UNLOCKING THE PRISON DOOR

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY TO ENDING GENERATIONS OF PERSECUTION
UNLOCKING THE PRISON DOOR: EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY TO ENDING GENERATIONS OF PERSECUTION

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SCHOOLYARDS OF DENIAL

As I drive to work, I often see young kids grouped in clumps at intersections as they excitedly wait for the school bus, their proud mothers or fathers with steaming mugs of coffee nearby.

The kids of all shapes and sizes carry their colorful backpacks and lunches. They have all the fuel and support they need to carry them through a day of learning and fun activities. Not just on this day, but for a lifetime.

I wish the same scenario were true in other parts of the world, in the corners where we delve, where assaults on followers of Christ occur daily. Where children cannot attend school because of their faith or circumstances. Where instead of dissecting earth worms or learning about the Roman coliseums, they traipse through stinky trash heaps to find salvageable items to sell. Where families lack access to capital, better-paying jobs, and strong schools due to persecution.

As I reflect on my family and our three children, I am so grateful for their educational opportunities. Yet, like most in the West, my heart aches for the little ones who face a lifetime prison of persecution without education or job training.

At International Christian Concern (ICC) we understand that we cannot save every child. Evil, in so many forms, crushes families from all sides. It will be this way until Jesus returns to his creation and makes things right.

Until then, we put education and job training at the forefront of our projects. We can give families needed financial relief in the short term. But the long climb out of the hole for many of these kids, and out of the clutches of persecution, is the knowledge of things and tools of trades.

So, at ICC we are doubling down to expand our Hope House, a comprehensive approach in the Middle East that gives kids valuable resources and schooling to lay the foundation for a better life. And as they get older, to transition to Generation Transformation that continues to break the cycle of poverty and persecution through a college education and job training.

You are on this journey with us. Every child, teen, and college-age youngster who we help together creates a ripple in this life and the one to come.

I cannot thank you enough for your support.

JEFF KING
President: International Christian Concern
Author: The Last Words of the Martyrs and Islam Uncensored

PROVERBS 1:7

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

18
THREE FORMER MUSLIM LEADERS HUNTED DOWN FOR THEIR CONVERSION

I t’s a rare, but eternally-rewarding occurrence when a prominent Muslim leader, known as an imam, leaves behind his years of training in the faith for Christ. That was the case for not one, but three, local imams in Uganda.

Tamir, Salomon, and Michael recently converted to Christianity—and are now being hunted down by their former communities.

The Muslim community found out about Tamir’s conversion when he was baptized. He was chased away with his family of four, and his house was destroyed. A local pastor is currently taking care of Tamir and his family until they can find a more secure, and permanent place to live.

Salomon and his family of five are in hiding after he left his teaching position in a local mosque when he gave his life to Christ. Salomon came across a verse in the Quran that states that Muhammad is dead, and those who follow him are also dead. He compared it with John 14:6, that says Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. He trusted Christ for his salvation and was baptized the same day. Currently, his Muslim friends and family are hunting him down to kill him for converting to Christianity.

Michael, another local imam, and his wife were baptized together after converting to Christianity. When the Muslim leaders who had been training him realized his conversion, they began to threaten his family. He is also currently being hunted down by the Muslim elders who invested in him during his training, and risks being killed if they find him.

Though these three new converts see the life and salvation found in Christ, they still face earthly death daily. ICC worked with them to provide emergency food supplies for their families. Please join us in praying for the safety of the three ex-imams and their families as they look for a secure place to live and means of earning a livelihood.

BRUTALLY BEATEN BY HER FAMILY BECAUSE SHE TURNED TO CHRIST

S ophia grew up in a Muslim household until last year when she trusted in Christ.

While her newfound faith in Jesus brought eternal rewards, she faced immense persecution within her family. Sophia and three other siblings were living with her brother who was supporting her. When he found out about Stella’s conversion, he abandoned all of them saying he “couldn’t stay with non-Muslims.” Because Sophia was jobless, she was forced to move back home with her parents.

She quickly discovered, however, that her brother had already warned them about her conversion to Christianity.

