

# Sahara Challenge Works to Build Muslim-Christian Relationships

As violence, unrest and confusion heat up in predominantly-Muslim countries like Libya, Tunisia, Bahrain and Egypt, many believers are beginning to see the potential for outreach.

As Fouad Masri, president of Crescent Project, mentioned in a recent interview with MNN's Greg Yoder, Muslims living in these countries have watched Islam fail as a political system. Devout Muslim leaders have been overrun by other Muslims in search of more rights. The tension has undoubtedly rubbed off on Muslims who live elsewhere around the globe.

Questions are stirring in the minds of many Muslims. In fact, in the last 10 years, more Muslims have come to faith in Christ than over the last 1,400 years combined. This exponential growth in interest toward Christianity presents the Christian world with an urgent responsibility.

"If we have the cure for sin, it is not right that we keep the cure," says Masri.

There is clearly a need for believers to engage in conversations and friendships with Muslims. Crescent Project's Paul Keller says when Muslims have come to Christ, "One of the overriding reasons was just the love and friendship of a believer in their lives. They saw that a Christian loved them and cared for them, and they got to see the Gospel in that context."

Engaging in a dialogue-much less friendship-with a Muslim can be extremely intimidating, though, for believers who don't know much about Muslim culture or have never had much of an opportunity to get to know a Muslim before. Plus, the wrong

approach can be about as ineffective as the right approach can be effective. How can believers meet this alarming need to tell Muslims about their true Hope if they know little about how to approach the situation?

One simple answer? Sahara Challenge. "It's training on what Muslims believe, what they practice," Keller says of the intensive week-long training. "We'll be talking about how we can prepare ourselves spiritually and how to be an ambassador and really represent ourselves well as we talk to Muslims. We'll be very well-equipped with tools in our toolbox on how to overcome common objections that Muslims have to the Gospel and to Christianity."

The Sahara Challenge will prepare believers to ask the right questions, will debunk misconceptions about Islam, and expose misconceptions Muslims have about Christianity. These are all important components to healthy friendship and conversation.

The week-long conference will be held at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, just minutes away from a mostly Muslim Pakistani community. Participants will have the opportunity to practice what they have learned throughout the week by engaging in conversation with people in the community. For even more experience, those at Sahara Challenge will have the option to join a short-term trip in the U.S. or overseas as well.

Any believer could benefit from this training, but particularly believers who have a heart for or are in frequent contact with Muslims. Literally millions of people are waiting to hear the Good News and may never get the chance if believers are not intentional about reaching out to them.