

The Muslim Mission

Barnabas Aid is working against trends such as the Insider Movement to convert Muslims to Christ



Barnabas Aid is on a mission to bring hope and relief to the persecuted church—but the group also has a massive outreach to Muslims. The international ministry has more than 400 full-time missionaries and pastors in Islamic countries. It distributed nearly 1 million tracts last year and funded TV and radio broadcasts that evangelize the Muslim world. Barnabas Aid also supports new church construction and income-generating projects that sustain converts when they lose everything for following Christ.

“We are seeing considerable growth of the church in the Muslim world. The Lord is doing a remarkable thing,” says Patrick Sookhdeo, international director for Barnabas Aid, who himself converted from Islam in the 1970s. “The numbers are not as some have been reporting about many millions of Muslims each year turning to Christ. Still, Muslims are turning to Christ in an unprecedented way.”

Of course, converting Muslims is one thing. Discipling them is another. The name Barnabas means “son of encouragement,” and Barnabas Aid lives up to that name by encouraging and strengthening converts. But the challenges of raising up strong believers in the Muslim world are many. Indeed, the consequences of calling Jesus “Lord” in extremist nations such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan can be deadly.

“Many converts lose everything. Psychologically they become quite dysfunctional. So the need for emotional and spiritual stability becomes hugely important,” Sookhdeo says. “Because Islam is a religion that is heavily demonic, you are dealing with difficult spiritual and psychological matters.”

Then there's the Insider Movement, which Sookhdeo calls "catastrophic." It takes a ministry approach to foster a belief that missionaries should not try to remove a convert from his Islamic community. The Insider Movement argues that the gospel message is found in the Quran and converts should continue upholding Muhammad as a prophet and attending their mosque.

"Some Western groups are literally imposing upon converts what I would say is postmodern Christianity, where culture is everything and truth goes out the window," he says. "The Insider Movement poses a major theological challenge. [It] is actually downplaying the Trinity and Christology. Unfortunately, we have a huge difficulty as missionaries are bringing this new doctrine into the Muslim world."

On the 10th anniversary of 9/11, Sookhdeo believes the church needs to distinguish between three issues. First, we must love Muslims unconditionally because they are created in God's image. Second, the church must approach Islam from the perspective of Bible doctrine—we have to be free to critique the religion. Sookhdeo stresses that taking a scriptural approach to Islam does not equate to Islamophobia—and loving people doesn't mean loving another religion.

"I read about a clergyman from the States who has allowed Muslims to create a mosque in the basement of his church. He believes that if he loves Muslims he must respect their religion and allow them to practice it in the basement of his church," Sookhdeo says. "This is where Americans have a huge issue with their pride and become so emotional they find it difficult to separate their mind from their feelings; and so their truths fall to love."

Third, Sookhdeo says, when a religion tries to become political or enter public space through Sharia law—or any time that religion intends to practice violence—the church needs to flat-out reject it and instead "seek to win the Muslim for

Christ.”