

AFGHANISTAN

Another 64 Christian converts helped to safety

FOOD.GIVES

Providing for Malawi Christian cyclone victims

PAKISTAN

New homes for flood-affected believers

barnabasaid



**Life-
saving
rice aid
for South-East
Asia Christians**

WE WORK BY:

- directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them (“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, **especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**” Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- channelling money **from** Christians **through** Christians **to** Christians (we do not send people, we only send money or goods e.g. food)
- channelling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organisations)
- using the money to fund projects which have been developed by local Christians in their own communities, countries or regions
- considering any request, however small
- acting as equal partners with the persecuted Church, whose leaders often help shape our overall direction.

WE SEEK TO:

- meet both practical and spiritual needs
- encourage, strengthen and enable the existing local Church and Christian communities – so they can maintain their presence and witness rather than setting up our own structures or sending out missionaries
- inform and enable Christians in the West to respond to the growing challenge of other religions and ideologies to Church, society and mission in their own countries
- facilitate global intercession for the persecuted Church by providing a range of prayer materials
- safeguard and protect our volunteers, staff, partners and beneficiaries
- keep our overheads low.

WE BELIEVE:

- in the clear Biblical teaching that Christians should treat all people of all faiths with love and compassion, even those who seek to persecute them
- in the power of prayer to change people’s lives and situations, either through grace to endure or through deliverance from suffering.

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Front Cover: Christian in South-East Asia receives her daily rice funded by Barnabas

Following in the steps of the King of kings

I am writing this on 6 May 2023, a few hours after the magnificent and Christ-centred coronation of King Charles III in London's Westminster Abbey.

Many years ago, when he was still Prince of Wales, he responded to a suggestion I gave him and convened a meeting at Clarence House, his official London residence, bringing together senior British Muslim and Christian leaders. The subject for discussion was the apostasy law in Islam.

I had told His Royal Highness how classical Islam demands the death penalty for all sane adult males who leave Islam. In some schools of sharia (Islamic law) it is the same penalty for sane adult females. Prince Charles was aghast. At the meeting, he asked the Muslim delegates whether this could possibly be true. As the apostasy law is well known to all Muslims, they were unable to deny it.

The Prince then challenged those present to find a solution.

The Muslim delegates were open to this, and it was left with the church leaders to follow up. Prince Charles had created an open door for positive change and a hugely significant advance in religious liberty, which could have benefitted countless thousands of Christian converts from Islam.

Although there has been only one known state execution for apostasy in modern times (Rev. Hossein Soodmand, hanged in Iran in 1990), many converts are murdered by zealous Muslims following sharia – for example, Lawan Andimi, a Nigerian convert, who survived at least three attempts on his life before his kidnap and murder in 2020.*

Thankfully, the number who are actually killed because of their allegiance to Christ is relatively small, but the possibility hangs over all who leave Islam. Furthermore, the vast majority of such converts suffer persecution, often severe and often including violence, which is supported, in the minds of many Muslims, by the existence of the apostasy law.

However, the church leaders who had gathered at Clarence House evidently had other priorities. The wellbeing and even the survival of their Christian brothers and sisters from a Muslim background was not important enough to them and the opportunity was missed. The booklet the church leaders eventually produced spoke only of the need for Christians and Muslims to negotiate “sharing the space”; the concrete issue of the apostasy law was not mentioned.

One of the main messages of the coronation service today was about serving others. This theme appeared repeatedly, not only in the ancient and traditional ceremonial words but also in new words added by King Charles himself.

One of the King's innovations came right at the beginning of the service, with the first spoken words being from a child who welcomed the King “in the name of the King of kings”. To this His Majesty replied, “In his name and after his example I come not to be served but to serve.” (He was referencing Mark 10:45.)

Later in the service many items of regalia were presented to him, the first being a pair of spurs representing the values of knightly chivalry of old. The use of spurs in coronations dates back to the coronation of Richard I in 1189 but the words spoken today were revised to focus on the defence of the vulnerable:

Receive these spurs, symbols of military honour and chivalry,
that you may be a brave advocate for those in need.

King Charles needs no telling, for he already has a track record of half a century of brave advocacy for those facing a wide variety of needs, including converts from Islam.

Let us, like King Charles, seek to model ourselves on our servant King, the Lord Jesus, King of kings, remembering the words of His parable:

The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:40)

*See page 11

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO
International Director, Barnabas Aid

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how barnabas is helping

Strengthened and encouraged. This is what we often hear from Christians who have received support from Barnabas Aid. Thank you for making this possible. Here are just a few examples of the many ways we have recently helped persecuted and pressurised Christians.

\$11,674



Christian school for children displaced by Burkina Faso conflict

Three hundred Christian children displaced by the jihadi insurgency in Burkina Faso have benefitted from attending an emergency Christian school part-funded by Barnabas. Some of the children had been refused school places because they are Christian.

Lessons led by Christian teachers every weekday for 12 weeks in a safe setting enabled children to catch up on their learning that has been severely disrupted by conflict. The malnourished children received a nutritious lunch each school day, and spiritual sustenance at Bible classes.



Christian children displaced by jihadi violence at the Barnabas-funded emergency school

Project reference: PRI596

\$352,567



ePap delivered to 11,700 Christians in Zimbabwe

More than 11,700 Christians living in poor and hunger-afflicted areas of Zimbabwe were helped through our latest ePap rollout. Our food.gives project delivered 48,000 kg of the nutritious porridge to 131 churches in April 2023 – providing a total of 1,053,720 portions.

Pastors ensured that priority was given during distribution to vulnerable children, the sick, elderly, disabled and pregnant or breast-feeding mothers. Our project partners said Christians thanked Barnabas supporters for their care, love, faith and generosity.



Supplies of Barnabas-funded ePap are unloaded at a church in Zimbabwe

Project reference: PRI555
(food.gives)

\$7,745



Winter jackets given to poor Christian children in Jordan

“The jackets came at an ideal time and were a true blessing,” said our project partner as Barnabas provided clothing to protect 400 poor Christian children in Jordan from the winter’s cold and rain. A number of the recipients were children of Muslim-background Christian refugees who fled persecution and conflict in their homeland. Others were from poor Jordanian Christian families.

The children were excited to put on their new jackets, and the sounds of “Thank you” exclaimed in Arabic filled the air. We also distributed blankets.



Christian children in Jordan keep warm in their Barnabas-funded jackets

Project reference: 20-383
(Christian refugees in Jordan)



\$134,956



Bibles meet growing need for God’s Word in Oromo language

“People are so happy,” said our project partner in Ethiopia. He was reporting on the distribution of 27,000 Bibles newly printed in Oromo, the language spoken by around a third of the population.

The new Bibles, which were part-funded by Barnabas, are helping to meet a huge demand for God’s Word among the fast-growing Oromo Christian community, which numbers over 20 million. The need for spiritual sustenance is even more acute because of war and drought afflicting Ethiopia.



Barnabas part-funded the printing of 27,000 Oromo Bibles

Project reference: PR1585 (Bibles and Scriptures for Ethiopia)

\$111,646
to free 100 families
(Phase 18)



100 more Christian brick-kiln families freed from debt

Pakistani Christian brick-kiln worker Naveed thanks God that Barnabas has paid the loan he raised from his employer to meet his wife’s medical bills. Now his two sons no longer have to labour alongside him to meet the interest payments; instead, they go to school.

Barnabas has freed another 100 poor Christians like Naveed from debts that kept them bonded to the brick kilns. It brings to 1,575 the number of families whose loans – taken out at times of crisis – have been paid by us.



Naveed with his wife and sons. His debt of \$2,136 was paid by Barnabas

Project reference: 41-1356

\$80,042



Hundreds of poor Kyrgyz Christians given food, coal or hay

Barnabas has given food, coal or hay for livestock to 298 poor Kyrgyz Christian families (around 700 people). Ostracised by the Muslim majority, they live in poor rural areas badly impacted by Covid-19. Rising prices have made their situation worse.

