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THE POWERFUL MESSAGE OF LOVE

ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



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Building Meaningful Friendships

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear friend of Reach Beyond,

It is a stunning reality that most people in the Middle East have never met a true follower of Jesus, and very few have ever had one as a friend.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?”* — Romans 10:14 NLT

In this issue of V+H Magazine, you will read about a small group of Reach Beyond missionaries and dedicated volunteers who are building meaningful friendships with people from an unreached people group in the Middle East. We refer to this outreach as The Ephraim Project.

Conventional friendship evangelism requires being face-to-face in the same place at the same time, but this is difficult to achieve in places where traditional missionaries cannot go. The Ephraim Project team, however, is able to build friendships even though they aren't located anywhere near the people they are trying to reach—they are many time zones away. And because of security concerns, they rarely even know what each other looks like.

Street evangelism efforts involve trying to talk to total strangers about Jesus. Yet with The Ephraim Project, unreached people come to us and say, “Can I practice my English with you?”

Public conversations within the social media group naturally lead to private conversations between learners and Ephraim Project staff. Friendships form, and they begin sharing pictures and texts.

It soon becomes apparent to them that something is different about The Ephraim Project team. They become trusted friends who are often told during private conversations, “You are the only person I can talk to.” Once trust is established, people feel free to talk about the challenges in their lives, talk about faith, and even ask spiritual questions. What an opportunity!

I love how The Ephraim Project allows anyone with a heart to reach people in the Middle East, to do so from their home, without ever having to quit their job, leave their family, raise missionary support, or learn a whole new language. It is an amazing way to do missions!

But the best part is seeing what God is doing. Many people are beginning to read portions of Scripture, and they are discovering the Good News of Jesus Christ. God is clearly at work, orchestrating events, conversations, and even dreams that lead people towards Him. Join us in praising God for each one who is choosing to follow Jesus and is now being discipled.

Thank you for your partnership that makes each story possible.

I pray you will be greatly encouraged,



Daniel Enns | President



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ROMANS 10:14 (NLT)

“...And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him?...”

“But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?”

OUR VISION

To see unreached people transformed in Christ

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Serving as the voice and hands of Jesus, we declare and demonstrate Jesus Christ through media, healthcare, and community development.

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GLOBAL SNAPSHOTS



WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE MINISTRY



EUROPE/EURASIA

Kitty is sharing the love of Christ with refugee women in Greece by teaching them handicraft skills and entrepreneurship—priceless gifts for women who have rarely had a sense of dignity and value. Most of the women Kitty teaches were forced to flee their homelands in the Middle East and other unstable regions. They came from Islamic cultures which limit or prevent women from engaging in business or moving around independently. In Athens, people are able to sell handmade items without an official license. By teaching these women how to run a business, Kitty offers them an opportunity to develop a sense of autonomy while creating space to talk, build community, and hear about Jesus.

After months of hosting her classes in different locations, Kitty wanted something more permanent. God provided such a place in downtown Athens. In exchange for helping a local ministry partner manage the space, Kitty is able to use it for her classes free of charge. Since starting her latest five-month long class in September, Kitty has seen the religiously diverse group speak openly about their joys and their struggles. One woman shared about a friend who was shot during the unrest in her home country. Two other women often start conversations about Jesus, which create opportunities for them and Kitty to share more about their faith and hope in Christ.

God has brought Kitty to this new space so she can better demonstrate Jesus's love and speak His truth into the lives of women who might not otherwise hear about Him. ■

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Reach Beyond's new Kenyan missionaries, Benjamin and Tess traveled to Pemwea, Kenya to train the staff at Radio Alpha, one of Africa's newest Christian radio stations. The station consists of a shipping container, essential broadcasting equipment, and two computers, one for radio and the other for administrative tasks. As a new station, most of the 13 staff members lacked any formal ministry or radio training other than one presenter who had worked for a Muslim radio station before being born again.

