

“What the Middle East Needs Now”

Special Edition

Micah 4:1-4

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Bob: It’s tremendous to be with you this morning. I’m a lifelong friend of John Christopher. Because of him I could be here today. You know, you can have new friends and you can have old friends. But at our age you can’t have any new old friends.

(Laughter) So take care of the ones you’ve got, okay? Now with the help of my friend Don, maybe he will usher us into the presence of the Lord. *(Music)*

Thank you. The Old 100th. Let the good news come now, O God, not only in words but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. We thank You for Your call upon our lives from Christ our Lord to the church Your bride and to the mission, Your cause. And we pray that the good news that has come to us will come in power in the Holy Spirit to all of the Muslim peoples of the world. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bob: Twice in my life the hair on the back of my hands has stood up, and the hair on the back of my neck. The first time was when I heard Ludwig Beethoven’s “Hallelujah From the Mount of Olives.” And the second time was when I was in a U.S. military helicopter flying into one of the most closed countries in the world, northern Iraq, to translate for the U.S. military in April of ’91, following what was called the first Gulf War. It wasn’t always so clear that I should live in northern Iraq. I and my family were the first Americans to live in Iraq in a generation or two. And my home church looked at my application to be sent by them, and it sat there for a long time on their desk like a ham at a Bar Mitzvah. *(Laughter)* They weren’t at all sure that this was something that I should be doing either. *(Laughter)* Thank you for not saying that I’m a man of many convictions, by the way. Most of those were misdemeanors. *(Laughter)* I have to explain that to people.

But I found a team and an agency to help us. And we believed that the Lord would have us to live among the Kurdish people, the Kurds who live between Iraq and a hard place. Ha, ha! *(Laughter)* We studied our Arabic in Jordan. And then after the Gulf War it became possible to move to northern Iraq. I translated for the U.S. military in the summer of ’91. And when that military effort came to a close, we simply headed back into the neighborhood and made our home among the Kurds for the next six years.

Now here’s the word of the Lord from Micah chapter 4. *“It shall come about in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be lifted up as the highest of all the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills. And the nations will stream up to it. And the nations shall say to one another, ‘Come! Let us go up to the mountain of the house of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that we may learn His ways and follow in His paths.’ The law of the LORD will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will arbitrate between strong nations far and wide, and He will settle the disputes between the nations.”*

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And then the famous text: *“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and shall study war no more. And nation will not raise up sword against nation. And every man shall live in piece under his own vine, and no one will make them afraid, because the word of the LORD has been spoken.”*

If you can think of anything more important than the word of the Lord being spoken, to bring about the kind of peace, the kind of *shalom*, the kind of *salim* that you and I and the Middle East need now, you’ll have to tell me because I can’t think of it. So the coming of the word of the Lord to the peoples of the Middle East is the most preeminent need in our times. Thank God it has already begun in small ways.

My wife and I wanted to bring the hope of Christ to a people who were without hope and without Christ. I’ve become something of an expert on the Kurdish people in the world. I wrote this book called *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Late Lessons from Kurdistan*. And it’s become something of a standard. It hasn’t sold that well. Maybe that’s because of the endorsement on the back. Once you put it down, you can’t pick it up again. *(Laughter)* More about that some other time. *(Laughter)*

It wasn’t at all clear how we would proceed in our work in the Middle East. But you know, the Lord is the Artist. And He’s the One who gives the providence to do this. And so after I translated for the U.S. we taught American history and American government at a university in northern Iraq called Devoke University. My students were eager, eager to learn about the free world. And we taught them the best parts. We taught them to memorize the best parts of the Declaration of Independence. *“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. And among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”* They were eager to memorize the Preamble of the Constitution.

And so they want what we’ve got. They want a free world. But I wanted to tell them what I’m telling you, that you cannot get to a free world without Jesus Christ and a long conversation with the Bible and the word of the Lord, and the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule and the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray, and the way He regarded women and children and minorities. All of these things become part of the conversation that takes us to challenge the human nature which has brought us to the world of Cain and Lamech and finally to 1 John 5:19: *“The whole world lies under the power of the evil one”*, to give us deliverance and bring us into a 1 John 3:8 world. *“The Son of Man appeared to destroy the works of the devil.”*

So our part was to convert them to Christ. And if you can think of anything more important than that you’ll have to tell me, because I can’t. No wonder T. C. Studd said, *“If God calls me to be a missionary, I would not stoop to be a king.”*

Participant: Amen.