“This help was a blessing from the Lord,” declared grandmother Nazira, who said the gift of hay meant the family no longer had to sell one of their cattle. A widow with three children said that when our food parcel arrived she didn’t even have money for bread.



Poor Kyrgyz Christians thank the Lord for hay funded by Barnabas

Project reference: 57-724 (Central Asia winter relief)

“Thank you so much for helping to save my family”

Barnabas helps second group of Afghan Christians to reach safety in Brazil

“Thank you so much for helping us, for helping to save my family!”

exclaimed Sayed, an Afghan Christian convert from Islam, to Barnabas Aid as he arrived with his wife and three children in a safe Christian country, Brazil.

They were among 16 Christian families (64 individuals) who fled likely death at the hands of the Islamist Taliban government in their homeland.

Gospel studied in secret online

They were flown by Barnabas to begin a new life in Brazil, where they can worship freely.

In Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Sayed learned in secret about the Gospel over the internet and listened online to the sermons of pastors. He came to know our Saviour Jesus Christ, and shared his love for the Lord with his wife, two daughters and son.

However, they dared not share with their wider family or friends that they had become Christians in case the Taliban learned of their faith.

The Taliban rules by sharia (Islamic law), which demands death for apostates from Islam. It proclaimed on seizing control of the country in 2021, that Christians must reconvert to Islam, leave the country, or be killed.

Not looking back

Sayed, his wife and children left everything behind for the love of the Good Shepherd.

Asked about the goods and properties they gave up, Sayed quotes Luke 9:62: “Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’”

The family arrived in Brazil at the end of March 2023, and have already settled in well at their new home and church.

A church member describes Sayed as having an “amazing knowledge and love for God’s Word”.

She said the family, especially the children, are eager to learn Portuguese and quickly picked up a number of words and phrases.

“Since the first [worship] services they attended, they already made an effort to sing in praise of God, even with so little knowledge of the language,” said the church member.

“Glory to God for the family’s life and all He has been doing in our midst through them.”

Family reunited in Brazil

One man who had more reason than most to welcome the arrival of the 16 families in Brazil was Samim, a Christian convert from Kabul.

He was among the first group of ten Afghan Christian families (54 individuals) resettled by Barnabas to Brazil in June 2022, and was waiting eagerly at São Paulo airport in March this year for the arrival of his mother, father and two brothers.





Samim, right, welcomes his parents and brothers to Brazil

Samim last saw them around the time the Taliban came to power and he fled Afghanistan by crossing into a neighbouring country (*Barnabas Aid* November/December 2022, p.6).

After Samim escaped Afghanistan, he told his family that he had become a Christian and took every opportunity to tell them of Christ's love. His parents and brothers also came to put their faith in Christ.

Samim rejoices that he has been reunited with his family in Brazil.

“Now they are here we can pray in freedom and we can praise the Name of the Lord,” he says.

“We are so happy and so thankful for everything that God did for us through Barnabas Aid.”

All the newly arrived Christian families have been adopted by churches in Brazil and the congregations – with some financial support from Barnabas – are providing them with housing, food, Portuguese language classes and pastoral care.

Barnabas' Head of Operations in Brazil says the first group of families that arrived in June 2022 are well settled and enjoying life in the country. “Their Portuguese is improving each day, some of them have jobs now and are being able to start providing for their families already,” he adds.

Project reference: 01-901 (Needy and persecuted Afghan Christians)

Devotion of new arrivals inspires other Christians

The faith and thankfulness of the Afghan Christians has been an inspiration to Christians in Brazil, according to a leader of one of the churches that has adopted the new arrivals.

“We learn a lot from them – more than we teach them, in fact,” he said.

“They live the Church life with reverence and zeal. They are grateful to God for everything, from leaving home to going to the market, to arriving at the market.

“They live a life of devotion that is not forced or learned in a seminary. This is what impacted my life the most.

“Questions like, ‘If there is no persecution here, why don't we worship God for four or five hours – two hours is not enough?’ – or, ‘Since it is allowed, why don't we have services every day?’

“We were very blessed with the coming of this family. I lost count of how many times I cried leaving their house. God is wonderful.”

“Now they are here we can pray in freedom and we can praise the Name of the Lord”

Samim thanks God for reuniting him with his family in Brazil through Barnabas Aid

food.gives

Life-saving rice aid for South-East Asia Christians

“Jai” now has enough to feed her mother and child each month

The timing was absolutely perfect, unbelievable actually.” These words from a Barnabas project partner testify to God’s perfect provision for impoverished Christians in a South-East Asian country, where Christians in rural areas are greatly persecuted.

The country is one of the highest per capita consumers of rice in the world. Yet with food inflation running at more than 50% in early 2023, large numbers of the country’s inhabitants, including many Christians, struggle to feed themselves.

In an exciting new component of Barnabas Aid’s food.gives project, we

have provided support to buy a rice milling machine and 260 tonnes of unmilled rice. Our partner purchased rice directly from a network of farmers before it hit the market, thus making a considerable saving. “The last rice was secured days before the open market buyers came in,” our partner explained thankfully.

Our partner has been working through rural churches to supply impoverished Christians with rice. More than 5,000 have already been reached, and the aim is to provide even more believers – amongst the poorest of the country’s poor – with vital food aid. A rice milling system serves to remove the husk

and the bran layers, and produce an edible white rice kernel that is free of impurities.

The mill serves three distinct groups. Free rice is distributed to Christians who cannot afford to pay anything. Discounted rice is sold to pastors and other full-time Christian workers. Rice bran, the outer layer of the rice kernel high in fat content, is also made available to Christian farmers to feed their animals. Unmilled rice can be stored for more than 12 months and once milled it can retain its quality for around 4-6 weeks in the open air.

The rice aid has already transformed the lives of many. Our partner describes “Halia”, a Christian widow, as “one of the poorest believers we have ever seen in over 10 years working here”. Halia’s age is estimated to be over 70, but she cannot remember which year she was born. Halia lives in an open windy bamboo hut with limited protection from the elements. Her daily routine includes walking out to the jungle to cut bamboo to weave into baskets, which she tries to sell for 50 cents each. She can expect to make three baskets a week, so providing a meagre weekly income of \$1.50. Through the Barnabas Aid initiative Halia now receives 1kg of rice a day from the local church, so she has enough to eat.

“Jai”, a young Christian woman, often had to go hungry so that her elderly mother and her child could eat. She works hard selling food at a village stall. The rice aid project has supported Jai and her family by providing 20kg of rice per month.

In this way the rice milling machine is, in the words of our project partner, “providing a crucial lifeline” to the country’s struggling Christians, with the aim of reaching even more believers in the months ahead.

Project reference: PR1555 (food.gives)



“Halia” holding her rice in one of the bamboo baskets she weaves to sell at market

Cyclone-affected Malawi Christians receive nourishing ePap

Barnabas Aid responded swiftly to the urgent needs of Christians affected by the cyclone that devastated Malawi in March.

Fifteen tonnes of nourishing ePap porridge was sent to Malawian Christians desperately short of food. That amounts to 350,000 servings of ePap.

ePap is a maize-based porridge fortified with soya protein, vitamins and minerals that brings health to the malnourished. The nutrients contained in ePap have proven success in combatting child hunger and malnutrition.

In partnership with African Enterprise, the ePap was transported by road from South Africa, a journey of more than 1,000 miles. Christian-majority

Malawi is often the last to receive aid in time of need owing to its landlocked position.

Cyclone Freddy – which battered Malawi, Madagascar and Mozambique – caused more than six months of rain to fall in just six days in mid-March.

The rainfall resulted in widespread flooding and mudslides that left an estimated 40,000 homes damaged or destroyed. More than 500 people in Malawi are known to have been killed in the disaster, and as many as half a million were displaced. The cyclone’s devastation far surpasses that suffered in January 2015 in southern Malawi, where the worst floods in living memory displaced 336,000 people and caused more than 100 deaths.



