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An Interview With Naghmeh Abedini: God Is Bigger

This month, we feature an excerpt from an interview between Dr. Jeff Myers and Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Pastor Saeed Abedini who has been imprisoned in Iran for the past two and a half years. Naghmeh graciously visited the 2015 Summit Adult Conference in mid-March. This excerpt focuses on the ministry that Naghmeh and Saeed had in Iran and the incredibly inspiring ways they have seen God move in the Middle East.

Dr. Jeff Myers: We have a really great privilege tonight to have with us Naghmeh Abedini. In order to understand Naghmeh's story (and we're going to come up here and have a little interview), but in order to understand Naghmeh's story, we need to understand something of her family's story. And we'll talk about that some when we have our conversation, but Naghmeh's husband, Saeed Abedini, who's a pastor and father from Boise, Idaho, is currently imprisoned in Iran.

He was imprisoned July 28 of 2012. He was visiting Tehran. He was there to visit family ... to help put together the board to organize an orphanage. And the Iranian revolutionary guard detained him and said they were going to have him face criminal charges for his Christian faith. He was interrogated, put under house arrest, and told to wait for a court summons. On the 26 of September of 2012, he didn't receive a summons, but five members of the revolutionary guard raided his parents' home, they confiscated many of his belongings, and they took him to an unknown location.

After four days, the revolutionary guard informed the family that Saeed was in solitary confinement in a notorious prison. Throughout Saeed's imprisonment, he spent several weeks in solitary confinement. And during that time he was only



brought out of his cell to be interrogated in an abusive fashion. He has been allowed visitation now from his family in Tehran, but he has been cut off from Naghmeh and their young children.

Saeed's been denied medical treatment for the infections he received from the treatment. While in the prison, the doctor and the nurse refused to treat him because they said as a Christian he is unclean, he's an infidel. In 2013 it became clear that Saeed was suffering from internal injuries, the doctors determined that his injuries warranted immediate attention, and that he needed to be treated in a non-prison hospital. For almost a year, the Iranian regime ignored this advice. In March of 2014, Saeed was permitted to enter a private hospital for treatment, but after spending almost two months in the hospital, he was returned to prison without having been given the surgeries deemed necessary by the hospital doctors.

Secretary of State John Kerry has called for pastor Saeed's release, the White House has called for his release, the House of Representatives held two emotional

hearings that highlighted his plight, multiple nations have called for his release, attorneys from the ACLJ have argued his case before the United Nations. We're still waiting for breakthroughs on this. ...

But this isn't just an abstraction. This is a pastor wanting to do good things, who is being persecuted for his faith. And he has a champion. His wife, Naghmeh, will not give up doing everything she can to help secure his release, fighting for him.

...

Dr. Myers: Now, let's go back to the beginning. How did you and Saeed meet? And then there are the missionary journeys and all of that, but talk a little bit about that.

Naghmeh: So I grew up in Idaho. I was born in Iran, came to the United States when I was 9, ended up in Idaho. When we were in California (we came to California and my dad had a few brothers that lived there), my brother had a vision of Jesus, and he came running to me.

Now the first nine years of my life, I grew up on war. Iran and Iraq were at war. The Islamic revolution happened, the



An Amazing Story of Hope

If you're sick of what is happening in our culture, I'd like to share a story of the undeniable power of living fully committed to Jesus.

Last Thursday, I shared the stage with a hero whose plight is tragic, but whose story inspires thrilling hope. As a little girl, Naghmeh Abedini's family fled from Iran to America to escape the Iran-Iraq war. After college, Naghmeh returned to the country of her birth to serve Jesus. While there, she met and married an Iranian pastor named Saeed. After several years of fruitful ministry, they settled in Idaho to have a family.

But neither Naghmeh nor Saeed could forget the faces of their young Iranian friends, so hungry for truth and so fed up with Islamic radicalism. Risking his life, Saeed traveled to Iran to minister to them. Waiting at home with their two young children, Naghmeh received horrifying news: Saeed had been arrested and sentenced to die for being a Christian.

While Naghmeh fought for her husband through the media and legal channels, even appealing for him to the President, Saeed was being beaten in prison. And yet no amount of torture could stop him from leading his fellow inmates to Christ. The angry Iranian regime retaliated by transferring Saeed to Iran's most violent prison, filled with murderers. Now hardened criminals are coming to Christ!

And that's not all. Before a rapt audience of Summit friends, Naghmeh shared that *thousands* of Iranian young

people are coming to Christ. Hundreds of churches are being started. It's the story of the early church, and it is *happening in our lifetime*.

But it is not without cost.

Naghmeh and Saeed are paying the cost. From prison, Saeed wrote his 8-year-old daughter, "People die and suffer for their Christian faith all over the world, and some may wonder why. But you should know the answer of WHY is WHO. It is for Jesus. He is worth the price."

"That Jesus is worth the price is the urgent message I will share with thousands of students at Summit this summer."

Dr. Jeff Myers

That Jesus is worth the price is the urgent message I will share with thousands of students at Summit this summer. We are experiencing record enrollment, and I believe it's because this is a generation desperate for something worth living — and dying — for.

In the coming years it will be costly to follow Christ, even in America. As I write, anti-Christian forces are drumming public officials out of office for supporting traditional marriage and

shutting down the businesses of those who refuse to let government force them into violating their deeply held convictions.

This isn't the first time a culture has ignored God. As Ecclesiastes says, "There is nothing new under the sun." But from India and Southeast Asia to the Middle East, the Gospel is bringing freedom and hope. Isn't it like God to bring such good in a time of evil?

At Summit, it's our sweet spot to prepare young leaders for such a time as this. Over the last 53 years Summit has trained tens of thousands to stand for the truth while fighting on their knees. Who knows where America would be without them?

Please help us prepare young students for such a time as this by sending a teen (ages 16-22) to one of our Summer Student Conferences, or by providing financial help for one who otherwise would not be able to come. We are passionate about protecting and shaping the faith of future leaders this year. Summit is changing lives, and through your prayers and support, you are just as much a part of this as our instructors and staff mentors.

Also, please enjoy the transcription of my interview with Naghmeh Abedini in this month's edition of the *Journal*, and be encouraged and inspired by this hero of the faith and her family's incredible story.

hostage crisis, and then there was war. So I grew up sleeping most nights in a basement and hearing Iraqi airplanes bombing, and missiles, and waking up to destruction, seeing houses around us destroyed and our school friends dead. And so my twin brother and I were always talking, “Where is God, who is God?”

So when we came to California and he came running to me and he said, “I found the God we’ve been looking for!” I knew what he was ... he said he had a vision of Jesus. He said, “Naghmeh, I’ve found the God we’ve been looking for, His name is Jesus.” And that was pretty powerful to me because as my twin brother, we’d talked about who’s God, who’s this God. And we’d found Him.