Bob: We’ve had some success among the Kurds, and finally some movements. A movement is a definition that we’ve agreed to with all the other mission agencies. A movement to Christ in the Muslim world means a thousand Muslims coming to faith over a relatively short period of time. And it must involve Muslims who are disciple making disciples who make disciples into four generations.

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I’ll tell a story that tells the whole story. This is the story of Layla, an Arabic woman from the city of Faluja, and her husband and her children, and how they made it to the City of Refuge.

Layla closed the door to her home and walked away with her husband and her children as she heard the rat-a-tat fire of guns on the next street. She could taste ash in her mouth and smell the smoke in her nostrils as ISIS moved from house to house, blowing them up and taking prisoners. They had to drop their pictures and their suitcases and grab their children and keep going. And they couldn’t run fast enough. And the black vehicles were coming at them from the city.

And just when things were looking their blackest, a white pickup truck pulled up in front of Layla and her husband. And the driver rolled down the window and said, “Get in the back.”

And they got in the back and they rode off to the northeast, to the city that we call the City of Refuge. And if people can make it to the City of Refuge, we will be there and the United Nations will be there to provide them safety. With nothing that they had from their past and with a very hopeless future they were assigned a tent and given the basic supplies of health and food for the day and the week. And then life got very boring and tedious for Layla and her husband.

But one night she had a dream. And in the dream the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her and said to her, “I will send you a man tomorrow, and he will show you the truth about Me.” Layla recognized the man in the dream and had seen him before.

And so the next day a man we’ll call ananias came to their tent area. And she waved at him like this, and told him about the dream. He said, “Yes, I can help you.”

And he gave to Layla and her husband the first teaching that they’d ever had about the Lord Christ, and a chip to put in their phone that could give them the stories in Arabic from Genesis to Jesus Christ, 35 stories that tell the basic essential story. And they began to listen.

And you know, in a society which is non-literate, you can memorize stories. And they began to listen to them over and over until they memorized these 35 stories. And when they got to the story of Jesus Christ crucified, buried, resurrected and ascended, they broke. “This is the word from heaven; ah, yes! Me too!”

This is not just an intellectual story. With the coming of our encounter with the Son of God who had died for us, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, I break too. And to think of His words on the cross—to take care of His mother with His dying breath, to have the sense to look at the man next to Him and provide for him salvation that day, and to look upon those who were His enemies and to say, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*”—these seven words of Christ that were remembered by the people for 35 years until Luke and Matthew could show up and write it down have become for us the essentials of what it means to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it was for Layla and her husband. And they looked at one another after their baptism. And Layla said, “It is not enough for us just to believe. We’ve got to tell our neighbors. It is as though we have been given a white pickup truck.”

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And so asking for more of these chips and going door to door, they began to invite their neighbors to start the journey through the Bible to know Christ. Do not imagine that everyone wanted the chip or the story. But if only one in twenty in this vast refugee camp received the chip, and one in ten of those began to follow the way of Christ, you still had enough until she could count 24 families that had come to faith and were baptized.

And then she was told by ananias, “You’re not the only one handing these out.” There were six streams of the good news going forth, until we finally realized that more than a thousand people had come to faith in the City of Refuge.

Nothing like this has happened before in the history of Islam in Iraq or any other place. So we are now able to count movements. And I’ve got a chart here. If you can’t see it that well, that’s okay. But you can see that it’s a graph. This is 14 centuries of Christian/Muslim encounter from the time of Mohammed. And what it shows you is that for the first 13 centuries there were no movements to Christ among Muslims. But in our day, beginning in the 1990s, there have been an astonishing number of movements, a thousand or more Muslims in the here and the there—eleven of them in the last decade of the 20th century, and 104 of them in the first fifteen years of the 21st century. And we have the word of Micah. *“In the latter days the mountain of the LORD shall be lifted up as the highest of all the mountains, and the nations will stream up to it.”*

Now if you want to do this for me, take your finger and stretch it all the way to the left. Be respectful to the person next to you, but do that right now. *(Laughter)* This is history’s time line. And bring it all the way up to the top and then into your right palm, right here. That’s history. That’s revealed history from Genesis until now. And put your finger right there and say with me to yourself, “The latter days.”

