

## Examples of Cruciformity

### **12. George Kazoura**

Much of the material for this story came from Julia Fisher's book: *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories*.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 2001, I spent a few days at the Home of Love and Peace in Rama in the Galilee, founded and run by George Kazoura. I was deeply impressed by his testimony of cruciform love towards Jewish people, including extreme forgiveness, which his story illustrates beautifully.

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In 1948, during the War of Independence, George, with his parents and five siblings, fled from their home in Haifa to Nazareth, where there was a large Arab community. After a month, when the war was over, they returned home; much to their surprise and horror, they found a Jewish family living there. This family had burnt all the Kazouras' belongings and removed all trace of their ownership of the house.

Sad, angry, and bewildered, the eight Kazouras moved to Nazareth to be near their relatives, and there built a one-room house, with a floor space of only 25 square metres (about 270 square feet). Reduced to living in such primitive and cramped conditions, George became more and more angry towards God and the Jewish people, changing from being an easy-going, happy boy to an embittered teenager with only one ambition — to have revenge on the people who had caused him and his family such distress and hardship. George joined a communist group, which fuelled his feelings for revenge and desire for justice against those who had destroyed his life. Over the years his heart became even harder against God and against the Jewish people.

His parents, who had been nominally Catholic, become committed believers in 1952. One evening, George's father urged George to go to a revival meeting. George refused and left to see some friends, whom he then persuaded to go to the revival meeting to create a disturbance. However, some questions from the preacher penetrated his thoughts. At the end of the meeting, he felt a great power taking him from his chair and moving him forward, but also felt somebody catching him from behind and whispering in his ear: 'Don't believe these things. All these things are lies. Did you forget what the Jews have done to you? How can you believe in God, who threw you on to the streets so now you live a miserable life?' Confused, he left the church with his friends and went home.

His mother recognized how troubled he was and had George read some verses from the Bible. He felt a great power make him kneel down and he confessed all his

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Fisher, *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories* (Sparkford, UK: J.H. Haynes Ltd., 2006) 47 to 55.

sins. When he finished, his mother asked him if he really was George; he told her that the George whom she had known had died and that he was never to be the same again.

In the following ten months, George read the Bible from cover to cover. Late one night on the second time through, he came to the twelfth chapter of Genesis where God says to Abraham in verse 3: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3, NIV). George started laughing aloud and shouted, "What blessing can come from this man, who died many thousands of years ago?" "God," he shouted, "if you really are God and these words are yours, reveal yourself to me and tell me what meaning it has for me."

Desiring to be alone, he left the room that they called home and sat silently for more than half an hour. Then he felt a hand on his shoulder and looked around thinking that it was his mother. But there was nobody there. Then he heard a voice: "I am Jesus, who came to earth as a man of flesh, from the seed of Abraham, and I am a Jew, who died for your sins. I forgive you all your sins and I forget them. Now you must forgive your Jewish brothers as I have forgiven you." The night came to an end and it was time for him to go to work. The day passed and later that evening he knew what he had to do.

He found his way to their old house in Haifa and stood outside and forgave the Jews who lived there for what they had done to his family. He extended his hand towards the house and asked God to bless the family who now lived there. It was very hard for him to do this, but immediately he felt a load lift off his back and a joy rising up inside him that he had never experienced before. All the hatred, bitterness and anger that he had felt towards the Jewish people disappeared, and from that moment until today, the Jews are no longer his enemies; they are his beloved people. George is following Jesus on the Cross, Who forgave His enemies.

Today a Messianic fellowship meets in that house in Haifa! Some time later he met an old Jewish man in that congregation. When he heard George's story he asked for forgiveness. This simple act touched George's heart and immediately he was able to love the Jewish people even more!

God blessed George with a precious wife who understands his priority to serve the Lord and with four children who all love the Lord. They opened the House of Love and Peace for children from the streets in 1990. The children are mainly from Muslim families, many of whom have been taught to kill and throw stones. Here they are taught how to be cruciform, how to love Israeli Jews. He teaches his Arab congregation about the importance of loving their Jewish neighbours and being a blessing to Israel. George then has been a wonderful example of cruciformity in his attitudes and actions towards Jewish people and teaches such cruciformity to the Arabs in his congregation and to the children under their care.