

The Refugee Crisis— Part of God’s Answer to the Unreached Peoples “Problem”

by Robby Butler, revised 6/24/2018

For two hundred years after Martin Luther sparked the Protestant Reformation there was no concerted Protestant effort to obey Jesus’ command to disciple all nations. Then, 290 years ago, God poured out His Spirit on a small band of Moravian *refugees* from religious persecution who found sanctuary in Herrnhut, Germany.

A full generation before William Carey—often hailed as the “father of modern missions”—the 1727 revival among these refugees birthed a 100-year, round-the-clock prayer meeting that thrust hundreds of Moravian missionaries out to the ends of the earth and established thousands of mission stations.

Not only did their work inspire Carey, It also impacted the world through the conversion of John Wesley, George Whitefield and others.

Learn more at:

- [A History of the Moravian Revival \(lowpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Moravian-Revival.docx\)](http://lowpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Moravian-Revival.docx)
- [YouTu.be/xRs9YkCvM_8](https://youtu.be/xRs9YkCvM_8)

In April 2017, in Germany, I met A, a beautiful, loving young 30-year old former radical Muslim who exemplifies some of what God is doing through this refugee crisis (see his separate testimony).

In Germany we joined A:

- at a refugee camp where we ourselves found it easy to meet, talk with and pray for recent arrivals,
- for dinner in the home of a refugee family that has come to faith and is pastoring a refugee church, and
- visited the church where A and other refugees gather to learn what it means to follow Jesus.

A shared with us the testimony I recorded on the following page. **His story is remarkable, but not unique.** God is doing amazing things as refugees encounter believers and receive prayer. When we met him, the team of which A is part was seeing 10–15 refugees come to faith each week.

I shared A’s story with a friend who immediately introduced me to another refugee in Sweden who experienced a similar transformation and has also become a powerful evangelist.

And the friend who introduced us to A has collected more than 100 such stories of God’s work in the lives of refugees.

Please join us in praying for the Holy Spirit to continue:

- leading believers to pray for refugees and share the gospel with them,
- transforming refugees through the power of the gospel,
- training refugees to multiply disciples and churches, and
- engaging refugees in reaching their own people, back in their homelands.

Over the past 40 years great attention has been given to reaching *unreached people* groups—groups through which disciple-making/church-planting movements can spread, but haven’t yet. Through this focus, hundreds of these groups now have movements, with many more movements starting. Yet many of these groups are still relatively inaccessible to missionaries. And once again God is using *refugees* to advance His global purpose, even as He did with the Moravians.

Like a tsunami, refugees are once again

- leaving lands with little access to the gospel,
- landing where they can find and follow Jesus,
- learning to multiply disciples and churches, and
- going on to reach their own and other peoples.

Prayer— a Hidden Factor Hastening Completion of God’s Purpose

Nearly 300 years ago the 100-year prayer chain begun by Moravian refugees laid the seeds of the modern mission effort.

One hundred fifty years later, women’s missionary societies sowed prayer and vision into the generation of children that became the Student Volunteer Movement. In that movement, 100,000 college students pledged themselves for overseas service. 20,000 made it to the field, supported by the others. (My maternal grandparents were among those who went to China.)

Prayer has repeatedly brought our land and others back from depravity (Peacekey.com/1-1-a/OSAS/Revival_Prayer_1.HTM).

Last May in Herrnhut (site of the 100-year Moravian prayer chain), 120 prayer and mission network leaders gathered to again link the prayer and mission movements. God arranged for the leaders to invite my input on prayer priorities. Following is some of what I shared with them:

Unreached Peoples and the Unfinished Task

The Bigger Picture

Over the past four decades the gospel has advanced significantly in most of the world. Yet the great concentration of unreached peoples in Asia lags far behind. Several key factors need prayer:

- **Intercessors to focus on unreached peoples.** The prayer needs of Asia’s masses rarely rise to the top of our agenda. Every remaining people group needs a committed team of intercessors praying for laborers and preparing the soil for fruitful planting and harvest.

- **Laborers with Paul’s ambition** to preach where Christ is not yet named. Identical verses (Mt 9:38 and Lk 10:2) command us to beg (*deomai*) the Lord of the harvest to thrust out (*ekballo*) laborers. (*Deomai*, or “beg” is stronger language than Jesus uses in other commands to pray, and *ekballo* is also used to describe “casting out” demons.)

- **Apostolic passion** to bring light amidst the *greatest* darkness. In Asia and around the world, most laborers are engaged in supporting and growing churches

The bold, simple prayer of a poor Pakistani Christian street sweeper is central to A’s testimony. And prayer features prominently in all of the movements I am researching.

During our trip to Europe I learned of Inherit The Nations (<http://InheritTheNations.net>), an effort to link teams of intercessors with field missionaries. The intercessor teams commit to pray for the field work for at least one hour per week and share with the field workers what the intercessors hear from the Lord, while the field workers commit to share what is happening on the field. Each of the 20 matches that maintained this commitment saw field breakthroughs within a few months.

where they already exist. This is a noble service, yet for the remaining unreached to be reached, some laborers must have apostolic passion to engage them.

