

ONE AMBITION

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known" *Romans 15:20a*

SUFFERING AND MISSIONS *Getting the Story Right*

By Anita Brown

The young doctor took a deep breath. It was time to decide. Would he go with them, or stay behind?

Things were not always this unstable. When he first came to this country, it was peaceful. Then there were the protest, the riots, and increasing political unrest.

He looked around the room. There were the usual noises in the busy ward: a nurse trying to convince a husband why his wife needed to be in hospital, a malnourished child whimpering, an old man in the corner groaning in pain, the cries of a woman in labour. These familiar sounds were now rivaled by shouting in the streets, and even occasional gunfire. He thought about all they had done to build this hospital, and the great work that remained. Women safely delivered babies here, the wounded were cared for, the sick had access to medications, people came and heard the gospel. But it wasn't safe anymore. News of missionaries in the capital city being kidnapped in the midst of chaos has caused a great exodus of foreign workers, the last of them flying out tomorrow. It was time to decide.

When we think of missions and suffering, this is often how we paint the picture in our minds. We envision as the protagonist of the story a courageous western missionary; somebody's son, husband, someone loved. He's the good guy. And good guys always make it, right?

The plethora of examples from the Old and New Testaments, as well as modern day, tell the story that the Lord's workers often face danger doing the Lord's work. We think of Daniel being thrown to the lions, the stoning of Stephen, and Jim Elliot being martyred by those he went to serve. While we know Jesus said we would be persecuted for His name's sake, difficult questions still arise. **Would I willingly go to a war-torn country? Would I subject my parents to the heartbreak of worrying about my safety? Would I risk my child's health, education? Do I allow my daughter to risk her life as a missionary? What about the strain it would have on our marriage? What about finding someone to marry? What about burnout, loneliness, or being in a spiritual desert? As a missions agency, do we send our workers into known danger?** While our hearts beat for missions, there is competing angst and concern for the missionary.

I would argue that some of the difficulty reconciling these questions stems from telling the story from the wrong perspective. What if the protagonist isn't the missionary, and we've focused on the wrong person in the story? Are the lives of the people the missionary serves worth any less? Are **they** not somebody's son, husband, someone loved?

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Are the countless masses just countless masses, reduced to staggering statistics in our individualistic mentality? Do our hearts have the same angst and concern for **their** physical and spiritual wellbeing? However staggering, statistics alone are not known to compel anyone to leap into a fiery furnace. Perhaps focusing on the task, however great, isn't the point of the story either.

Amy Carmichael quotes 1 John 3:16 to highlight the need for the gospel, “‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren’. How often I think of that ‘ought’. No sugary sentiment there. Just the stern, glorious trumpet call, OUGHT.”¹ Is the Lord Jesus not the true protagonist; He who is the ultimate example of one who suffered? Is missions not ultimately about His glory and renown? So instead of asking, “Is it dangerous for **me**?” or “How else will **they** hear?” perhaps a superseding question is “Oh Lord, how are **You** working for **Your glory** here?”

This may mean we sometimes find ourselves bitten by a viper and unharmed for His glory, or completely shipwrecked for His glory. Paul and his disciples discerned from the Holy Spirit that Paul would be beaten and imprisoned in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23, 21:4,11), but instead of this translating to a change of plans, Paul was “constrained by the Holy Spirit”, and went, willing to lay down his life, as the people prayed and sent him (Acts 20:38, 21:5,14).

The difficult questions around suffering and missions need to be approached with the right focus on the story—the ultimate glory of God. When the Israelites spied out Canaan and saw fearsome giants, they focused on their impending doom instead of the power of God; they sinned and died in home camp (Numbers 13:28-14:4). When they grew impatient and decided to fight those giants on their own, focusing on the task instead of waiting in obedience, they sinned again and were defeated on the field (14:40-45). Whether remaining in home camp or venturing into the field, there is no peril more sobering than the words, “**because you have turned back from following the Lord, the Lord will not be with you**” (14:43).