And so my parents got angry and my dad thought we’d lost our culture, our identity. He was going to move us back to Iran. He said, it’s better if you die, I’ve lost everything. I’ve lost my kids to this American culture. And so he was thinking about moving us back when one of his brothers had found a job in Boise, Idaho, and he said, give Idaho a try. It seems pretty secluded. Out in the middle of nowhere. So from 10 million people in Tehran, we moved to California, and then we moved to Idaho.

So 12 years into it, my parents in Boise, Idaho, gave their hearts to Christ, the city they ran away to. So my uncle’s idea was move the kids to Idaho, de-brief, bring them back to Islam. They thought, they’re 9, they’re kids, what could kids possibly? ... It’s a phase; they’re probably going to grow out of it. They tried really hard. They wouldn’t let us read the Bible, they wouldn’t let us go to church, but we kept our faith, and 12 years into it they accepted Christ.

...

My twin brother ended up getting his doctorate in quantum physics at the

University of Chicago, so I was the loser because after four years I was supposed to go to med school at the University of Washington, but the Lord was like, “That’s not the plan I have for you.” And He just turned everything. He said, I want you to go back to Iran. And I was like, “What?”

My parents at that time were believers. I had graduated from college, and they said, no, your future is in the U.S., you need to live the American dream. But I felt the Lord say, I want you to break your idols and the things you hold dear, and the American dream, and the finances, and your parents, and security. Because for me, Iran meant bombs and a scary place. I was very fearful of airplanes because from a very

“Naghmeh, I’ve found the God we’ve been looking for, His name is Jesus.”

Naghmeh’s twin brother, 9 years old

young age they were a sign of death, growing up in Iran.

Long story short, I ended up by God’s grace flying into the Middle East two months after September 11.

...

I was pretty fearful, I wasn’t out in the streets evangelizing. I wasn’t. I started sharing with my uncles and aunts, and five of my cousins accepted Christ within a year. So I thought I was done. My parents kept calling me, “Are you done with your mission trip now? Are you ready to come home?” And I was going through a lot, I was crying a lot, I felt depressed. And they were like, “Did

you get enough of that? Are you ready to come home? Do you see how they treat you?”

I was ready to come back in 2002, but when I was ready to come back, I met Saeed and I got stuck for another few years. So I met him at a church, actually. I had a cousin who had converted two years earlier. An amazing story, but she was part of a local church, and she kept telling me to come to the church. And I thought, no, it’s a government approved church. I was so scared. I didn’t want the government to know. I don’t want to go under the radar of the Iranian government. I’d rather just do my little Bible study with my cousins in my house, my little apartment.

So I didn’t go for a year, and I was flying back to the U.S., and she was persistent. So I thought, OK I’ll come to your church. I’m not going to be in Iran for long. So I went to the church and that’s where I met Saeed.

Dr. Myers: Now he was a relatively recent convert at that point?

Naghmeh: He was. In 2002, he was a 2-year-old in the Lord. He converted in the year 2000. He was so much stronger than me. At that time, I was, I don’t know, 15 years in the Lord, and he was so much ... When I met him, he was a pastor of about 100 people, college-age students. He was in his 20s. Pretty much the church was 20s and younger.

We got married in 2004, and by 2005 when we left Iran, over 2,000 Muslims had converted to Christ. Just within our house church network. There were so many others. And it spread from Tehran, and it was all young people, all college aged. It spread from Tehran to 30 cities. There are so many stories.

One time we visited 10 cities in 10 days, and we had \$50. And every city, we would go pray and someone would

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interview

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open their door, and we would stay at their house. We would share the gospel, and they would feed us, they would take care of our needs. And we got to lead people to Christ, every house, every city, and then we'd move on to the next one. We went through the Turkish part, the Kurdish part, just part of Iran.

One time we picked up this Turkish boy and we said, "Do you know who Jesus is?" and he said, "He doesn't live in my village." It was just powerful. At the end, we gave him a *Jesus* film in his own language and he was just screaming and shouting in the streets, wanting his whole village to watch it. They had one TV and they were going to watch the movie in their own language. But it was just amazing going from city to city and sharing the gospel and seeing it spread, especially among the young people who were thirsty for God, but they were tired of religion.

Dr. Myers: Is that part of what you think put Saeed and you on the radar of the leadership there?

Naghmeh: We were on the radar because Saeed was a part of the government approved church, so he was always on the radar. But the government was allowing it. It was a more moderate government, you know, it wasn't really taking Christianity seriously. They didn't realize it would spread so quickly. So they knew all this was happening, and they were just letting it happen; they were allowing it. He wasn't hiding it from the government, but the president before Ahmadinejad was more moderate, very much believed in allowing the Christians to do that. They knew that our house churches existed and were allowing it, were permitting it.

Actually, at our wedding, Saeed said, let's go tell the Iranian government we're converts. I said no. He said, I want to get a permission to have a Chris-

tian wedding, I can't imagine making promises to Allah. I said, no, let's do that. Let's just make the promise and then break it or something. Well, he convinced me after much argument. I would always tell him that my first job as his fiancé and then his wife was to argue to make sure he was making the right decision! And after much argument, he was pretty adamant about that decision. So we went to the Iranian government; we said we're Christians.

And then I thought, my parents are coming for our wedding, maybe 10 people would show up for our wedding,

"It was just amazing ... sharing the gospel and seeing it spread, especially among the young people who were thirsty for God, but they were tired of religion."

Naghmeh

maybe 30, 40, 50 people from Saeed's family. There ended up being about 600 people, most of which I didn't know. Saeed was there. Somehow he had had our bridesmaids and groomsmen make 300 wedding favors of Bibles and *Jesus* films, so they're passing those out. I'm in my wedding dress. He's up on the — I have the video; I've shared it with people — Saeed's up on the pulpit sharing Christ and I'm just in my wedding dress looking at him. I'm just thinking, is this a wedding? Is this another church event? What is this? It's interest-

ing because we had our biggest fight that day, 'cause I felt like he didn't stop doing ministry and I felt like there's one day you can just stop and you can just focus!

...

Actually the meeting I had on our 10th anniversary, I thought, "God this is your gift! I'm going to hear good news!" The first response from the meeting with a very high up state department person, after a lot of people in the room, was that our positive thoughts are with you. Their first response was, your husband just keeps making things worse, everywhere they take him. They put him in Evan prison and he was leading people to Christ there, so they exiled him. (Which I didn't know you could exile a prisoner once they were in prison.) So they exiled him to another prison and they put him in the murderer ward.