Men: The latter days.

Bob: “The last times.”

Men: The last times.

Bob: And we have the real hope that there will be more people coming to faith in these last times than in all the other ages combined, especially in the least, the last.

So actually there are three times in which the head stood up on the back of my neck. And the third one was last month, when I and my colleague took a trip to Baghdad. I’d never spent much time in Baghdad, but he has a vision for Baghdad, that we might bring the hope of Jesus Christ to still farther places than it’s ever been brought before.

Alas, I can tell you with grief in my heart that the endangered species that matters most in the Middle East is Christians. There are far, far fewer Christians in the Middle East today than there were a century ago. A century ago, as you know, with the Ottoman Empire the Armenian people and the Greek people were nearly exterminated and driven from the Ottoman Empire. And we are witnessing in our day the disappearance and the near extinction of the historical presence of Christianity in Baghdad, Mosul and these cities. We spoke with four brave men who are pastors in what’s left of Baghdad. One of them, Pastor Faruk of the Presbyterian church, said that in the year 2000 he had 1200 members in his church. Today he has 100 members in his church. There is a real brain drain. If we leave only the bad guys left in Baghdad, what kind of a world will we have?

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And it's the same with the other struggling beleaguered churches and these brave men that have stayed. But there are none of these men that can live openly to share the gospel of Christ with Muslims. They're more like submarines with the hatches battened down, existing in a sea of Islam. So I want your prayers, because not only do we have to go back to the Bible. We have to go back to Baghdad with the Bible and bring about the hope of Jesus Christ. For the future of Christianity in the Middle East must be the conversion of Muslims for the first time in history in great numbers.

Now we have little examples of how that has happened. But we now must believe in the Lord for these prophecies from Micah, and that men would lay down their swords and beat them into plowshares and study war no more and live in safety. I know a lot of people in the Middle East whose children are not safe tonight, and that's why they want out. That's why they want to come here. They want to come to where it's safe. *“Every man shall live in peace under his own fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid,”* because the word of the Lord has been spoken. So let's go and speak the word of the Lord as Brave Men, and trust the Lord with the results of that. We have His word, that people will finally say, *“Come! Let us go.”*

Now we will pay a great price before this is finished. And we will have more martyrs. Everyone wants to look at the end of the Bible and find Revelation 7:9, where it says that “a great multitude from every tribe, nation and language was gathered around the throne.” Before you can get to 7:9 you've got to go through 6:9. And Revelation 6:9 is the martyrs below the throne who say, “How long until our blood is avenged?” And the Lord says, “Give each of them a white robe,” and says, “Wait a little longer until the number I have to be killed has been fulfilled.”

So let us be sober-minded. I don't think Baghdad is a place for families. It's a place for singles. And it's for couples who have their pillow talk and would decide that Christ matters most. And His cause matters most of all.

I do have this gospel of John in Kurdish. It's the first book of the Bible ever translated into the Kurdish language. What do you think about that? This is the work of the first believers that we were privileged to see, the fruit of faith in northern Iraq.

I'll read to you from the gospel of John in Kurdish. Well big deal; that won't help you very much, will it? *(Laughter)* Unless I translate it as well.

(Kurdish) The gospel of John, chapter 10, verses 14-16. *(Kurdish)* “Jesus said,” *(Kurdish)* “I am the Good Shepherd.” *(Kurdish)* “And I know My sheep,” *(Kurdish)* “and My sheep know Me.” *(Kurdish)* “Just as the Father knows Me,” *(Kurdish)* “and I know the Father. *(Kurdish)* “And I lay down My life for the sheep.” *(Kurdish)* “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.” *(Kurdish)* “I must bring them also.” *(Kurdish)* “They shall hear My voice.” *(Kurdish)* “There shall be one flock and one Shepherd.”