It is in this following that we need to continually seek the Lord, moving and remaining as the Spirit leads, like when the Israelites were led by the pillar of cloud (Numbers 9:16-23). Is it always safe? Most certainly not. It's a challenge of faith to believe that our sovereign and loving God uses suffering for His glory, for the advancement of the gospel, and for our joy. As He said it, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

 *Missions is about His glory and renown! Is God tugging on your heart to declare His glory among the nations? We'd love to hear from you and discuss opportunities to serve with Pioneers. Call us at 866-268-8778, email us at connect@pioneers.ca, or explore current opportunities at pioneers.ca/go. ■*

¹ Elisabeth Elliot, *A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael*



Director's Message

Many of us love the “Hall of Faith” chapter of the book of Hebrews. We love reading about the “heroes of the faith” at the beginning of chapter 11. Then we come to verses 36-38: “**Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated...**” Many of us either skip this section or we want to minimize it. Passages on suffering do not necessarily warm our hearts. However, as you will see in the articles in this issue of **One Ambition**, suffering and unfulfilled ministry efforts are realities that many missionaries wrestle with in their ministries.

So, why do they do it? And why should you care?

This particular passage ends with, “... **God had provided something better for us...**” (verse 40). This speaks of the future described in heaven in Revelation 7:9-10: “**After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’**”

The “something better” is the realization of the hopes of all “heroes of faith” from every age, along with the “multitudes” that will come into the Kingdom because of each of the missionaries who place their lives on the line to take the Gospel to “every nation”... such as the missionaries

who wrote the articles you are holding. As you read this issue, may you be reminded that your support of Pioneers is playing a crucial role in taking the Gospel to the nations.

And there is a greater why. The main theme of the book of Hebrews is the absolute sufficiency and supremacy of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and our King. In this chaotic and violent world, torn by political strife and terrorism, there is no better news than the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the reality that the Kingdom of God is near! Together we are invited to sing praise in adoration of our King, who will take away all suffering, and bring every knee to bend to His sovereign reign!

In His Mercy,

James Kim

Executive Director ■

the OTHER SIDE of the STORY

By Melanie T.*



Maryah's son, Faruk, a three-year-old boy, runs into the room, distraught that his rubber ball has popped. He jumps on his two older brothers, punches them both, while ripping apart the deflated ball with his teeth. The two boys don't return the violence; they sit patiently while attempting to hold Faruk's fists. Defeated, Faruk continues to run around in frustration. I'm astonished. Throughout the weeks I've been in this country, I've seen children use violence to resolve disputes. Violence is their norm. "Your brother is hitting you. Why didn't you hit him back?" I asked. "We don't hit. Hitting is bad." For every story of a violent Faruk, there's often the untold side of patience and love.*

In conversations about going to Mid Asia, people often question me, "Isn't it dangerous?", "Why do you have to go? Let someone else go!", "Aren't you afraid you'll be killed?" The relative danger is the side of the story that most of us see, and yet I've been given a heart that aches for this nation. Despite the potential violence and fighting, I find myself broken for Faruk and his brothers. **God has led me here with a relentless tugging on my heart that I cannot ignore.** It is because I am sure of His leading, that He is with me by my side, that I go to these people trusting in His protection and plan for me. With the skills He has given me, I believe I am called to tell the less told side of their story: one that's filled with pain, and yet displays strength and beauty. These unreached people are loved by God and each have a story to tell. How beautiful would it be to have their stories include Christ one day!

1 Peter 1:8-9 says, "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls". I have so much admiration and respect for the long-term workers, who experience the daily corruption here, but remain hopeful for the joy and glory of God to transform these people. **It's this persevering hope that has kept them here by faith, serving and loving people in the face of danger. In turn, this has given the local people hope as well.** Tangible ministries like paving roads, raising awareness about mental health, and introducing art therapy and music education have pointed a dark nation towards a God who cares deeply for them and loves them. On the other side of the violence and danger in this

country, I also see this hope—it's in the beauty of the children playing by the well; it's in sunflowers adorning the land; it's in God being glorified through the work He is doing amongst this people.