I don't know if I've shared this, but the head of the new prison ward told Saeed's father, if he even mentions that he's a Christian, that he's a convert, they will kill him. There is no way your son can lead anyone to Christ here. And people start having dreams about Jesus, these murderers. He was in the lions' den. That month he was in there, we were afraid for his life. He was covered with lice, he had death threats, people were trying to put drugs in his food, they were trying to kill him. I mean it was just horrible. We didn't know if the next prison visit he would be alive. And people start having dreams about Jesus and went to Saeed and asked about who Jesus is and accepted Christ and start protecting him.

So long story short, the state department's just telling me they moved him from the murderer ward to another place, and then they moved him to the hospital; they beat him. From the

hospital, so many people were accepting Christ, so many people coming in, there are so many stories. His parents were with him at the hospital, and people with injuries and nurses were accepting Christ, so they beat him and moved him back to Evan prison.

So our government official was saying, he's making it hard! He just keeps sharing Christ wherever. And the Iranian government is just pretty frustrated about that. And I just said, "Well, he's not doing it out of defiance, he's doing it out of his passion for Christ." And I got to share in that meeting how Jesus Christ has changed his life. And I said, the Iranian government could always kick him out of the country! I was coming from that meeting and I was just thinking, this is who Saeed is.

The few years that we lived in Iran, it was pretty amazing seeing God move. The young people ... Iran is very open to the gospel, which is scaring the Iranian government. God's strategy is to bring the young people. Seventy percent of Iran is 30s and younger, and they're very open to the gospel, very open. The government, the way we treat terrorism, that's the way they treat Christianity — it's their number one fear.

When they were torturing Saeed the first months and they were putting him in solitary, they said, "You've corrupted so many young people. No matter what we do, they won't turn back. Maybe if you turn back to Islam, they would also turn back." So they were trying to make him deny his faith so that other people would see him as an example.

Dr. Myers: What you're describing is straight out of the book of Acts.

Naghmeh: It's the same God. What's interesting is we see so much stuff on the outside, but God is doing so much, moving in the most powerful way in the most dark places of the world. It

was amazing for someone who's grown up in the U.S. to see that, to see so many getting saved in Iran and so much openness to the gospel. The people are oppressed, they are tired of religion. They are tired of Islam. But they're not tired of God.

So when we offered them relationship with God and Jesus Christ, they were ready. They would weep. There were young kids who would be kicked out of their houses, they were persecuted by their families, they would

“They would tell me the ‘Our Father Who Art in Heaven’ prayer, and in their dream or vision Jesus had taught them that.”

Naghmeh

lose jobs, they were denied education because they had become Christians, but they were on fire for the Lord. They were sleeping wherever, moving house to house, city to city, sharing the gospel.

Dr. Myers: I just have this sense, maybe you do too, of how much bigger God is than I usually think in the culture that we're a part of.

Naghmeh: He is. One thing is that, when I lived in the states, I wouldn't say it, but in the back of my mind I questioned the justice of God, because I thought how could someone who's been in this village in Africa who's never heard about Jesus, how could You keep him accountable? But when I went to Iran, we would go with a taxi driver or someone in the street, and we would

pray and the Lord would show us people to go and talk to, and we would say, "Do you know who Jesus is?" We would have people bring out wooden crosses and they would start weeping and they would say, "My child was dying and I cried out to God and Jesus appeared to me. And He said, I'm the way the truth and the life."

So for me, that made a lot of sense. It answered a lot of questions that whoever calls on the name of God will find Jesus Christ. God is not limited to missionaries, God is bigger. That for me opened my mind. Maybe it's simple for a lot of people, but for me, I was like, "Oh God, You will. Whoever calls on Your name, in whatever language, in whatever state, just calls out and says, God you are there, Jesus you are there."

Just hearing testimony after testimony of people seeking God and finding Jesus. And a lot of them didn't even have Bibles, and they would tell me the "Our Father Who Art in Heaven" prayer, and in their dream or vision Jesus had taught them that. And when we gave them Bibles, they were excited. So just hearing stories like that really strengthened my faith, having grown up in the U.S. and realizing God is bigger. He involves us in the ministry, but He can do it without us. He can reach the lost without our help.

In Naghmeh's full interview, she shares so many other amazing things: the lessons her children are learning through this experience, the opportunities God has given her to reach millions of Iranians, and an awe-inspiring account of how God responded to her prayer and fasting to move the President of the United States. To read the transcription in full, please go to www.summit.org/resources/the-journal/, open the April PDF, and scroll to the end.

alumni spotlight

a look at the summit alumni network



What the Summit Alumni Network Has to Offer You

Calling all Summit grads! Did you know there is now an Alumni Network that exists to further serve and equip you, as well as connect you with fellow alumni for networking and support? Find out all about it at www.summit.org/alumni.

Here are four things you'll want to be aware of:

1. Faculty Q&A Webinars
2. Summit RE:SOURCE
3. Local Summit Communities
4. Career Direct



Faculty Q&A Webinars help you continue the conversation you began at Summit. In a one-hour, interview-

style webinar, you'll be able to interact with some of your favorite Summit pros every month. Topics range from "Understanding My Vocation" to "Responding to Same-Sex Marriage." Webinars are free and you're welcome to share them with friends! The next Q&A will feature Dr. Jeff Myers on the topic of "How to Find a Mentor + Be a Mentor." It will be on April 21 at 6 p.m. MTN. Go to www.summit.org/alumni-webinars to register, watch recordings, and keep abreast of upcoming webinars.



Summit RE:SOURCE is your first stop for free resources and ongoing equipping. This monthly alumni-exclusive e-publication is delivered right to your inbox, bringing you the best of Summit in a snapshot, including what's trending, video blogs, free

lectures, new offerings, featured speakers and alumni, and a quarterly Seed Thought series that will challenge you to pause, reflect, pray, and grow. Not yet receiving it? Check out previous issues and sign up at www.summit.org/alumni-resource.



Local Summit Communities are where you can meet up with fellow alumni in your own hometown. These intergenerational, alumni-led groups are sprouting up all around the country this year, seeking the growth of their members and the good of their cities. To find one near you, check the interactive map at www.summit.org/alumni-map, or apply to start one yourself at www.summit.org/alumni-leadership!

alumni spotlight

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INSIDE: Dr. Jeff Myers interviews Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Pastor Saeed Abedini who is imprisoned in Iran

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interview with naghmeh abedini

from the summit adult conference 2015

Dr. Jeff Myers: We have a really great privilege tonight to have with us Naghmeh Abedini. In order to understand Naghmeh's story (and we're going to come up here and have a little interview), but in order to understand Naghmeh's story, we need to understand something of her family's story. And we'll talk about that some when we have our conversation, but Naghmeh's husband, Saeed Abedini, who's a pastor and father from Boise, Idaho, is currently imprisoned in Iran.