Malawian Christians received 15 tonnes of ePap funded by Barnabas

Project reference: 00-634 (Disaster relief fund)

New homes are answer to prayers

Impoverished Pakistani Christians thank Barnabas for help after devastating floods



Ramson, his wife Anbo and daughter Aneeta have decorated their cherished new home with hand-painted flowers

"God answered my prayers," said Ramson, a poor Pakistani Christian farm labourer.

Ramson, his wife Anbo and daughter Aneeta were among 50 Christian families made homeless by devastating floods in southern Pakistan who have been provided with new homes in the first phase of a Barnabas-funded building project. Work is shortly to begin on building more than 50 new homes in the project's second phase.

Our local project partners say the homes project has become a "light of hope" for impoverished Christians, who even before the floods were struggling as a result of inflation, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the damage to crops caused by locust attacks.

New homes are more resilient to flooding

"My whole family is happy and thanks Barnabas Aid for their wonderful effort, which led us toward a happier life," said Ramson.

The mud house where they lived before was washed away when unusually heavy monsoon rains caused widespread flooding in July and August 2022 in the largely agricultural Sindh province.

The new Barnabas-funded homes have brick pillars between the mud walls, and iron girders supporting the mud roof, which is lined with plastic sheeting. These measures make the dwellings more resilient to flooding than the old houses.

Each home cost around \$1,400 to build, including all the materials.

Ramson is confident his new house will be better able to withstand weather extremes than his old homes that were wrecked by floods in 2010 and 2011 as well as in 2022. "This [new] shelter is far better than we had previously," he says.

Thousands of poor Christians like Ramson lost their homes and livelihoods in the latest floods. Some squeezed into the tiny dwellings of their equally poor relatives. Others set up makeshift shelters, usually set on higher ground beside roads.



One of the new Barnabas-funded homes under construction, showing the brick-built pillars supporting the mud walls. Some of the iron girders that will support the mud roof are in place

With generous help from our supporters, Barnabas provided 2,000 Christian families with food, drinking water, mosquito nets, tarpaulins and other emergency items as well as medical care in the weeks following the disaster.



Mrs Suraj and her son praise God for their new Barnabas-funded home

Widow gives prayers of thanks for Barnabas

Widow Mrs Suraj lives with her 18-year-old son. She thanks God that they have been given a new home by Barnabas.

Mrs Suraj's husband died of tuberculosis 15 years ago. She and her son are agricultural labourers and each receive 1,000 Pakistani rupees (\$5.40) a month, as well as an allowance of wheat flour from their employer.

Their home and few possessions were destroyed in the flood. For many months Mrs Suraj and her son lived on the roadside, and food and practical aid from Barnabas helped to sustain them.

"She was always thinking and becoming sad because they do not have enough resources to rebuild their home again," said our church partner.

Now Mrs Suraj and her son are settled in their new Barnabas-funded home. She says she will always remember Barnabas for providing them with support at a difficult time.

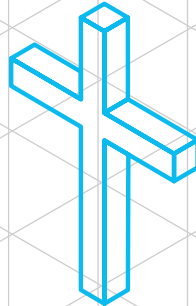
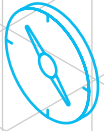
"I will pray for blessings for Barnabas Aid my whole life," says Mrs Suraj. "Thank you for providing us with a house."

In part 1, we saw that the Sermon on the Mount is Christ's teaching for His disciples living in the world, telling us what should be going on in our hearts, minds and wills, and how we should behave. We saw how disciples in ancient times not only tried to absorb the teaching of their master but also studied his way of life and tried to become like him. For us as Christians, the Lord Jesus Himself is our Master and our model.

A Manual for Christian Living

2

Christ: Our Model and Pattern



Martyn Lloyd-Jones tells the story of Dr B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), an eminent Indian lawyer, economist, social reformer and politician.¹ Dr Ambedkar was a Dalit, a group below the lowest caste of the

Hindu caste system, formerly called “untouchables”. Late in life he converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. While a student, he had lived in the USA and UK, but found there was no life in the Christianity that he saw there. The transformative power that he was seeking was to be found, he believed, in Buddhism.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was attracted by Christ but repelled by His followers. He famously commented, “I’d be a Christian if it were not for the Christians.” Yet in his autobiography he recorded that the Sermon on the Mount “went straight to my heart” and “delighted me beyond measure”.²

How could the true faith have degenerated so? Of course, failure has been with us since the early Church. The Ephesian Christians lost their first love (Revelation 2:4-5). Yet history suggests that the Christian faith, founded on the simplicity of Jesus, often turns into a mere religion when it becomes

a respectable system, based chiefly on approved liturgy or sound doctrine.

In 312, only seven years after the “Great Persecution”, Roman Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity. The following year he and Emperor Licinius established religious liberty throughout the Roman Empire. No longer persecuted, the Church grew rapidly. Church leaders began to express concern that some of the new Christians had “converted” to the emperor’s religion only in the hope of winning his favour. As Christianity gradually became the dominant religion of the Empire it absorbed Roman culture until the lifestyle of urban elite Christians was little different from those around them.³

Christianity ceased to be a simple faith centred on Jesus, with the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount shaping the lives of Christians. It became a civic religion based on power, and (may God forgive us) for many long centuries an oppressor of others.

No longer looking to the example of Jesus, Christians copied contemporary models of leadership, with fifth-century bishops patterning themselves on Roman consuls and twenty-first century pastors patterning themselves on businessmen or TV personalities.

American theologians, Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, have spoken of “Constantinianism”, meaning that “with an adapted and domesticated gospel, we could fit American values into a loosely Christian framework”.⁴ They saw this “domestication” of the Gospel and of Christian ethics as typical of the Western Church after 313, when Christianity was dominant in society.



Sadly, the Western Church lost the simplicity of Jesus and was marked by superficiality and shallowness.



The Church was never meant to be powerful and dominant. She was meant to be a pilgrim community. The people of faith are “strangers and pilgrims” on the earth (Hebrews 11:13, KJV; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:11). Other translations say foreigners, wanderers, exiles or aliens. Earth is not our home. We do not belong here because we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Interestingly, the Beatitudes begin and end with the promised reward of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3,10), as if Jesus were emphasising to His disciples that they belonged in a different realm.

Hauerwas and Willimon have described the Church as a colony, a beachhead or an outpost, that is “an island of one culture in the middle of another, a place where the values of home [heaven] are reiterated and passed on to the young, a place where the distinctive language and life-style of the resident aliens are lovingly nurtured and reinforced”. It is the demands of the Sermon on the Mount, they explain, which make necessary the formation of a colony, because these, if believed and lived, are what make us different from the world.⁵

We are journeying to our heavenly Home and we should be travelling light, not encumbered with material possessions. As stateless foreigners in this world, we do not have earthly powers or physical land. We were never meant to build huge edifices and shrines that spoke of status and privilege.

When Jesus said that we must become like children in order to enter the Kingdom of God, He was referencing the powerlessness of children in the society of His day. We can see this from His encouragement to “humble” ourselves, that is to take a lowly position (Matthew 18:3-4).



The early Christian community was a pilgrim Church without earthly power.



The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount take us back to the beginning, from which they offer us a way forward, that way being the pathway of God, the pathway to glory.

“The renewal of the church will come about through ... an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount,” said German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), who lived in a country and a time when large sections of the Church supported Adolf Hitler and Nazi ideology.⁶

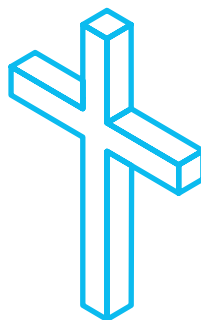
As the longstanding dominance of the Church in the USA was beginning to fade, Hauerwas and Willimon wrote in 1989 of what a blessing it was to live at a time when the Church was becoming marginalised.

