

Osama Bin Laden is responsible for more Muslims following Jesus than anyone else alive* today, according to Patrick Johnstone, the founding author of Operation World.

His claim, backed up by years of research, is made because the atrocities that are being committed by radical Islamists seem to be backfiring on them.

By that I mean that while Islamists are inflicting judgement on non-Muslims for their secular materialism, moderate Muslims see what is being done in the name of Islam and are saying to themselves, "If this is the truest expression of Islam, I don't want it." Some such moderates are choosing to find other ways of submitting to God, including the option of turning away from the 'way of the Prophet' (i.e. Muhammad) and instead following Islam's second most prominent prophet - *'isa al-masih* (Jesus Christ).

Johnstone's claim is supported by analysts such as David Garrison, who goes even further, saying that, "More Muslims have come to Christ in

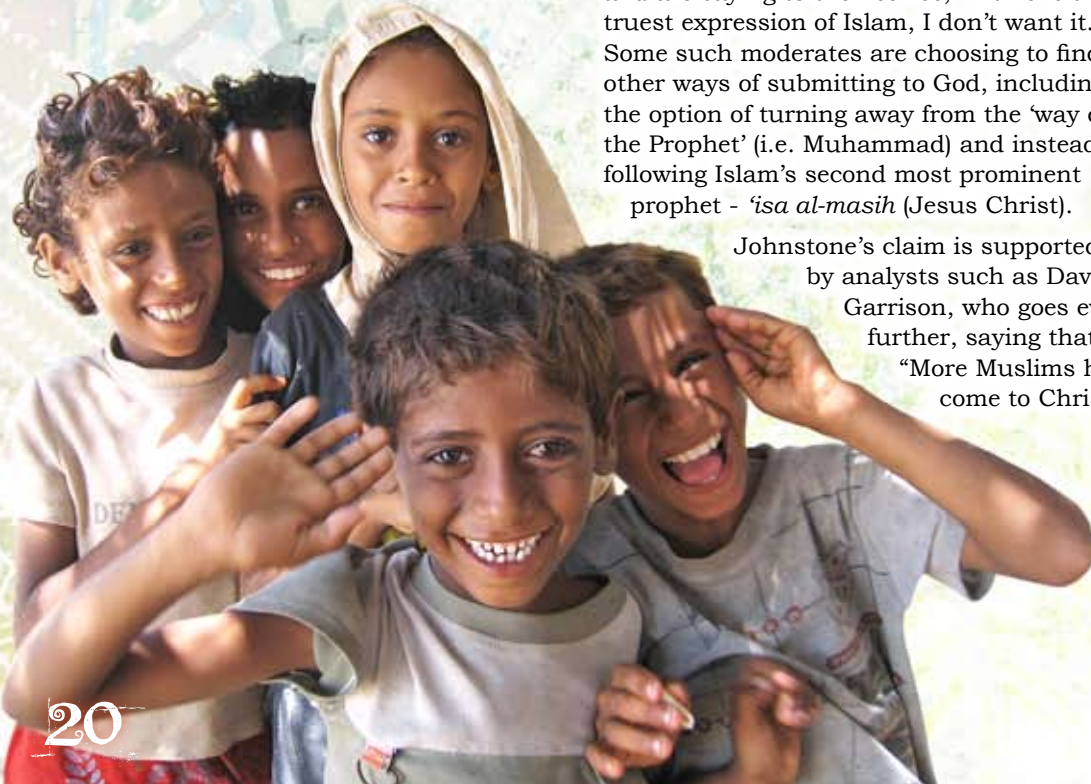
the past two decades than at any other point in history."

Brother Andrew has stated, "We must start spelling Islam 'I Sincerely Love All Muslims'. We need to take time to get to know Muslims and show them real love."

Taking this stance does not mean we have to become politically naive about the agenda of radical Muslims. I have always been concerned about the potential of such radicals especially when they become politically subversive or organise themselves into the networks that are sympathetic to Al-Qaeda's vision. The Christian response to this sort of Muslim is the power-encounter which comes through concerted intercessory prayer. However, the Muslims who are turning to Christ are not from the radical core but the moderate fringe. These are the ones I call 'ordinary' Muslims. My optimism for Muslims comes not from the popular lack of understanding that is usually based on shallow news-coverage, but from firsthand experience of living and travelling in the Muslim world. It is my personal knowledge of Muslims, both radical and ordinary ones, that has brought me to the place where the love of God can come in and dissipate fear. The Bible is clear that love and fear cannot co-exist (1 John 4:18). As a result, my instinctive reaction to Muslims is no longer one of fear or anger but compassion.

In the past I felt a sense of isolation amongst western Christians due to my belief that Muslims could - and would - follow Jesus,

GRACE SEEKING Muslims



but now many others believe the same. Destructive fear is turning into constructive prayer. This is a trend that has been paralleled over the past twenty-five years by a marked increase in the activity of God's Spirit among Muslims around the world. Take, for instance, a Pakistani-born British Muslim woman who became a follower of Jesus in Leicester. She told me that when she visits her extended family in her Pakistani hometown, she finds more Muslims following Jesus there than she does in the UK. Logic says this should be the other way around but these are the upside-down ways of God.