He was imprisoned July 28 of 2012. He was visiting Tehran. He was there to visit family ... to help put together the board to organize an orphanage. And the Iranian revolutionary guard detained him and said they were going to have him face criminal charges for his Christian faith. He was interrogated, put under house arrest, and told to wait for a court summons. On the 26 of September of 2012, he didn't receive a summons, but five members of the revolutionary guard raided his parents' home, they confiscated many of his belongings, and they took him to an unknown location.

After four days, the revolutionary guard informed the family that Saeed was in solitary confinement in a notorious prison. Throughout Saeed's imprisonment, he spent several weeks in solitary confinement. And during that time he was only brought out of his cell to be interrogated in an abusive fashion. He has been allowed visitation now from his family in Tehran, he has been cut off from Naghmeh and their young children.

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prison, the doctor and the nurse refused to treat him because they said as a Christian he is unclean, he's an infidel. In 2013 it became clear that Saeed was suffering from internal injuries, the doctors determined that his injuries warranted immediate attention, and that he needed to be treated in a non-prison hospital. For almost a year, the Iranian regime ignored this advice. In March of 2014, Saeed was permitted to enter a private hospital for treatment, but after spending almost two months in the hospital, he was returned to prison without having been given the surgeries deemed necessary by the hospital doctors.

Secretary of State John Kerry has called for pastor Saeed's release, the White House has called for his release, the House of Representatives held two emotional hearings that highlighted his plight, multiple nations have called for his release, attorneys from the ACLJ have argued his case before the United Nations. We're still waiting for breakthroughs on this, and it highlights some of the things that Abdu talked about, some of the things that Mindy talked about today.

But this isn't just an abstraction. This is a pastor wanting to do good things, who is being persecuted for his faith. And he has a champion. His wife, Naghmeh, will not give up, doing everything she can to help secure his release, fighting for him.

And so it's a real honor to have the opportunity tonight to visit with Naghmeh to find out her story, to hear about this, to highlight not only — and this is one of the things I love most about this family (we just got to meet today) — but if you go to the website

to learn more about Pastor Saeed, there are lots of different cases in there. It isn't just Naghmeh fighting for him, she's fighting for freedom. She is fighting for people who are under persecution all over the world right now. So please welcome with me Naghmeh Abedini.

Thank you for coming to Colorado to be with us.

Naghmeh Abedini: Thank you, Dr. Jeff, for having me.

Dr. Myers: It's really an honor to meet you. We've been hearing your family's story and praying for you. How are your children?

Naghmeh: They are OK. God has really become their father. But it's been rough, it's been three birthdays. The last time my son saw Saeed he was 4 and in a few days he'll be 7, so ... it's been ... it's emotional for them. They feel like they're growing up without their dad.

Dr. Myers: You're part of a community of people there, though. Do they have people who step in as grandparents?

Naghmeh: My parents have been ... Saeed's parents have really stepped in and spoiled them and taken care of them. I'm not allowed to discipline anymore! I'm evil if I do; I just can't. There's too many grandparents to fight with! So I'm on my own. And so I can't discipline them or be mean to them. They're already going through so much. So that's what they say — both Saeed's parents and my parents are pretty adamant about that.

But God has really strengthened their faith through it. They have a lot of nights where they cry or wonder why, but they're learning to trust God as

interview with naghmeh abedini

from the summit adult conference 2015, continued from page 9

I've tried to teach them that the price that Jesus paid on the cross for us and that God has done for us deserves our life. And it's not that it's our life that we get to be mad at God — why isn't He answering this prayer, or that prayer? He's given us everything, He gave His only son, and so He deserves our life. We're the ones who are bondservants, and ones who are to submit to him daily.

So that's what I try to teach them: that the existence of God is not based on answered prayers or delayed prayers. It's that part of following Christ is paying a price. And he deserves that, God deserves our life.

Dr. Myers: Wow. What an incredible lesson for them to have to learn at such an early age.

Naghmeh: It is, but it's interesting how much they pick up ... you know, how much they're understanding. It's hard to understand, but they are getting it.

Saeed would always tell me when we were married, and even before when we were engaged, he would say, you know you might become a widow, or there's a cost in following Jesus, especially in a Muslim country. And so it's not about God's answering to our every need or wanting, it doesn't change. What Jesus did for us deserves our life, and a lot of times as Christians, we go through life and question God based on answered prayers or not answered prayers, or losses, or delayed prayers, or things are not going our way, and I just want them to learn that.

And Saeed would always say I don't want you to be a crying widow, I want you to rejoice that this is for Jesus. And I want my kids to rejoice. And

so he was always trying to teach them lessons. I remember when we started the orphanage, every time he would go back to Iran he would open his suitcase and he would tell the kids, bring your toys and clothes that I can bring back to the Iranian kids, and they would bring these old toys and dolls and clothes. And he would say no, bring your favorite, the one you got on your birthday and Christmas. And so they would come crying, giving away, and I would be mad, you know, I wanted to fight with him right there, and he would say, "You know, you give God your best, you give God your best, you always give God your best."

And so it's something that I knew I wanted, and I knew Saeed wanted, our kids to understand, that it's not about us, it's not about how our life is going, it's about Jesus. The Bible says we will go through persecution when we follow him, and so we know we go through trials, but one thing we know is that he will never leave us.

In that prison, when he was in solitary for over a month, I know that a lot of people go crazy, but I knew that Jesus was there with him. I knew that it's a relationship that no prison walls and no prison guards can take. And so he has that relationship and Jesus is something you can't take away. And so I want the kids to know that there is a price you pay. And Jesus says you will pay a price for following him, but he is there with you. He's been there with us every morning.

I struggle with anxiety, and where is my life, and what's going to happen, and what does our future look like, and what are the kids ... You know, I was fearful of losing. When Saeed was first

taken, I thought, "I can't imagine if the kids grow up without him," and my worst fear is coming to life. They are growing up without him. He missed their kindergarten and first grade and second grade, and he's missing out. But you know, I had to get over that and say, you know what? For the sake of the cross I count it all as loss.

And that's what I want to instill in my kids: that's it's not about what you get for following Jesus; you already got everything for accepting Jesus. Now you pay a price in following him. But he will never leave you. He's right there.

I remember a few nights ago, my daughter came crying, saying, "Mommy, I just miss daddy so much." And I held her and she was crying and I just said, "Remember how you feel when mommy holds you, but Jesus is there even closer. I want you to learn to go to Him. He will never leave you, he is always there whenever. He's there and He's real and I want you to experience that reality of Jesus so much."