On my last visit to Faruk's family, I presented them with Play-Doh. The boys cried, "I've seen this on TV but I've never played with it before!" They were overjoyed with

something so simple -- something I took for granted as a child. They carefully opened each container and began to make shapes. Maryah joined in. The boys showed off their creations and laughed; Maryah began to smile too. "The Play-Doh is making a difference. This act of relationship building demonstrates our Father's love, even if it seems small", my team leader said. The Play-Doh offered a temporary happiness, repainting their family portrait from one living in the midst of violence and strife to a simple picture of children laughing and enjoying their time together as a family.

I dream of a day when I can present these people with another gift—the Gospel of Jesus. Instead of providing temporary happiness, this gift will offer eternal joy. I long for that day!

 *We rejoice that the Lord continues to raise up more missionaries, such as the writer of this story, who recently joined Pioneers. In fact, through the help of supporters like you, Pioneers Canada was able to see 15 missionaries sent to the field last year! Thank you so much for sharing in this. Together, we can change the story of the unreached.*

Gifts to our Strategic Priorities Fund help us recruit, train, and care for missionaries to the unreached around the world. Currently, we are in need of an additional \$50,000 by the end of September. If you would like to give to this fund, you can call us at 866-268-8778, donate online at pioneers.ca/give/give-online, or simply mail the enclosed response form with your gift. ■

*names changed for security

Faith in Darkness:

Unfinished Stories

By A Pioneers Worker in North Africa

We have lived and ministered in a “high-risk” country for over a decade now. To say that ministering in a land like this is *challenging* would be an understatement.



It is a genuine test of faith. The spiritual darkness that sits over the country seems almost palpable at times. It's as if there is a dark ceiling under which only brooding shadows reside, obscuring the view of anyone who seeks to find their way. We are desperately praying for a shattering of this darkness and for the Light of God's Love to burst into the lives and hearts of the people we have come to know and love.

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for a missionary's heart to bear is the *separation* that results from legitimate security concerns. Separation, that is, from new believers.

Our first experience with this distinct test of faith involved a small study group fifteen years ago. The members of this group had accepted Jesus and were conducting discussion style teaching on a regular basis. An entire nuclear family would gather around Christian TV programs to learn and worship together. How thrilling to hear! Then two brothers and a cousin began to walk with Christ and joined in.

Regrettably, as a few foreigners would visit fairly often, the police became aware of the illegal "activities". In fact, two of the men from this group were thrown into prison, and remained there for three grueling months. We do not know what horrors they endured.

Being fearful upon their release, they isolated themselves and asked that Christians and foreign brothers not visit. We often wonder if they are experiencing the great and gentle healing by God's loving hand, or if they knew His joy in the midst of their suffering. We don't know. We are now cut off from communicating with them, but we pray that this story is not finished.

We need to have faith.

Our second experience involved dear friends whom we've known from the beginning of our time here: a barber, his lovely wife, and four beautiful daughters. The entire family accepted the Lord as Saviour and were baptized eight years ago. They had joyfully received the Christian picture books for children, songs, Bibles, and TV programs we have shared with them over the years.

Unfortunately, the family moved to another town, where they have no Christian fellowship. They live with family members who are strong Muslims, and the children are in an Islamic school. When we last visited them, there were more Islamic strongholds in their home than Christianity. We are saddened, and yet, we have faith that their story is not finished either.

At times, we can see glimpses of light streaming into the darkness

We often wonder if they are experiencing the God of all peace and comfort as war rages just down the hill from their town. We pray that they hold fast to the truth of Christ. We are now cut off from being able to communicate with them, but God is not. We pray that their story is one where they remain true to Christ.

Our recounting our experiences would not be complete if we did not share about how some are not separated, but brought together in Christ. We know a dear man who has been walking with Christ for about ten years now. With many ups and downs in life, he has always returned to his love for Jesus, reading, praying, fasting and sharing verses that have spoken to him with us. Through the internet, he has met another national who loves Jesus. Please pray for these two, and give thanks with us for God's grace in their lives.

