

Monday 27th August

The Arab Gulf is a region consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates and, as we read last week, it is where Islam was originally founded.



Today, over 85 million people, mainly Muslims, live in the Arab Gulf. Throughout the entire region, there are only a few known churches or fellowships of local Muslim background believers.

This region has one of the greatest concentrations of unengaged Muslim people groups. Nearly 100 such groups live there.

And yet the Gulf is full of unique opportunities for

Christian professionals.

Since the oil boom of the mid-twentieth century, daily life in the Arab Gulf has transformed from the rhythms of desert nomadism and pearl diving, to opulent lifestyles marked by the pursuit of wealth.

International corporations are flooding into the Arab Gulf, which has two of the world's top twenty economies. These businesses bring opportunities for believers who have professional degrees and technical skills, to reach unengaged Muslim people groups who are otherwise inaccessible.

Amidst this material abundance, Muslim Gulf Arabs are in great need of the gospel.

- Arab Gulf Muslims are not beyond the reach of God's incredible love. Let's pray for them to know a touch from the King of Kings.
- Pray for God to send more cross-cultural workers with professional skills who are unafraid to live in this spiritually restricted region.
- Pray that Muslim Gulf Arabs would discover that their seeming abundance is like a house built on shifting sand. They need the word of God as a sure foundation in their lives. (Matt 7:24-27)

Tuesday 28th August

Beginnings of Islamic reform in Saudi Arabia

In April this year, Mission Network News published an article entitled 'Beginnings of Islamic reform in Saudi Arabia.'

It described how Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Salman, is beginning to put into motion positive changes to freedom of religion in his country.

Islam has been seen to be losing its significance, mostly as a reaction to the country's religious restrictions. This is especially noticeable among the young, people under 30 years of age who are tired of fundamentalist Islam.

Christian Aid Mission's David Bogosian was quoted as saying: "One of the things that the Crown Prince is proposing is freedom of religion in Saudi Arabia. That's almost unthinkable today in a country that is so locked down, in a country that is the guardian of Mecca, and the host of the Hajj, and so many other things. For them to even be whispering about this would be unthinkable. But this is being spoken of publicly, by the Crown Prince."

Bogosian believes the Crown Prince will succeed in his reforms because of the support of the young people and because Muslim clerics are aware that they are losing the younger generations. He also believes that a move to freedom of religion could have a deep impact on the Christian population.

"I think it's a very encouraging sign. There are Saudi Christians who are practicing their faith in a very humble way, a very quiet way. And what this could mean for them could be very significant."

Bogosian feels that this freedom will bring further social change, as a result of the opportunity for the gospel to be shared and Christ's love to be demonstrated.

"I think we need to see that also when God sovereignly moves, what we thought was impossible...all of a sudden is a done deal," Bogosian shares. "And so the kinds of changes we're seeing in Saudi Arabia, I believe they actually are answers to prayers. The prayers of God's people who've been praying for the Muslim world."

It is so encouraging to hear how prayer is changing the spiritual atmosphere of this country.

- Pray for Saudi Christians. Pray for their faith, their encouragement, for grace and for their lives to reflect Jesus.
- Pray for the leadership in Saudi Arabia; ask God to move in their hearts. And let's pray for all leaders in the Arab Gulf region, that all will find the King of Kings and the Prince of Peace and rule with justice and integrity.
- Let's give thanks to God that these changes are beginning to happen in Saudi Arabia and let's pray for them to trickle through the rest of the Middle East.

Source: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/beginnings-of-islamic-reform-in-saudi-arabia/>

Wednesday 29th August

Evangelism in Saudi's Cities

In the Western coastal area of Saudi Arabia, are eight of the top twelve largest cities in this country. It is the religious hub of the country as well as for the rest of the Muslims in the world. Some are even classified as 'holy cities' such as Mecca. Each year millions pass through these cities on their religious pilgrimages.



There are some small groups of believers that are meeting in many of these cities, but they are currently doing so at great risk to their families' well-being. Discovery leads to banishment from their families, their tribes and their

cultures. They lose jobs, are harassed by security police, sometimes beaten and are made outcasts in their societies.

Government and employment restrictions place limits on what workers are permitted to do. Also Saudi Arabia is not the easiest place to get into. There is no such thing as a “tourist” visa; foreigners are permitted to be in the country only for work or business, or to make the Islamic pilgrimages.

Saudi cities like Jeddah, Riyadh and Khobar are places where the gospel could easily cross societal boundaries and spread to people from many tribes and regions across the country. The overwhelming majority of gospel workers reside in these three cities.

Although the number of gospel workers in Saudi Arabia is increasing, the number is very small in relation to the total population. It remains difficult for them to obtain and keep visas.

- Pray for the millions of Muslims who get a false sense of security as they take religious pilgrimages like the Hajj. Ask that they will feel a deep unrest and desire to seek out the truth.
- Pray that the local believers meeting in the holy cities, will be protected and bold to share the truth of Christ with those around them.
- Pray for creative ways to obtain visas that allow workers to remain in the country and to access other parts of the country.
- Pray that workers would be intentional in their relationships with local people and that their lives will reflect the love and light of Jesus.

Thursday 30th August

The Bride of the Red Sea

On the west coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lies the ancient city of Jeddah.