Her father was upset that she converted and held her hostage for two weeks, peppering her with questions, wanting to see proof. Stella did not say her Muslim prayers, and her father found a Bible in her belongings.

“I was brutally beaten, and he chased me out of the house claiming that I was going to spoil my little siblings,” said Stella, who had to flee again, this time to a friend’s house.

“Currently, I struggle to get what to eat and personal needs as a woman,” she told ICC staff. “My only prayer is to have a simple milk dairy shop.”

ICC helped make her prayers a reality by providing her with items to open a dairy shop including a deep freezer and other supplies, and covering four months of her rent.

Sophia was overcome with gratitude, praising the Lord for his faithfulness.

“Thank you Jesus for I’ve been yearning for financial independence and also hiding from the community hunting me,” she said. “This shop will also enable me to help my siblings!”

“Thank you Jesus for I’ve been yearning for financial independence while hiding away from the community hunting me!”

To learn more about how you can support these initiatives, visit www.persecution.org or give us a call at 800-422-5441.

YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

ICC SMUGGLES BIBLES TO CONVERTS

F or Muslim-background believers (MBBs) in one country (censored for strict-security purposes), possession of the Bible is banned. No one can own a copy of the Bible—no writing notes in the margins, no highlighting verses, or embossed customized covers and cases. The Word of God is considered contraband.

For MBBs, possession of the Bible or other Christian materials invites persecution. Bibles are banned from being imported, and MBBs who have access to electronic versions of Scripture must be very careful to avoid getting caught, or they will be punished. The Bible is so heavily monitored in this country that it is difficult for God’s people to gain access to his word.

ICC is working with more than 100 house church leaders to equip them with copies of the Bible to get into the hands of MBBs and those who are seeking the Word of God but have not yet converted. Our goal is to get 2,000 copies of the Bible into believers’ hands to grow in their walk with Christ.

Please pray that God would make it possible for the Bibles to arrive safely to the country, so our courageous partners can smuggle the books without authority interference.
ONGOING INITIATIVES

**RESCUING CHRISTIAN CONVERTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Muslims who convert to Christianity stand to lose everything. That’s why in June, ICC raised our voices to rally for those who have lost their families, communities, and loved ones because of their conversion. Sara is one of those. She grew up in a Muslim family in the Middle East. Struggling to make ends meet because of the discrimination she faced for her conversion, one of her sons died suddenly due to an epileptic seizure. Under these horrible circumstances, Sara found solace at a local church. ICC helped contribute funds to pay for her rent and other living expenses. ICC continues to work with Sara to create a safe and more stable future.

**WRITING LETTERS TO PRISONERS**

Last month, ICC launched our second round of letters to prisoners campaign, with seven new prisoners of faith. Professor Solomon Tarfa was sentenced to two years of prison in Nigeria after being falsely accused. He is believed to be targeted for running a Christian orphanage in the Muslim-dominated north. To download your digital packet with more profiles like Solomon’s, please visit www.persecution.org/letters.

**BRINGING THE GOSPEL WHERE TWO KINGDOMS COLLIDE**

One of the most important things we can do is push the gospel out in the most dangerous places on earth. As we speak, we are training 200 church planters to go out in India this year. We are also getting ready to train an additional 100-200 more! If you would like to join our efforts to spread the gospel, please visit www.persecution.org/gospel.

**TRAGEDY STRIKES TWICE**

It’s an everyday challenge for Khaled and his Christian family to live in the Middle East. Persecution is rampant.

The family has also faced daily struggles. Khaled has lost all his possessions—twice. He used to own a furniture store in his Middle Eastern country, but due to the ongoing war in the region, everything he, his wife, and three children owned was destroyed.

Once Khaled’s family relocated, a missile landed on their new building on Good Friday. By a miracle from God, his family came out safely despite the death of many of his neighbors. Khaled was in a coma for three days following the attack.

"On Good Friday, the suffering of the Lord and the crucifixion occurred. That happened to us. We suffered and lost everything. But after three days, Christ rose, and so you will raise us up with Christ so that we can return to life with hope," said Khaled.

In an instant, once again, everything he owned was destroyed. In the past, Khaled owned his house, a warehouse, managed workers, and had a workshop. But now, he is only able to work for a friend to pay his rent. Khaled is more than 60 years old, but he has not given up and relies on God for everything, he said when ICC visited him.