At times, we can see glimpses of light streaming into the darkness. However, losing touch with new believers and the loss of follow-up with seekers continue to test our faith. For example, we were excited to meet, but subsequently lost contact, with several individuals who reached out to our partnering internet ministries while searching for the Truth. One man joyfully accepted a Bible, but returned to his town, and has not been heard from since. Another seeker traveled to a different country and has lost contact with us, and we can only hope that he is continuing in his faith. A third young man, riddled with questions about faith and different religions, never made a commitment and has now traveled away. Yet another dear young man met with us at length to discuss his questions, but then having received a Bible, stopped communicating with us and has not been heard from for nearly a year. Still, there are some like the high school senior who met with us several times, enjoying Bible study. Defying threats, he continued to meet and ask questions right up until a violent uprising forced foreigners to leave.

We often feel cut off from these people we love, not being able to reap what was sown, but we know that God is at work. We only see a glimpse, simply an introduction to the story, perhaps without ever knowing how the Lord will continue to move in these lives. We are waiting in faith, and praying that the darkness will be shattered.

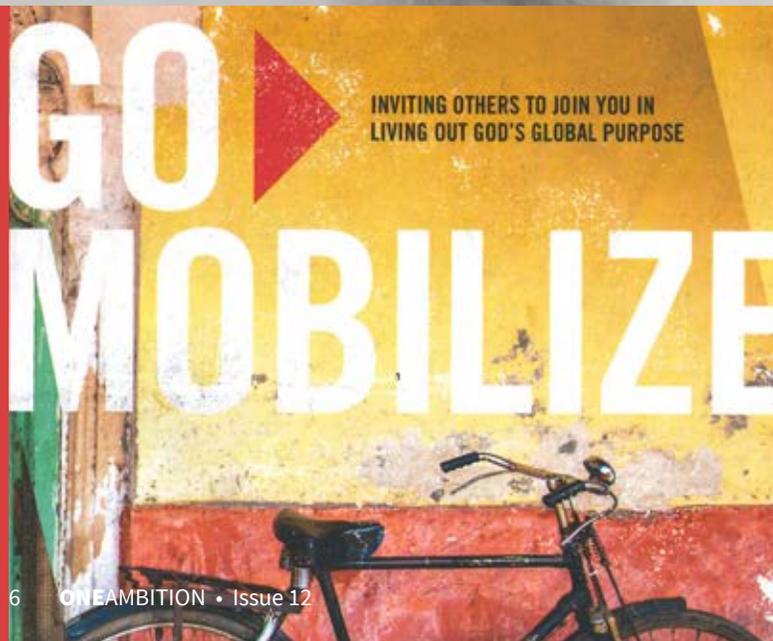
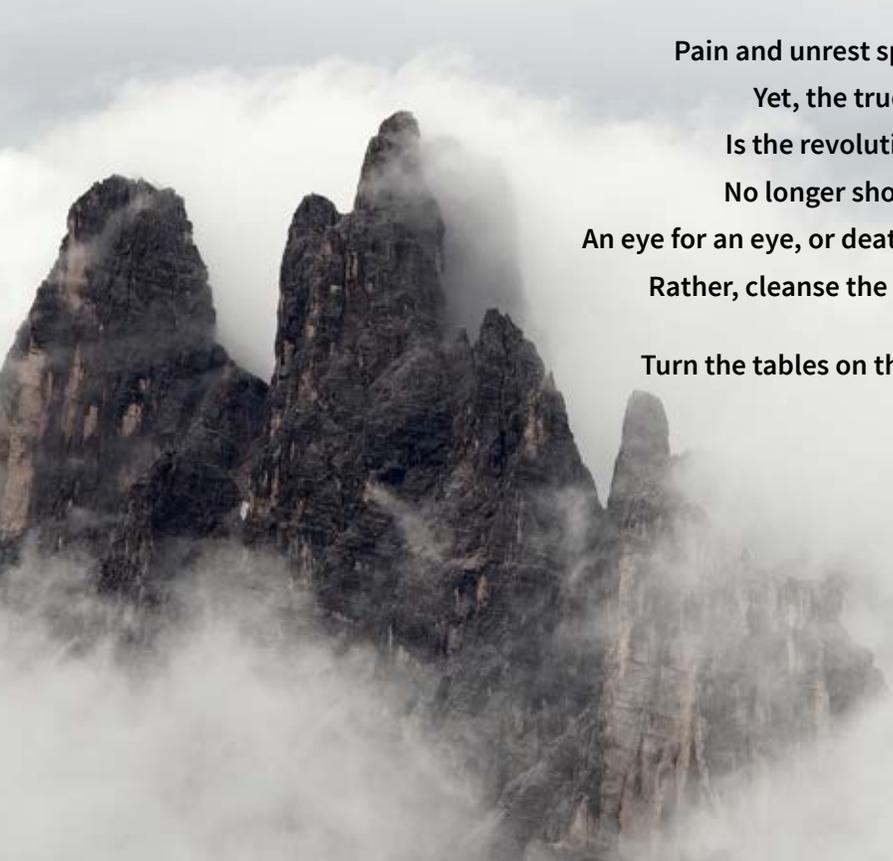
 *Would you join us in praying that the spiritual darkness would be shattered and that faith would remain in Him who will accomplish these things? "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" Hebrew 11:1. If you would like to learn more ways to pray for our workers please visit pioneers.ca/pray/join-us-in-prayer. ■*

