

Examples of Cruciformity

13. Naim Khoury

Much of this material comes from an excellent book by Julia Fisher, *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories*¹.



Naim Khoury's parents belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church; his grandfather was a priest and so were eleven of his uncles. He had never read the Bible or knew about experiencing forgiveness through the death of Jesus on the cross until he "found the Lord" in his twenties at a service in the YMCA in West Jerusalem. The preacher from America described simply how Jesus Christ died on the Cross for every person.

He then experienced a lot of difficulties and persecution from his parents. For seven years his family treated him very badly, but he kept praying for them and demonstrated a "cruciform" attitude towards them. His mother first, and then all his brothers and sisters gradually came to know the Lord as their personal Saviour. Finally, after almost twenty-seven years of daily prayer for his oldest brother, he, too, was touched by the Lord.

Naim was educated in Jerusalem and then studied theology in America. He returned to Bethlehem and started a church in a small apartment, which has become a church of 200 members. He also has started the "Jerusalem Church" in the Old City of Jerusalem.

¹ Julia Fisher, Julia Fisher, *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories* (Sparkford, UK: J.H. Haynes Ltd., 2006) 89 - 104.

Naim has deliberately sought relationships with Jewish believers. He believes that the promises to Abraham are for ever and ever and thus the land is promised to the Jews of today. Naim enjoys regular fellowship with many Messianic leaders and speaks at their conferences and in their congregations. In fact, most of his fellowship is with Messianic Jewish pastors, because he cannot find many Palestinian pastors who share his understanding of the Bible. Jewish believers try to help his congregation.

Since 1999, the past few years of conflict have been a difficult time with much opposition from both Muslims and nominal Christians. His church has been bombed 14 times in the last 10 years. He survived an assassination attempt, in which one of three bullets went into his left arm, just missing his heart. He has been threatened many times. His lack of fear and willingness to suffer and die show a great degree of cruciformity. Naim has no bitterness against those who have opposed him.

He believes that to have the full blessings of the Lord and the fulness of the Holy Spirit, we must have no grudges or bitterness. "If you want God to use you, you have to give up everything and look only to Him." Naim thus shows great cruciformity in his willingness to accept the Cross of Jesus as a paradigm for his attitudes and actions towards Muslims and Jews, and also towards Christians who oppose him.

Naim states that they are in the beginning of a revival in their land.

"Building hope in lives that lost it, planting love in hearts that forgot it, to build a better tomorrow." (slogan on web site)

