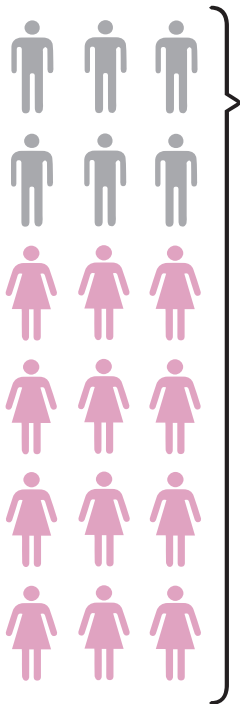


project 142



SAFEGUARDING THE DISCIPLE MAKERS

Of all the places in the Middle East I could have been teaching—it was an *actual upper room*. It was a beautiful late afternoon in April, with the sun just beginning to set over the horizon of Madaba. The minarets of the local mosques, backlit by the dusty orange sunset, projected high above the city skyline and just began to echo the evening adhan, or “call to prayer.”



Glancing around the room to get a quick head count before I began, I recalled a thought that confirmed what I saw: **Two-thirds of the mission field consisted of women workers—even those in the higher-threat areas of the Middle East.** Due to security concerns, we were at an undisclosed location and I counted 18 of us.

Shortly after my security presentation began, I asked a question to those in attendance: “Is there anyone here that has been previously attacked, in any way, while working on the mission field?” A number of hands shot up. Not wanting to cause anyone to re-experience what had happened to them, I didn’t ask specifics, but the volunteered details emerged anyway: verbal harassment, rock throwing, physical groping by young males and other sexual assaults. No religious persecution in this group. Teresa and I were starting to hear this far too often.

The two teams in attendance that night, along with all the others Teresa and I have taught in the past, were there to understand how to prevent attacks like these. Experiencing the evil as these people have, men and women who have more-or-less sacrificed everything to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to unreached Muslims, I didn’t have to tell them twice that a few simple security precautions could likely prevent them from being a victim a second time. They were pretty attentive!

No matter where we find ourselves in this world, we are all part of a mighty movement of God and we can learn from those who have gone before us how to face threats and persecution.

The Apostle Paul, for example, was faced with religion-based terrorism for much of his Christian life:

- > Run out of town in Damascus, **his evacuation plan included a nighttime escape** over the city wall (*Acts 9:23-25*).
- > Beaten, placed in stocks and imprisoned in Philippi, **he sang hymns of praise** (*Acts 16:23-26*).
- > Threatened by an Ephesian mob, **he listened to his advisors and left the city** (*Acts 19:31*).
- > Threatened by a mob of Jewish extremists in the Temple, he was imprisoned in Jerusalem. This time **the evacuation plan included a daring night escape** with a contingent of Roman soldiers (*Acts 23:23*).

Everyone who preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be persecuted and hated by the world for His name's sake—this is a truth spoken by Jesus. But, when missionaries and their families are criminally attacked simply because they stick out as strangers, or because their host country doesn't agree with the missionary's home country's political policy, **there is wisdom and understanding we can all use** to protect our families and avoid attacks like these.

You may be asking, what is the end game for our ministry, Project 142. Ninety-nine-point-one percent of the Muslim Palestinian population has not received a Gospel witness. Nearly five million people live within Gaza and the West Bank of Israel, and 99.1% of them—**99.1% of nearly five million people—are categorically unreached**. Palestinian territories have an annual Gospel growth rate of precisely **0.0%**.

Traveling within the areas of the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, we will carry the gospel there, as well as equip other missionaries, through education and training, who choose to work within these higher-threat areas of the mission field.

Thank you so much for your continued faithfulness in prayer and financial support. If you have not already done so, please prayerfully consider supporting Project 142 by becoming a partner or even with a one-time gift.

All our best,

Patrick and Teresa Houghteling