AN UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

By SCD

Tires no longer rotate on the roads
they once journeyed upon;
Clouds as black as coal
Churn in the air
Ascending from rubber blockades
ablaze.
Masked men hurl stones
With the aim of afflicting harm,
In the name of restoring honour.
The call for riots rings through the
street;
The passion of the people burns in
protest.
Pain and unrest spark a coup,
Yet, the true overthrow
Is the revolution of heart.
No longer should we seek
An eye for an eye, or death for death.
Rather, cleanse the mind of this
nonsense;
Turn the tables on this delusion.

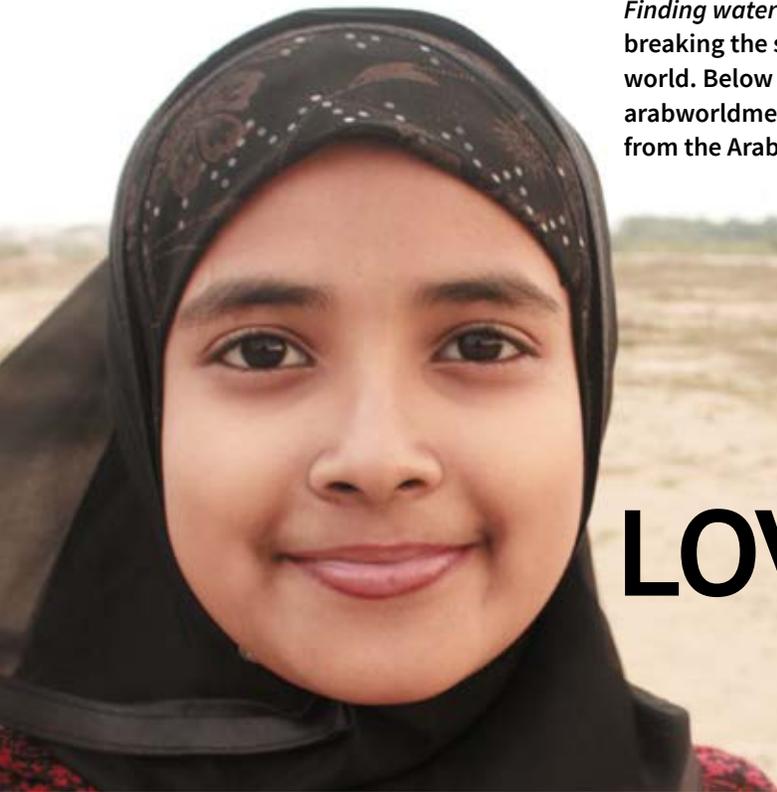
Experience the freedom found in
forgiveness
And embrace the grace offered by
the Savior.
It is He who proclaimed “Forgive
them
For they know not what they do”.
The Word became flesh,
Truly living out “Love your enemies”.
We must also walk in His ways
If we claim to be connected
To His merciful kingdom.
He gives life and takes it away.
Not one sparrow falls without His
sight.
So, we need not repay evil for evil
Or take out swords in our defense.
Instead, we trust in the Defender’s
care
And give ourselves to those
Who make themselves our enemies,
Just like our compassionate and
humble King.



