

# on the horizon

• • • Horizons International Newsletter – October 2023 • • •



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# METAMORPHOSIS

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF GOD

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“ 15 members of my family died in one day.”

## AHLAM'S TESTIMONY

In April 2017, I experienced a terrible tragedy—**15 members of my family died in one day**, during the Syrian War. When I heard the news, it turned my life upside down, filling me with despair and gloom. I was suddenly unable to enjoy my life and felt disconnected from my husband and children.

The tragedy caused me to lose faith in the god of Islam, and I became an atheist. I kept asking: “God, even though I’m righteous, I read the Qur’an, I fast and pray, and do good deeds—**why would you take my family?** And especially my beloved sister?!” I completely isolated myself from people and placed a great deal of blame on God.

I had never felt joy or peace within Islam. No matter what I did, I always felt that God was disapproving of me. All my life, I wondered what would happen to me after I died, and no one was able to answer my question.

During this difficult time, a faithful sister from Horizons, Sahar, heard my story and visited me. Despite my initial reluctance to talk to her, **she visited and prayed for me regularly**. Eventually, I began to trust her—her words were a comfort to me.

Sahar took me to meetings at a Horizons Center, where I learned about Jesus. My understanding of salvation was transformed when I realized that **we are saved by grace, not by works**, and that he died for us—to save us from our sins. I took my first step into faith in Jesus.

I am now a servant of Christ! I have been trained in evangelism and discipleship, and have learned the Christian life, taken leadership training, and attended numerous conferences. These all have greatly contributed to my spiritual growth and my relationship with the Lord. **I now teach and mentor 50-60 women**. And although I lost my sister, God has blessed me with a spiritual family. I serve alongside 12 beloved sisters in Christ!

In my darkest times, the Lord gave me worth and resurrected my soul to a new life in Christ. I hope that everyone, especially Muslims, will come to know the Lord as I do. Since becoming a Christian, I have found great joy and hope, and a smile that never fades!

# GLOBAL UPDATES

## THE CHURCH PERSEVERES AMIDST TRIALS

“  
*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*  
”  
—Matthew 16:18-19



Christians around the world face persecution and discrimination for their faith. Yet God's revival is spreading as people turn to him in times of hardship and uncertainty. Despite the dangers, many are boldly coming to and following Christ! Here are some of the places currently experiencing persecution.

### ALGERIA

After a season of exponential growth, the church in Algeria is enduring a troubling rise in persecution. **Believers are increasingly experiencing restrictions** and pressure from state officials designed to cause them to renounce their faith, and stifle the influence of Christianity.

### CHINA

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is tightening its grip over religion by persecuting Christians and rewriting parts of the Bible to force the church to be subservient to the state. Certain portions of the 'official' Bible have been rewritten such as changing the story in John 8, which now shows Jesus stoning an adulterous woman to death, and modifying the first commandment in Exodus 20 to read "Resolutely guard against the infiltration of Western ideology."

### AFGHANISTAN

Since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, Christians have faced regular home raids, restrictions on work and education, and threats of violence against their families. Due to the Taliban's restrictions on contact with the West, humanitarian relief efforts have ground to a halt.

Christians are still highly at risk of being reported to, and tortured by, the Taliban. Many have fled, but despite the dangers, **there are reports of Afghan Muslims secretly converting to Christianity** and even meeting together.

### IRAN

The Iranian government is cracking down on Christians during ongoing civil unrest, as believers are considered enemies of the state. Protests have erupted over stricter hijab laws, leading to violent repression by the government. Despite facing persecution and imprisonment, **Iranian Christians continue to spread the gospel**. In fact, Iran is believed to have the world's fastest-growing church due to a significant increase in conversions in recent years.

Anyone who chooses to follow God can face persecution (2 Tim 3:12). Yet we can take comfort in the Lord's promise that he will 'never leave us or forsake us' (Heb 13:5). Let us pray for believers who are facing persecution, that they would find strength and comfort in God during their trials.



# HOUSE VISITS

## BRINGING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST INTO HOMES

*Every week, lives are transformed during house visits throughout Lebanon. Many are coming to know Christ and being disciplined within their homes.*

Jesus sent out 12 disciples to conduct ministry visits, spreading hope and healing to people as they traveled throughout the region, as recorded in Matthew 10. 2,000 years later, thanks to your prayers and partnership in the gospel, Horizons is following in the disciples' footsteps by bringing the light of Christ into homes.

Horizons staff members use their relational skills to form deeper connections with people they meet, whether on the street or at a ministry event. **Middle Eastern hospitality makes it easy for staff to get invited into homes**, and they are good at steering the conversation toward Jesus while sipping tiny cups of strong coffee. Throughout Lebanon, Horizons staff make at least 70 of these house visits each week.

Opportunities to meet in homes build a level of mutual trust and openness that is not easily replicated within a church service. Many Muslims, fearful of visiting a church, can ask questions in a safe environment while building relationships with believers!

House visits are wonderful opportunities for our teams to actively live out their faith, reading the Word, discussing questions about scripture,

and—most importantly—praying together. As Susanne Johnson, a Horizons board member, shared after a recent house visit, "Once people get in the habit of doing things that disciples do, it is often just a matter of time before the truth takes root in their hearts and they become true followers of Christ."



People are being transformed through experiencing Christ in this way. **And it is not just those whom we visit who are being transformed.** Staff members, volunteers, and vision trip guests are also being inspired as they see God answer prayers and transform lives:



A former Muslim shared how she had thought we were slaves to God, but now that she knows that God is a Father, she is a daughter of God!

*Nada, Mejdlayya Center*

I felt like I was walking through the book of Acts after listening to the testimonies of two ladies and how they were drawn to Christ. They had heard the gospel preached and listened to stories of Jesus. They shared how, despite being strict followers of Islam, they and their husbands **could not resist the grace of God shown to them** through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Jesus revealed Himself in their dreams!

