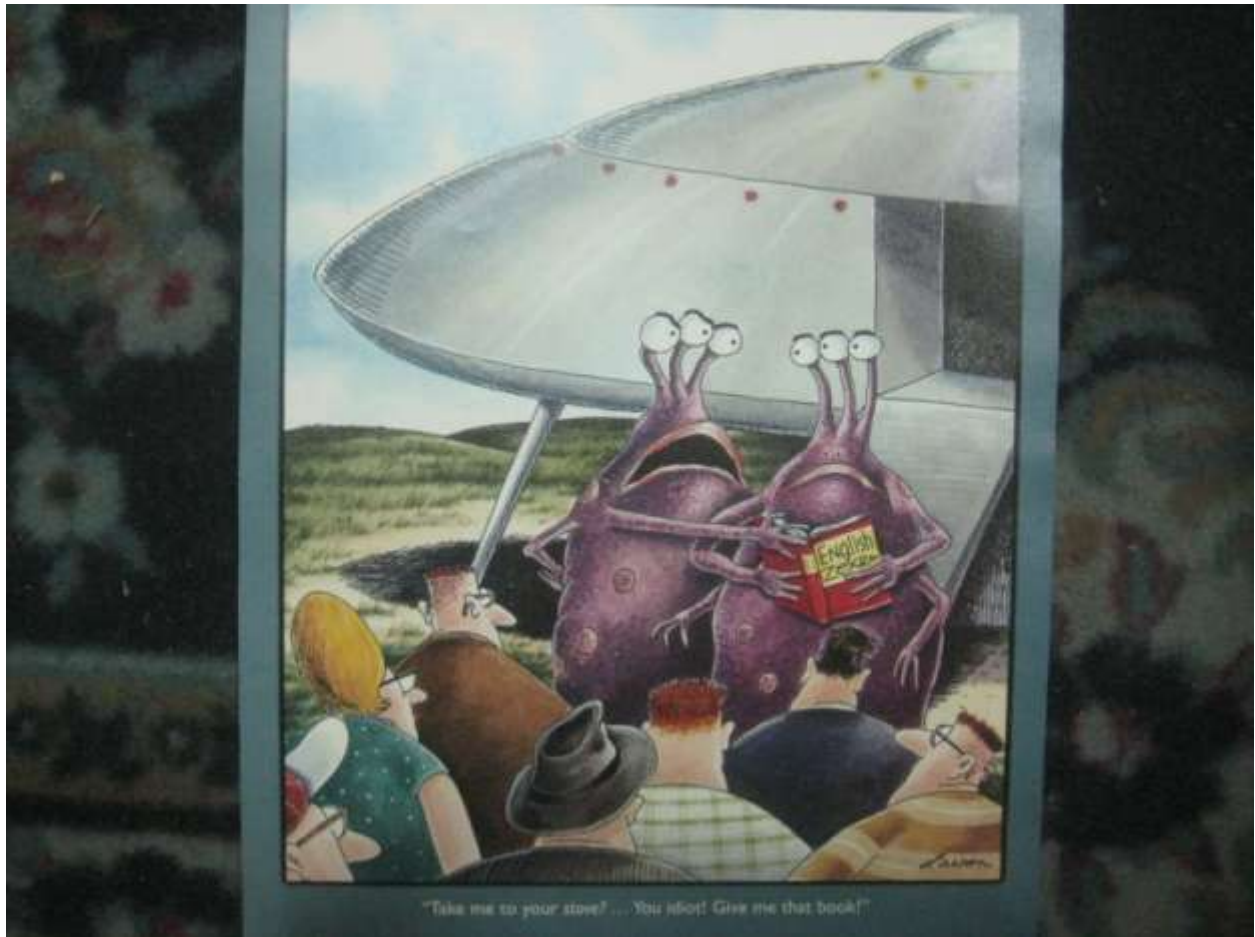


October 23, 2010

Dear Family and Friends,

Recently we found an old Larry Larson calendar with his impossible cartoons spoofing our daily lives. One calendar picture shows two Martians who have just emerged from their flying saucer and are facing a handful of curious humans (see first photo attachment). They are trying to talk to them. One of the Martians is holding an English-Martian dictionary in his hands, and he isn't too happy. The other Martian is obviously annoyed and is reaching for the dictionary as he says, "Take me to your *stove*? ... You idiot! Give me that book!"





That's not the worst of it. I showed my Larry Larson cartoon to my scholarly Dutch colleague, Willem de Wit, expecting a good laugh, and he looked at it long and thoughtfully. "Stove," he said. "Stove. Do they mean stove like you cook food on?" He absolutely did not get it. I said, "Don't you have Martians say, 'Take me to your leader' in Dutch movies?" No, he wasn't familiar with the phrase. Neither was my Egyptian student tutor. I realized that not only is my mouth handicapped when it comes to making the elegant Arabic sounds; my culture doesn't serve me either as I try to use my sense of humor to build bridges with people around me.

And we expect to help these people share the Gospel?! Surely the missionary enterprise is an audacious business! Yet St. Paul claimed that God's power is made perfect in weakness, and no one is weaker than one who can't even talk right – like us! In the sympathy and amusement caused by mispronunciation and embarrassment, intercultural fear is overcome and unexpected relationships are born. In our experience it is precisely these kinds of relationships that God may choose to use to communicate things that really matter.

The fall school term has begun. I am teaching Christianity in the Middle East until the Rise of Islam and Research Principles and Methods (in English!!) Linda is cataloging English books in the seminary library. We have moved to a more modest apartment closer to the seminary, so we can walk most mornings. We are glad to be here, glad to be your representatives in this vibrant Egyptian church, glad to be a voice for the Gospel in this historic place.



Greetings to you all,

Your Overseas Missionary

Three attached photos:

1. The Larry Larson calendar cartoon: language is tricky.
2. The whiteboard full of the day's Arabic lesson: language is still tricky.
3. The cross lifted high over the village of Nazlet an-Naql: language is worth it.

This letter may be used in any communication, written or electronic, to help the church stateside understand its missionary task.