Over the course of two days, Benjamin and Tess provided the Radio Alpha team with both theoretical and hands-on training in radio ministry principles, outreach strategies, content development, and program creation. They also gave them assignments to complete.

Sam, the station manager, shared how one of their listeners is an elderly man who cannot attend church. He eagerly looks forward to the sermons aired by the station each week. Radio Alpha is providing people with Biblical teaching, spiritual truth, and encouragement that they would not receive in any other way.

The Radio Alpha team greatly appreciated the training they received and are now better empowered and equipped to broadcast the voice of Jesus into their community. ■



ABOVE: Reach Beyond's Kenyan missionaries Benjamin and Tess provided theoretical and hands-on training to 13 staff at Radio Alpha, one of Africa's newest Christian radio stations.



LEFT: Russell Grainger, CEO of Reach Beyond New Zealand, talked with the village chief and his wife.

REACH BEYOND NEW ZEALAND

It's 6 a.m. in Ghana, and people in this particular village are beginning their day by listening to a program of Scripture reading, a devotional, and Christian music. They are hearing the Gospel from an unlikely source—a solar-powered light pole in the middle of their community!

This innovative ministry is meeting practical and spiritual needs thanks to the partnership between Reach Beyond New Zealand and Theovision International, with assistance from our Sub-Saharan team. Many rural villages in Ghana have no electricity. The solar panels mounted on the pole provide power for a streetlight at night and charging stations for mobile phones.

The multi-purpose pole also contains a Sheep Station—a small wifi server developed by Reach Beyond New Zealand that allows people to download a variety of Christian content directly to their mobile phones. Content includes Scripture, worship music, and discipleship resources as well as agricultural and community health materials.

The Sheep Station also serves as a mini “radio station” that speaks in the heart language of the community. About five hours of programming (produced by Theovision) are automatically played at set times each day through loudspeakers mounted on the pole. Content includes dramatized Bible readings, devotionals, Christian music, children's programs, and a program designed specifically for women.

The initial rollout of the project began in August to install about a dozen of these multi-featured poles. Theovision would like to install 200 more in the next five years in villages where they have been sending evangelists.

RIGHT: Sub-Saharan team radio engineer Alfred works with Bob Arend from Reach Beyond New Zealand to install a multi-feature light pole that is proclaiming the Gospel to the entire village.

“And so he just loved it. And he likes the Bible messages too!”

Russell Grainger, CEO of Reach Beyond New Zealand, said the reaction of the villagers has been incredible. He explained, “The village chief is a Muslim, so we went into the village and talked to him. I said, ‘Tell me about the pole and what it means to you.’ The chief said, ‘It's fantastic. We had a big problem. We would put our cocoa beans out to dry, but during the night, people from surrounding villages would come and steal our cocoa beans. But ever since the poles have been installed with the light, we haven't had any more cocoa beans stolen.’ And so he just loved it. And he likes the Bible messages too!” ■



GLOBAL SNAPSHOTS

(CONTINUED)



LEFT: Nearly 2,000 people attended the evangelistic event which was sponsored by over 20 churches in southern Spain.



“God is using Radio Vida to impact an ever-growing number of people...”

SPAIN

Radio Vida worked with over 20 local church congregations to host and broadcast Inspira 2022, an evangelistic event and concert attended by close to 2,000 people. This is one of the many ways that Reach Beyond is actively co-laboring with pastors, believers, and local churches to share the Gospel in southern Spain.

Inspira 2022 featured Christian music and entertainment groups from Northern Ireland and Spain as well as testimonies and speakers. Radio Vida, Reach Beyond staff, and a short-term radio systems engineer from Chicago worked together to do live broadcasts of the event over Radio Vida's FM radio station and streaming audio channels. The Radio Vida team and volunteers also did live interviews with people all throughout the program.

Bill, a Reach Beyond missionary, says that this was the first time that all of the local churches in that area had worked together to hold such an event. Even the local mayor lent his support by giving the churches use of the bullring stadium for free. The mayor said during a TV interview that the church offers a solution to the problems that many people face and that it has a message people need to hear.