ICC worked with Khaled to pay the rent on his house for a year and to secure the other needs of his family to help him re-establish what he’s lost in the war. After that, ICC will help him get set up with his own workshop again. "With your help for me and my family, you are helping me to recover our wounds," Khaled said.

His wife added, "My husband’s smile has returned after many years, and it is all thanks to God and to you."

To learn more about how you can support these initiatives, visit www.persecution.org or give us a call at 800-422-5441.
When we ran into Bernard Randall in Washington, D.C., this summer, he was a respectable, unassuming, caring member of the clergy. According to British authorities, however, Randall is an extremist, a terrorist who leads people into violence; and someone who should stay away from children.

Randall’s situation is a barometer of rising persecution issues in the West, albeit not the brutal suffering kind our brothers and sisters face in radical Muslim communities. But a growing chorus of criticism from progressive elites directed toward Christians. The latter, like Randall, who hold a Christian worldview and biblical understanding of things like marriage and the sanctity of life.

As the chaplain of a private K-12 Christian school in England, Randall was grateful to share the love of Christ with students and their families. To disciple, counsel, and love them as an ordained minister of the Church of England.

Everything was going swimmingly until the Christian chaplain shared his thoughts from the pulpit. School leaders introduced a controversial and all-encompassing LGBTQ+ curriculum. It was heavy-handed, with no room for discussion or interpretation. Randall wanted to talk with school officials about the elements that contradicted Scripture before the materials were used. Parents and staff also raised concerns. Things deteriorated when Randall gave a sermon in the school’s chapel and acknowledged that people, including Christians, held different opinions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage. That they should make up their minds about the subject and not just accept what they were being told. But it was important to “respect the people you disagree with. Loving your neighbors as yourself doesn’t mean you have to agree.”

But it does mean respect the sincerity of people you’re having a discussion with.”

Pretty innocuous. A tame, diplomatic sermon. So, he thought. Randall was brought in and interrogated by administrators and asked why he was going against the school’s position on their LGBTQ+ curriculum.

“The following day I was suspended and sent home, and I was disciplined and fired for gross misconduct,” said Randall at the International Religious Freedom Summit, where he met with International Christian Concern (ICC) President Jeff King and others. “This is the chaplain doing his job as a school chaplain. In the process of disciplinary action, they also reported me to child protective services as a risk to children.”

Shockingly, he was also reported to police under the Britain’s anti-terrorism bureau for being an extremist who leads people into violence.

“So, as a consequence, I am a Christian minister of a Christian school suing the school for anti-Christian discrimination,” Randall said with a laugh. “So, they are being sued for discrimination, harassment, unfair dismissal.”

The case goes to court in September, and ICC will monitor it closely along with others like it.

When the school closed because of COVID-19, officials told Randall they could no longer afford a chaplain. He was dismissed a second time.

“As an ordained minister my job is to speak out and so many people don’t go public with these stories,” he said. “But I have to. When I was ordained, I promised to speak out. So I am, and that’s what I am doing for all those other people who are persecuted in sometimes very little ways. It all adds up to such a big picture … there’s a bigger picture, a bigger struggle going on.”

OFFICIALS: KEEP VIOLENT CHAPLAIN TERRORIST AWAY FROM CHILDREN

Minister in England Sues Private School That Fired Him for Christian Values

By Mike Anderson

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“Presumably, they didn’t hear the sermon where I said no attacks or personal abuse,” noted Randall.

School trustees eventually returned Randall to his position, but with conditions that he submit sermons for approval in advance, not say or do anything controversial, support ‘all beliefs’ on topics such as gender identity and homosexuality, and more. He had to support all beliefs but not the ones clearly spelled out in Scripture that were near and dear to him.

In his country that values religious freedom and tolerance, Chaplain Randall was free to express his Christian beliefs on any subject if he kept them private. Tolerance is a cherished hallmark in the West – unless it pertains to Christian thought. In some circles, even a private Christian school, Christianity is not welcome in the public square.