Do you hear the word of the Lord? Thanks be to God!

Participant: Amen.

Bob: “I have other sheep that are not of this fold.” They're not our kind. “I must bring them also.” This is where the destiny of the world is moving.

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If you want to know what is about to happen in the Middle East, I’m going to make a prediction. You’re lucky to be here this morning. Get ready to text your friends.

(Laughter) You can say you were there when it was first predicted. After it comes true, you’ll be famous. *(Laughter)*

What’s about to happen in the Middle East? I’m not a prophet. I’m not the son of a prophet. I’m from a non-prophet organization. *(Laughter)* What’s about to happen in the Middle East? An ingathering of harvest like we’ve never seen before, as we rely upon the promises of God. *“This gospel of the kingdom must be p-reached as a testimony to all the ends of the earth, and then the end shall come.”* This is the only place in the Bible where these six words are used: *“and then the end shall come.”*

Arthur Enger wrote a great poem about this in 1902. I’ve kept it with me. I say it to myself almost every day. It’s called “God Is Working His Purpose Out.” This is how it goes.

*“God is working His purpose out
As year succeeds to year.
God is working His purpose out,
And the time is drawing near.
Nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that will surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.
From utmost east to utmost west,
Where human feet have trod,
By the mouth of many messengers
Goes forth the voice of God.
‘Give ear to Me, you continents,
Ye islands, give ear to Me!’,
That the earth may be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.
What must we do to work God’s work,
To prosper and increase
The kingdom of God and the day of the Lorde,
And bring in the age of peace?
What must we do to hasten the day,
The day that will surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God,
As the waters—“*

Men, you’ve got to believe in this finality, this great happily ever after, Revelation chapter 22, the conclusive end to history, as all of history moves ineluctably towards God’s great final purposes. I’ve always wanted to use that word in public, Sig. *(Laughter)*

Sig: Can you say it again?

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Bob: Ineluctably towards the end. It’s not that we are better than anyone else. Daniel Niles of Srilanka, himself from a Buddhist background who became a Christian, said that *“Christianity is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”*

Participant: Amen.

Bob: We have a testimony of Christ. We are not a better culture. We are not a better language. We are not oppressors of others. We want them back. We want them like Aslan brought back the statues that were there in the witch’s brew of the castle there beyond the wall. He leaps the wall in Narnia and breathes on them and restores them to their humanity. These are people who have been captured by the dark side. And we have this great promise that Christ has *“delivered us from the dominion of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”* And it’s not enough that we’ve been given a pickup truck. So let’s be about this great purpose of our lives—yes, to know Christ, yes, to be in His church, but also to be part of His great purpose.

I’ll close with a formal ending and then I’ll take some questions. Is that all right? You know, before I went to the Middle East, people said, “Why don’t you wait till the Middle East calms down?” *(Laughter)* When I got there I studied Arabic in Jordan. My missionary teacher, George Kelsey who has been there since 1956, said, “Oh, they said the same thing to me.” *(Laughter)*

Participant: Wow!

Bob: I imagine that when Samuel Zwemer went out in 1890 they would have said to him, “Mr. Zwemer, why don’t you wait till the Middle East calms down?” *(Laughter)* And can you imagine, perhaps two thousand years ago, when God the Father called a council of the angels and said, “The time for all of the prophecies is to be fulfilled and the Son of God will be born in Bethlehem”, the angels could have responded, “Heavenly Father, why don’t You wait till the Middle East calms down?” *(Laughter)* “There’s a Herod down there. And then You’ll have no ‘Joy to the World.’ You’ll have no peace on earth. You’ll have no ‘Hallelujah Chorus.’”