So that's what I want to teach them, and I know that's what Saeed would want to teach them, that you will pay a price for following Jesus, but he won't leave you, he's right there.

Dr. Myers: Now, let's go back to the beginning. How did you and Saeed meet? And then there are the missionary journeys and all of that, but talk a little bit about that.

Naghmeh: So I grew up in Idaho. I was born in Iran, came to the United States when I was 9, ended up in Idaho. When we were in California (we came to California and my dad had a few brothers that lived there), my brother had a vision of Jesus, and

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he came running to me.

Now the first nine years of my life, I grew up on war. Iran and Iraq were at war. The Islamic revolution happened, the hostage crisis, and then there was war. So I grew up sleeping most nights in a basement and hearing Iraqi airplanes bombing, and missiles, and waking up to destruction, seeing houses around us destroyed and our school friends dead. And so my twin brother and I were always talking, “Where is God, who is God?”

So when we came to California and he came running to me and he said, “I found the God we’ve been looking for!” I knew what he was ... he said he had a vision of Jesus. He said, “Naghmeh, I’ve found the God we’ve been looking for, His name is Jesus.” And that was pretty powerful to me because as my twin brother, we’d talked about who’s God, who’s this God. And we’d found Him.

And so my parents got angry and my dad thought we’d lost our culture, our identity. He was going to move us back to Iran. He said, it’s better if you die, I’ve lost everything. I’ve lost my kids to this American culture. And so he was thinking about moving us back when one of his brothers had found a job in Boise, Idaho, and he said, give Idaho a try. It seems pretty secluded. Out in the middle of nowhere. So from 10 million people in Tehran, we moved to California, and then we moved to Idaho.

So 12 years into it, my parents in Boise, Idaho, gave their hearts to Christ, the city they ran away to. So my uncle’s idea was move the kids to Idaho, debrief, bring them back to

Islam. They thought, they’re 9, they’re kids, what could kids possibly? ... It’s a phase; they’re probably going to grow out of it. They tried really hard. They wouldn’t let us read the Bible, they wouldn’t let us go to church, but we kept our faith, and 12 years into it they accepted Christ.

I graduated from college at a very liberal college, the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, near Seattle. My parents at the time I went to college, university, were Muslims still, so I didn’t have an option to go to a Christian university, but went to college and was ready to go to med school. I had studied pre-med.

My twin brother ended up getting his doctorate in quantum physics at the University of Chicago, so I was the loser because after four years I was supposed to go to med school at the University of Washington, but the Lord was like, “That’s not the plan I have for you.” And He just turned everything. He said, I want you to go back to Iran. And I was like, “What?”

My parents at that time were believers. I had graduated from college, and they said, no, your future is in the U.S., you need to live the American dream. But I felt the Lord say, I want you to break your idols and the things you hold dear, and the American dream, and the finances, and your parents, and security. Because for me, Iran meant bombs and a scary place. I was very fearful of airplanes because from a very young age they were a sign of death, growing up in Iran.

Long story short, I ended up by God’s grace flying into the Middle East two months after September 11, when

my parents were like, “That’s crazy, there’s going to be war in the Middle East. What are you doing?” But I felt the Lord say, “It’s for such a time as this, I have a plan.” I was a girl in my 20s; I didn’t know what I could do in the Middle East. What difference can one girl from Boise, Idaho, make?

I was pretty fearful, I wasn’t out in the streets evangelizing. I wasn’t. I started sharing with my uncles and aunts, and five of my cousins accepted Christ within a year. So I thought I was done. My parents kept calling me, “Are you done with your mission trip now? Are you ready to come home?” And I was going through a lot, I was crying a lot, I felt depressed. And they were like, “Did you get enough of that? Are you ready to come home? Do you see how they treat you?”

I was ready to come back in 2002, but when I was ready to come back, I met Saeed and I got stuck for another few years. So I met him at a church, actually. I had a cousin who had converted two years earlier. An amazing story, but she was part of a local church, and she kept telling me to come to the church. And I thought, no, it’s a government approved church. I was so scared. I didn’t want the government to know. I don’t want to go under the radar of the Iranian government. I’d rather just do my little Bible study with my cousins in my house, my little apartment.

So I didn’t go for a year, and I was flying back to the U.S., and she was persistent. So I thought, OK I’ll come to your church. I’m not going to be in Iran for long. So I went to the church and that’s where I met Saeed.

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Dr. Myers: Now he was a relatively recent convert at that point?

Naghmeh: He was. In 2002, he was a 2-year-old in the Lord. He converted in the year 2000. He was so much stronger than me. At that time, I was, I don't know, 15 years in the Lord, and he was so much ... When I met him, he was a pastor of about 100 people, college-age students. He was in his 20s. Pretty much the church was 20s and younger.

We got married in 2004, and by 2005 when we left Iran, over 2,000 Muslims had converted to Christ. Just within our house church network. There were so many others. And it spread from Tehran, and it was all young people, all college aged. It spread from Tehran to 30 cities. There are so many stories.

One time we visited 10 cities in 10 days, and we had \$50. And every city, we would go pray and someone would open their door, and we would stay at their house. We would share the gospel, and they would feed us, they would take care of our needs. And we got to lead people to Christ, every house, every city, and then we'd move on to the next one. We went through the Turkish part, the Kurdish part, just part of Iran.

One time we picked up this Turkish boy and we said, "Do you know who Jesus is?" and he said, "He doesn't live in my village." It was just powerful. At the end, we gave him a *Jesus* film in his own language and he was just screaming and shouting in the streets, wanting his whole village to watch it. They had one TV and they were going to watch the movie in their own language. But it was just amazing going from city to city and sharing the gospel and seeing

it spread, especially among the young people who were thirsty for God, but they were tired of religion.

Dr. Myers: Is that part of what you think put Saeed and you on the radar of the leadership there?

Naghmeh: We were on the radar because Saeed was a part of the government approved church, so he was always on the radar. But the government was allowing it. It was a more moderate government, you know, it wasn't really taking Christianity seriously. They didn't realize it would spread so quickly. So they knew all this was happening, and they were just letting it happen; they were allowing it. He wasn't hiding it from the government, but the president before Ahmadinejad was more moderate, very much believed in allowing the Christians to do that. They knew that our house churches existed and were allowing it, were permitting it.

Actually, at our wedding, Saeed said, let's go tell the Iranian government we're converts. I said no. He said, I want to get a permission to have a Christian wedding, I can't imagine making promises to Allah. I said, no, let's do that. Let's just make the promise and then break it or something. Well, he convinced me after much argument. I would always tell him that my first job as his fiancé and then his wife was to argue to make sure he was making the right decision! And after much argument, he was pretty adamant about that decision. So we went to the Iranian government; we said we're Christians.