God is using Radio Vida to impact an ever-growing number of people, allowing the station to encourage, strengthen, and grow the church in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond. ■

Listen to Radio Vida online at RadioVida.es or via [TuneIn Radio](#) (search for "Radio Vida Cadiz").



ABOVE: The Radio Vida team did a live broadcast of the event and interviewed church leaders, guests, and the Mayor of Algericas, Spain.



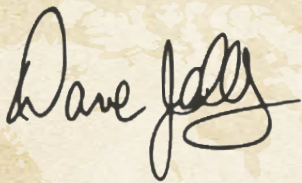
THANK YOU

FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS IN SUPPORT OF
OUR MISSIONARIES AROUND THE WORLD!

Dear friends of Reach Beyond,

As missionaries, we have witnessed first-hand how God is working in some of the darkest corners of the world! Your generosity has made it possible to continue working toward seeing unreached people transformed in Christ.

Thank you again for your continued support and prayers and for the impact you are making around the world for His Kingdom!



DAVE JOLLY
VICE PRESIDENT
DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILIZATION
REACH BEYOND



PHILIPPIANS 1:3

“I thank my God
every time I remember you.”

*Zach and Dave serving together at
a refugee camp in Greece.*



THE POWERFUL MESSAGE OF LOVE

ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

It's late at night, and Ahmad* is sitting alone in a park somewhere in the Middle East. He's chosen a secluded spot so he can freely talk with friends he met on social media. While this might not be unusual in most parts of the world, this particular conversation is different. Ahmad is speaking with someone on the other side of the world, and their conversation is about Jesus.

Ahmad lives in a country where missionaries are not allowed and the culture is resistant and often hostile to the Gospel. Like most people in his part of the world, Ahmad had never known or even met a Christian. All that changed when he began looking for a way to improve his English. He discovered a social media group where he started engaging with Reach Beyond staff and volunteers and having conversations that would change his life.

Five years ago, Suzanne* was serving with Reach Beyond when she decided to take a class on using social media in missions. Suzanne remembers, "The professor gave us an assignment, 'Find an app that reaches the people you want to reach. Download it, play with it, and report back on how you're going to use that for ministry.' So I started using this social media app, and before I knew it, I had an English group with the very people that God had placed on my heart."

Suzanne's class assignment would become The Ephraim Project—a pathway for anyone with a willing heart to do frontline evangelism in closed countries simply by using their computer keyboard or mobile phone.

Reach Beyond staff working in North Africa/Middle East were ecstatic to see how God was beginning to use Suzanne in this new work. The team had been praying for and trying to reach this people group for over seven years, yet every effort had been thwarted or failed.

Suzanne recalls, "I was told that even if we were only able to do ministry for three months, that would be a success. And here we are four years later, still going strong."

The idea of ministering to people in the Middle East was challenging for Suzanne, especially at first. "God had to do a big work in my heart to want to reach out to anyone from a Muslim background. I was afraid of them. I was afraid of what they believed. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to argue or debate what I believed. I was afraid they'd be mean. None of that was true."

The Ephraim Project is currently engaged with over 100 Middle Eastern people living in some six countries. Suzanne says, "They tend to be in their twenties or early thirties. They work in a variety of occupations including artists, business professionals, doctors, engineers, farmers, taxi drivers, and teachers. They are disillusioned with Islam. They are not seeking Christianity necessarily, but they're always excited about the concept of love and being loved. We find that a lot of them do 'seek' once they have a relationship with a Christian, or at least they'll seek conversation. They love to debate and converse, and they are delightful, lovely people."

*names and images changed for security

"I have learned from many years of working with young people who are learning English: they have a burning desire to belong. And even if it is just a group of other people who are practicing English, it fills a deep need for them."