We are going to have to be Brave Men and take upon ourselves the same calling as Jesus Christ. *“As the Father has sent Me, so send I you.”* Our destiny is to free the peoples of northern Iraq and southern Lebanon, and invite the peoples of all the Middle East and the world, and the unreached peoples of Christ to the Communion table. As the dwarf said in Tolkien’s *Return of the rings*, *“Victory is impossible. Death seems likely. What are we waiting for?”* *(Laughter)*

Friends, on some future day when this spiritual battle has been won, we will look back to this day and say that we paid a great price. And the price we paid was worth it. And we will give thanks to God that though we felt foolish as Moses, who stuttered before the Pharaohs of the world, in our weakness we did proclaim the peace, the *shalom* and the *salim* that the Middle East and indeed the whole world needs now. All for Thy majesty, King of glory, all for Thee. For Thine is the dominion and the holiness and the splendor and the adoration and the magnificence, and the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever and ever and—How long is that? Forever and ever. We give Him then all the forever and ever. Amen.

Participant: Amen.

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Bob: Thanks be to God Almighty. Amen. And now, heavenly Father, come to us in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We give all of our people. We don't want to resist You in any way. I ask for every person here that they might hear from You and say yes to You new and fresh, as Lord. As the One who calls us to the church and to Your cause. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you for this opportunity. I will take some questions if I can.

(Applause)

Sig: And you men know we have a mic at the back with bill and me. I'd like to just ask him one question. Bob, that's very compelling. I'm thinking. Why don't we just get a white van and drive to the Middle East now and then we can support you. And then I think that they haven't built a bridge there yet. But nevertheless, I'm very compelled about what's going on in the Middle East. But what do I do about my neighbor here in Pittsburgh, this Muslim or a Middle Eastern? I mean, I always think that the Muslims have a strong faith, but not all Muslims are devout. I mean, can you give us a little glimpse of what a Muslim living in America might believe?

Bob: First, let's be people that welcome. Let's remember who we are from Leviticus chapter 19 verse 34. *“The stranger among you shall be as your neighbor, and you shall love him as you love yourself.”* This trumps any other concept that you might have about how we should treat the people coming to us from other countries. So let's be welcomers. We're goers, we're senders, we're welcomers. And let's make this the City of Refuge, because they've come here to find what they can to make a better life for themselves. It's a terrible drain on the other places when the good people come here, but that's what's happening.

And then there are all manner of Muslims as there are Christians. And not all of them are as faithful as you and I would assume them to be. I do have a Scripture which I think is important in our relationship with Muslims. And if you have a relationship with Muslims, and they are interested in you and you show some interest in them, I do believe in going first and saying, “Tell us about the holiday that's coming up. It's Ramadan. I've heard about Ramadan. Tell me about your family, what it was like over there,” and indeed they will respond. But this is the Scripture that I believe is pertinent to Islam from the Scriptures, and it is an invitation. It's from John 1:29, where Jesus Christ comes to the Sea of Galilee to be baptized, to the Jordan. And John says to Him, *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*

Now John the Baptist is an important person in Islam. And he is the forerunner, right? He's the forerunner to Christ, even in Islam.

And they have a long tradition of the lamb being slaughtered. In their annual feast called the *idoleta*, they remember that Abraham sacrificed a lamb instead of his son. That's their heritage. Every year the people buy a lamb and they slaughter the lamb according to ritual.

So if you can bring to them the truth that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, that all of their tradition brings them to this very point. Yes, it also shows them that it's not an adequate sacrifice that they've been trying to find, but that Jesus Christ is the One who provided it. *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* That's the global statement.

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But then you want to give your own testimony. He took away my sins. This is something they don't think about with you, because they assume that you are Christian-born, like they are Muslim-born. We have come out of darkness, even as people that might have been in a Christian home growing up. It's an evangelical testimony. You're telling your testimony.

And then ask them what they think about it. And if there is a sense of interest, ask them who else is interested in this story that you'd like to hear more about, because we want to find those Muslims who not only show an interest in the gospel, but who are also willing to find a wife or a brother or another person who is interested. So I start with John 1:29. What else? Yes, sir?

Participant: Are you familiar with the organization, The Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East?

Bob: No.

Participant: Okay.

Bob: Tell me.

Participant: Well, it was started by the Episcopal bishop in Iraq, a very well-known Episcopal bishop. His name is Stephen—

Bob: Yes. I visited his church a month ago. He's a very interesting man. He doesn't live there now. But he did write a very interesting book which started this foundation.

