

Syria

In Jesus' day the "news about him spread all over Syria" (Matthew 4:24) and large crowds came to him and followed him. Some of the oldest churches in Christendom are found in Syria and are evidence of the extent of Jesus' impact in the region. Today, the Good News of the Kingdom is not all over Syria. The vast majority of the Syrian people (more than 90% Muslim) do not know Jesus. What happened?

The people of Syria are a diverse people. Just as the carpets in the ancient market are full of different colors, textures and designs - each with a story behind the pattern, Syria has many different people groups, each one with its own distinct



characteristics and history known by God.

Islam has a long history in Syria, with Damascus as a former capital of the Umayyad caliphs (AD 661-750) bordered by the Byzantine Empire. The Christians of that time were weakened in their faith under the constant mistreatment and temptation.

Praise God for Syria's Christian minority! Most are from a culturally Christian background, from peoples who kept their faith, even though greatly weakened. They have a passion for Jesus but are strongly restricted in proclaiming their faith by the Muslim majority. They face historical and cultural barriers and possible imprisonment for evangelistic efforts. The very few Muslims who do believe in the Messiah face persecution from family and government and the difficulties of isolation.

One predominantly Muslim people group is responding to Jesus. The Kurds have reached an identity crisis. After a long history of persecution by their Muslim neighbors, they have been given freedom by the "Christian" West. Several are believing in Christ and are even meeting in their own Kurdish fellowships.

Syria has had some very hard years of oppression and corruption under the reign of dictator

Hafez al-Assad. However, his son, Bashar, has a different style. He is opening up the country inside and outside, both economically and politically. But he is not alone in the government, and it is not easy to turn a big ship. The scars of oppression are very noticeable in the people, who are often suspicious and fearful.

Syrians love to make visitors feel welcome. Hospitality and respect for guests is one of their highest priorities. They are a friendly and hard working people. May the love of Christ touch this people.

▶ Prayer REQUESTS

- ▶ Please pray that the Good News of Jesus would again be heard all over Syria.
- ▶ Pray that Syrians may come to faith and start meeting and encouraging each other.
- ▶ Praise the Lord that Syrian Kurds are turning to Jesus. May God continue to draw more Kurds to himself and deepen their faith.
- ▶ Pray for the government, that the Party and Islamic authorities would reign so that believers may live peaceful and quiet lives (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