And then I thought, my parents are coming for our wedding, maybe 10 people would show up for our wed-

ding, maybe 30, 40, 50 people from Saeed's family. There ended up being about 600 people, most of which I didn't know. Saeed was there. Somehow he had had our bridesmaids and groomsmen make 300 wedding favors of Bibles and *Jesus* films, so they're passing those out. I'm in my wedding dress. He's up on the — I have the video; I've shared it with people — Saeed's up on the pulpit sharing Christ and I'm just in my wedding dress looking at him. I'm just thinking, is this a wedding? Is this another church event? What is this? It's interesting because we had our biggest fight that day, 'cause I felt like he didn't stop doing ministry and I felt like there's one day you can just stop and you can just focus!

I was actually in Washington D.C. on our 10th year anniversary and I remember that night Saeed was kind of smiling (he was trying not to smile because he knew I would get angrier) and he was saying, I'll give you the best 10-year anniversary year, and it's going to be like this, and it's going to be all about you. I was flying back from D.C. from a very hard meeting with one of our government officials and I was just in tears, I was just thinking ... that's where I would imagine Saeed in prison for Christ, on our 10th-year anniversary. I was remembering his promise of our 10th year, and it was hard not being with him. But that's how Saeed was, and is, he's passionate for Christ.

Actually the meeting I had on our 10th anniversary, I thought, "God this is your gift! I'm going to hear good news!" The first response from the meeting with a very high up state department person, after a lot of people in the room, was that our posi-

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tive thoughts are with you. Their first response was, your husband just keeps making things worse, everywhere they take him. They put him in Evan prison and he was leading people to Christ there, so they exiled him. (Which I didn't know you could exile a prisoner once they were in prison.) So they exiled him to another prison and they put him in the murderer ward.

I don't know if I've shared this, but the head of the new prison ward told Saeed's father, if he even mentions that he's a Christian, that he's a convert, they will kill him. There is no way your son can lead anyone to Christ here. And people start having dreams about Jesus, these murderers. He was in the lions' den. That month he was in there, we were afraid for his life. He was covered with lice, he had death threats, people were trying to put drugs in his food, they were trying to kill him. I mean it was just horrible. We didn't know if the next prison visit he would be alive. And people start having dreams about Jesus and went to Saeed and asked about who Jesus is and accepted Christ and start protecting him.

So long story short, the state department's just telling me they moved him from the murderer ward to another place, and then they moved him to the hospital; they beat him. From the hospital, so many people were accepting Christ, so many people coming in, there are so many stories. His parents were with him at the hospital, and people with injuries and nurses were accepting Christ, so they beat him and moved him back to Evan prison.

So our government official was saying, he's making it hard! He just keeps sharing Christ wherever. And the Irani-

an government is just pretty frustrated about that. And I just said, "Well, he's not doing it out of defiance, he's doing it out of his passion for Christ." And I got to share in that meeting how Jesus Christ has changed his life. And I said, the Iranian government could always kick him out of the country! I was coming from that meeting and I was just thinking, this is who Saeed is.

The few years that we lived in Iran, it was pretty amazing seeing God move. The young people ... Iran is very open to the gospel, which is scaring the Iranian government. God's strategy is to bring the young people. Seventy percent of Iran is 30s and younger, and they're very open to the gospel, very open. The government, the way we treat terrorism, that's the way they treat Christianity — it's their number one fear.

When they were torturing Saeed the first months and they were putting him in solitary, they said, "You've corrupted so many young people. No matter what we do, they won't turn back. Maybe if you turn back to Islam, they would also turn back." So they were trying to make him deny his faith so that other people would see him as an example.

Dr. Myers: What you're describing is straight out of the book of Acts.

Naghmeh: It's the same God. What's interesting is we see so much stuff on the outside, but God is doing so much, moving in the most powerful way in the most dark places of the world. It was amazing for someone who's grown up in the U.S. to see that, to see so many getting saved in Iran and so much openness to the gospel. The people are oppressed, they are

tired of religion. They are tired of Islam. But they're not tired of God.

So when we offered them relationship with God and Jesus Christ, they were ready. They would weep. There were young kids who would be kicked out of their houses, they were persecuted by their families, they would lose jobs, they were denied education because they had become Christians, but they were on fire for the Lord. They were sleeping wherever, moving house to house, city to city, sharing the gospel.

Dr. Myers: I just have this sense, maybe you do too, of how much bigger God is than I usually think in the culture that we're a part of.

Naghmeh: He is. One thing is that, when I lived in the states, I wouldn't say it, but in the back of my mind I questioned the justice of God, because I thought how could someone who's been in this village in Africa who's never heard about Jesus, how could you keep him accountable? But when I went to Iran, we would go with a taxi driver or someone in the street, and we would pray and the Lord would show us people to go and talk to, and we would say, "Do you know who Jesus is?" We would have people bring out wooden crosses and they would start weeping and they would say, "My child was dying and I cried out to God and Jesus appeared to me. And He said, I'm the way the truth and the life."

So for me, that made a lot of sense. It answered a lot of questions that whoever calls on the name of God will find Jesus Christ. God is not limited to missionaries, God is bigger. That for me opened my mind. Maybe it's simple for a lot of people, but for me, I was like,

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“Oh God, You will. Whoever calls on Your name, in whatever language, in whatever state, just calls out and says, God you are there, Jesus you are there.”

Just hearing testimony after testimony of people seeking God and finding Jesus. And a lot of them didn't even have Bibles, and they would tell me the “Our Father Who Art in Heaven” prayer, and in their dream or vision Jesus had taught them that. And when we gave them Bibles, they were excited. So just hearing stories like that really strengthened my faith, having grown up in the U.S. and realizing God is bigger. He involves us in the ministry, but He can do it without us. He can reach the lost without our help.

Dr. Myers: Getting people to have dreams is not something they teach in seminary!

So I'm curious about the young converts you worked with when you were there, are they aware of what's happening to Saeed, and how is this being taken in Iran? I know we are becoming more and more aware of it here because of the things you and your family have done to make us more aware, but what about there?

Naghmeh: Not only the converts, but a lot of the people we knew through the house churches had to flee to Turkey. They are refugees there. Some stayed behind and are sharing the gospel and are continuing in that.

But the interesting thing is that when I met Saeed, he would say, God will use me to reach millions of Muslims. I would say, millions, really? The interesting thing that happened for me is that in the lowest time of my life, where I was a single mom, I didn't even know what I was going to do, we

were living with my parents, God has taken me to very secular environments to share. Some doors I could never open.