As a volunteer with the Ephraim project, Joy* has built deep friendships with many in the group. She says, "I've learned almost every one of them is hurting—like deeply. They're facing their hopelessness. They're afraid. They're alone and just completely lost. They're all trying to find a way out. They're all trying to find a way to be loved, truly loved. A lot of them don't know what love is—I mean heavenly love, Jesus's love. They're just desperate for direction and hope and love."

"It's unique, because we provide almost like a window into the freedom that they don't have, like the freedom of speech." Joy says, "There's so many of them that have come to me and just said, you know, 'I can't ever say these things to anybody here. Not even my mother, not my brother. This is the only place I'm safe to say this to you.' And so it's amazing the things that they share. And that creates an opportunity to give the truth of Jesus's teaching and love."

Joy says, "My goal is to love people with the truth into Jesus's kingdom, one at a time, one heart at a time, through relationship and sharing the hope and the joy that we have in Christ alone."

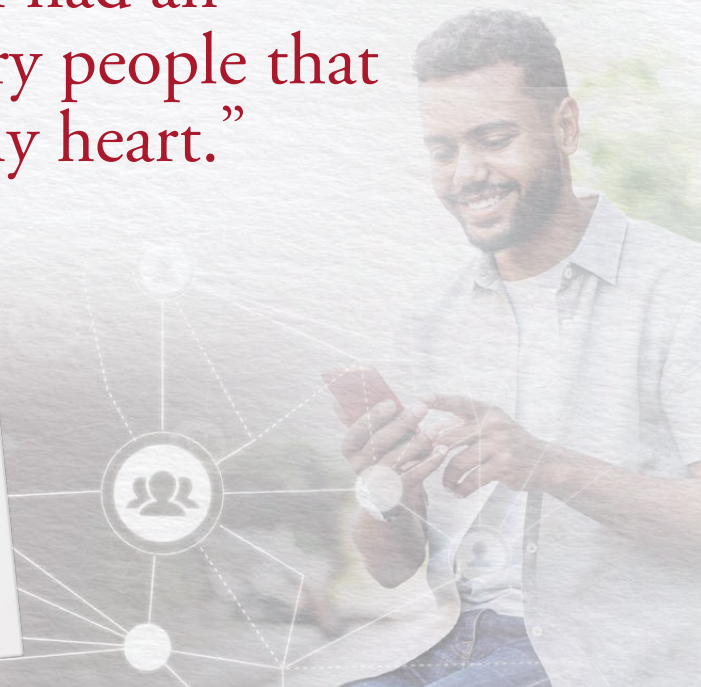
Ahmad joined The Ephraim Project social media group in 2018 and soon began engaging in private conversations with Esther*. They would send each other pictures of where they were and all sorts of things. Esther recalls, "He began to ask me about Jesus a little bit. So I just

began sending him Jesus stuff, you know, the Sermon on the Mount and different things, and he would practice his English by reading these to me. He's very well read. He's read existentialism. He's read philosophers and psychologists. He'd ask me questions about what I thought of all these different people, and I'd have to quickly Google it to know what I thought. But he was making these excellent connections between what he's read in philosophy or psychology or anything with Jesus. And you see the superiority of course, of Jesus, in all of these things. And so sometimes, we'd read a whole chapter, and then I'd kind of get worried that he's going to ask me a hard question or something, and he'd just say, 'Yes, that's great!'"

During private conversations, Ephraim staff are often asked for advice in personal situations. Esther recalled one conversation with Ahmad, "He had a practical issue with his roommate. He said 'My roommate is making me angry with his behaviors. I don't know how to deal with it. I'd love to keep my peace of mind.' And so we talked about what was irritating him."

Topical discussions within the social media group also generate many private spiritual conversations. Joy posted a video which depicted a man out in this desolate place. He was continuously walking with his head down, but not actually going anywhere. Then Joy asked the group to share what the video meant to them. Joy said, "The responses were pretty heavy. And so we talked about what gives hope and how you can turn suffering into beauty. We had a great conversation. Ahmad privately messaged me, and so we started talking. And he goes, 'Joy, you know a lot of times when I meet people, I realize what they're

“...before I knew it, I had an English group with the very people that God had placed on my heart.”



obsessed about.’ He said, ‘You know what you’re obsessed about?’ And I said, ‘What?’ He said, ‘Love.’ I smiled and said, ‘That’s right, that’s it. I’m obsessed about love. And that love comes from the fire in my heart that’s Jesus.’ I knew that he was talking to Esther, so I kind of left it at that.”