...in the twilight of that [Christian-dominated] world, we have an opportunity to discover what has been and always is the case – that the church, as those called out by God, embodies a social alternative that the world cannot on its own terms know.

The demise of the Constantinian world view, the gradual decline of the notion that the church needs some sort of surrounding “Christian culture” to prop it up and mold its young, is not a death to lament. It is an opportunity to celebrate. The decline of the old, Constantinian synthesis between the church and the world means that we American Christians are at last free to be faithful in a way that makes being a Christian today an exciting adventure.⁷

The role of Christians is to live lives that model Christ. Rather than try to change the culture of society at large, Christians should simply live out the distinctively Christian ethics of the Sermon on the Mount.

Every Christian is therefore meant to embody the life of Jesus. Each Beatitude shows an aspect of the character of Christ and should be an aspect of the character of a Christian too, formed in us by the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). The Beatitudes are not a smorgasbord of virtues, from which to choose one or two. Rather, every disciple should show all these characteristics. The same applies to the rest of the Sermon. All the teaching is for all Jesus’ disciples.



The Sermon on the Mount gives us a portrait of the Preacher Himself.⁸ And we must be like Him.





Some say that, as Christians, we are under grace, not under law, and therefore have no need for rules of any kind. But this is an error. The risen Jesus commanded the Eleven to “make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). He wanted disciples who would pattern their lives on His, disciples who would not make light of His commands but would seek to obey them.

The reason for the incarnation was that “the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us” (Romans 8:3-4). In the words of J. Oswald Sanders, “the primary purpose of grace is to enable us to meet the demand of God’s holy law”, and the Church is in desperate need of the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount.⁹

Let us not allow anyone, whether liberal or evangelical in their theological views, and however sincere in their personal convictions, to deprive us of the challenge, the searching, and the inspiration of this matchless Sermon.¹⁰

Some say the Sermon of Mount was preached for another age, not for the modern world. Some say that we cannot be expected to emulate a Person who lived on earth 2,000 years ago, as we make our way through the morass of our secular humanist, pluralist context. Some say that it is wishful thinking to hold that Jesus could be incarnate in the lives of His followers in the twenty-first century. Some say the Sermon is for all humanity, not just for the disciples of Christ. Some say the Sermon is for a Christian elite, not for ordinary Christians. Some say that it is for the “remnant” in a future “Kingdom age”. Some say that the values of the Sermon are unattainable, so there is no point even trying.

As Sanders points out, every principle in the Sermon is reiterated in one form or another in the New Testament epistles.¹¹ The Apostle Paul strove constantly to grow more like his Master. We can be sure that the Sermon on the Mount, described to him by the Eleven who had sat at the Lord’s feet and heard it first-hand, must have been supremely important to him. It should be supremely important for all of Christ’s disciples, showing us how He wants us to live, which is how He lived Himself.

It is through living out the Sermon on the Mount that we can bear good fruit in our lives, the figs and grapes that Jesus describes (Matthew 7:15-20). Unless we cling to Jesus and His teachings, our lives will bear bitter fruit or the mere fluff of thistledown.



The Sermon on the Mount must be embraced and lived, for it is nothing less than the life of Jesus that is being embraced and the character of Jesus that is being formed in each one of us as we live it.



Jesus is not only our Saviour, the One who died on the cross to take away our sins, the One who gives us new life through His resurrection, the One who gives us a future and the sure hope of heaven. He is also our Lord, our Master, our King. He is the life that we live. He is the air that we breathe. In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Our lives are inseparable from Him.

The question is not only what Jesus meant to us when we first believed, but also what He means to us now, today, this minute. Our ongoing relationship with Him is the essence of faith.

Paul saw the importance of Jesus not just in terms of salvation but also as the mainspring and essence of his very being. Paul was “fixated” with Christ. “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me,” he wrote (Galatians 2:20) and “for to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). It was Christ’s grace which carried him in times of pain and anguish (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul in turn carried on his own body “the marks of Jesus” (Galatians 6:17).

In Philippians 3:4-11, having outlined the things that his community considered most valuable, he rejected them all as dung (v.8, KJV). What Paul valued now, he says, was “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”. Later he explains more:

I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)

He saw this as a lifelong process.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Philippians 3:12)

Paul had one of the most dramatic conversions imaginable (Acts 9). He knew well that it is by the grace of God and through the atoning death of Christ that we are saved, not by keeping God’s law (Galatians 2:21). Yet it was his continuing relationship with Jesus that was the focus for Paul as he went on in the Christian life. He wanted to know “Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8) as well as “Christ Jesus our Saviour” (Titus 1:4).

Of course, deciding to put our trust in Jesus is the most important thing we ever do. Yet how sad it is when individual Christians or whole congregations stop there. I heard of a church near where I live in Wiltshire, UK, who told their pastor to give up his sermons on how to live the Christian life and just preach an evangelistic Gospel message to them every week. Essential though evangelism is, it should not be separated from teaching believers to live godly and righteous lives reflecting the beauty of their blessed Lord and so become a witness to unbelievers.

We should never cease in our thankfulness to the Lord for dying to take away our sins and in our praises





for His glorious resurrection. Yet if we focus solely on this we are surely missing His plan for our lives.

Jesus spoke of entering by a narrow gate and then following a hard road (Matthew 7:13-14, ESV). After deciding to step through the gate we must continue along the road, however hard it may be. Discipleship is an ongoing process in which we must make countless decisions every day.

We made the right choice when we went through the narrow gate, but we must keep on making right choices if we are to stay on the difficult road which leads from the narrow gate to life. The American author John Steinbeck (1902-1968) wrote:

*We have only one story. All novels, all poetry, are built on the never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil.*¹²



Jesus is our Lord and our life as well as our Saviour. Until we get to heaven, we face inner conflict every day as we decide whether to act in a Christ-like way or a different way.

We should be transformed by our daily relationship with Christ (Romans 12:2) – that is, “transformed into His image with ever increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We can have a fair guess at how Paul would have reacted to the Wiltshire church I mentioned from his stern words to the Corinthian church who had not been much transformed and were still

¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol.1. (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1959) p.19.

² M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1940), p.49.

³ Christianity did not become the official religion of the Roman Empire until 27 February 380 when Emperor Theodosius I issued the so-called Edict of Thessalonica.

⁴ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p.17.

⁵ Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, pp.12,74.

⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a 1935 letter to his brother cited in G. B. Kelly and F. B. Nelson (eds), *A Testament to Freedom*:

“mere infants in Christ” not yet ready for solid food (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).

A key part of that transformation is the renewing of our minds, so that we love what the Lord loves and not what the world loves.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Many Christian hymns and songs have taken up this theme, for example:

*May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.*¹³

As Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones points out:

The Christian and the non-Christian are absolutely different in what they admire. The Christian admires the man who is ‘poor in spirit’... The world believes in self-confidence, self-expression and the mastery of life ...

Then obviously they must be different in what they seek. ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst.’ After what? Wealth, money, status, position, publicity? Not at all. ‘Righteousness.’...¹⁴

In the next article, we shall begin looking at the Beatitudes and see how they can transform us.

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director, Barnabas Aid

The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (New York: HarperOne, 1990), p.320.

⁷ Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, pp.17-18.

⁸ J. Oswald Sanders, *The World's Greatest Sermon* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972), p.7.

⁹ Sanders, *The World's Greatest Sermon*, p.16.

¹⁰ Sanders, *The World's Greatest Sermon*, p.16.

¹¹ Sanders, *The World's Greatest Sermon*, p.14.

¹² John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (New York: Viking Press, 1952), p.415.

¹³ Kate B. Wilkinson (1925)

¹⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol.1. pp.37-38.