One of them just blew my mind and reminded me of what Saeed told me. I have been able to share on *BBC Farsi* and *Voice of America Persia*, very secular channels run by Muslims, and they broadcast into Iran. Millions of Iranians watch it. They estimate 60-70 percent of Iranians watch these very secular news channels. And a few times it was taped, so they could cut out stuff. But I had a few live interviews where I had their primetime.

One of them was right before the Iranian election, and they estimate tens of millions of Iranians had watched. And I had a live, one-hour. And they had different lawyers. There were lawyers who had represented three hikers. They were talking about Americans being held captive in Iran. I was the only Christian there, and all these lawyers were calling, and some were skyping in from Iran that had defended the hikers. They were all Muslim. They were very eloquent in their speaking. And my speaking is really elementary.

One of the lawyers said, as Iranian people we need to protect our culture, and people like Saeed are a threat to our culture. The host said, “What do you think?” So I had a chance to say, “Actually, 600 years before Islam we had Christianity in our country. So if we want to go back to our culture, let's go back to the book of Acts where the Parthians and the Elamites were the first people to accept Christ. And the Persian king helped the people rebuild Israel.” You know, our history is very deep in the Old Testament and

the New Testament. One of the first churches was right in Iran.

So I had a chance to say this, let's go back to our culture, before Islam. So it is interesting how I got to share, and I got to share how I have so much peace. I'm normally a very anxious prone person. I've had so much peace washed over me over the past two years, I feel like God has been just cradling me and carrying me to speak and travel. But I got to share how I have that through Jesus Christ and how they can find that. They estimate up to maybe 50 million were watching, and I was crying, thinking how Saeed had said God would use his story to reach millions, but I would never have wanted it this way and never thought it would be this way.

You asked have the house churches heard. Not only have the believers heard and they have said how this has strengthened their faith, but it has led a lot of Muslims to finding Christ. It's really become a testimony.

The interesting thing about Saeed's story is the whole world's attention right now is on Iran and the U.S. relations, and the news of him has been in the middle of that. So a lot of Iranians are reading up on him because it's so much part of the Iran/U.S. relationship. And so a lot of these secular channels have asked me to come speak about it because it's such big news right now, because it's between U.S. and Iran. And it's given me a great platform to speak about Christ. It's just been amazing.

Dr. Myers: There's no way to really know this, but do you believe that Secretary Kerry is bringing up Saeed's case as part of these negotiations?

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Naghmeh: I know he's bringing it up, but I know that they are trying to make a deal and they don't want to upset the Iranians. And I know that, as someone put it in our government, they are allergic to Saeed and what he stands for in terms of human rights issues. And so I know they haven't been as aggressive. I think if it was any other time, Saeed would be out within months. They haven't been as aggressive in getting him out because it upsets the Iranians too much and they just want to focus on making a deal. And that's frustrating. But I just have to realize that God is in control.

I know they're trying to, but there is a bigger issue, such as the nuclear deal, and they don't want anything to get in the middle of that. And so Saeed's been caught up in that. It's an easy issue; it's a human rights issue. The United Nations has recently released a report saying Iran's holding Saeed illegally. Their working group released a report saying that every day Saeed's been imprisoned, he should be compensated. This is from the United Nations.

The European parliament has released resolutions, the U.K. parliament, the Dutch parliament, all over the world governments have said this is not acceptable, you need to release him. It's a human rights issue. And so it should have been an easy release, with all these countries stepping in, but it's just become so complicated.

Dr. Myers: How do you deal with the frustration of the state department just being so anemic?

Naghmeh: It's been frustrating. I just pray. I've been up in meetings. I have to work with them so I've been

trying to be nice. There's been moments of negativity. They're the ones handling this, so they've asked other countries to back off. They want to negotiate everything now that they're talking directly with Iran.

They're the ones kind of doing it. They're the only ones talking about Saeed. I've just learned to pray for them. And God has just laid on my heart, you can't hate and you can't be hateful towards them, you have to love them. And the Bible says to even love your enemies, and they're not our enemies. God wants us to be a unified nation, and they're not my enemies.

And also to pray for them. The Lord has really convicted me, how much are you praying for them: that God would touch their heart, would wake them up, would show them — if they don't know Christ — that Jesus would show up and they would realize, why is this pastor going through so much standing for his faith? That God would really use this story to touch a lot of lives in the state department and the white house.

Dr. Myers: Well, the President came to see you.

Naghmeh: Yes, which was a miracle. The reason I was so excited about meeting with the President was that for two years, almost two and a half years, I tried to get a meeting with the President, or even get one phone call. And I criticized him for making the phone call to the gay athlete and saying he was proud of him for standing up. And I'm thinking, "Here is my husband standing up for his faith, why am I not getting a phone call."

So I tried really hard, I talked about

it on the media, it was all over the place. I went to Washington D.C. so many times, and just nothing. And at the beginning of the year, the Lord put on my heart and said, do a 21-day Daniel fast — where I would just stop eating things that were pleasurable, stop drinking coffee for 21 days, and that was a big deal. I've never fasted from coffee before! And the Lord was like, just seek me.

So every time I would go to the Lord and start praying for Saeed's release, God would just be like, you've turned your eyes away from me. So the first few days was just a prayer of repentance, of where I put my eye and focus on things I shouldn't have. And that was why emotionally I was so up and down. I thought other people were Saeed's savior, or they would do something. And God was like, you've turned your eyes away from me, what's wrong with you?

So the first few days I was just focused on God. I was sharing on my social media about the 21 days. The other days, every time I'd want to pray for Saeed, God was like, worship me, praise me, that's easy, I'll take care of that. People were like, why aren't you praying for Saeed? It's 21 days of prayer and fasting, isn't it for your husband's release? I was like, I don't know why, but every time I pray to God, God is like, pray for this and pray for that, and pray for revival, and I'll take care of that, just focus on me, I want you to put your eyes on me.

And two weeks into the fast, I felt the Lord say, "I'm going to do a breakthrough, like Daniel." And it's interesting that Daniel, when he fasted,

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he was battling the Prince of Persia, which is Iran. But two weeks into it, people start messaging me and saying, President Obama is coming to Boise, Idaho! Someone said no standing President has visited Idaho. Some very few presidents have visited during their campaign, but no one who has officially become a president has visited Boise.

People were like, is he coming to meet you? And I was like, no I don't know why he's coming to Boise. The day after his State of the Union address, he came to Boise University, and then he was in India. So it was pretty much Boise, India. And I just knew it was an answer to prayer. God said, you tried so hard, but how much are you getting on your knees? How much are you trying in your own effort? And this is the message he put on my heart for this nation too: How much are you getting on your knees for this nation? Versus getting frustrated or getting angry or getting fearful or whatever.