Joy continued, “One morning, I woke up, and I was talking to my sister, and we both had some things we were praying about. I said, ‘Let’s grab our Bibles and see what Scripture God would give us.’ So we both grabbed our Bibles, and at the same time, we opened up Isaiah 26:3. ‘You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you.’ We were amazed, and I thought, ‘Wow, OK, Lord, got it.’ Right after that, I got a message from Ahmad. He said, ‘Hi, Joy. How are you?’ I said, ‘I’m good. Is there anything I can pray for you?’ And he said, ‘Actually, I need a peace of mind.’ And he said, ‘I’m thinking about the love that’s in your midst.’

“OK!” I said, ‘Ahmad, let me tell you something. Before you texted me that, this happened. I know God has this message for you. The love that’s in my midst is Him. It is the Creator. It is God who came to this Earth, Jesus Christ who died for your sins.’ And I just gave it to him, and he said, ‘Thank you. Thank you, Joy.’ And that was it. So then, he goes off to Esther and says, ‘Esther, I want to read the Bible with you.’ And so that’s when it took off. It was just so cool how God orchestrated all of that. It was so sweet.”

Esther and Ahmad began reading more Scripture together. She would send him small portions at a time, one side in his heart language and the other side in English. Each passage would lead Ahmad one step closer to Jesus.

Esther remembers, “I sent him an illustration that basically shows us and God, and how sin separates us. And we try to bridge that gap with many things, but only Christ can bridge the gap. And so that was when he saw that connection for real salvation.”

Ahmad wrote back, “I don’t know anything of the history of Christianity. I’d love to know more about it from you. I’ve decided to be a Christian. Can you help me?” Esther recalls, “So I just gave him a prayer and he says, ‘Should I read it and repeat these verses?’ He wanted to know how to accept Christ! I wrote and sent him a prayer for him, and then a prayer for him to say. And then I said, ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he’s a new creation. The old has passed away, behold the new has come.’ And then he said, ‘I want to start learning right now.’”

Over the next few months, Esther and Ahmad studied Scripture together once or twice a week, but that was not enough for Ahmad. Joy recalls the text he sent her, “He said, ‘Joy, I can meet with you every single day this summer. I don’t have school. I don’t have to work.’ He said, ‘I want to read the Bible as much as I can in this free time and be strengthened.’ He said, ‘Could you do it with me? Because the times that Esther can do it, I can’t do it.’ And I said, ‘I’m here. I’ll do it. This is crazy, but OK.’ So we met every day in the morning. I would get up and meet with him at 5 a.m. Sometimes Esther would join us, and it was just fun. We got through Luke, Mark, and Acts. They had already done Matthew and John. And now he’s trying to get through Romans on his own, but I know he can do it. I kept saying, ‘Holy Spirit’s your teacher. You got it.’ So in that discipling, we read The Word. We read a chapter a day, and we talk about it, and we pray about it. And then Ahmed would come back with the things that Jesus was teaching him. He would show that what he had learned in the Bible was getting in his heart because he would go off and tell his best friend about it. Which is amazing discipleship—being fruitful.”

Ahmad’s roommate was also surprised by the noticeable change in his attitude towards him—a change that surprised even Ahmad. He wrote Esther saying, “I now have this love for my roommate.”

“I’ve decided to be a Christian. Can you help me?”

The decision to follow Jesus is not often a quick one for people in the Middle East. Ahmad’s journey took nearly three years. It requires a lot of prayer and the planting of seeds that take time to grow.

