

Five Reasons Why We Must Have a Heart for Saudis

George Otis Jr. wrote a book some years ago, *The Last of the Giants*. This book denotes Islam as one of the last major blockades to seeing the Gospel carried to all the world. When considering Islamic influence in the world, it is clear that **Saudi Arabia is the** key influence today. However, few people ponder what it would take to reach the Saudi people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And even fewer people find reasons to simply reach out to Saudis who may be living in their own towns. Saudis are often portrayed by the news media as the enemy, but Christians must have a heart for Saudis and reach out to them in love. Here are five main reasons for doing so:

1. **History** - We as Christians need to correct past wrongs to the Saudi people. The Christian world has ignored Saudis for centuries. Over the years, many Christians developed negative stereotypes of Saudis by considering their rough style of desert living and believing that they held to a closed-minded Islam. These stereotypes kept Christian evangelists at bay. Over the centuries, there were great Christian missionary movements to China, India, South America, and North America. However, missionaries stopped at the Arabian Peninsula. The last time “Christians” came to the Middle East, in the minds of Muslims, was the Crusades. This lack of missions throughout history has alienated the Christian Message from the Saudis. In the early 20th century, a few missionaries did come to the Arabian Gulf, but they made only minor inroads in reaching the Saudi people. This avoidance of the people in the homeland of Islam must stop. The Christian world must engage the Saudi people with the Message of Hope.
2. **Everywhere** - Saudis are everywhere around us. After 9/11, the U.S. and Saudi governments, in an attempt to mend the political damage between them, agreed that more Saudi students would be permitted to study in U.S. universities. Tens of thousands of Saudi students are now studying in the United States. Also since 9/11, the Saudi government has funded their students to study all over the globe, including China, Australia, Great Britain, Spain, Malaysia, Canada, etc. Many of these Saudi students live isolated, lonely lives, without friends in their host countries. King Abdullah is attempting societal change by cultivating a new world perception of his young people. Has this attempt created a positive opportunity for the Christian World? Yes—BUT ONLY if we will accept the responsibility! When we have a Saudi neighbor or hear of Saudi students at our local universities, how do we respond? The natural response today is fear, but can this continue? No! When Christians and churches hear that there are Saudis in their area they **must** make a concerted effort to embrace our lonely and hopeless brothers and sisters in humanity with the Message of Hope.
3. **Authority** - Because Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, this country carries great authority in the Islamic world. One missionary in the Middle East some years ago declared, “What impacts the Saudis impacts the rest of the Islamic world.” Proclaiming the Message of Hope in Saudi Arabia and seeing groups of Saudis formed into worshiping communities will impact the whole Islamic world. If God can plant His church among the Saudis, where in the world could He not plant His Church? The War on Terror is best countered by the Message of Hope. Historically, military conflict has never created positive heart-level behavioral change. But large numbers of Saudis coming to faith **will** create an environment of positive change in the Islamic world. Rather than being motivated by fear, the Christian world **must** respond in obedience to God and with the love of Christ for the Saudi people. We must reveal the Candle under the basket to shine into the Saudi world.



4. **Restrictions** - Saudi Arabia is perhaps the most closed county in the entire world to the gospel. There is extreme difficulty getting missionaries into the country. Historically, Christian missionaries simply did not go to Saudi Arabia. However, today the Saudi government has made it **impossible** for Christian missionaries to go there. Does this mean the Christian world is off the hook in fulfilling the Great Commission to the Saudi people? No! As the Gospel travelled the trade routes in the early days of the Church until now, professionals and laborers must carry the Message of Hope to the Saudi people. Just as the internet and satellite media have broadcasted the Message of Hope to much of the Unreached World, the Church must mobilize its finest healthcare professionals, teachers, engineers, and other professionals to the heartland of Islam to reach the locals. Will there be a generation of Jesus Followers who will follow the call to GO to Saudi Arabia, using their professional skills and job experience as their “ticket” to enter the forbidden kingdom?

5. **Tourism** - Over the last few years, there has been a great upsurge in tourism among the Saudis. Today, Saudis travel the globe. They are visiting us. Saudis typically travel to other countries in the summertime to escape the oppressive heat and culture of their country to enjoy cooler weather and an environment of openness elsewhere. Popular destinations include London, Geneva, Kuala Lumpur, Washington D.C., Orlando, Florida, the Gold Coast of Australia—to name just a few. This tourism is a great opportunity for evangelism. While it is illegal to distribute Arabic New Testaments to Saudis in Riyadh, neither the Queen of England nor the President of the United States cares if the Saudis receive copies of the Holy Book in these open countries. Could it be that this Saudi tourism over the summer is a God-ordained opportunity for you to bring the Message of Hope to Saudis while they are outside their homeland? Yes! If Saudis are vacationing near you, what will you do to reach these lost people with the Message of Hope?

As you read the above five reasons for reaching the Saudis in love, you may have noticed that these reasons spell out the word “**HEART**” (**H**istory, **E**verywhere, **A**uthority, **R**estrictions, **T**ourism). While Saudi Arabia is the “heart” of Islam, it is also important that we as Christians have a “heart” for Saudis. Will you have a “heart” for these precious souls for whom our Lord Jesus died? Today is the day of Salvation, as the Scriptures declare. This is also true for the unreached Saudi people. May millions of Saudis come to faith and may God’s church be planted deeply among them.