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“Tell my brothers that I died well”: Nigerian pastors martyred for Christ



Pastor Lawan remained faithful to Christ despite his impending death at the hands of Islamists

“Thank God for everything,” said Pastor Lawan Andimi in a video message released on 5 January 2020 by the Boko Haram terrorists who had kidnapped the prominent church leader in north-east Nigeria. A convert from Islam, Pastor Lawan led many other Muslims to Christ, including his father-in-law who was a famous *mallam* (Quranic scholar). Pastor Lawan had been repeatedly targeted by Islamist extremists, and survived attempts on his life in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

In the video he urged his loved ones not to cry or to worry about him and described his awareness of being in God’s hands, whether he was to be reunited with them on earth or whether he was to be killed:

I have never been discouraged because all the conditions that one finds himself is in the hands of God. By the grace of God, I will be together with my wife, my children and my colleagues. If the opportunity has not been granted, maybe it is the will of God.

On 20 January 2020 Boko Haram announced that they had killed him.

Pastor Lawan was one of at least 11,000 Christians in northern and Middle Belt Nigeria who have been martyred since 2015, but the anti-Christian violence began in the 1980s and only God knows the total death toll. Church leaders are one of the primary targets of the Islamist extremists.

Dying well: singing, praying and encouraging

Another who died bravely and, with a true pastor’s heart, seeking to strengthen and encourage other believers to the end, was George Orjih. On 27 July 2009, as he and other Christians, tied up and lying on the ground, waited for almost certain death at the hands of the Islamist militants who had kidnapped them, Pastor George said to the others,

Tell my brothers that I died well and am living with Christ. And if we all die, we know that we die for the Lord.

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

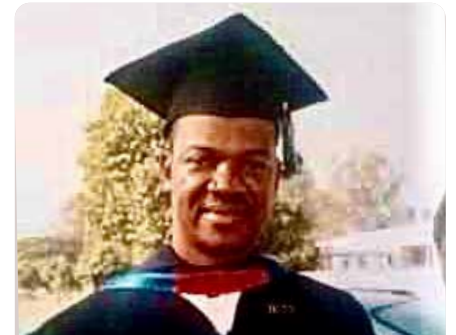
The kidnapers asked him to convert to Islam, but Pastor George refused. He preached Christ to the leader of the kidnapers and continued singing, praying and encouraging the other Christians to stand firm – until he was beheaded. Another pastor in the group, Sabo Yakubu, was also asked to convert to Islam and also refused: he was likewise beheaded. But some of their companions lived and were able to take Pastor Orjih’s final message back to his congregation in Maiduguri, Borno State.

“You need Jesus”

“Is there any pagan amongst you?” demanded radical Muslims, posing as police officers, when they pulled over

a van in Bauchi State on 18 April 2011.

One of those travelling in the van was Isma Dogari, a Nigerian missionary pastor. “I am not a pagan but a servant of the living God. You need Jesus in your life,” replied Pastor Isma. They took him from the vehicle to a mosque, gave him a Quran and told him to



Pastor George Orjih preached, prayed, sang and exhorted until he was beheaded

renounce Christ. But he refused, saying, “I have since passed that level a long time ago. You need Jesus in your life.” They beat him and gouged out his eyes, then asked him again to renounce his faith. But he persisted, “You need Jesus.” They stabbed him and set fire to his body.

It seems that the Lord had prepared Isma for his martyrdom through a dream, not long before he died, in which he was warned about men being killed and women being left as widows. He repeatedly reminded his family of the dream and urged them to stand firm in their faith no matter what happened. The day before his death he had preached, in what turned out to be his final sermon, that Christians must stop living carelessly and must be prepared, if the Lord willed, to lay down their lives for Christ’s sake.

You can read more about these and other modern Nigerian martyrs who had been active in ministry in Patrick Sookhdeo’s books of daily devotional readings on Christian martyrs, *Heroes of Our Faith*, Vol. 1. pp. 2, 6, 119, 127, 147, 151, 170, 198, 353 and Vol. 2, pp. 10, 40, 117, 155, 230 (Isaac Publishing, Vol. 1, 2012, second edition 2021, ISBN 978-1-9524501-2-9, Vol. 2, 2021, ISBN 978-1-952450-15-0). To purchase these books please go to barnabasaid.org/resources/books or contact your nearest Barnabas Aid office (addresses on inside front cover) or write to sales@barnabasbooks.org



The Shepherd's Academy



Church leaders in South Asia are among many across the Global South who lack opportunities for formal theological training

Training the under-shepherds of God's flock in South Asia

"The Shepherd's Academy ... helped me to correct myself in many areas. ... I thank God for this wonderful opportunity."

These were the words of "J.V.," one of the South Asian church leaders who recently completed a short training course delivered through Barnabas Aid's The Shepherd's Academy.

Christianity has been present in South Asia since the first century, yet believers today are a persecuted and marginalised minority. Opportunities for church leaders to undertake formal training – often taken for granted in the West – are few and far between. Recent statistics indicate that more than five million church planters and pastors across the Global South have not had the opportunity for proper training.

The Shepherd's Academy (TSA) is a project of Barnabas Academia, offering undergraduate-level learning opportunities to grassroots Church leaders in the Global South.

The vision and goal of TSA is to empower these grassroots church leaders with the necessary tools to lead their communities and churches faithfully and effectively, emulating the Good Shepherd in their contexts. The intention is for church leaders to be a ladder that their congregations and leaders can use to grow the Church to greater heights.

Short courses equip more church leaders for ministry

TSA's work in South Asia is new and growing rapidly with many students having already completed courses and more joining every month. At present there are more than 100 active students in undergraduate programmes, with many others having already completed courses and continued in their ministry.

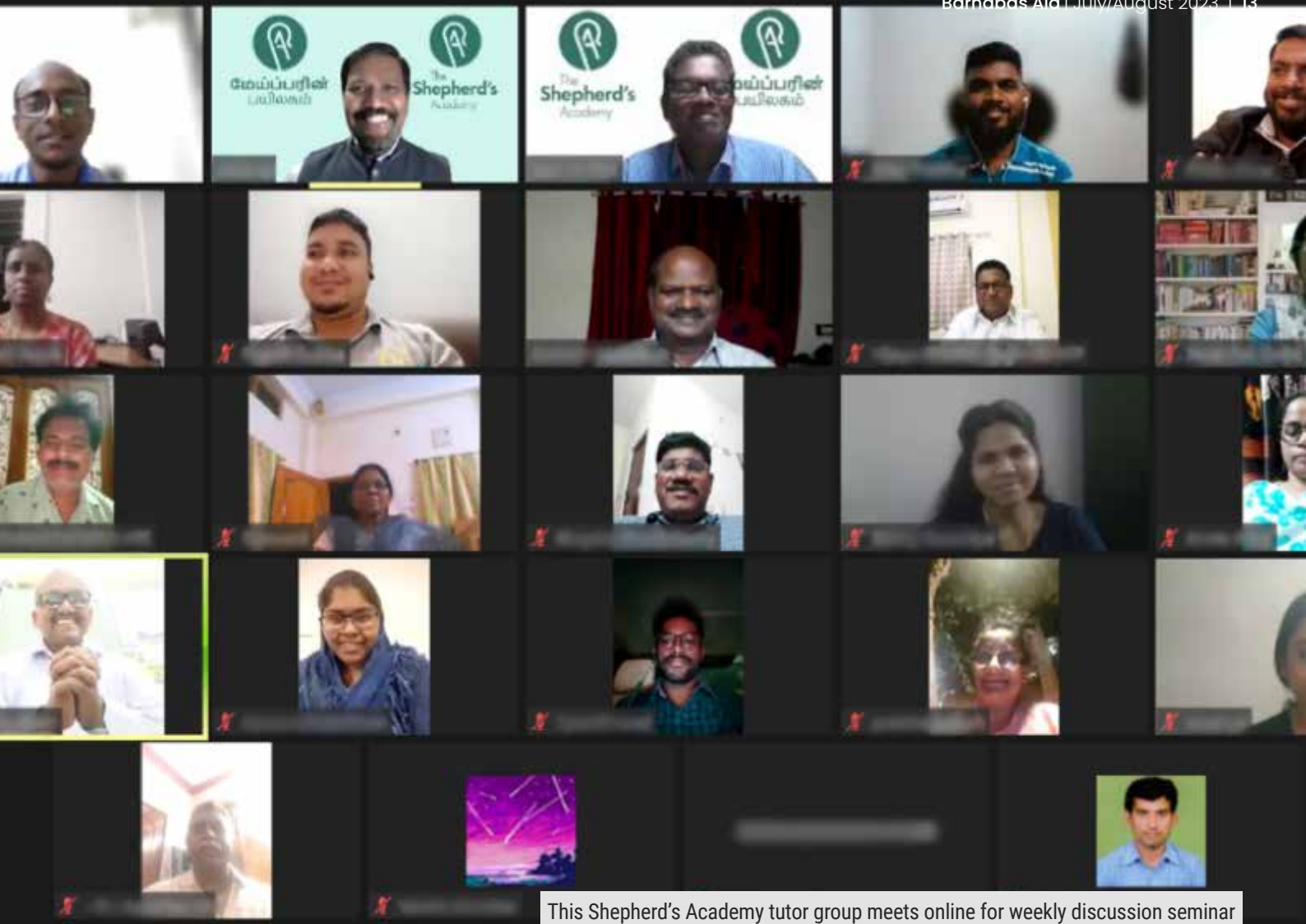
A church leader called the course a "privilege", describing his studies as "thought provoking" and adding, "The peer learning during the tutorials and discussion forums gave me a wide range of practical ideas to implement the learning. The tutor's clear passion made the learning complete."