Ahmad wrote, “Joy, I was thinking about what has happened here. You didn’t attract me to Christ by some prestigious university degree and fancy talk. It was simply your pure love. And I know this was Jesus’s love filling you and pouring out into my life and heart. It is a simple yet powerful miracle.” ■

*names changed for security



MAKING FRIENDS AND SHARING JESUS

Volunteering with The Ephraim Project has been a perfect way for Joy* to do ministry. She says, “I really feel like God called me to do this in this phase of my life.”

As a stay-at-home mom and part-time professional violinist, Joy loves how she is able to engage with people in the Middle East from her own home while being able to maintain her family as first priority.

Esther* says, “I love the fact that I can do this very conveniently from home and don’t have to get dressed up, don’t have to put on makeup, or do my hair. I just start talking and meet them where they are.” Many of Esther’s conversations happen in the morning, “It’s like I am sitting down and having breakfast with friends!”

Suzanne* sees opportunities to reach even more people with the limit being determined only by the number of Christian volunteers—especially men. Anyone with a computer or mobile phone who has a heart for missions can engage in evangelism with the Islamic world. “But more importantly,” Suzanne says, “The Ephraim Project is about being a friend and having a friend. It goes both ways. These relationships are not projects; they’re friendships with people you want to win to Christ.”

Suzanne points out that there are no prerequisites to volunteering with the project. “You don’t have to come with previous experience with Muslims. We provide training. We provide help. We provide mentoring. We find ways to engage, and you’re not going to do this alone.

“We’re just asking people to pray about it and listen if God taps them on the shoulder.”

Engaging with people in the Middle East is important to Joy. She says, “Each of these precious souls have been lied to all of their lives about who they truly are, what their purpose in life is, what makes them worthy, and especially who God is.

It is an indescribable joy to share truth with them, the amazing love and grace of Jesus.”

“The most fulfilling part for me,” Esther says, “is making true heart-to-heart connections with people on the other side of the world who I’ll probably never see in my life. And who I would otherwise never know, but who I can fall in love with and share Jesus with. And that’s why I’ve always wanted them to have the Scriptures in their hands, chapter by chapter. I enjoy sending them the Word of God, reading it with them,

“I love the opportunity to share the light, the love, the truth of Jesus Christ...”

hearing them learn the truth about Jesus and the whole Biblical story, how it all points to God’s saving grace. It’s extremely satisfying to think of those whose world is totally closed to the Gospel receiving the precious words of Jesus, the knowledge of Jesus, the experience with Jesus, and the experience with a Christian. They can talk with a Christian on this project, on this platform, and they can really know someone who follows Jesus and loves them.”

Joy says, “I love the opportunity to share the light, the love, the truth of Jesus Christ, and the true teachings of Jesus Christ in the Word of God—The Bible—to places where it has been blocked. And I can do this unique kingdom work from my own home!”

Volunteers like Joy and Esther rejoice in seeing the friends they’ve made through the Ephraim Project decide to follow Jesus—friends like Hassan*, who now says, “Jesus is my only hope. Nothing can separate me from Him. Without Him, my life would be like a trip without a destination.” ■

*names changed for security





OMAR'S JOURNEY TO JESUS

Like many young men living in the Middle East, Omar* felt isolated from outside ideas and information. He turned to the internet where his curiosity led him to discover new age beliefs and practices. He became a pranic healer, one who uses spiritual forces or energy, even though the practice was very much prohibited in his country.

Omar's desire to improve his English skills drew him to engage with The Ephraim Project on social media. His curiosity and interest in spiritual things generated opportunities for private conversations where Suzanne* and the team began sharing their faith. When Omar heard that Suzanne was having some issues with her eyes, he offered to heal her. This gave Suzanne the opportunity to explain the spiritual reasons why she did not want him to attempt to heal her. Omar had many questions. Over the next couple of years, they exchanged thousands of texts, voicemails, and pictures as Suzanne slowly shared portions of Scripture with him.