Participant: I just wondered if it was still a worthy organization, since he's no longer involved in it. I just wanted to know.

Bob: Sorry, I don't know.

Participant: Okay. Thank you.

Bob: Yes. But what a man, a man above his peers. Yes, Brian?

Brian: I'm curious if you can give us a little bit of the history of the Kurdish people, because that is who you were with, correct?

Bob: Yes.

Brian: So I guess what I don't understand is why are they despised by all? It seems that Iraq hates them, Syria despises them, Turkey hates them. And now with us leaving, they're at a bit of a disadvantage. Tell us about the history there.

Bob: Well, let's push it one step further. They hate each other, too. *(Laughter)* You know, from this far away they look like a beleaguered people and we feel their victimness. And they have a Kurdish proverb which is such a lament. *(Kurdish)* “*The Kurds have no friends, only the mountains*”, to which they escape. So our hearts go out to them. But I've also watched them betray one another and jockey for power and be corrupt. And so their own people finally say, “Our rulers are just as bad as the others.”

So they speak a different language than the Arabs or the Turks or the Iranians. You count to ten in Arabic.

Transcriber's Note: Bob counts to ten in Arabic.

Bob: And in Kurdish it's—

Transcriber's Note: Bob counts to ten in Kurdish.

Bob: So it's a completely different language and culture experience. And at the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was carved up. The Greece marker came out

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and they said, “Here, we’re going to give this to the French, and so on.” And so Iraq was formed as an artificial country without any attention to the people groups that were there already. And the Kurds aligned right across the middle of where the Kurds were, separating them from the Kurds of Turkey, Syria and Iraq. So the Kurds have a little proverb. Let me see if I can remember it. *“Borders have scratched across the hearts of men by strangers with a calm, judicious pen. And when the borders bleed, we watch with dread. The lines of ink across the map run red.”*

So I think we’ve got some unsolvable problems here geographically. And as the United States rather simply pays attention to a country like Iraq or Syria without understanding the mosaic, the broken human mosaic there, we will continue to flub around. As the Iraqi army stands up, the U.S. army will stand down. What Iraqi army? There has never been one—the Shi’ites, the Sunnis and the Kurds. So these are insoluble problems with humanity. What we need is the word of the Lord to come there and change human hearts. Then people will put away their swords. My thoughts. Yes? What else? John?

John: Do you find that there’s a resistance to Christianity among Muslims because they feel that they have to give up their culture? Is there a difference between their faith and their culture? For us, we can see that difference. But do they see that difference?

Bob: No, they don’t want to lose their culture. And it looks like you’re requiring them to become another culture. Look, of all the aspects to culture, one is the most prominent, and that’s language. Language is 50% of culture. If you as an outsider are willing to submit yourself like a child again and babble, and goo-goo-gah-gah until they teach you their language, and you will empower them by giving them strength with something they’re good at, which is their own language, then we will find in the translation work that we have empowered their language and their culture to remain and to exist and to be reformed by the gospel, because all cultures need to be reformed, right?

So yes, that is the great threat. Look, in the Middle East everybody has a birth certificate. It’s stamped “Muslim.” And you want to come along and deny their birthright, as they would see it, and break their fathers’ hearts that they’re no longer Muslims. So these are enormously important, difficult issues.

There’s another issue, too, which is Islam itself. It requires converts out of Islam to be killed. We’ve got this 18-year-old woman now. She made it safely to Bangkok. Did you see this? She’s declared a refugee, and the United Nations will take her case. But she had to barricade herself in her hotel room so that her father and her brother couldn’t come and get her and take her back to Saudi Arabia. She has declared herself an atheist who doesn’t believe.

So wow! If they come one at a time like that, we will never see a movement. But if we can bring about whole families coming to faith, as Layla and her husband, and as has happened in the City of Refuge, we will start to see the family being the factor by which people linking arms they will be able to resist the threat of the religion. And they will retain their culture.

So yes, cultural preservation is important. But we don’t just want to be people who admire cultures, either. We know that they all have to be redeemed.

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John: As a follow-up to that, is it possible for one in the Middle East or anywhere else to be a Muslim who is a follower of Jesus?