A third, James, reported that the course "gave me a lot of clarity and guidance in my ministry among neighbours".

Online learning respects cultural context

In order to provide the most directly applicable ministry training to grassroots leaders, the course material has been written by subject experts from the students' own regions. This means that course materials are tailored to benefit church leaders in their particular context.

TSA is the undergraduate section of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL), providing training opportunities for grassroots church leaders across the Global South who often struggle to access formal training or education. At present 418 students from 16 countries are registered for short courses or undergraduate study with TSA, and TSA study centres are based in Cameroon, Nepal, Pakistan, South Sudan and Zambia. TSA course material is being translated into Chinese, Russian and Tamil, with, God willing, further translation into Arabic and Bengali to follow.



This Shepherd's Academy tutor group meets online for weekly discussion seminar

“...Lord, help me to be a ladder like you”

Under a qualified mentor, peer group learning is used through an online learning platform. Regular assessments focusing on practical engagement with the information complete the learning process.

Online learning is used for three main reasons. Firstly, it provides flexibility for grassroots church leaders who are shepherding a congregation – many of whom will also have paid employment outside of the church and cannot devote themselves to attending seminary or university.

Secondly, online learning keeps costs minimal. These savings allow formal training to be offered at reduced cost to church leaders who would otherwise be unable to afford it. Thirdly, online learning means that students can undertake their study without being uprooted from their contexts and ministries.

This prayer from a senior church leader, “J.P.”, who is completing a TSA course, is a useful conclusion and summing up of the fantastic work that TSA is doing in South Asia, through your donations and by God’s grace.

“Lord, I thank you for reminding me to be in disciple-making and leadership development. Lord, I am willing

to go to the next step to become a ladder. This is costly to me, but Lord, I am willing to develop people and to take for myself the back seat. Lord, help me to be a ladder like you. Lord, I am willing to be a ladder to develop disciples, leaders and even ladders. Lord, give me more understanding. Amen”

The Shepherd's Academy achieves international accreditation

We are thankful to the Lord that, after much hard work, The Shepherd's Academy has achieved international accreditation for all TSA programmes from the European Council for Theological Education. This is a vital step for TSA, allowing us to offer degree qualifications that will be formally recognised by churches and theological colleges around the world. In some countries, such formal qualifications are a legal requirement in order for church leaders to lawfully practise their calling as pastors and ministers.



Become a regular hope-giver

Support suffering Christians with a monthly gift of hope

We are so thankful for our supporters' faithful support and generosity over the course of many years. Thanks to your prayers and gifts through the last three decades, we've helped suffering and persecuted Christians in 109 countries.

This practical help has included emergency support following natural disasters; supplying food and water; aid for converts and victims of violence; sponsoring education and small businesses; providing Christian literature; and support and training for church leaders.

None of this would be possible without you.

Barnabas exists to provide hope and aid from Christians, through Christians, to Christians. In a world plagued by discrimination and

persecution against our brothers and sisters, we invite you to make a difference and go further to help believers around the world who suffer because of their faith.

Make a lasting impact through regular giving

We ask you to prayerfully consider if you can give a regular gift in order to help provide solace, strength and renewed hope for Christians amidst their trials. Whether you choose to give to a specific need, a particular country or one of our sponsorship projects through Living Streams, the impact of regular giving cannot be overstated.

Regularly contributing through Direct Debit or standing order to our ministry helps keep our administrative costs down. This means more money reaches the suffering Christians we serve, helping us to be responsible

stewards of what the Lord entrusts to us through you.

What's more, regular giving helps us to plan our aid to the suffering Church, contributing to long-term projects such as Christian schools or apprenticeships and vocational training that continue making a positive difference decades into the future.

Can you become a continuous source of encouragement to Christians in need?

As you can see, your continued support will not only alleviate immediate needs but also empower Christian individuals and communities to rebuild their lives and stand strong in the face of persecution.

So can you become a regular hope-giver?

We invite you to join our mission of providing hope and aid to suffering Christians. Please consider whether you can contribute a regular gift, large or small. Your pledge will help to sustain, support and strengthen needy Christians living under pressure and persecution.

As a part of the family of God, you can stand with us and make a difference for our suffering family all around the world.

LIVING STREAMS

Sponsorship



Your monthly gift through Living Streams can support Christian children and other believers in lands of suffering and persecution

“I am really grateful for having a school where I can go and learn amazing things about this world and also about my faith.” These were the words of six-year-old Shyna – a young believer in Pakistan who is just one of the 11,000 Christian children to receive a place at a Christian school with help from Barnabas Aid.

Shyna and her four-year-old sister Jessica live in a rural community in Punjab and attend a small Christian school, with fewer than 40 pupils, supported by Barnabas.

In countries where Christians are a despised and persecuted minority, Christian children can be victimised in state-run schools. This can include being marked down or failed in exams, or pressure to convert to the majority religion. Some even suffer violence at school. Many Christian children do not go to school at all, because their parents are too poor. Attending a Christian school enables Christian children to learn in a safe environment, where they start to thrive. They can also grow in the Lord through worship and Christian teaching at school.

“I am thankful for this school,” continues Shyna, “and I hope when I grow up I can support my family financially with the knowledge I gain from this place and the people here.”

A continuous flow of hope and practical support

By joining Living Streams you can become part of a continuous life-flow helping Christians living with pressure and persecution around the world. A powerful way to do this is to sponsor a schoolchild – Barnabas currently supports over 120 Christian schools – yet this is only one of our Living Streams programmes.

Through our feeding programme, you can provide a nutritious monthly food parcel for a Christian family struggling with severe poverty. A monthly gift to our Pastors and Evangelists programme will support church workers serving faithfully, despite hardship and hostility, within their own country or people group. A regular donation to our Bibles and Scriptures fund will help to fund the distribution of Bibles, New Testaments or portions of Scripture.

You’ll receive regular updates on how your support is helping Christians in need. If you choose to sustain a family or sponsor a child, we’ll also send you a prayer card with a photograph and details of the believers you’re helping.

“I see that when we are faithful and patient, God will accomplish for us, in the right time, wonderful things,” said a Bible translator in West Africa. Through faithful and patient giving, you too can see God accomplish wonderful things for our suffering brothers and sisters.