It seems that the early twenty-first century is likely to be a time in which hundreds of thousands of Muslims choose to follow Jesus. According to the research of Reverend Dr David Barrett, in one area of India up to fifty thousand Muslims are believers, and hundreds of thousands of Muslims are choosing to follow Jesus in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Iran, Palestine, Iraq, Turkey and across North Africa.

It is time for the western church to make a connection between the patient 'tilling of hard ground' over the centuries and the present movements of Muslims to Christ. New technology (such as satellite TV and the Internet) is also reaching the once-isolated areas to reap a harvest. Sources in the Gulf report seeing the DVD of the Mel Gibson film *The Passion of the Christ* selling out of the boots of cars in areas where there were no

cinemas because of the strict Wahabi Islamic laws. The Spirit of God is also working through dreams, visions, healing and deliverance. Jesus is appearing to Muslims in various places. Here are some examples.

- A group of Nigerian Muslims saw Jesus as they were performing the hajj pilgrimage at the *ka'aba* in the heart of Mecca.
- Jesus told a string of individual Gulf Arabs the exact name and address of a Christian bookshop in a neighbouring Middle-Eastern country where they could buy the Bible. The shop owner told me that one of them walked in and pointed to a picture of Jesus on the wall and said, "He told me where I could buy the injil (Gospel)."
- Minaz is from the isma'ili group within Islam, and owns a luxury-car dealership in the north of England. One day in 1999, a light came into the room. The face of Jesus appeared in the light and He spoke to Minaz for about ten minutes. During this time Minaz felt the love of God enter his body, cleanse him internally and heal him. He began to follow Jesus that day and soon afterwards his wife joined him. They now run an outreach to others.
- Jesus appeared simultaneously to an Islamic cleric in the Middle East and at the foot of the hospital bed of his dangerously ill daughter in Germany. As Jesus told the cleric He was healing the girl, she was instantly cured. When the father received confirmation by phone of the miraculous healing, he left the country with his family

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in order to follow Jesus.

- Sources in Iran say that since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, tens of thousands of Iranian Shi'ite Muslims are following Jesus Christ inside Iran, in spite of sporadic persecution. Thousands more Iranians around the world are following Jesus.
- A North African nation has one of the fastest church-growth movements in the Muslim world. An estimated fifty to eighty thousand Muslims are following Jesus and an estimated fifty home fellowships are being set up every year. Believers are meeting in homes daily in spite of opposition. They also experience dreams, visions and healings. Even former terrorists and Islamic sorcerers are now following Jesus.
- One Christian organisation reports that over five hundred Muslims are visiting its Arabic website each month to enquire

about Jesus. It is also reported that over the past ten years a thousand home fellowships of believers from Muslim backgrounds have been set up across the Middle East.

- Amer is from a nation that borders Israel. He was a radical who became a violent jihadic activist. He ended up in Khartoum, the capital of North Sudan. One evening he was praying alone in a mosque and the voice of Jesus boomed into the mosque asking, “Why are you persecuting Me?” At the same time the glass window high above Amer shattered and Qur’ans toppled off shelves. This supernatural intervention triggered Amer’s search for Jesus. He soon took the dangerous step of becoming one of His followers.

Beware – God is at work!

God is not only touching Muslims but He is also gently creating a new climate of faith for them among Christians.

Open Doors with Brother Andrew ended a seven-year prayer initiative for the Communist world in 1989 – the year the Berlin Wall came down. They then embarked on a ten-year prayer initiative for the Muslim world. In 2000, I visited the World Prayer Centre, directed by Dr C. Peter Wagner in Colorado Springs, to familiarise myself with their state-of-the-art technology. It is used to track the millions of Christians around the world who are praying for Muslims, especially during the Ramadan month of fasting. Shortly after my visit to the Centre,

Peter Wagner reported that the intercessory networks for Muslims around the world were growing so fast, they had become impossible to count and were therefore humanly ‘out of control’. God is initiating this prayer thrust for the remaining unreached.

What began as droplets of Muslims following Christ in the 1980s became a trickle in the 1990s and a tiny flow around the turn of the millennium. The attacks in America on 11 September 2001 proved to be another factor that compelled Christians to pray; they also loosened the heart allegiance of thousands of Muslims from their traditional structures, causing them to turn to Jesus Christ.

The flow is not yet a flood; nevertheless, Christian leaders in the Muslim world tell me that the phenomenon of Muslim enquirers who want to talk about spiritual issues is now a daily occurrence. The baptism of believers from Muslim backgrounds has also become a regular feature of local church life in several Muslim lands.

The Great Commission contains no exclusion clause for Muslims. God loves them as much as anyone else, and His grace is actively seeking them right where they are, both within the Muslim world and the West. ☞

Steve Bell is National Director of Interserve England and Wales. This article is extracted from his book, Grace for Muslims?, published in 2006 by Authentic Media. If you would like to buy this book, please contact our office.

* Osama Bin Laden was killed in May 2011.