Jeddah is also called the Gateway to Mecca, which lies about 44 miles inland. Every year, between two and three million Muslims from around the world pass through Jeddah to take part in the pilgrimage in Mecca.

From its humble beginnings as a fishing village some 2,500 years ago, Jeddah has blossomed into one of Saudi Arabia’s largest cities, second only to Riyadh, the capital of the Kingdom.

With a population of over 4 million, Jeddah is home to the largest port on the Red Sea and is an important commercial hub. For centuries, traders have converged on the city, which was once a key port in the frankincense trade. Today an

international airport in Jeddah has dedicated terminals for pilgrims travelling to and from Mecca. There is a special terminal called the Hajj terminal and by road, there are multilane highways and bus services from Jeddah to Mecca.

In its historic centre, high-end shopping malls flank ancient mud houses and bustling souks or markets. The Old City is a UNESCO World Heritage site and displays Jeddah's past glory through beautiful architecture, historical buildings and traditional homes.

Lovingly called the Bride of the Red Sea, Jeddah boasts open-air art installations scattered across the city. Along the coastline, families enjoy the Corniche, a boardwalk almost 20 miles long.

The city is proud home to King Fahad's Fountain, the world's largest water fountain. Illuminated by 500 spotlights and reaching over 900 feet into the air, it's about as tall as the Eiffel Tower.

Let's pray for this strategic city.

- Pray that Jeddah, the Bride of the Red Sea, will be redeemed and renamed the Bride of Christ as Muslims embrace Jesus and establish His church.
- Just as Muslims can look up and see Jeddah's fountain reaching into the sky, pray for eyes to be lifted up to see Christ, who fills us with streams of living water (John 7:38).
- Pray for God to raise up new teams of faithful men and women to reach Muslims in this strategic city.

Friday 31st August

Pray for Yemen **Pop: 28.9 million**

Yemen is a country that continues to feature in our news reports.



It lies on the southern half of the Arabian Peninsula, a land of ancient cities and beautiful landscapes. The country boasts a long history of trade in frankincense and myrrh and it is also a source of premium coffee beans.

But Yemen also happens to be one of the poorest countries in the Arab world and has faced decades of instability. Since 2015, civil war has gripped the country and left the people in dire need of humanitarian aid.

At the centre of the conflict are the Houthi rebel movement and the forces allied with President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Early on, the Houthis advanced and took control of key cities. In response, Saudi Arabia and several other Arab states formed a coalition and began air strikes against the rebels.

Since then, the crisis has spiralled and fighting has engulfed the entire country. More than 9,000 Yemenis have been killed, over 50,000 injured and 3 million people have fled their homes. Millions of people face shortages of food and water and less than half the country's health facilities are functional. Approximately 16.4 million people currently have no access to healthcare.

Earlier this year, Médecins Sans Frontières reported: "A mother of five told us that her 16-year-old was wounded by shrapnel while playing football. She had to sell her jewellery to pay for transport to hospital. She had been saving it for her children's future. She never dreamed that her jewellery would literally save her child's life. Her son eventually arrived at the MSF facility."

Intensifying the people's suffering is the coalition's recent closure of air, land and sea routes. This blockade was put into place to stem the flow of arms into Yemen after the Houthis fired a missile at the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

However, shutting down Yemen's ports has also blocked deliveries of food, medicine and aid. With millions of people facing malnutrition, starvation and one of the world's worst cholera outbreaks, this conflict has caused a major humanitarian crisis.

It is ordinary people who are bearing the brunt of this brutal war.

- Pray that the U.N. and the Saudi-led coalition would work together to reopen ports and resume the delivery of food, medicine and humanitarian aid.
- Ask God to protect the Yemeni people, bring an end to the conflict and establish His peace in their land.
- Pray that the gospel will go out and that those who have never heard will encounter Jesus Christ and embrace Him as their hope and refuge. Ps 91:2

Saturday 1st September

Offerings of Incense from Oman

Oman lies on Yemen's eastern border.

In this country, the distinct smell of liban, the Arabic name for frankincense, is everywhere. It infuses every home, shop and alley.



Frankincense originates from the southern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. Harvested from the dried sap of the Boswellia tree, it releases a distinct fragrance when burned. It has been prized for its aroma since ancient times.

Today, every household in Oman blends its own mixture of frankincense, spices and oils.

Before guests leave, the hostess places a clay vessel with the burning mixture beneath their clothing. The smoke fills their garments so that the visitors leave carrying the scent of the home with them.

We know from God's Word that frankincense was brought to Jesus at His birth (Matthew 2:11).

Incense and frankincense were also used as offerings in the temple. In the Old Testament, God's people were instructed to bring incense before the Lord (Numbers 16:17, Leviticus 16:12).

"In every place incense will be offered to my name," says Malachi 1:11. David cries out in Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be counted as incense before you." Revelation 5:8 describes our prayers as incense that rises up to God.

Generations upon generations of Omanis have harvested this treasured resin.

What God would treasure more is the devoted, single-minded worship of the peoples and tribes of Oman. Today, of Oman's population of 4.8 million people, virtually all are Muslims. They are proud of their religion and resistant to the gospel message.

- Let's pray that the Muslim peoples of Oman will have softened hearts and bring the Lord fragrant praise and worship.
- Pray that gospel messengers in Oman would bear "the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." 2 Corinthians 2:15.
- Ask the Lord of the Harvest to draw Omani Muslims to the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus and share it with others.