

Articles and Sermons :: Lessons From The Underground Church Movement In Iran by brother Greg

Lessons From The Underground Church Movement In Iran by brother Greg - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2012/10/15

One of the greatest oppositions to the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been the invention of the muslim faith where our enemy Satan has created an anti-thesis belief against Christianity. Essentially, the Koran states that those who believe in a son of God will be in everlasting burnings where the Holy Bible states that those who believe the Son of God will have everlasting life. So thus the muslim faith hits to the vital nerve of what it means to have eternal life. But under such a vehement opposing to the faith, the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is flourishing even under strong opposition.

We can learn many things from these precious believers in Iran. God is moving mightily and we must recognize this and learn again child-like dependence and faith in God's Holy Spirit. There are many lessons we can take from this underground church movement may we humble ourselves to learn and receive instruction from these humble saints in their example.

Lesson 1 - Explosive Growth

The Gospel of Jesus Christ since its inception in AD 33 has never been but explosive in its growth when it has not been hindered by the traditions and religious ideas of men. The simple message of the Son of God crucified and resurrected for the sins of mankind has impacting millions of lives to surrender all their rights and life to God and receive forgiveness of sins. We see in the book of Acts several accounts of this explosive growth:

“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14).

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

Some estimate that between Acts chapter 2 and Acts 6 the growth of the church was from 120 to upwards of 25,000 believers in this short duration of time! Some will caution against seeking after such growth in the Church but we must not try and hinder what God wants to do by His Spirit. When there are times of pressure that come upon the Church this can result in great expansions of the Gospel into the world. Some estimate that over the last 30 years more Iranians have given their lives to Jesus Christ then over the last 1300 years put together!1

Lesson 2 - Sharing the Faith Constantly In All Situations

Under such an oppressive regime such as Iran's government believers who share their faith can be reported for apostatizing from the muslim faith. Yet there is a Holy Spirit boldness in many in the underground Church to share their faith publicly and daily with other Iranians. Believers share their faith with people in the buses, taxi's, in the shops, and even stopping at a red light. Some Iranians when given the truth of the Gospel will want to accept it right away such is the openness in many hearts for the truth.

They do not hold any special crusades, rallies or any sort of evangelism outreaches. All the Iranian believers go out in their daily live but share the Gospel with almost everyone they get in contact with. All of them are not foreign missionaries but blend right in with their country and culture and therefore are able to share their faith naturally in daily life.

There is one story where the car stopped at a red light in Tehran and the believer in the car felt led of the Holy Spirit to get out of his car, knock on the window of another car and give that man a New Testament. They also exchanged phone numbers and shortly after that man who received the Testament believed on Christ and met with the man that gave him the Scriptures. He testified that he had this overwhelming desire to follow his car and for 20 minutes drove behind the Christian not knowing why throughout the streets of Tehran. Such is the way the Holy Spirit is working and drawing many to Himself by what we would call miracles and impossibilities. But this is the normal working of God's Spirit to bring men to

o Himself through Jesus Christ.

Lesson 3 - New Converts Every Church Meeting

It is such a normal thing now to see so many new converts that Iranian believers expect every meeting to see new people coming to repentance to the Gospel. This is very much like the account of the book of Acts where it says the Church was: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."² When there are meetings that have no one coming to the Lord or stories of a conversion they consider what they have done wrong to hinder the Lord working.

Such growth has happened in the last 30 years to where many say conservative estimates put the size of the Iranian church at over one million people.

Lesson 4 - Networking of Small Groups of Believers

Just like the church in the book of Acts when it came under great pressures from the Jewish atrocities they began to meet in homes as a network of believers. In the same way today Iran has similar pressures that have encouraged the meeting of believers in small home fellowships that are all networked together with other believers.

Also as persecution intensifies in certain areas believers move to different cities and start home fellowships there so the spreading of these gatherings is something that is continually happening. The Iranians believe that Jesus Christ is with them in their small gatherings and therefore there is a confidence that they are meeting as a Church even if there are just a few believers present. Believers count it a necessity to network with others and consider themselves all part of one church. There is no choice to try and find a different church for doctrinal preference or worship style all believers are content to meet simply with each other.

Lesson 5 - Martyrs esteemed in the Church

Though the sadness and hurt of any believer in Christ being martyred is something hard to bear. Yet from an eternal mindset and persecutive there is a glory and esteem the Iranian believers have for those who have laid down their lives for the cause of Christ. The stories of the martyrs in Iran are many here is one:

On January 19, 1994 Haik disappeared from the streets of Tehran. The authorities reported his death to his family on January 30; he was stabbed 26 times in his chest: "Indeed, Haik gave his heart to Christ twice. Once when he invited Christ to his life as his Saviour, and second, when his heart was torn apart for his faith in Christ."³

Such lives are not laid down in vain but are paving the way for the furtherance and spread of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Tertullian said in his Apology in AD 200: "The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow. The blood of Christians is seed." Such seed is being sown in Iran today that we should expect a vibrant harvest of souls in the coming days before the coming of our Lord.

May we trust the Lord afresh for a vibrant work of His Spirit in our lives today to be His witnesses of the Gospel.

¹ Estimation from Elam Ministries who works extensively with the Church in Iran.

² Acts 2:47

³ From Hovsepian Ministries Testimony

Re: Lessons From The Underground Church Movement In Iran by Greg Gordon, on: 2012/10/15 14:33

I read in 1979 there were less than 500 believers in Iran under the relative freedom of the Shah. After the Islamic revolution, a gospel revolution took place. Now thirty years later there are upwards of 100,000 or more believers in Iran. Some place the figure up to a million.

On one of our con calls God blessed us with some Persian believers who prayed with us. They shared that when the gospel is shared with the average Iranian. It generally takes them 6 to 8 minutes to come to faith in Jesus. With a hard liner. 10 to 12 minutes.

Truly God is at work with these precious saints. And indeed we can learn from them. May God grant us the humility to do so.

Bearmaster.