

Why Muslims Are Converting to Christ in the Face of ISIS Atrocities

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←A Christian prays with a Muslim refugee in the Middle East who arrived at an undisclosed country with his children – and nothing else.

Atrocities by the Islamic State (ISIS) are softening the hearts of Muslims to Christianity, and evangelistic techniques and technologies are proving effective, but locally-based missionaries say the main reason for the spike in conversions in the Middle East is simply that former Muslims are finding God is real.

In war-torn areas of Syria and Iraq where ISIS is fighting to establish a caliphate, Muslim refugees to neighboring countries, Internally Displaced People and people remaining at home are learning about Christ from native aid workers, podcasts and broadcasts. [Tent churches](#) among refugees are sprouting like mushrooms. For people who have suffered such deep loss, seeing that they can pray to a personal God whom they can call Father has been the critical factor.

"You can see the tears in their eyes when we pray – that God would care," said the director of one ministry working in the region. "It's the connection that makes a huge difference."

Muslims who were previously taught to pray by rote to Allah, who by Koranic definition was unknowable, can feel the difference of having a relationship with God through Christ. "They see that God can give you strength, can heal you," said the director. "They say that things have changed, that they have a peaceful attitude towards those 'who have done this to my kids, wife, or husband - I can pray about it and give it to God.'"

Former Muslims, who once prayed five times a day as a duty, say they don't quite know how to describe the difference. "They say, 'Now with our relationship with God, we see a huge difference; something has changed in our life,'" he said. "You can see it on their faces. They say, 'Every time we pray, there's a difference.'"

The soul-crushing loss of loved ones, home and country that people have suffered at the hands of ISIS has helped open Muslims to the gospel. Another ministry director said Syrian and Iraqi refugees are more open to the gospel than at any time in history because of atrocities by ISIS. "Absolutely," he said, "because ISIS is saying that the things they are doing come from the Koran."

Tailoring evangelism to the Muslim worldview has also played a part, and one way of contextualizing the gospel for Muslims, ironically, involves the Hebrew Scripture. Middle Eastern Muslims are familiar with the blood sacrifice and prophets of the Old Testament, and Christian workers build bridges with those references. They talk about why Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, animal sacrifice, and the meaning of blood in ancient times, Moses and the saving blood smeared on doorposts in Egypt, and then Jesus' shed blood.

"So we go from the Old Testament to the blood of Jesus that saves us; 99 percent of the people I know will use this method," the ministry director said.

The deity of Jesus and the Trinity, by contrast, are the most problematic issues for Muslims. Imparting these doctrines takes time, and although the director and his teams teach the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, he said earthly teachers have little success.

"How do you convince them?" he said. "We were never able to convince them. Only when they read the Bible does it come, and then suddenly they say, 'Now I understand, I get it.'"

Many of those reached are illiterate and receive the Bible and message of salvation by radio – FM, medium wave, shortwave, satellite and internet radio stations – and by digitally stored media on MP3 players. The cost of one MP3 player distributed by the ministry that is assisted by Christian Aid Mission is \$30, and they are solar powered, eliminating the need for electricity or batteries.

Arriving in Turkey after an Islamic State offensive drove them from Syria, families in search of food and shelter are more open to an encounter with Christ.

The gospel is best presented one-on-one rather than in large groups, in order to head off security problems, though witnessing Christ to families of three to five members is also effective. Security, of course, is a huge issue. Last month a ministry director lost one of his team leaders in Syria, a convert from Islam who is survived by his wife and three children. He was beheaded by other relatives.

In Iraq another of his team members was beheaded after ISIS found out a member of a church had visited him. He left a wife and four children. Yet another Christian in Mosul, Iraq, was killed after ISIS learned that a U.S. photographer had visited him.

Christian Aid Mission's Middle East director said the ministry directors and their workers are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances who need prayers for safety and endurance, both emotionally and physically. The ministry director who lost team members last month spoke of their human frailty, even as they exercise immense faith.

"There are still workers there [in Iraq]," the director said. "They seem down. They are asking why is this happening to them when they're doing what God is asking them to do? They seem depressed. The same in Syria. The main leader in Syria was crying on the phone. He could not speak. 'I don't know how people can do this,' he said."

One reason they're killing is that they wish to stop the rapid spread of Christianity. There has never been a time when a greater percentage of Syrian Muslims, in-country and refugees, have believed in Christ than in the past three years of civil war. We all agree that it's the greatest awakening happening since the beginning of Islam," he said.

The ministries also distribute food, medicine and clothing, among other items – tangible evidence of the God of love. The gospel message of love is the greatest evangelistic tool that Christian workers have, the director said, concurring that the love of Christ compared with the hatred of Muhammad in the Koran is shocking to Muslims.

"When a Muslim reads about the unconditional love of Christ in the gospel and how He forgave the adulteress, compared with the stoning of an adulteress by Muhammad, for example, the Muslim sees that God is not vengeful, but a loving God," one of the directors said.

The first ministry leader added that the New Testament is about love, God giving Himself, and God wanting to be with you...

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