One day, Omar called Suzanne to tell her about the dream he had. "I was in a room sitting beside a man and a boy. I discovered that this man was Jesus Christ. We were talking about healing power. He was about to heal that boy. I told Him that he can't heal this boy. I said, 'You don't have the ability to heal him.' Jesus looked angry because of these words, and He was angry with me because I said that. He turned His face and became sad. After a minute or so, He asked me, 'Would you like me to heal you?' I said again, 'Can you heal me?' He said, 'All of your sins are forgiven. You are clean now, your mind, your body. You are clean now. I cleanse you, and you will be in Heaven.' That was really an impressive dream. I was shocked when I woke up. I was shocked by that dream. I have had some interesting dreams with great men, but this you know, this is a dramatic dream for me. Maybe it was a sign, I don't know. You know because when I heal other

people, I call for help from Allah, from archangels, and sometimes from Jesus Christ for healing powers to help me heal others better or faster. And maybe this is a sign for me to believe in Him stronger and better."

Omar asked Suzanne, "What do you think it means?" She responded, "I think Jesus is pursuing you and wants you to become one of His children."

Omar asked, "How do I do that?" Suzanne shared Romans 10:9 with him, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Omar replied, "Let me think about that."

Not too long after that, Omar left Suzanne a short voicemail that still brings tears to her eyes. He said, "I confess that Jesus is Lord. And I believe in my heart—I believe that God raised him from the dead! It's wonderful. He raised Him from the dead."

Suzanne began walking through the Gospels with Omar, one chapter at a time.

“I confess that Jesus is Lord. And I believe in my heart.”

One day, Omar was out walking, and he came across an old Christian cemetery that he didn't know existed. He began reading the inscriptions on the tombstones that had been desecrated and were now scattered around on the ground. This was all new to him, and he was so amazed by what he read. His excitement was cut-short when local police stopped him. They asked for his identification and why he was in this Christian cemetery. They looked up his records and saw that he had been identified as a pranic healer. Now he was wandering through a Christian cemetery. They warned Omar that he needed to shape up.

But Omar was excited as a new believer. He wanted to be baptized even though it was not possible in his home country. He secretly crossed over the border to find a church and a pastor who would baptize him. The experience was a bit surreal as he had never seen a baptism before. Suzanne recalls, "Omar described it as getting into a huge tub of water. 'The pastor said some words, and then he pushed me under the water.' But Omar could not remember what the pastor said. I asked him, 'Did the pastor say, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'

*names changed for security

He replied, 'Yes, that's it! That's what the pastor said' Omar was so excited to know for certain these special words."

Omar felt compelled to share the Jesus he had discovered. He wanted others to meet Him too! He created what he thought was an anonymous social media page where he began sharing truths about Jesus. His social media page did not go unnoticed, and his true identity was discovered. As a result, Omar received another very threatening phone call from extremists who told him to stop his behavior immediately or he and his family would suffer.

Faced with this difficult choice and not wanting anything to happen to his parents or his sister, Omar fled the country. His family was extremely heartbroken that he had left. Throughout the journey to a safe country, Omar's sister would ask Suzanne to pray for him, "My brother has left for this Jesus. He's hiding in Jesus's house. Jesus needs to protect him." And Jesus did.

Suzanne recounts how Omar was walking through the woods scared and alone. "He hadn't eaten for days and was getting desperate. He asked the Lord to provide him with food. About five minutes later, he saw a man in the distance. Omar was worried that this man might be an official, but then he thought, what if this man was God's answer to his prayer. So, he decided to approach him. It turned out the man was a Greek Orthodox believer who had a hut in the woods. He took him in, gave him some wild boar to eat, water to bathe, and a place to sleep that night. Omar was sure that he was going to get parasites from eating the wild boar—it was so counter-cultural. But he said, 'Actually, it tasted delicious.'"

Omar's journey across 11 countries was difficult. He was beaten, robbed, and arrested several times. Yet even in that, Omar saw God provide for his needs. At one point, he was so tired he could hardly walk. He was arrested, and then transported all the way to the other side of the country, where he was released in the direction he originally wanted to go.