Mobilize [moh-buh-lahyz]: to point those who know Jesus to entire peoples who don't.

Do you want to learn how you can mobilize among your friends, at your church, and in your family? Maybe you are interested in joining the Pioneers mobilization team?

Email us at connect@pioneers.ca and we will send you a free copy of Go Mobilize, a short study designed to help World Christians grow into mobilizers.



There is an Arabic proverb that says, *What is the greatest crime in the desert? Finding water and keeping silent.* The Love Never Fails initiative is all about breaking the silence and sharing living water with people of the Arab world. Below is an excerpt from a recent article that was posted online at arabworldmedia.org. Included in it are some of the latest testimonies received from the Arab world highlighting the impact of the Love Never Fails initiative.

LOVE NEVER FAILS

> *Looking for Answers*

Where does a Muslim go for answers? Raised in an environment that actively discourages questioning of any kind, more and more are turning to the internet. As the Middle Eastern world goes through ongoing upheaval, our online Arabic website is inundated with inquiries. Live chat sessions and our chat rooms are also full of activity. Muslims are increasingly disillusioned with Islam. This year's events throughout the world – the attack on Canada's Parliament Hill in October, the hostage taking in Australia's coffee shop, the beheadings of tourists in North Africa--are causing Muslims to reconsider what they have always believed to be the truth.

Our Arabic language social media sites continue to see a surge of activity every month. In November alone, the Facebook page had 28,261 **new** fans, and there were 73,053 views of the content on our YouTube channel. More than 8,500 Arabic language Bibles and pieces of Christian literature were downloaded from the website in November. An encouraging article from Christian Aid talks of the growing demand for Bibles by refugees who are fleeing the violence of ISIS.¹ This on-the-ground reality is clearly reflected by what we see happening online.

All comments on social media and the website are followed up by our responders who answer questions, lovingly engaging individuals in dialogue. Wherever possible, they eventually seek to connect them with a national believer in their own country who can help them to grow in the knowledge of His Word.

We would like to share with you some of the questions and comments we have received. May you be encouraged as you see that behind the dreadful headlines in the media, God is at work drawing Muslims to Himself.

I'm fed up with the misery we live under because of Islam. Female, Algeria

I have been thinking about the Christian religion for the past year. Does it offer true life? I feel I haven't known life and I haven't found anything in Islam. I wish I could live in a truly Christian society in order to understand what Christianity really is. Male, 26-35, Morocco

Good evening. I have a question which I don't know how to answer. I've been reading the Bible for a few years now and have believed that the Lord Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. I haven't told anyone about this. I am weary of not making it known that I am

a Christian. I don't know how to handle this. Please help me. With my warmest greetings. Male, 36-45, Egypt

I have a friend from a Muslim background who has become a believer. He is very afraid. What should he do? Male, Egypt

Please tell me how I can get some genuine information about Christ. I want to know. I love Christ and I feel that he is there wherever I go. I feel that he is calling me. I don't know how to explain it. Please help me. Male, Egypt

Could you send me the basic information which a Christian should know about their religion? Female, Gulf

 We wish to express our gratitude to those who responded to the 'Love Never Fails' initiative. Your support helps Arab World Media respond to questions online and engage in spiritual conversations and online discipleship. This initiative continues to need support so that those in the Arab world can receive living water. If you would like to give to this effort, please call us at 866-268-8778 or donate online at pioneers.ca/give/give-online. ■

¹<http://www.christianaid.org/News/2014/mir20141023.aspx>

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