

Iranian Christians Take Advantage of Middle East War to Proclaim the Gospel

Iran is widely known to have a growing underground church that has long been a target for persecution.

But as the Islamic nation's regime struggles to outlast a new war with the United States and Israel, less energy is being devoted to oppressing Christians, opening opportunities for them to advance the gospel.

Todd Nettleton, vice president of Voice of the Martyrs, said in an interview with The Christian Post that "with the Iranian government and the authorities there paying attention to the war, they're not paying as much attention to house churches."

They are therefore not "paying as much attention to keeping Bibles out of the country or from being distributed within the country."

Voice of the Martyrs staff members have less ability to enter the country, but they have distributed several thousand Bibles within Iran since the conflict started.

Nettleton discussed a group of underground Christians who were forced to flee their city, but stuck together as they sought safety.

"They turned it into a church camp," Nettleton described.

"They spent time out of town, studying God's Word, worshiping together, encouraging each other, and really growing as a body of believers."

Nettleton said leaders of the group told him "they are proactively talking to people about Jesus in a time when

everything is in chaos, in a time when people are dying, and so people are thinking about eternity.”



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Many fellow Iranians are indeed thinking afresh about their own mortality.

Iranian Christians were already used to communication restrictions when the rest of the country had their internet access blocked by the Iranian government to discourage demonstrations earlier this year.

“In that sense, I guess the believers and other Iranians were used to or prepared for that,” Nettleton said.

“Because of that, many of these conversations are happening in one-on-one contexts in cafés or in a home.”

Other reports likewise confirm rapid growth in the Iranian church, even amid the difficulties wrought by the war.

ByFaith Magazine, the news outlet of the Presbyterian Church in America, recently invited experts on Iran to share their insights, learning that the gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed advancing in Iran.

Tat Stewart, who works with the missions agency of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, is a second-generation missionary to Iran who confirmed that “we have the fastest-growing church in the world in Iran.”

“Today it is estimated that over a million people profess Christ, and we have no idea of how many people are secret Christians,” Stewart commented, noting that only 3,000 Protestant Christians were known to live in Iran during the 1979 Revolution.

“God uses difficulty, struggle, and trial to advance the

gospel, and we should praise him that which was intended for evil, God has been using for good, and for the blessing of the people of Iran.”

Hamid Hatami, a PCA teaching elder who founded Middle East Reformed Heritage Ministries, sent a newsletter to supporters in March saying that “this may become a season of evangelism, discipleship, leadership training, and church planting on a scale that has not been possible for decades.”

“This also means that the church must not stand at a distance. Iran is not only a battlefield; it is also a mission field,” Hatami continued.

“If the present regime continues to weaken, the need will not merely be for humanitarian concern or political analysis, but for faithful gospel workers, wise shepherds, sound theological training, and church-planting efforts rooted deeply in Scripture and committed to the ordinary means of grace.”

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