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A third grader attended church with his family one morning, and left an orphan, alone in a land hostile to Christianity. This is Smith Sabir’s story, one of hundreds of stories from the churchgoers at All Saints Church in Pakistan. His parents were among those killed in the All Saints Church terrorist attack in Pakistan on Sept. 22, 2013.

Sabir’s chance for survival and long-term success was bleak. No one was there to encourage him, disciple him, and support his dreams. Fortunately, donors stepped forward and International Christian Concern (ICC) supported Sabir and chronicled his inspirational story over the past decade.

In an interview, Sabir shared his gratitude, “Often, I keep thinking about God’s strange plans. He took my parents to heaven, but He gave me ICC to take care of me, stand with me, to strengthen me, and to build my future. I have learned a lot from ICC on how to love others and engaged in charity work. I would love to follow in ICC’s footsteps.”

For Sabir and children like him, persecution can remain a lifelong struggle without such intervention.

Stepping In

Governments in places like India put systems in place to keep Christian families ostracized and removed from economic opportunities and adequate schools. Christians who publicly profess their faith in Jesus are prevented from participating in government services re-
“Often, I keep thinking about God’s strange plans. He took my parents to heaven, but He gave me ICC to take care of me.” - Smith Sabir

served for even the lowest class in society—the untouchables, or Dalits.

In Egypt, schools are so bad that many Christian families pull their kids out at an early age. They do menial work, such as picking up garbage, because that is a better alternative than public schools.

In Nigeria, more than one million Christians are displaced because of violence in Benue State and living as in-country refugees. For the many children removed from schools, hope fades in the rubble.

While ICC provides immediate assistance to families, including food, shelter, medical expenses, and small business support, education remains the best long-term antidote for oppression.

Hope In a Better Future

Nelson Mandela famously said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

ICC has launched two successful education programs: Hope House and Generation Transformation. For security concerns, ICC does not divulge their specific locations.

Hope House equips Christian children in the Middle East to break out of this generational cycle of persecution. Through one-to-one sponsorships, kids receive better schooling, medical care, nutrition, and other benefits. ICC is also in the beginning stages of expanding Hope House to other regions, like Africa.

As students advance into their teens and college years, they transition to Generation Transformation where they receive vocational training, college scholarships, and grants to start small businesses.

“The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts,” C.S. Lewis said. ICC’s mission is to bring the wellspring of education to the persecuted.
TRANSFORMING A GENERATION

Restoration and revival can come after all hope seems lost.

By Hannah Campbell

Survivors of gruesome terrorist attacks have a long journey ahead of them after the dust settles from the bombs and loved ones are laid to rest. For the All Saints Church bombing in Pakistan that claimed the lives of 127 and injured 250 church-goers one Sunday morning in September 2013, many children were left to navigate the world as orphans.

International Christian Concern (ICC) set up a schooling program to make sure that these children’s future wasn’t taken from them, even if their loved ones were.

Now, almost 10 years later, our staff has walked with these children as they have grown up, discovered their passions, and developed big dreams.

Some of these children who we met are ready to head to college and other vocational trainings.

The roots of persecution are a prison of desperate poverty and a lack of political power stemming from generational educational deficits, job discrimination, and lack of access to capital. Education and vocational training have the power to break cycles of persecution.

ICC’s Generation Transformation was birthed out of the desire to attack the root cause of persecution.

We select one community and infuse it with blessings, by funding and aiding the entrepreneurs, taking the best and the brightest persecuted Christian children and giving them a top notch education in private schools, and supporting vocational training to turn them into carpenters, plumbers, and electricians.

The following testimonies speak to the incredible talent and faith of these young Christians whose lives would look much different without education.

We hope you are moved by their resilience, grit, and love of Christ.
SHAYAN

Grade: 9

“I lost my papa and mama when the [All Saints] Church was attacked in September 2013. I had no idea what happened on that day as I was just about four years old. I have gone through very difficult times. Every moment I miss my parents. However, I am thankful to my guardians and ICC for supporting and taking care of me.”

Shayan has been a beneficiary of ICC’s Schooling Project since April 2014, set up to support orphans and victims of the All Saints terrorist attack. English and Math are his favorite subjects.

