

Let's Help the Church in Iraq

Together we can help the churches minister to the Iraqis' needs.

Iraq has been in the news a lot lately because of the recent war. Undoubtedly you're familiar with at least some aspects of the country due to the media coverage. But did you know that what is now Iraq is important in the Bible? It is the birthplace of Abraham. It is the probable location of the Garden of Eden. And it is also home to the ancient city of Nineveh, where Jonah was commanded to go and preach.

Babylon, the prophet Daniel's place of captivity, was in this country, too. The Bible tells us that when Daniel prayed for deliverance, his answer was delayed for 21 days because of warfare in the heavens (see Dan. 10:4-13). Interestingly, it was the same number of days from the time the bombs started falling on Baghdad until the statue of Saddam Hussein toppled.

Admittedly, the war to liberate Iraq was short and casualties were few. But it left behind much destruction, a devastated economy and an unstable social structure.

During the war, I was glued to the news channels, wanting to know what was happening. After it ended, I wondered, "What can I do to help?"

The fact is, none of us has the ability to act alone. But together as Christians we can help the churches in Iraq minister to the tremendous needs in that country.

Working together in the name of Christ is what World Relief is all about. An arm of the National Association of Evangelicals

(NAE), World Relief aids American churches in helping the poor all over the world.

World Relief's mission is biblically based and Christ-centered—to work with the church in alleviating human suffering worldwide. But the goal is to serve the whole person by meeting his physical, emotional and spiritual necessities through ministries that strengthen the church.

For the last two years I have had the privilege of serving on the board of World Relief. I have seen firsthand the effectiveness of this organization and the absolute integrity with which it operates.

Recently NAE President Ted Haggard launched a program called "Operation Iraqi Care" to get Bible-believing Christians to band together to meet the tremendous needs in Iraq. His action prompted me to do something I've never done before: I'm pushing Operation Iraqi Care in three of our magazines this month. You'll see an ad about the program on page 49. Similar ads are running in Ministries Today and New Man, along with editorials urging our readers to get involved.

Why am I so passionate about this cause? Because I believe Iraq is important to God. I also believe that as Christians it is imperative for us to do our part to help those who are suffering.

Perhaps you're wondering what the needs are. Here are the basics:

- * Water supply and treatment
- * Facilities for water and sanitation

- * Power supplies
- * Health care
- * School and home rehabilitation
- * Home reconstruction and resettlement of internally displaced people.

World Relief is working in Iraq to provide aid to churches that are attempting to meet these needs. They are supporting intervention focused on resettlement and rehabilitation with investigations for realistic health care and power-supply options in six villages in northern Iraq.

These efforts would involve resettlement of families; reconstruction of homes, schools and water-supply infrastructures; provision of "starter" home and school kits; and development of plans for providing sanitation, health care and power. The estimated cost of the aid is about \$2 million.

In addition, if the conditions in Iraq improve, a substantial number of returnees from Iran are expected. Depending on the availability of funds, World Relief could be involved in rehabilitation and development efforts, including health and microenterprise development, for this group as well.

As you can see, the needs are great. Won't you join brothers and sisters across our land by acting now to show Christ's love to this Muslim nation? Encourage your pastor to take an offering. But respond personally, also, as I am.

Mail your donation to Christian Life Missions, P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, FL 32795-2248. We will send 100 percent of what is raised to World Relief, which will distribute it through the Christians in Iraq. Please don't delay. Join us in

making a difference today!

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.