

Why This Kingdom Leader Says American Believers Must Change Their Mindset About Iran

American Christians often have a narrow window on the world. Even with our well-publicized failures, we still think of U.S. congregations as leaders in global Christianity, with the best pastors and the strongest churches anywhere.

But my longtime friend Clive Calver, an international ministry leader and author, sees it a different way. “Without exception, I would say the strongest churches that I’ve seen in the world are the ones that have been persecuted,” he told me on a recent episode of the *Strang Report* podcast. “And the strongest now are the ones that are really undergoing persecution in the present day.” Because of the rampant persecution in Iran, the church there is powerful, he says, and American believers must change our mindset about this country.

“I’ve worked with Iranians for 30 years,” he says. “And I’m absolutely stunned when I look at Elam Ministries, as representative of the Iranian church in exile, to see what is happening. The statistics say it all. Iran is growing as a church at 19% per annum. And that’s been consistent for the past few years.”

These believers are hard to count, Calver says, because so many have been imprisoned or have been exiled after being released from prison. “Half your Iranian core believers are probably in exile, and the others are in Iran and face incredible persecution,” he says.

“We tend to feel, ‘Well, Iranians are our enemies,’ Calver

says. "But in reality, Iranian believers should always be our friends."

Calver says Americans don't understand the reality of what's happening in Iran. "We automatically assume that the axis of evil extends to every Iranian," he explains. "If someone is your brother or sister in Christ, then they're there for you to love. And the first thing we need to do for the Iranians is to start to pray for them, and start to love them and recognize what is happening that with the amount of 'gospel' that's going on, the amount of conversations about Jesus, the amount of distribution of the Scriptures—it is phenomenal.

"You can always get in touch with Elam [] and they'll simply tell you how you can buy a Bible or 20 Bibles, and they'll arrange them to be transported ... to get them into the hands of the people we're talking about," Calver says. "It is an incredible opportunity for Iran at the moment, the fastest-growing church in the world. But we despise it because these people are Iranians. And yet it's an incredible situation.

"Imagine what it was like with the Nazis, if in Hitler's Germany, there was an exploding network of churches—what that should mean to us. Do we hate them because of the Nazis? Or do we love them because they're people who've met Jesus who just happen to be a nationality that we don't naturally appreciate? I've learned so much in 30 years of working with Iranians. I've watched so many lives be transformed and so much happen."

For much more from Clive Calver about the church in Iran and why and how we must encourage, support and pray for the believers there, listen to this entire episode of the *Strang Report* here, and be sure to subscribe to the *Strang Report* on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast platform. {eoa}

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