“In the future, I want to be a doctor. A part of my professional career will be dedicated for the uplift of the needy and deserving people,” Shayan told ICC. “If ICC wasn’t there to support me, I would have never gone to school because I lost my parents, and my relatives were financially not so good.”

SEHAR

Grade: 6

Sehar prominently proclaims her Christianity and is proud of her faith. She sets great examples among her Muslim classmates with her excellent performance. She lost her mother in the All Saints Church bombing.

“I did not spend much time with my mother, but I have heard she was a great woman and very strong in her faith,” Sehar told ICC. “I am the only child of my parents; therefore, I have the advantage of being loved so much. However, I face a lot of challenges. I miss my mother at every step of life. May her soul rest in Jesus.”

Sehar is a lover of art and music and wants to become a doctor. She believes that God will open doors for her to make her dreams come true and Christian community proud.

TANIA

Grade: 9

Tania is a brilliant student and often gets performance awards. She loves reading, English, mathematics, and the study of biology in school.

Her father died in the bombing of All Saints Church. “I miss my father a lot on special occasions and on Father’s Day. I want to be as genius and a humble person as my father was.”

ICC has been supporting Tania’s education since April 2014. She wants to study to become a lawyer so she can become a voice for the oppressed Christian community.

“ICC has done a lot in shaping my life and bringing me up as an educated Christian girl. I appreciate and am highly grateful to ICC,” Tania added.

MEHAK

Grade: 6

Mehak is a shining star. She regularly receives awards and certificates for her excellent performances in art, public speaking, handwriting, and painting.

“I love reading and speaking English. It’s my favorite subject,” Mehak told ICC. “I want to become the best teacher of English literature in the town. I believe Christians can only develop their lifestyle if they concentrate on the studies.

“From my childhood I have seen ICC team continuously visiting us at our home,” Mehak told ICC. “We have experienced a very painful time with our mother after the church was attacked. My mother did a lot for us. We are happy ICC has continued to do a great job for us.”

THANK YOU

ICC
After relentless violence, child refugees find new hope thanks to ICC.

Story and Photos by Kate Piselli

The breadbasket of Nigeria is starving. Christians in Benue State have suffered gruesome attacks by the Fulani militants, a radical Muslim militia group, forcing approximately 1.5 million people from their ancestral lands into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the last five years.

Having previously been farmers, years in the camps with no land or opportunity have forced them into lives of obscurity. School-aged children wander the streets, begging for food. It’s common for women to go into town to trade their bodies for a meal to bring home.

Crime runs rampant, especially in the Makurdi North-Bank IDP Camp. The camp has a population of about 10,500—around 2,000 of those are children.

“Currently, the rate of education is very low, considering that when the children wake up in the morning, they are looking for work, food to eat, water to drink, to find firewood... all sorts of things,” said Amos, an ICC volunteer who regularly visits the IDP camp.

EXILED WITH A SECOND CHANCE
In February 2022, ICC began providing eight volunteers with a small stipend to travel to the camp three times a week. We provided basic school supplies such as whiteboards, markers, books, lesson materials, as well as funds to supplement classes with food and drink.

“Children who have never been to school have been given the chance to be educated, which has given them a sense of belonging,” said Amos.

ICC also set up a lunch program to help feed the children.

“Hungry children whose parents can’t afford proper meals can now eat good food every week,” said Amos.

To steward the Christian population that has lost their home churches, ICC conducts a Bible club every week. The goal is to educate the children and remind them of Christ's love for them despite their dire circumstances.

“Older women who were not opportune to be educated have been given a second chance as four have become dedicated pupils,” said Amos.

ICC will continue to work with volunteers and Christians on the ground to implement education programs to equip these children to have brighter futures.
A LONE VOICE CALLING IN THE NIGERIAN DESERT

Benue State Governor Tells the Truth About Christian Persecution

By Mike Anderson

There have been several assassination attempts on Samuel Ortom’s life, including one in March 2021 that involved 15 men with AK-47 rifles as he visited a farm. Yet as governor of Benue State in Nigeria, Ortom is an undeterred, courageous man on a mission.

