More than we could imagine –

Bryan Knell (2005)
Global Connections Church Relations Director

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Paul's words to the Ephesians are always a challenge to me: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20). We put God in a box. We hope he is able to do as much as we long for. Constantly, in mission, God surprises us, but we shouldn't be surprised – we should begin to accept what appears to be miraculous.

I remember years ago when visiting North Africa, I was amazed at the way young Christians were seemingly unfazed when their prayers were answered. Indeed they scarcely appeared to say thank you. They assumption was, of course, God would do what they asked – isn't that what he promised to do?

At the beginning of the 1990s we were rejoicing that the church in Algeria was beginning to grow. Groups of young men were finding God and being prepared to stand up against the opposition and persecution that they faced as new Christians. On the university conferences they showed the Jesus film. Several members of a soccer team witnessed openly. The church began to grow particularly among the Kabyle people of the mountain areas.

Through most of the 1990s, the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Army (FIS) strongly opposed the government. Civil war took over and all expatriates were encouraged to leave and all Christians were in great danger, but the Church continued to grow rapidly.

The FIS was disbanded at the beginning of 2000 and it has been safe for expatriates to return. In recent years that has included a number of mainland Chinese who are involved in construction projects.

Today we hear that in a strongly Muslim country, where the church has struggled for so long against considerable opposition, Chinese workers are now coming into a relationship with Jesus through the witness of Algerian Christians. Now that is immeasurably more that we could have asked or imagined!