One night, Omar contacted Suzanne to ask about a bug that was on his chest. Turns out it was a tick carrying Lyme disease. He became feverish and sought out a Christian church which took him to the hospital where he received antibiotics, food, and rest. During another leg in the journey, he was in the bottom of a boat with 25 other people when the boat began taking on water—up to his waist! Then a ship from a friendly government suddenly stepped in and rescued them.

Suzanne says, "He couldn't heal himself; he needed God to heal him. He couldn't feed himself; he needed God to feed him. He couldn't take one more step, and God took one more step for him. He needed a rescuer, and God rescued him." Omar needed a Savior, and Jesus reached out and saved Him. ■



THE DREAM WITH A CROSS

As a volunteer with The Ephraim Project, Joy* is engaging on social media with people thousands of miles away in the Middle East. She explains, "Sometimes you don't even know what's happening on the other side, in their heart, and in their mind. So, you have to trust that the words you say and the Spirit of God is there and doing His work.

"When I met Karim*, I had no idea what he was about, but I knew he was hurting. He said he was a taxi driver. He used to be very successful in his profession but had been put in prison because he had criticized people in power.

"And then he told me, 'I don't really want to live anymore. I lost everything. And now I'm a taxi driver and I have no reason to live.'

"I asked him, 'So do you have a faith?' And he said, 'No, I don't. I don't. I'd like to, but I don't.' I said to him, 'I believe in God. And this God that I believe in is so kind. And He loves you very much.' And the Holy Spirit said to leave it there.

"A couple of days later Karim said, 'Joy, are you religious?' And I said, 'No, but I have a relationship with my Heavenly Father.' And then out of the blue he asks, 'What is the cross for?' And I was thinking, he didn't even know I was a Christian! I never said a word! And so I said, 'Hey, the cross. That's what Jesus Christ is all about. And this is who I'm talking about as my God.'

"Then I shared the Gospel with him. I said, 'Do you want to know more?' He said, 'I would love to.' So I sent him a Bible, just a PDF file I have, and he went off and began reading it on his own. Not like a lot of times when people want me to walk through every verse with them.

"One day he was telling me how he hates the fruit of religion, and I said, 'I'm with you. I'm totally with you. You know, religion is what drives people farthest away

“He had that fire in his heart because Jesus gave him life and hope.”

from God because they're trying to earn their way, you know, instead of what I said is in the Bible.'

I remember I asked him, 'What do you think about a faith—that this God loved you so much that He came into your presence, in your life, and actually suffered for you to take away all of your guilt, all your shame, all of your suffering, so that you could be with him forever?'

"And Karim said, 'Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I want, I want, I want.' He took it on his own. And through that he became saved. So from then on, you saw the fruit of the Spirit change him. He had hope. He was full of love. He was sharing the Gospel with his fiancée and her sisters. He had that fire in his heart, because Jesus gave him life and hope."

"But that's only part of the story." Joy continued, "I had no idea that he had a dream just after we first met. And in that dream he was behind bars, and he saw me. I was standing in this path of light. I had my arms open. The light was all behind me, and the light was in the shape of a cross. And in his dream, Karim was saying, 'Help me, help me, help me, Joy. I'm lost!' Up to this point, we had never talked about God or anything related to the cross or Jesus. This dream caused him to ask, 'Who is this girl? What is this?' So he knew that he had to ask me about the cross."

After Karim became a believer, he began taking his girlfriend to a very secluded place so they could read the Bible together safely. Before long, he led her to Christ, and she gave her heart to Him as well. Now they are married and looking for ways to share their testimony with others.

Joy described a conversation with Karim after he became a believer, "He said, 'I've learned that with my people, we're so in the dark that if you show too much light, we'll be blinded.' He said, 'What you did was you showed one ray at a time. And that's what made me be able to open my eyes. And then I just started seeing the world the way Jesus meant it to be.'" ■

*names changed for security

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