The 61-year-old leader shouts from the rooftops about persecution in his country. And of the 36 governors, he is one of only a few willing to publicly criticize Muhammadu Buhari’s administration. And the failures of previous administrations to stop atrocities against believers.

Ortom shared his thoughts on a recent visit to International Christian Concern’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he met with ICC President Jeff King and staff. His trip also included a rigorous agenda and meetings with leaders on Capitol Hill and the U.S. Department of State.

His goal? To counter the Nigerian government’s narrative, parroted by the media, that the lawlessness and killings of tens of thousands of Christians is just a tribal conflict between radical Fulani Muslim herders and Christian farmers. That it is fueled by geopolitical forces, climate change, and petty land disputes. And that the government is doing all it can to protect religious freedom and everyone’s lives.

The reality? There has been no meaningful action by the Nigerian government over the past 20 years to stop the killings of Christians. While there are concomitant forces and reasons for the genocide of Christians in Nigeria, Ortom said those in power are aiding and abetting in the radical Islamization of his country. And of the 36 governors, he is one of only a few willing to publicly criticize Buhari’s abysmal response to the killings and displacement of Christians.

Despite attempts on his life—his security detail protected him from the farm attack—Ortom said he has nothing to lose or fear. He will openly tell the truth to whoever will listen about the perils of Christians in his region and the tactics of radical Fulani militias—and other terrorist groups such as Boko Haram—who are on a mission to transform and impoverish the land.

Of the approximately seven million people in Benue State, most are Christians, with 1.5 million living as in-country refugee camps. Many are children without schooling or necessities. Benue State is considered the nation’s fruit basket, blessed with verdant fields and the prodigious Niger and Benue rivers. The fertile land, farmed by mostly Christians, also attracts the Fulani herders who need water and grain for their cattle.

Ortom said the deeper ongoing problem is not the herder-farmer land skirmishes, but the Islamization and colonization of Nigeria by jihadists who aim to rid the country of Christians and establish their permanent caliphate.

Some Fulani herders falsely claim that their cattle are rustled by locals. Radical Muslim militias then descend on the farming communities where they murder and rape Christians, and displace entire populations through fear and intimidation. The radical Fulani then moves in after a massive land grab before eying the next vulnerable community.

“People are afraid to go to church and even make pronouncement that they are Christians,” Ortom said.

To make things worse, radical Muslims hold positions of power in the government, military, and security apparatus. Many believe that if the Nigerian government or international communities do not step in to protect Christians, it could lead to civil war.

Ortom. It is illegal for everyone else, including Christians who need protection, making it a one-sided fight. Yet the government claims the Fulani need weapons to protect themselves from the ‘ghost’ cattle rustlers.

As news of Ortom’s visit to Washington made the news cycles back home, government officials responded that the Middle Belt situation was complicated and Muslims were persecuted, too.

Ortom will continue his solo campaign, a lone voice calling in the Nigerian desert, to tell the world about the atrocities and the motives and people fueling the conflict.

“I appreciate this opportunity to say the other side of the story and to try to change the narrative that is going on, especially within the international community,” said Ortom.

Note: ICC named Nigeria the most dangerous country for Christians in its 2021 Persecutor of the Year report. And the Fulani militants were named the most dangerous ‘entity’ this year.

Photos: Gov. Ortom (center, with ICC President Jeff King) was joined by Abrahams Kwasungu, Principal Special Assistant on Special Duties for the Office of the Executive Governor, Benue State Government, Rev. Peters Ichull, Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Diaspora Affairs, and Stephen Enada, President and Co-Founder of International Committee on Nigeria (ICON).
RAISING THE EDUCATION BAR
ICC’S HOPE HOUSE IN EGYPT GIVES KIDS A BETTER Chance AT SUCCESS.

More than 325 Egyptian children attend ICC’s education center, Hope House. In a country where Christians are viewed as second-class citizens, Hope House seeks to break the cycle of generational persecution by providing access to quality education and upward mobility.

Hope House is the innovative alternative to public schooling, where Christian children are largely sidelined and receive poor teaching.

Mariam, who teaches at one of the centers, shared, “There is a vast difference between them. In public schools, it’s just a routine. But at the center, we work with the kids as if they are our kids. Here it is a service. As much as I can, I focus on each kid separately, and I care so much about the kids.”

