

‘The Billy Graham of Iran’ Boldly Sparks Great Awakening in the Middle East

As someone who once shouted “death to America” in the streets of Tehran, the capital city of Iran, Dr. Hormoz Shariat has come a long way since the 1970s.

His fascinating journey from Islam to Christianity sparked a different passion in him, and now Shariat, known to many as the “Billy Graham of Iran” is on a diligent quest to help make his home country what he claims will be the “first Muslim nation to turn to Christ.”

The founder of Iran Alive Ministries, Shariat says that Iran—despite the fact that Islam still rules there—is a nation fertile with individuals hungry for something different, the gospel of Christ.

Shariat says a Great Awakening is happening in Iran, and it is being transformed one soul at a time.”

“So many people have asked me what is happening there. It’s an awakening, a transformation,” Shariat told the Daystar Network. “And it’s mostly through young people. The young people in Iran are free from the spirit of Islam. It is a spirit, an enslaving spirit.

“The parents have this mindset that they are not allowed to think. Muslims are not allowed to think or to question Islam. The new generation in Iran is done with Islam. They have this open-mindedness. They are looking. They are listening and are comparing, and that’s why so many of them are coming to Christ.”

After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Shariat came to the

United States and earned a PhD in Computer Science at the University of Southern California. After becoming a Christian, his passion to reach Muslims was partially fueled by the murder of his brother by the Iranian government.

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But instead of wallowing in unforgiveness, Shariat received a message from God that the best way to retaliate against Islam was to dedicate his life to loving Muslims and sharing the gospel with them.

Once an introvert, Shariat received Christ in the 1980s. His love for God not only began to grow but also his love for people.

“I realized there was a power in the message of the gospel,” Shariat says.

Shariat’s work hasn’t gone unnoticed by members of the Christian media. Author and evangelist Joel Rosenberg says “God is doing an absolute miracle in that country” through people like Shariat.

“Millions of Iranians are abandoning Islam and turning to faith in Jesus Christ,” Rosenberg says. “It is the greatest spiritual awakening in the epicenter (the Middle East), and this pastor (Shariat) finds himself in the eye of the storm.”

Rosenberg says Shariat is the most watched Iranian evangelist in the world. During his lifetime, Billy Graham preached the gospel to 215 million people in person and preached in 185 countries, but never in Iran because it’s against the law to do so, and punishable by death.

However, Rosenberg says, Shariat is doing what Graham could not—sharing the Good News of Christ’s love, forgiveness and

His offer of eternal life in the Farsi language to millions of Iranians 365 days a year through the miracle of satellite television technology.

Shariat claims there are six million Iranians who are watching the message of Iran Alive Ministries in the privacy of their own homes.

On his website, , it reads, "There are no above ground Christian churches in Iran. Even underground churches, while effective and growing, are only accessible to 1% of all believers due to fear and security."

There are approximately 84 million people in Iran, and 2 million of them identify as Christians.

But Shariat says Iran has the "fastest-growing evangelical population" in the world today. And his message to those who feel trapped in Islam is to put away that fear and allow the Holy Spirit to fill their hearts with God's love and joy.

✖ "Perfect love casts out fear," Shariat says. "Receive God's love. What fear do you have in your life? Do you have fear of persecution? Be filled with God's love and you'll find the courage you need."

Shariat's prayer is for everyone to receive God's heart for people, and that's how the whole world will come to know Christ.

"God, will you please give us your heart for those who hear this. There are miserable people out there who need you, Lord," he prayed on the Daystar program. "Let us have compassion for them. We pray that they will have a fresh encounter with you. We know that you love them and want to save them, so I pray that you work in their lives and give them a revelation of your truth."

It's a prayer similar to the ones Billy Graham loved and

embraced his entire life.

*Out of Islam traces the adventures of **Christopher Alam** as a young Pakistani convert to Christianity from a traditional Muslim family. {eo}*

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