

# GOD HAS PROVIDED A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY: LET'S JOIN HIM IN WHAT HE IS DOING.



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The work God is doing today among Muslims is so historic and unprecedented that I wonder if any of us can truly comprehend it. Never before in the 1,400 years since the death of Muhammad have we seen so many Muslims coming to faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. And these are not just isolated individuals but whole families and communities. In our lead article for this issue, Dr. David Garrison reports on an unprecedented number of movements to Christ developing among Muslim communities all over the world (see page 6).

As Garrison reports, in the first 1,300 years since Muhammad, there was *only one* voluntary movement to Christ among Muslims of 1,000 or more believers. In the last 20 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there were *eight*. In just the first 12 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century there have been *64*. *That is not a misprint*. As of 2012 there were at least 64 documented movements to Christ taking place among Muslims, each with over 1,000 baptized believers and 100 worshiping fellowships. And the number of these movements is *growing*.

Can you believe it?

God has brought Muslims by the millions into our communities so that we can tell them about Jesus. Can you believe that God wants these Muslims to experience forgiveness of their sins through faith in Jesus and that He wants to involve you? This issue of *MF* is aimed at equipping you with simple yet powerful tools for reaching out to your Muslim neighbors with the good news of Jesus. Are you ready to join with God in reaching out to your Muslim neighbors?

## DOES OUR APPROACH TO REACHING MUSLIMS MATTER?

As we see growing numbers of disciple-making movements taking place among Muslims we may wonder whether they are simply God's timing or are new models of ministry producing greater results. Does our approach matter?

Steve Smith offers some perspective on page 29 as

he explains how God's sovereignty and our efforts work together:

*GOD starts Church-Planting Movements, not His servants. Yet He uses His servants to be the initiating agents in CPMs when they understand His ways and submit their ministry efforts completely to Him. Think of it this way. As a sailor, I can work on all of the controllables: making sure my sails are up, the tiller is in the right position, the sails are trimmed correctly. But until the wind blows, my sailboat is dead in the water. The wind is the uncontrollable. Or if the wind is blowing, but I as a sailor fail to raise the sails or trim them to catch the wind, I go nowhere. In this case, the wind is blowing but I don't know how to move with the wind.*

This illustration suggests that the mission strategies and practices we apply among Muslims can have a very real impact on whether or not a movement will develop. While God is indeed at work within each of these 64 "miraculous movements" reported by Garrison, He is also using the ministry models which He has revealed and led His people to apply at this particular time in history.

It is no accident that the only voluntary movement to Christ to occur in the first 1300 years after Muhammad was one where a Javanese evangelist, Radin Abas Sadrach Surapranata, applied contextualization principles to make the gospel indigenous to the Indonesian culture rather than imposing a foreign culture upon the new Muslim believers.

As Dr. Garrison reports on page 7, Sadrach "then gathered converts into contextualized, indigenous *mesjids* of Javanese Christian communities called *Kristen Jawa*, rather than extracting them into the local Dutch Christian churches." Sadrach allowed these Muslims to have their own contextual centers of worship and did not force them to join a culturally foreign body in order to follow Jesus. When we follow similar indigenous disciple-making movement practices today we "trim our sails" to catch the wind of God's spirit that is now blowing through "the House of Islam" as never before.

## WHAT ARE WE GOING TO FOCUS ON?

Recently, my wife and I went to hear a popular speaker talk about Islam. As we arrived at the Wednesday night service of a local megachurch we were surprised to find the place packed with almost no parking spaces available. We

wondered why so many were coming to hear this former Muslim speak. Were all these people really interested in reaching Muslims with the gospel and learning how to disciple them?

The speaker was a former Islamic terrorist from the Middle East who spent a lot of time telling how he grew up being taught to hate Christians and Jews and how Muslims are working to spread Islam in the West. He also told how he came to faith in Jesus through the sacrificial love of some believers. It was a great testimony and he was a very entertaining speaker.


But as I left the service that night, I felt sad for the following reasons.

1. The speaker did not distinguish between those Muslims who are terrorists and the majority of Muslims who are not, leaving the impression that all Muslims are dangerous and to be feared.
2. There was no teaching about how to build bridges to share the gospel with Muslims or even begin a conversation with them. The focus was on what divides us.
3. The speaker gave an altar call for those wanting to be saved but he did not give any invitation for those who would like more training on how to reach Muslims.
4. He did not inform his audience about the thousands of missionaries working to reach Muslims who need their prayer and financial support.

Overall his message moved believers more towards fear than preparing them to lead Muslims to Jesus.

As believers we have a choice to either focus on what separates us from Muslims (living in fear and self-protection) or to obey Jesus' call to make disciples of all peoples, including Muslims. My wife has had a passion to reach Muslims as long as I have known her, now going on 22 years. She reaches out to them with friendship and love seeking at every opportunity to disciple them toward Jesus. Some of her closest friends are Muslims and some of them have come to faith in Jesus. She has never walked in fear but in faith and love, looking for all those in whom the Spirit is working.

This issue of *MF* is full of helpful resources and models of ministry for anyone interested in leading Muslims to Jesus. The models highlighted in this issue center around meeting Muslims where they are, and respecting their culture, background and beliefs, while introducing them to Jesus and what He has done for them in a way that resonates with their culture and worldview.

Our goal is not to have Muslims join our churches and to become culturally like us. Our goal is to disciple them towards Jesus and train them to make disciples of all their Muslim contacts until a disciple-making movement develops. We want more than just a few individuals to follow Jesus. We want whole families and communities of Muslims to be transformed by the love of Christ. We know this is possible because we can see that God is already doing this all around the world. Let's join Him in the work He is doing. 

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