Classes at Hope House are one third the size of public school classes, allowing the students’ teachers to provide more personalized schooling.

The child sponsorship program provides incentives to children and their families to keep the children enrolled in school. Especially during the summer months, poorer Christian boys are pulled from school to work in the fields, earning less than $2 USD per day. Girls are typically tasked with helping at home or learning homemaking skills.

Sponsored children receive intentional discipleship in conjunction with each center’s partner church. They and their families also receive monthly food packages to offset any income deficit due to children focusing on their education over work. Children participate in routine medical testing and medication as needed, entertaining cultural field trips, and receive special gifts throughout the year, such as new clothing.

As a result of the sponsorship program’s benefits, parents are taking note of the importance of their child’s education.

Lena, who teaches science at one of the centers said, “Only two weeks after the start of the program, the parents were supporting their kids to join the classes. And they consider this service is essential for their kids. The kids want learn more and more.”

Mariam shared about the improvements she has seen in her students since they began, “I had a kid in my class who did not know how to hold a pen or write. He has now improved so much. Honestly this center is perfectly affecting our village, as the most neglected thing for kids here is the education.”

ICC prayerfully opened another center this summer, trusting that the children in this new village would receive sponsorship and the educational encouragement needed to help them move beyond second class citizenship.

Please join us in praying for the growth of the new center, the local partner church, and the development of the local Christian children and their families.

Partner with ICC
Only 40% of the eligible children in Hope House are sponsored. ICC extends an invite to faithful donors who are looking to make a difference in the lives of these Egyptian children. If you’d like to make a difference, go to: www.persecution.org/initiatives/hope-house/ or email ICC@persecution.org.

SEPTEMBER 2022
A member of the demolished Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi province asks for prayers for the imprisoned leaders of his house church, especially his sister.

Though the megachurch was demolished in 2018, members continue to gather for worship services.

Last August, nine Christian church leaders were arrested. Although two were released on bail, the remaining seven leaders are currently awaiting their trial. They are being charged with carrying out fraud in the church.

One of the imprisoned leader’s brother, Mr. Yang, explains that the church offerings collected from church members are used to support and keep the church ministry going, a practice in line with Christian tradition, and by no means a scam.

According to Mr. Yang, his sister does not receive proper meals in prison. Her family cannot visit her, and she is denied treatment for her diabetes—a fatal condition if not treated properly.

In response to such tragic circumstances, he asks for prayers for his sister.

According to Bitter Winter, Golden Lampstand Church belongs to a network of house churches with more than 50,000 members called Sola Fide, Latin for “by faith only.” These churches refuse to affiliate with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regulated “Protestant church denomination.”

In 2009, pastors and other members of the Golden Lampstand Church were arrested and received prison sentences from the CCP. In 2018, the $2.6 million USD church building was blown up with dynamite by the CCP. The local authorities were eyeing the property for its commercial value.

Since then, the church congregation has continued to meet outdoors or in private homes and is facing ongoing persecution.

Ever since the CCP announced new religious regulations and increased control over churches in 2020, China has seen an uptick in crackdowns on Christian leaders and places of worship that refuse to join the state-approved church.

ICC has continued to monitor and report on the persecution Golden Lampshade Church has faced throughout the years. In China, ICC actively supports the underground church in China and the families of pastors arrested by the government.

Photo from the demolition of the Golden Lampstand Church in 2018.
I have a question for you: What is your calling? How does being asked that question make you feel?

It makes a lot of us feel like second-class citizens because many of us don’t have a clear calling. We listen to people who have a very direct, specific calling from the Lord, and we think, “I don’t have that. I’m kind of doing life without a very clear compass direction.”

I think that question can create a lot of shame.

Let’s look at the life of a woman who had an evident calling: Amy Carmichael. She had a very clear calling to India. So clear that she basically ripped up the script of her life, and she decided her life would be spent on behalf of the lost of India.

She never had kids. She never married. She felt, “That is my calling, and that is what I’m going to do with my life.”

So, Amy goes to India. She starts sharing the gospel. And while she’s doing that, she begins to understand the culture. Amy looks at the temples. There are prostitutes in some of the temples—just like in the Bible. People pay “alms” and they are using these girls. The temple has captured them, and uses them as sex slaves.