\$38 per month* could sustain a Christian family living in poverty with monthly food parcels

\$57 per month* could support an evangelist or pastor in their ministry

\$34 per month* could sponsor a Christian child throughout their school years and see them grow in the Lord

\$9 per month* could strengthen suffering Christians through the grace of God’s Word

***Suggested amounts are based on typical costs. But you can join Living Streams by regular donations of any amount.**

Please note that we cannot normally arrange for the exchange of letters between a sponsor and those they are sponsoring. This is because of security issues in areas of persecution and to keep down administration costs, so that we can maximise the help given to needy Christians.

Project references: 00-1500 Family feeding sponsorship fund; 00-477 Pastor support fund; 00-478 Evangelist support fund; 00-514 School place sponsorship fund; 00-362 Bibles and Scriptures fund

Christian couple acquitted and released from prison after retrial

IRAN

Iranian Christian converts Homayoun Zhaveh, 64, and his wife Sara Ahmadi, 45, were acquitted and released from prison on 9 May.

Homayoun, who has advanced Parkinson's disease, and Sara, his main carer, had been in prison since August 2022. They were serving terms of two and eight years, respectively, for their involvement in a "house church".

The couple's third request for a retrial was granted after two previous unsuccessful applications. The appeal court judge ruled that there was "no evidence" that Homayoun and Sara had acted against national security. Gathering with other Christians was, said the judge, entirely "natural". Having books about Christianity was merely "an extension of their beliefs".

The judge added that the law did not recognise as criminal activity the participation in "home-groups" to promote Christianity.

The couple were originally arrested and detained in June 2019 and sentenced in November 2020. When they responded to a summons to begin their sentences in June 2021 they were sent home, before being jailed again in August 2022.



Homayoun and Sara were acquitted of their alleged crimes against national security by an appeal court on 9 May, and released the same day [Image credit: Article 18]

Six Christian converts arrested for apostasy and proselytisation

LIBYA

Six Libyan Christians, who were arrested separately, may face the death penalty as apostates from Islam.

They are also accused of proselytising others in the Muslim-majority country.

One of the six is a 22-year-old woman who released a video explaining her conversion to Christianity at the age of 15.

A seventh Muslim-background believer is thought to still be on death row after being sentenced to death for apostasy in September 2022.

In a separate incident, two teachers, both US citizens, were arrested in the Libyan capital of Tripoli on suspicion of proselytising Muslims.

They were detained by the Libyan Internal Security Agency for "inciting our children to renounce Islam and convert to Christianity". Both teachers were deported to Tunisia.

Whilst Libya's interim constitution guarantees non-Muslims freedom of worship, those who share the Gospel with Muslims face serious reprisals.

A law stating that apostates from Islam who refuse to recant will be sentenced to death was passed by the Libyan General National Congress (GNC), which sat from 2012 to 2014. Laws passed by the GNC were subsequently abolished, but political instability has allowed this apostasy law to remain in use.

Report documents killing of at least 1,350 Christians in North and Middle Belt over 12-month period

NIGERIA

More than 1,350 Christians were killed in northern and Middle Belt Nigeria from 1 February 2022 to 31 January 2023, according to a new report.

The Kukah Centre – founded by Matthew Hassan Kukah, a senior church leader in Sokoto State – also concluded that this violence is the result of anti-Christian persecution by Islamist extremists.

Since the period covered by the report many more Christians have been killed, including at least 133 in the Middle Belt in March-April.

A night-time attack on the Christian community of Sankwap Runji in the Zangon Kataf Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State on 15 April resulted in 33 deaths. Many of the victims were asleep and died when the attackers set fire to more than 40 homes. A mass burial was conducted the following day by a senior church leader.

Also in Zangon-Kataf LGA, nine residents of two villages in the Christian-majority Atyp Chiefdom were killed by suspected Fulani extremists in attacks on the evening of 12 April. One man was killed in Ruji, and eight others died in Takjei. Three people were treated in hospital for injuries.



The mass burial in Sankwap Runji, Kaduna State, on Sunday 16 April, after 33 residents were killed by suspected Fulani extremists [Image credit: Nasarawa Mirror]

Uyghur pastor released after 15 years in jail

CHINA

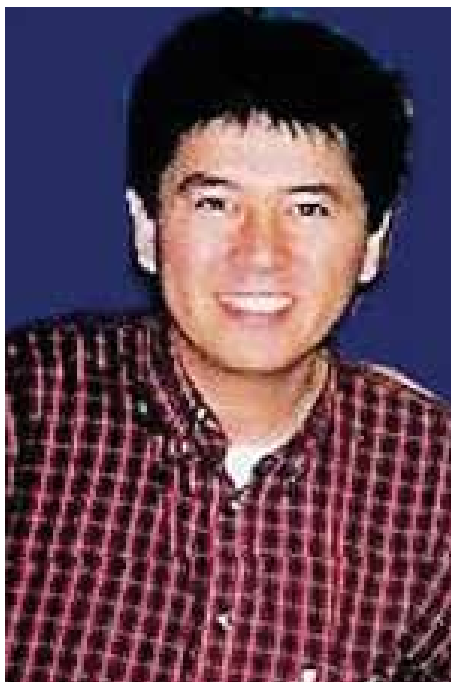
Uyghur house church pastor Alimujiang Yimiti (Alim) has been released after 15 years' imprisonment in China, and is now home with his family.

Alim, 49, who converted to Christianity from Islam in 1995, served as a pastor in Kashgar, Xinjiang province, until his arrest in 2008 for alleged anti-state activities.

In 2007, authorities initially accused Alim of using his business to "infiltrate" Kashgar with Christian ideology. Alim was detained on 12 January 2008 for "inciting separatism" and "unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organisations".

He was finally sentenced in August 2009 after being subjected to two trials held in secret, with his family prohibited from attending. Alim's wife and lawyer did not learn of the trial until October 2009, and did not discover that he had been sentenced until December of that year.

Alim was held in Xinjiang No. 3 prison, where inmates are reported to be made to wear headphones continuously playing communist propaganda, which they must memorise and repeat.



International experts said that Alim's imprisonment was arbitrary and based solely on his "religious faith and religious activities" [Image credit: China Aid]

Bible translator abducted and killed

CAMEROON

A senior Bible translator in north-west Cameroon has been killed by gunmen.

Wuwih William Gemuh was abducted when returning home after facilitating a languages workshop on 17 March. He was later killed by the armed men.

Wuwih had responsibility for supervising translation work into several languages in the region, where Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram is active.

Keyeh Emmanuel, General Director of the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy, said, "We are working to bring comfort to the family and colleagues at this very difficult moment. We invite you to be in prayers for us and for Wuwih's family."

Islamist attacks and other violence in Cameroon have left Bible translators such as Wuwih "in persistent danger", added Emmanuel.



Wuwih William Gemuh leaves behind a wife and six children [Image credit: Wycliffe]

Illiterate Christian widow arrested and charged with "blasphemy"

PAKISTAN

An illiterate Christian woman, together with a male Muslim colleague, was arrested and charged with "blasphemy" at the school where they worked in Punjab, Pakistan.

Musarrat Bibi, a widow with three daughters, and Mohammad Sarmad were charged with desecrating the Quran when asked to clear a store room at the Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Arif Wala city, on 15 April.

They gathered waste paper that had been discarded in the store room and burnt it. As both Musarrat and Mohammad are illiterate, they did not realise that some of the pages contained Arabic verses from the Quran. Pupils initially alerted the school authorities and residents in the district informed the police.

Pakistan's "blasphemy" laws stipulate life imprisonment for desecration of the Quran.

Musarrat has worked at the school since the death of her husband, who was a teacher.

Pakistan's "blasphemy" laws stipulate life imprisonment for desecration of the Quran.

Elsewhere in Pakistan, a Christian, Kashif Masih, was shot and killed in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, on 1 April. Kashif was returning home from his job as a sanitary worker when motorcyclists opened fire. The shooting was claimed by Islamic State Khorasan Province (a group active in Afghanistan and Central Asia, as well as Pakistan).