- **A movement mindset** must be established in these laborers. Around the world, well-intentioned but individualistic church planting methods make people groups more resistant to the Gospel even as the first congregations are established. This happens when our methods tear apart tight-knit families rather than leading families to decide together to follow Christ. Fortunately the testimony of Scripture and experience of hundreds of new movement leaders points toward a much more biblical and fruitful approach.

- **Appropriate allocation** to the greatest needs. In all Asia there is only one laborer for every 46,000 people living in unreached groups (and most of these laborers aren’t working with unreached groups). In the rest of the world, there is one laborer for every 1,000 people living in unreached groups. As the Lord leads, let’s focus on praying and sending more laborers where they are most needed.

This is not *my* story, it is the story of *God's* work in my life.

”Thank you God for today, and for this man, and for this money,” prayed the poor Pakistani Christian street sweeper, “may he come to know the way, the truth and the life. Amen!”

Imam A had just given this poor man a bit of money for cleaning the street on an important Muslim holiday, and the man had asked imam A if he (the street sweeper) could pray for A. A thought “why not” and agreed, and the street sweeper prayed aloud for A on the spot, that A would “come to know the way, the truth and the life.”

As an Imam (one who leads Muslims in prayer), A was accustomed to praying long prayers in Arabic from the Qur’an, so in A’s heart he despised this street sweeper’s prayer. Yet over the next six years God answered this street sweeper’s simple prayer in a remarkable way, by bringing A to love and follow Jesus, even at great personal cost, and transforming A into a man overflowing with the love of God who has now lead thousands of others to follow Jesus.

“Run, his gun is not working.”

A had already been hospitalized for several days from a previous attempt to beat him to death. Now when he saw the AK47 pointed at his head A closed his eyes and prepared to die, praying for God to forgive the man who was about to kill him. But when A heard someone say “Run,” he opened his eyes to see that the gun had jammed on the first bullet. A ran, but thought, “If he doesn’t kill me today, he will kill me tomorrow.”

A short time later another friend called A and said: “Run, they are coming to kill you.” A’s wife and son were sleeping, and A began praying and crying. “This may be the last night of my life,” he thought, “or the last time I will see my family.”

A had only a few minutes to gather his possessions, and left with only twenty rupees (cents) in his pocket, and no identity card or passport. As he left A looked back at his home and felt the devil pushing him back: “If you leave today, you are never going to come back. Stay.” But A knew God had told him to leave his family for God, so he did.

“I began learning Muslim

prayers at the age of five.” A was born in Pakistan into a devout and highly esteemed Muslim family. His grandfather was an imam, his father was a mullah (Muslim religious leader), and his sister is a professor in a Muslim university. When A missed any of the five daily prayers, his mother would discipline him by withholding food the next day.

At age 9 A began memorizing the Qur’an in Arabic with more than 100 other children, although none of them understood the language or meaning of what they were memorizing. In four years A became the best student in his Muslim school and won a national competition for memorizing the Qur’an. At age fifteen he became an Imam. And there in Pakistan he had a car, and three servants in his family’s home took care of all his needs.

A went on in his Islamic studies, learning that there is no assurance of salvation possible in Islam and crying out to God daily because of his sin and fear of judgment day. According to the Qur’an there is one way to go to heaven without facing judgment; that is through Jihad, and every Islamic school trains for Jihad.

A was at the top of his class in Jihad, and asked his mother to pray that God would allow A to die in Jihad, killing Christians and Jews. According to the Qur’an this would not only ensure A a place in heaven, it would secure a place in heaven for his family as well.

A and his friends had sought to force Christians and Jews in Pakistan to become Muslims. Yet after the street sweeper prayed for A, his life began to change.

In 2005 A left Pakistan to become a Muslim missionary to Athens, Greece. There A’s life became harder, and he had to find a job to support himself.

Despite his contempt for Christians, A accepted a job from a loving Christian couple. He told them he was an imam, and that he needed to leave for prayers every day, and they agreed. And when the work was busy and A forgot his prayers, the wife

even encouraged A to pray, asking A to also pray for her business. As a Muslim, A only prayed from the Qur’an, but when this woman asked A if he prayed for her business he lied and told her he did.

In Greece, A preached love, peace and forgiveness, but only for Muslims as he had seen in Pakistan. But there in Greece A saw the power of love, peace and forgiveness for everyone.

The Sunni sect of which A had been part razed a Christian village in Pakistan, burning 27 people alive. When A discussed this with other imams in Athens he said, “This is not good.” But they all said, “We have to go with what the Qur’an teaches, not what you think is right.”