Amy’s heart breaks over this, and she begins to rescue these girls. She takes them out of their circumstances and creates a shelter for them.

As you can imagine, this creates a lot of trouble for her because she is really messing with society. On one hand, she’s messing with the religion of people. On the other hand, this is big business. If you run this temple, there’s money coming to you, right? So, Amy’s actions created a lot of blowback. At one point, she was charged with crimes and was facing seven years in prison, but the charges were dropped. Nothing ever happened.

Amy, throughout her life, endured a lot of physical pain as well. She suffered from neurological pain and at one point she broke her leg and her ankle so severely that it left her bedridden for the last 20 years of her life. But she didn’t stop. She kept sharing the gospel. She was helped by others, wrecking the temple prostitution business and rescuing the girls. And during this time in which her life was seemingly destroyed, she wrote 37 books—all from her bed.

Amy’s calling to India was obvious and very dramatic. Pull back and think about her work. Her work was to share the gospel and to rescue the oppressed. And that can be done anywhere! That can be done in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Columbus, Ohio, Peoria, Illinois. It doesn’t matter. Location isn’t the issue.

Her example is to be faithful in ministry wherever you are, to live a life of devotion to God and letting Him work through you. It doesn’t matter if you’re in secular work or ministry work. At the core of our spiritual calling is this: to put everything on the altar and to give him a greater portion of our heart.

And we have to do that again and again.

While we’re doing that, we can look at Amy’s life and see that it’s not just the life of any missionary. It’s really the life of all of us. There’s going to be lots of pain. There’s going to be lots of hardship and struggle.

But we press on. We don’t let those things stop us, but always keep in mind that it’s not what we do, it’s how much of what we do that we give to Him.

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ…standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

Application

Find a gospel-based ministry in your area that serves the oppressed and ask them how you can help with your time.

Questions

1. Have you sensed any kind of calling in your life? If not, ask the Father to show you what it is.
2. How much of your life have you given to the Lord? What part of it are you holding back from Him?
3. Who is somebody you know with a very distinct calling from God? How did they respond to it at first?

This was an excerpt from Jeff King’s upcoming devotional book focused on spiritual lessons from the persecuted. For information about pre-orders, please contact moreinfo@persecution.org.
Abbud was wholly devoted to Islam and had led his family in this way for many years. But Abbud’s commitment to his religion was shaken by the birth of one of his sons, Habib. Habib was born with a mental disability, and because of this disability, Abbud and his family were stigmatized by their Muslim community. They blamed Abbud for his son’s condition, saying that God had given him to Abbud as punishment because of his sin. Abbud and his wife were tortured with questions as to why God allowed their son to be born with a disability.

One day, as these troubles plagued the family, Abbud was walking through a local market and stumbled upon a Bible. Abbud decided to buy it, and he testifies that God led him to John 9.

Abbud read the story of Jesus’ encounter with a blind man. Jesus’ disciples had asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” In the passage, Jesus answered them, “It is not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

This passage changed Abbud’s life, and the lives of everyone in his family. He and his wife’s confusion and despair over their son’s condition had found an answer through these words of Jesus. They converted to Christianity soon after.

Their conversion, however, came with consequences. Muslim-background believers (MBBs) face harsh persecution in the Middle East. For Abbud, his wife, and his children, this persecution came most dangerously from their own extended family.

In one incident, the extended family kidnapped Abbud’s wife and physically abused her. Fortunately, his wife was eventually able to return—scarred, but alive. The threats being made against them, however, escalated and became increasingly dangerous. For their own safety, they desperately needed to flee, but their financial circumstances made fleeing to another city nearly impossible.

Seeing their need, ICC began a project to discretely relocate Abbud and his family to a safer location. The project faced a number of complex challenges, but ICC was able to successfully resituate Abbud and his family in a safe place, away from the family members who had threatened them.

The relocation was only possible because of our call to help support MBBs in June. This month, we are calling our supporters to help us share and spread the gospel in the world’s most dangerous regions. To learn more about how you can help, please visit: www.persecution.org/gospel.