And so after I heard he was coming to Boise, I asked some of my close friends to do an Esther fast. I said whoever wants to do it, we don't eat anything for three days, so that I would be granted a meeting with the president. And so I sent a letter to the White House and said I want to meet with President Obama when he's here. I knew because of all the meetings that I had that they didn't want to meet with me because it would upset the Iranian government. But I was like, OK God, You put it on my heart.

So after three days, on the third day of the Esther fast, I get a call from the White House saying the President's

going to meet with you. And then I thought, it's going to be a fast meeting, like "Hi/Bye," and people said it's going to be a meet and greet. He's probably just going to shake your hands and walk away.

And it was a long meeting. We sat in a room and I told him it was the prayer and fasting that had brought him there. I said, "You're here because of prayer and fasting!" And it was a good meeting. He saw the emotional, human part of it. He saw my kids. My son, whose birthday's coming up, he said, "President Obama, can you help bring my daddy home for my birthday?" He was so hopeful! He felt like the President of the United States is gonna make it happen. So it's going to be a rough birthday. And President Obama said, "I will try, Jacob, I will try."

But it was a good meeting. For me it was special because God just opened up the power of prayer in my life. How much are you praying? How much are you getting on your knees? I was reminded of Nehemiah, and Daniel, all of the people in the Bible where they hear bad news, Esther — and all they do is pray and fast. The first thing they do is seek God, and then God opens the next door of meeting with the kings. And the Lord was like, "How much are you getting on your knees and praying when you get bad news, how much are you searching?"

My heart, of course, being raised in America, I've been praying for revival, but the Lord was like, how much are you really praying for revival for this nation versus just being frustrated. God can do a turnaround. You've seen in the Old Testament where people

just break their idols and turn to God.

And so for me that meeting was special because it was like a message from God on the power of prayer, and how people in the Old Testament, and the New Testament too, how the first thing they did when they had battles or things that were impossible, was prayer. And then God would show them the strategy of what to do next.

Dr. Myers: That's what I'm taking away from tonight, absolutely. I think the way you said it was: How much are we fighting on our knees before we decide to go into battle?

Naghmeh: There is a battle. A lot of Christians think you should pray. And that's what I thought when they took Saeed in September, when they physically took him. I was praying, but I wasn't acting. I was just praying, God you're going to fix it. But after prayer always comes action. As Christians we can't just be on our knees and say, well it doesn't matter what ISIS is doing in the Middle East or the persecution.

After prayer, God would always give strategy: This is how you're going to defeat the enemy. You're going to go before the king. After prayer and fasting was always going before the king. Esther had to take a scary action. And so it's prayer, but also action. Because a lot of Christians do the prayer, but they don't do the action.

And a lot of Christians are like me, where they do the action, but they don't do the prayer part. That's first. That's essential. The prayer and fasting, going before God and beating yourself like Nehemiah: "Oh God, help my nation! Oh God, have mercy!" How much are we doing that on a daily

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basis?

For me, two years of constant travel to D.C. to meet with the President, knowing that he wasn't even going to give me a call because it would upset the Iranians. And then two weeks of prayer and fasting and having him come to Boise, Idaho? Now the funny thing is, I hate traveling, and I felt the Lord say, "I brought him to you. You didn't even have to go to D.C." After two weeks of praying, God even brought him to Boise. I didn't even have to travel to D.C. I was in the car for 10 minutes.

Dr. Myers: Can we ask you to pray for him to go to some other places as well?! Would that be alright?

Naghmeh, this has been amazing. Thank you so much for coming to be here today. And I know you were at Focus on the Family today and that's exciting. We're going to be praying that that program is able to be heard by millions more people here in the states and around the country.

Last year you shared a letter that Saeed wrote to Rebecca Grace on her 8th birthday. Is it OK if I read some of that? It stunned me just watching you as a family. And it affirmed so many of the things you were saying just now, what Saeed was saying in prison. And he said,

"My dearest Rebecca Grace,

"You're growing so fast and becoming more beautiful every day. I praise God for His faithfulness to me every day as I watch from a distance, through the prison walls and see pictures and hear stories of how you are growing both spiritually and physically. Oh, how I long to see you!

I know that you question why. You have prayed so many times for my return, and yet, I am not home. Now there is a big WHY. In your mind, you are asking why Jesus isn't answering your prayers and the prayers of all the people around the world praying for my release and for me to be home with you, and our family. The answer to the WHY is WHO. Who is in control? The Lord Jesus Christ is in control. I desire for you to learn important lessons during these trying times. Lessons that you carry now and for the rest of your life. The answer to the why is who. The confusion of why has all of this happened and why your prayers are not answered yet is resolved with understanding who is in control. The Lord Jesus Christ, our God. God is in control of the whole world, and everything that is happening in it is for His purpose and for His glory and will be worked out for His good (Romans 8:28). Jesus allows me to be kept here for His glory. He is doing something inside each of us, and also outside in the world. People die and suffer for their Christian faith all over the world, and some may wonder why. But you should know the answer of why is who. It is for Jesus. It is worth the price. And he has a plan to be glorified through our lives.

"Then my dear, beloved Rebecca Grace, I pray that God would return me home soon, but if not, we will still sing together, as Habakkuk did, either separated by prison walls or at home. So let Daddy hear you sing a loud hallelujah that I can hear all the way here in the prison. I am so proud of you, my sweet courageous daughter."

We want you to know that you have 100 friends here in this room, who are cheering for you and your family, for your children, for your husband. You're a hero for us. Thank you. Can we pray for you as we wrap up our evening here?

Father, we in your presence here, listening to Naghmeh's story, worship you and glorify you. You are indeed in charge. Enable us, Heavenly Father, to say hallelujah, whatever trials come. And Father, I pray that each one of us would take into our hearts in the deepest possible way, in the power of your Holy Spirit, what Naghmeh shared tonight: that we begin the fight on our knees, through prayer and fasting, for our nation and for our families. And then we take the bold action.

Father, with Naghmeh and Rebecca Grace and Jacob, I pray that you would lift them up and strengthen them and give them courage. That the power of your Holy Spirit would be never ending, especially in those moments where feelings of despair come over them in waves, where Satan does his best to bring discouragement and turmoil where you want to bring resolution and peace. Heavenly Father, I pray that in the power of the Holy Spirit, that you would reunite this family. And Lord God, that in the process your name would be lifted up and glorified all over the whole world.

We praise you for the millions that have been reached, and pray that you would reach many more millions. We trust you with everything that is happening in our nation and around the world, and for our leaders, and for all of these complicated things happen-

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ing in our times. We're assured that we live in evil days, but enable us in your power to make the most of every opportunity. Thank you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Thank you, sister.