



**CBM** *embracing a broken world  
through word & deed*

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Greetings from Beirut!

As the Middle East continues to dominate the news with events in Gaza and Iraq grabbing the headlines again, the crisis in Syria continues its gruesome course. As ISIS moves its new tranche of weapons captured from the Iraqi army into Syria, the opposition to the Syrian regime is becoming increasingly radicalized. The conflict has now become a slow meat grinder with hundreds being killed every month, while families and communities across Syria being systematically destroyed. There are no good guys in this conflict and there are no visible and viable solutions that are being considered.

Some months ago I was reminded that the intensity of the conflict here in the Arab Muslim world reflects the intensity of the conflict in the spirit world for the souls of Arab men and women, and opposition to the reign of God in the region. However, in the midst of the “fog of war” it is very easy to miss the signs of the power of God at work in the midst of the evil. Let me share with you one of the most remarkable moves of the Holy Spirit in the world today that the secular and Christian media have missed.

1. As the conflict unfolded and spilled in Lebanon over the past three years, the Lebanese Baptist community (LSESD) decided to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Being a church based agency, it worked to empower local churches inside Syria and in Lebanon to reach beyond their comfort zones and social boundaries and help those in need. This is a story of reconciliation that has not been told yet. Syria had occupied Lebanon for 20 years and every Lebanese family has stories of their homes being destroyed, family members killed, imprisoned and tortured, and the country systematically destroyed. The decision by a handful of Lebanese pastors to reach out to Syrian refugees in Lebanon meant being able to forgive and then lead their congregations to forgive. This went against the grain of Lebanese society and till date most of these pastors face opposition for their actions from family, neighbours and others in the community. In one church, 85% of the congregation left the church because the pastor decided to help the refugees. Inside Syria, where the Protestant Churches over the centuries had become very insular, many among them some decided to make their churches places of compassion for people of any faith to find help. Such transformations have only been possible because of the work of the Holy Spirit. I remember one pastor telling me, “We prayed for revival for years and nothing happened. Yet as we started helping the refugees and the poor in our community, revival came to the church.”
2. LSESD, working through atleast 30 churches in both countries is today providing food aid to about 40,000 individuals every month. Besides that, it is enabling the churches to provide medical assistance, and to work with children, who are becoming increasingly traumatized. This past year LSESD has also provided winterization items such as blankets, mattresses, stoves and other critical items to atleast 5,000 families. All this has been possible because of the generous funding from churches, foundations, individuals, and donor governments. In a conflict where the lines of conflict are based on religion, ethnic group and tribe, showing compassion to anyone with no conditionality is a powerful witness. In a region, where Christians are being driven out, Christians who remain and show compassion to those outside

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**If you wish to become a Partner in Mission with us and support the work in Lebanon, there are two options:**

1. Go on-line to [www.cbmin.org](http://www.cbmin.org). Select the “donate on-line” option, select field staff support, select “Das, Rupen and Mamta”, and follow the steps indicated.
2. Contact Barb Keys at **Canadian Baptist Ministries** 7185 Millcreek Drive, Mississauga ON L5N 5R4 Phone 905-821-3533. Email [bkeys@cbmin.org](mailto:bkeys@cbmin.org)

their community and faith runs counter to every social value in the region today. Many Muslim refugees have commented to the churches, “We never knew that Christians could be kind. Everything we had heard about Christians is wrong.” As encouraging as this statement is, it is an indictment of how we have behaved in the past. God has indeed been merciful on us.

3. In the churches through whom we are working, we are seeing hundreds and thousands of Muslims turn up wanting to know more about Jesus (we are hearing similar things from others). Many are in discipleship classes and some in this past year have openly acknowledged their faith through appropriate rituals. There is no explanation for this other than it being a move of the Holy Spirit.\* Many are looking for community as their families and clans have been destroyed. Others are desperate for food. Others want to see their children back in school after having lost two to three years as they fled their homes. Yet others are seeking medical assistance, something that they can no longer afford. As churches have tried to meet these needs with genuine concern while making no distinction between Christian and Muslim, whether they attended the church or not, or whether they were Lebanese or Syrian, the Holy Spirit has ministered deeply to those seeking assistance. As many of these refugees have come to know the Living Christ, some of them who have gone back to Syria, have been active in sharing their faith. One church in Lebanon has already planted 3 fellowships inside Syria. Others in Lebanon are bringing members of their family and tribe to the churches. History is repeating itself. Adolf von Harnack, the German Lutheran theologian in his monumental book *The Mission and the Expansion of Christianity*, stated that demonstrating the “Gospel of Love and Charity” as they continued to preach Christ, was one of the main factors in the rise of the early Church in the first four centuries.

We stand on the shoulders of spiritual giants as generations of missionaries and Arab Christians prayed, planted and watered and saw very little fruit. Yet, it is their faithfulness that is allowing us to reap today.

In the past many months as I find myself confronted by monumental evil, I have been thinking much about what the Kingdom of God would be like when He returns and establishes His reign here on earth. I don't think there has been a time I have yearned more for Rev. 11:15 to be fulfilled. “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.” So pray with us as Christ taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In the meantime He has allowed us to partner with Him in the work of reconciliation He is doing. Praise God with us for what we are beginning to see happen here. Pray with us that those seeking Christ would find Him and then grow in their faith through the Word, prayer and fellowship with other followers of Christ.

Your faithful partnership in prayer and in giving is bearing fruit for eternity.

Blessings as always,

*Rupen and Mamta*

Global Field Staff with Canadian Baptist Ministries

\* Some of you may be interested in David Garrison's new book called *A Wind in the House of Islam*, in which he traces the move the Holy Spirit through history in the Muslim world. He estimates (and documents) that hundreds of thousands are now turning to Christ – something that the Western Church is unaware of. What we are seeing in Syria is a continuation of what he documented from the rest of the world.