*Rich Duke, US Field Ministry*

Despite persecution and poverty, a lady in Nabaa, Beirut, was full of the joy of the Lord. **She had nothing, yet she had everything that mattered.** She was diagnosed with cancer and needed surgery to survive. One night, she had a powerful dream. Someone touched her, and a warm presence flowed through her body. The next day she went to see her doctor, who could not explain how she was completely healed!

*Kendall Johnson, vision trip guest*



*More testimonies and stories of transformation from house visits are coming to us every week! Know that through your support and prayers, the Lord is changing lives in Lebanon.*

*Continue to pray for staff members reaching communities through house visits—and pray that the Lord would open more doors to transforming lives throughout Lebanon!*

**For more ministry stories, follow us on social media.**

@HorizonsPDE  



# Eight Areas of Transformation

## That Everyone in Christ needs to Experience

Georges Housney wrote the Transformational Model into the Cubs to Lions course to help new Muslim-background believers in Christ to move beyond just 'being saved' into full maturity in the faith. This course helps them understand that salvation is only the beginning of our journey with Jesus. As they receive God's transformation into

each part of their lives, they become increasingly fruitful as they begin discipling others as well.

**We hope that this model will be an encouragement to you and useful to you, both in your personal devotions as well as in your discipleship of others.**

### Spiritual Transformation: Born of the Spirit

- Regeneration is not a mental exercise or a decision of man. *1 Corinthians 15:45*
- Born of God. *John 1:11-13, 25; 1 John 5:1*
- Born again, from above. *John 3:3*
- Born again by the living word. *1 Peter 1:23*
- Death to life. *Romans 6: 8-10; 8:9-13*
- From slaves to sons. *Romans 8:14,15; Galatians 3:26, 4:5; Ephesians 1:4*

### Heart Transformation

- From heart of stone to heart of flesh. *Ezekiel 11:19-20; Hebrews 8:10*
- Hearts opened. *Ephesians 1:18*
- Circumcision of the heart. *Romans 2:29*
- Hearts were afar off and defiled. *Mark 7:6-8, 15*

### Mind Transformation

- Mind of the flesh to mind of the spirit. *Romans 8:5-9*
- Not conformed to the world but transformed. *Romans 12:2*
- Having the mind of Christ. *Philippians 2:5*

### Character Transformation: Becoming strong

- We're being transformed into his likeness from glory to glory. *2 Corinthians 3:18*
- Maturity through suffering. *James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5*
- Perfect in Christ. *Colossians 1:28*
- Beautiful and gentle in spirit. *1 Peter 3:3-4*

### Moral and Ethical Transformation

- Moral transformation includes personal, social, and cultural actions.
- The old is gone; the new has come. *2 Corinthians 5:17*
- Genuine, God-given righteousness. *2 Corinthians 11:15*
- The Fruit of the Spirit. *Galatians 5:19-23*
- Put off the old and put on the new way of life. *Ephesians 4:22-24*
- Not conformed to former lusts but obedient. *1 Peter 1:14*

### Cultural Transformation: Kingdom of Darkness to Kingdom of Light

- From darkness to children of light. *Ephesians 5:8-14*
- Chosen people, holy nation...called out of darkness to light. *1 Peter 2:9*
- Walking in the light. *1 John 1:5-7*
- The inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. *Colossians 1:12*
- Changed community/affiliation/allegiance. *Acts 2:41*
- God chose us to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him. *James 2:5*
- You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God. *Acts 2:41*

### Religious Transformation: Works vs. Faith; From Religion to Relationship with God

- Freedom from religion of the law. *Galatians 5:16-18; Romans 7:4-6*
- From idols to the living God. *1 Thessalonians 1:3-5*

### Citizenship Transformation: From Earthly to Heavenly

- We shall be changed. *1 Corinthians 15:51,52*
- Transformed into his likeness from glory to glory. *1 Thessalonians 1:3-5*

You can learn more about the Transformational Model—and other helpful tools to equip and disciple believers—by joining one of our upcoming training events. Or you can take our online offering, the Engage Muslims with Christ course, a dynamic and interactive learning experience that will powerfully equip you for your witness to Muslims!

Discover more courses and training opportunities:

[horizonsinternational.org/training-opportunities](https://horizonsinternational.org/training-opportunities)

# YOUR GIFT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

By giving generously to those in need, we create opportunities to transform lives for the gospel. Even small amounts of worldly resources in the hands of indigenous believers make a huge spiritual impact. Together, we can bring hope and share the love of Christ with those who need it the most.



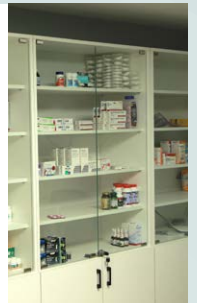
## Provide a Food Portion for a Family in Need

Your generous donation will provide essential food supplies for a family in some of the poorest communities in Lebanon. This simple act of kindness can show the love of Christ to those in need. Even this small amount can make a critical difference for the family that receives it.



## Supply Medicine for Those in Need

Many people in Lebanon cannot afford medicine under the nation's crippling economic crisis. Your gift will provide local people with medicine for chronic conditions, as well as dental, optical, and preventative healthcare. It will also support local churches ministering to their communities with help for medicine and medical emergencies.



## Sponsor a Refugee Child's Education

Your kind gift will enable a refugee child to receive an education and learn about Christ through School of Hope in Beirut, Lebanon! This donation will cover their tuition, books, supplies, and snacks. You can also be assigned a student and receive updates so that you can pray for them.



Explore more ways to give:

[horizonsinternational.org/giving-ideas](https://horizonsinternational.org/giving-ideas)



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