Bob: We have to let followers of Jesus speak for themselves in the Middle East, and not try and manipulate them with these terms. But the most important convert to Christ in the Middle East to whom I dedicate my book and whom I followed around, he’s a dangerous man. In the Bible there is a dangerous man in Matthew chapter 10, the man of violence. (*Kurdish*) “Behold, the kingdom of God advances by violence, and violent men lay hold of it.” He’s the one who would cause people to reduce that cultural problem to none and cause them to follow Christ. But he called himself (*Kurdish*), “a Muslim of the Holy Spirit.”

What’s that? It sounds confusing. Well, the word for *Christian* in that part of the world, (*a foreign language*), is a different language. Historically, the Christians speak a different language. They have a different dress, a different culture. And so the only picture that the Muslim has for becoming a Christian is to leave all of that culture and become like the Chaldeans, the church of the East, people of the Aramaic language.

Then you’ve got an additional problem for the gospel, that is, they must come to Christ and die to their sins and be baptized. And they must join this group. And so this guy’s idea, (and the young people resonated with it a great deal), call yourself by something that is true to the Lord. You’ve got a new book now, the Bible. You don’t pray toward Mecca any longer. You pray toward Jerusalem, as he saw it. And your fasting becomes a different meaning to you than it does during Ramadan.

So all those things are factors with a large number of Muslims, having a long conversation with one another about how to be true to this bible, and also not having to require Muslims to take on another culture to such an extent that they have actually become the Galatian heretics. More about that another time. In the back.

Participant: Take the Quran versus the Bible. Is there a parallel, or anything that would lead them from the Quran to the bible?

Bob: I would never start with the Quran by assuming that they are religious. But if they stiffen up and they talk about the Quran, you can go to the Quran and find some verses which will astonish them in the regard that it has for Jesus Christ. Most prominently it is in chapter 4 of the Quran, verse 131, where Jesus Christ is called the Word of God. They need that pointed out to them.

The Quran is not an inspired book, and their prophet is not a true prophet. But they have this verse and other verses which have caused them to wonder and find out more by going to the Bible. So if you have a friend and he’s interested in these apologetics, “well, Jesus is the Word of God in your own culture and your own book. So when did the Word of God begin?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“When did the Word of God begin?”

“Well, let’s see, it was a long time ago. The Word of God is eternal.” (*Laughter*) “It doesn’t have any beginning.”

“Wait a minute! Are you trying to tell me that Jesus Christ is God? I’m just asking you from your own book what it means that Jesus Christ is the Word of God.”

“What the Middle East Needs Now”

So you want to let them taste and see what’s really there for them, if they will turn to the Bible. Yes?

Participant: You men are smart and have done this for a long time. So the thought that came to my mind is, like other refugees from other countries that come to the U.S., do you work with people in the U.S. who are Muslims, or people that are Kurds, to help them bring their families to the U.S., and also maybe help their families to come to know Christ?

Bob: Frontiers Mission is to Muslims in the homelands. There are 45 Muslim countries. We are believing God for those great majorities. Someone else is going to have to do that work. The church of God is strong here. So we want that to happen. But we ourselves cannot be sidetracked by doing that. I had to start another little organization called Friends of the Kurds: Seattle when I myself took three years off to re-settle Kurds into Seattle, but that’s a different mission than Frontiers.

Look, there are 25 churches for every MacDonald’s in the United States. I hope you never recover from this fact. *(Laughter)* And there has to be a bigger mission in our lives than turning 25 into 26. Okay, let’s be aware of Isaiah 49:6-9. It is too small a thing for the people of God to restore the tribes of Israel, *“and the people of Jacob that I have kept. I will make You as a light to the Gentiles, that my salvation may extend to the ends of the earth.”*

So let’s thank God for the strength of the church. And let’s continue to take back our cities and our children and our churches. But let’s also remember with great regard the final purposes of God, and how the gospel came to you and me. Some missionaries crossed the Rhine River, came through the marshes and the swamps, and found their way to Europe’s completely unreached peoples, and brought the hope of Jesus Christ in stories that we’ve forgotten. But these stories are cutting edge. So let’s go to the frontiers. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*