

# In the Wake of a New Day

September 2024

As I am writing this message to you, today is September 11 th . Twenty-three years ago on this same day, I was traveling on a plane in the early morning hours headed to Pasadena, California, when our flight was interrupted by the pilot who told us we needed to make an emergency landing because of a horrible accident of some sort in New York City. In confusion and bewilderment, we made a nosedive landing in Phoenix, Arizona, where I spent the following four days in a hotel room watching multiple news reports describing the historical horrors of the terrorist attacks against our country. My life has never been the same since.

One of the things I cherish most about being in ministry is having experienced God's calling on my life. Tenderly and dramatically his will was made clear to me in 1983 when I left my business career and followed his leading into a life of ministry which has endured till this day. Hearing his voice and responding to his calling is the challenge each of us Christians must practice daily. We only want to do what God wants us to do and go where he wants us to go. If we pursue the Christian life according to our own purposes and using our own strength, we will tire and falter every time; our work will be fruitless.

As I sat in that hotel room in Phoenix for four days in September of 2001, an unexplainable pull towards understanding Islam and knowing Muslims better welled up inside of me. How could 16 men from Saudi Arabia convince themselves that God wanted them to initiate a monumental suicide mission and plunge hundreds of innocent lives to their deaths through massive destruction and demonic intent? What Scriptures were they reading? What understanding of God did they have? By the time I departed from that hotel room, I felt a calling to the Muslim world to be a witness for the Good News of Jesus Christ. It has been a calling which has lasted for the last twenty-three years of my life.



During these last two decades, I have seen dramatic changes in the Muslim world. I have worked during the horrors of Al Qaeda, the Iraqi war, and the ascendancy of ISIS. Yet, through it all, I have watched Christ touch thousands of lives, soften many hearts, and confront the evils of radical Islam. Two events in the Arab world have moved Islam towards a more moderate expression, inching it closer to the teachings of Jesus. The first involves the Arab Spring and what impact it had in Egypt. In 2011, after



Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi  
at an Egyptian Church celebrating  
Eastern Orthodox Christmas

massive demonstrations, President Mubarak was removed from office because of his authoritative and repressive policies. Then in 2013, President Morsi was forced to resign as bigger and historical public demonstrations demanded the country reject his radical Islamic beliefs and his association with the Brotherhood of Islam. Since 2013, under the current President Sisi, a Sufi Muslim, Egypt has embraced and practiced a more moderate Islam.

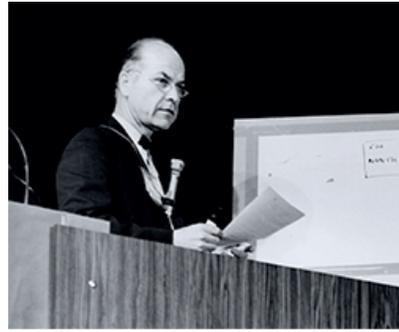
The second great advance in the Arab Muslim world has been the new leadership in Saudi Arabia that practically no one saw coming. The new, brash, young Prince Muhammad, despite his many personal flaws, has initiated numerous aggressive policies moving the country towards a more moderate practice of Islam. He has eliminated the religious police of Saudi Arabia, banned the practice of Wahhabism, the radical Muslim religion which greatly influenced Osama Bin Laden and the attacks on September 11, and the general spreading of radical Islam around the world. Prince Muhammad has now become friendly and conversive with Christians, and, as a result, many experts believe above-ground churches will be allowed in Saudi Arabia in the very near future.

Even with these significant advances within the Arab world there is still a lot of work to be done. Please continue to pray for the Middle East. The one country which is still aggressively exporting radical Islamic beliefs and terrorism is Iran. Religious police dominate the country. The Revolutionary Guard still foments unrest and ungodly terrorism throughout the Middle East as we witnessed clearly in Israel with the unimaginable terrors of Hamas. Mission workers, historical churches, and now a growing underground church of Christian Muslim believers throughout the Middle East are actively praying, hoping and imagining a new Iran which will reject the theological bankruptcy and cruelty of the Ayatollah Khamenei and his radical Islamic regime. Many experts believe that day may be coming soon. The younger generation of the Middle East wants little to do with radical Islam and the pain and destruction it has caused in their countries and the world. Young Iranians are risking their lives, taking to the streets crying for reform and greater freedoms. Please pray for these brave people.

A lot has happened since September 11, 2001. Armies of Christians around the world have been praying, dropping their fishing nets, witnessing, and becoming involved in what many people are calling a great harvest period of Muslims becoming followers of Jesus. I am not the only Christian worker who was suddenly called from a career to the urgent need to labor with Jesus in the Muslim world. Out of the tragedies of 911 have come new hope, thousands of new missions, and abundant and eternal life for many Arab and Muslim people worldwide.

And during this same time, the Good News has not only advanced in the Middle East, but throughout the world. In 1974, Ralph Winter, the founder of my mission organization, Frontier

Fellowship, proclaimed at the Lausanne worldwide missions conference that 60 percent of the world's people groups were still unreached, having no indigenous church or viable Christian witness of their own. Today, that number has miraculously shrunk to 25 percent. The majority of people in the world today have gained access to the Good News, yet there are many challenges which remain. We are inching closer to the entire world's population, with its numerous cultures and languages, having their own indigenous church; but there is still a lot of work to do. We are living today in what missiologists call the greatest acceleration of Christianity in human history. I feel blessed to have participated in a small part of this massive advance of Christian faith worldwide in our lifetime.



Dr. Ralph Winter

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the calling of the Apostle Nathaniel. What every human heart wants more than anything is to be known. Jesus touched Nathaniel deeply when he approached him and said he had known him from long ago. Today, we live in a very fast-paced world in which people are becoming increasingly isolated and suffering from what has become an epidemic of loneliness. People are wanting and dying to be known by others; they need community, faith, and purpose as never before. And Jesus knows this about us. He is calling us to action and involvement in his worldwide family of faith where love, grace, and truth prevail. The story of Nathaniel goes as follows; "As Philip and Nathaniel approached, Jesus said, 'Now here is a genuine son of Israel – a man of complete integrity.' 'How do you know about me?' Nathaniel asked. Jesus replied, 'I could see you under the fig tree before Phillip found you.' Then Nathaniel exclaimed, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God – the King of Israel!' Jesus asked him, 'Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this. I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down with the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.'" (John 1:47-51)

No one knows us better than God. He is always knocking at our door wanting a more intimate relationship with us. And what God wants more than anything is to introduce us to others who know him, too, whether down the street or on the other side of the globe. He loves his children and gathers his family together. And once we are known by God, he gives us tasks and assignments to accomplish for his kingdom. He knows there is no greater joy for our souls than serving others in need.

Thank you for your support, prayers, and encouragement through all these years. Praise God for all he has done through our humble efforts together. May we never lose hope no matter how dark the day may seem.