Two other men in the Peshawar area – a Hindu and a Sikh – were killed in separate incidents on 30 and 31 March, respectively, that are believed to be part of an Islamist attack on religious minorities.

barnabas+

“The goodness of God in the lives of His people”

Santal Christian Dijen, who was shot in the face and left blind in one eye, tells of his continuing faith in Christ in one of the latest Barnabas+ films

“**S**tories are powerful. When Jesus was here on earth He told stories and parables. Paul told stories through his letters. This is exactly what we are trying to do at Barnabas+.”

These were the words of Barnabas Aid’s Digital Content Producer – one of the team behind our Barnabas+ streaming service – who has recently returned from filming the story of a Santal Christian family in Bangladesh.

“We want stories that highlight the goodness of God in the lives of His people,” he adds.

“It’s very important to understand the context our brothers and sisters live in to be able to support and pray for them. It’s also an important way for our supporters to know how their support is making a difference all over the world.”

Encouragement and spiritual nourishment

The aim of sharing accounts of suffering and persecution is never to burden or discourage – but rather to encourage Western Christians, especially those who are themselves going through suffering, that the Lord remains faithful through our trials and tribulations.

Believers in the developed world are certainly not immune to hardship. Poverty is not as desperate for many of us as it is for our brothers and sisters in the Global South, but is still a trial to many. Illness and disease affect people everywhere, especially those in the later stages of life. There are many believers in the West who suffer hardship for their faith.

Believers who suffer in these ways – particularly if their suffering is compounded by loneliness or isolation – are searching for encouragement and spiritual nourishment. This is what Barnabas+ is designed to provide.

As well as Barnabas Originals – short features and films produced by Barnabas, such as the account of the Santal Christians – there are hours of Christian content available for you and your family. This includes Bible teaching, short devotionals designed to uplift and inspire, Gospel-based children’s TV shows, and Christian apologetics that re-affirm the truth of our faith.

Barnabas+ can be accessed at www.barnabasplus.tv and is available on multiple devices. New programmes are added every month. There are no monthly fees – the service is completely free.

Trusting in God through difficulties

Christians in the West will also be blessed and edified by the lessons our brothers and sisters in lands of persecution can share with us. Like some others in the Barnabas team, our Digital Content Producer himself grew up in a land of persecution.

“I think the most important thing to learn from the suffering Church is to trust God even in the most difficult situations,” he concludes.

“Living in the West can make us rely on systems, comfort, technology or even wealth. But what we really need to learn is how we can rely on God and not on our own understanding. He is forever faithful.”

In 2016 around 5,000 Santal Christians from a village in Gaibandah district were forcibly evicted by police, aided by local Muslim extremists. Their homes were burned to the ground. Dijen and his family were among the 100 Christian families who have been able to move into new homes built with Barnabas Aid funding. The next 100 houses are in the process of construction.

Project reference: 04-1360 (Rebuilding the Santal community in Bangladesh)

Queensland church trebles its target with Barnabas fundraiser

A church in Queensland was so moved by the violence and hardship endured by persecuted Christians globally that it launched an innovative and hugely successful fundraising drive for Barnabas Aid.

Worshippers in Beaudesert, a small regional town on the Scenic Rim, trebled their initial target of \$2,000, raising more than \$6,000 for Barnabas' work helping our brothers and sisters in need.

The congregation received an insight into the violence and discrimination suffered by believers around the world during a talk given by a Barnabas Aid representative.

The Lord richly provides

At the end of the talk church member Janice Tonges took home the 2022 edition of our Praying for the Persecuted Church booklet. After reading in it (and then in the 2023 edition) about the countries and contexts where Christians face hostility or even death because of their faith, she decided to organise the fundraiser.

Janice took as her inspiration Christ's instruction to Peter to "go to the lake and throw out your line" to find a coin in a fish's mouth (Matthew 17:27), and

Acts 11:29-30, where the disciples take up a collection for the relief of suffering believers in Judea, and entrust it to Barnabas and Saul.

With the help of a friend, Janice gave small money bags made of cloth to 50 church families, encouraging them to "go fishing" to see where the Lord might provide something extra for Barnabas Aid.

Time was set aside at every Sunday service for a month for members of the congregation to share testimonies of how the Lord had provided extra.

The church's Sunday school children got involved as well, contributing at least \$400 in total.

By the grace of God, the final amount collected came to an amazing \$6,304.

On the back of the donation cheque, church members printed a dedication based on Acts 11:29-30. It stated that they "as each one was able, decided to provide prayerful and financial aid to our persecuted and suffering brothers and sisters. Entrusting their gift to Barnabas Aid, ensuring that they will receive it."

Victoria church becomes .gives collection point

We are delighted to welcome to our .gives initiative the Australian Free Church in Chadstone, VIC.

The church has become the latest collection point for donations to our food.gives and medical.gives programmes, which provide aid to suffering Christians around the world.

Donations of dry foodstuffs (chickpeas, lentils and rice) as well as medical equipment you no longer require (such as crutches, walking frames or blood pressure monitors) can be dropped off at the church in Woodlands Grove by arrangement with the pastor, Matthew Winzer, on 0473 820 846.

He will then organise delivery of your donations to our .gives warehouse in Bendigo, Victoria.

If your church would like to become a .gives collection point, please contact our office on 1300 365 799, or email bfaustralia@barnabasaid.org



Janice Tonges with the presentation cheque to Barnabas Aid. After it was printed, a further donation of \$200 was received

SAVE THE DATE 5 - 12 November

Get ready for SCAAW 2023

Suffering Church Action and Awareness Week this year runs from Sunday 5 November to Sunday 12 November. The theme will be "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail" (Lamentations 3:22).

Be a part of SCAAW as we stand with our suffering Church family in thought, prayer and practical action. You can make a difference to the lives of our poor and persecuted brothers and sisters by praying, raising funds and informing others about the suffering of Christians by holding an event at your local church or group.



**Suffering Church Action
and Awareness Week**

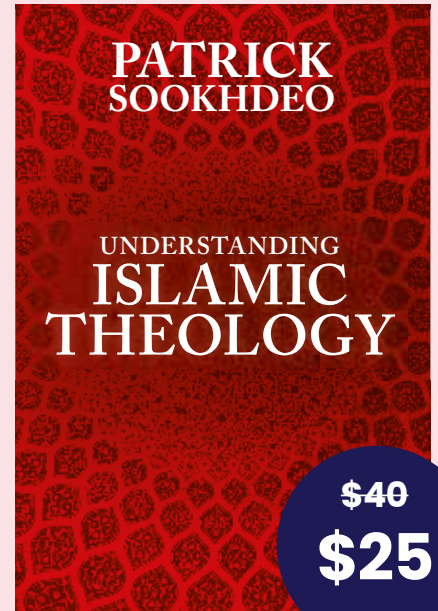
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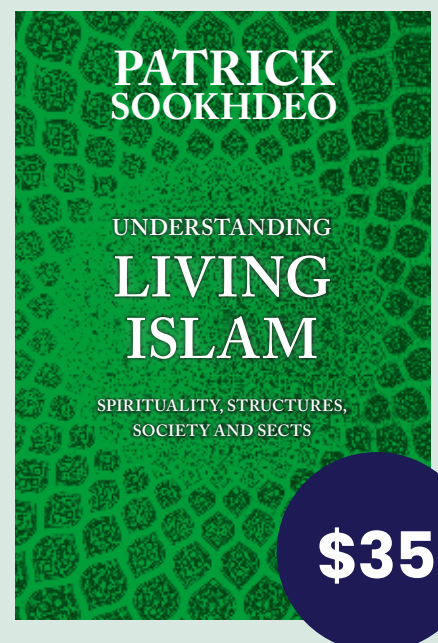
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– Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al-Hussaini, Senior Fellow in Islamic Studies and Azharite imam



To order, please contact your nearest Barnabas Aid office (addresses on inside front cover).

barnabasaid.org

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bringing hope to suffering Christians