A was also deeply troubled by the harshness of Islamic “justice” against a poor Christian mother who was imprisoned for years for drinking a bit of water from a glass reserved for Muslims. One Muslim governor said, “This is not right, this woman should be freed.” But this governor was killed by his bodyguard, who then became a hero in Pakistan. Eventually this woman was sentenced to death for “blasphemy.” When A told his Muslim friends, “This is not right,” they told him, “Read the Qur’an.” So A read through the Qur’an and other Muslim writings in his own language, looking for something that said this woman should be free.

Finally A concluded that Islam is not God’s teaching. A challenged God, “If the Qur’an is really your teaching, come to me and show me.” Then A quit being an imam, and quit doing his prayers.

Free from the scrutiny of his friends and family in Pakistan, A felt that two Sikh friends in Athens were better people than he was. So A quit trying to convert these friends and instead tried joining their Sikh fellowship and reading their holy book. But still A found no peace. A also had a Hindu friend A felt was better than A, so A tried being a Hindu and reading their holy book. Yet still A could not find peace.

A's Christian boss asked A why he wasn't going to his prayers. A confessed that he had been praying against his boss' business rather than for it, and asked her forgiveness. She surprised A by forgiving and hugging A, and telling A that she loves him.

"If you love me," A said, "tell me what I must do to know God."

"Oh A, it is so simple. Just pray and ask God to show Himself to you," A's boss replied.

So A began praying, not verses from the Qur'an, but from his own heart. "God, I see you in the beauty all around me, but I am so small and you are so great. I cannot see you. Please show yourself to me."

After some days, A was sleeping in his room with his two Muslim friends. In a dream, A found himself in a shop full of jewels, gold and silver, with a young man with a beautiful face. The man called A by his name, "Come to me, A." "You know my name?" A asked. "A," the man said, "I know everything about you. You must have all this wealth." "You must be joking," A replied, "If you know me you know I am a poor man." "I have bought all of this for you," the man replied, "Just take it." So in his dream A accepted these riches and felt overwhelming happiness.

A then felt very sad when his roommates interrupted his dream by waking him up. They talked excitedly about the wonderful light and presence that had just been in their room. But A told them he wanted to go back to sleep. And when A went to sleep the man appeared to A and gave him the riches again.

A then asked his boss if he could come to her church. She said, "Of course. Church isn't just for Christians, it is for everyone." When A entered the church, God gave A a

vision of a great king sitting on a throne. This king was the same man who had been in A's dream, and A now knew it was Jesus. A felt overwhelmed by his sinfulness, but in this vision Jesus welcomed and cleansed him.

Since that day, A has been transformed by love, joy and peace, and A began telling Muslims how God can transform their life as well.

A returned to Pakistan as a secret Jesus follower and joined an underground church. A's father arranged for A to marry his cousin, and together they had a son. But it wasn't long before A was discovered meeting with Christians.

The Muslims told A what Muslims believe about Jesus, then asked A what he believes about Jesus. A told of the blind man Jesus healed who said, "I don't know who Jesus is, but I know I was blind and now I see." Then A added, "I don't know about Jesus, but I know I was a sinner and Jesus is my savior."

The Muslims then asked A about Muhammad and A said, "Muhammad is not my savior. Muhammad didn't even know if he would be saved." These Muslims then beat A badly and left him for dead. Yet someone took him to the hospital, Christians cared for A, and God healed him.

After the two other attempts on A's life mentioned above, A left his home, leading Muslims to follow Jesus wherever he went. When the Mullah used Facebook and the radio to direct people all over Pakistan to kill A, A fled his homeland of Pakistan.

In Iran A was imprisoned for two months, then in Turkey for three months. Eight months after leaving Pakistan A arrived at a German refugee center. There A began a Skype ministry to disciple Muslims that get saved in Pakistan.

A few months later A was kidnapped, by four Muslims who beat A, stabbed him, broke his skull and left him to die. Two days later A awoke in the hospital.

A continues ministering through a radio broadcast in Pakistan, and sharing Jesus' love with refugees in Germany, where many have come to experience Jesus' love themselves. "God uses me very much here. I am nothing, God is everything. This is not my story, this is God's story in my life."

As A recalls with amazement all that God has done in his life, he is filled with gratitude for the simple prayer of the poor Christian street sweeper bold enough to offer prayer for a Muslim imam; a prayer which God has been faithful to answer.

A has helped start a dozen churches in Germany. His immediate vision is to start 170 churches there in Germany. However for political reasons Germany has declared Pakistan "safe," and denied A's request for asylum.

A's current documents expired in October of 2017, and his appeal to stay in Germany is pending and uncertain. Yet A continues to trust God with his ministry, and his life.

Should A be sent back to Pakistan, his death seems imminent. Yet A remains confident God will watch over him, as many around Germany and the world are praying for him.

Please join us in praying for God to continue protecting and using A to multiply followers of Jesus, and specifically for A to receive formal residency in Germany.

Pray also for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham (to bless all the families of the earth) by drawing A's family to Jesus and reuniting them.