

3 Things Persecuted Christians Can Teach Us

If you're like most Christians I know, you've not had to deeply weigh a decision for Christ knowing that you might face communal pressure, shame or death. It's hard for us Westernized Christians to imagine what it's like for new believers to follow Jesus in Islamic-ruled nations. We are free to read our Bibles without persecution. We can worship and share our faith with anyone we like. We can freely choose to follow Jesus (or not) without compulsion.

My friend Nadalla didn't have these same opportunities. He grew up in Syria in a large devout Muslim family. His father was an influential Islamic leader with multiple wives and children. As the son of his father's first wife, Nadalla was set to receive a great inheritance. But God had other plans. Through a series of remarkable events, Nadalla overheard two people discussing Jesus. The conversation left him seeking the truth, then renouncing Islam.

Nadalla was 19 years old when we met. By then he had fled family and country to follow Jesus. He had endured multiple attempts on his life. Through fiery on-going persecution, Nadalla went on to lead hundreds of Muslims to Christ and disciple them to do the same.

The persecution he faced amplifies three lessons for you and me:

1. Our Father pursues us. Nadalla repeatedly heard God's clear voice leading him away from Islam to Christ.

2. Jesus is worth it all. Nadalla counted the costs before giving up family, wealth and his country. He came to realize that his "sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and

in us" (Rom. 8:18, AMP).

3. Risk sharing your faith. Two men in Syria risked everything to talk about Jesus. They didn't know their conversation would be a catalyst on Nadalla's journey to Christ.

My friend's powerful story amplifies the depth and weight of what it means to be a Christ-follower. If you believe what the Bible plainly declares—that God is calling a great multitude of people to be His own—this episode of *iHOPE Empowers* on Charisma Podcast Network will awaken you to the wonderful, breathtaking privilege of being an ambassador for Christ. You'll be reminded anew that you serve a holy, living God and that following Jesus is worth it all. {eoa}

Hosts Renod and Karen Bejjani founded iHOPE Ministries to change the way everyday Christians think about sharing their faith with people of other faiths and cultures. Since 2011, iHOPE has empowered tens of thousands of Christians to live as authentic Christian witnesses among their neighbors of another faith.

Renod endured intense persecution as a Christian raised in Islamic countries. He spent decades filled with anger at God and hatred toward Muslims. Today, he serves the God he once denied, extending God's transforming love to the people he once hated. Renod is the author of Muslims: 5 Biblical Essentials, a primer for Christians who are curious or concerned about Muslims, and The Way to Paradise, a groundbreaking Bible study tailored for Muslim seekers.

While Renod grew up in Islamic nations, Karen never knew Muslims existed. She pursued the American Dream and built a successful career as a corporate executive. Now she emboldens everyday Christians to share Jesus across religious boundaries. Karen is the author of The Blue Cord, a catalyst for Christian women who know they should be sharing their faith.

The Bejjanis' powerful stories and timeless principles have catalyzed everyday Christians to live as authentic Christian witnesses to people of other faiths who live among us. When they're not empowering others, the Bejjanis spend their time hiking through forests and enjoying good Lebanese food with family and friends.

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