



October 2016

Could you live in Iraq? I'm not sure that TripAdvisor has a section within it which it could answer this question, but we are fortunate this month to hear from someone who is well qualified to do so! Iraqi Christian Mona\* says her country is the place to live in for a Christian and invites us to come and join her! She gives five reasons why:

1. **"When you live in Iraq, you are constantly reminded not to set your heart on material things.** In Iraq, we realise that you may lose those at any moment by explosion, theft or displacement. This urges us just to enjoy having the basic necessities and be thankful and happy! "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." 1 Timothy 6:7-8

2. **"When you live in Iraq, you discover that the real family is the church.** In Iraq, your family gets scattered all over the world because many people choose to emigrate. The church becomes more important. You find there brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, displaced from all villages and cities of Iraq. In Christ we are all family. "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." Matthew 19:29



3. **"When you live in Iraq, you have many opportunities to serve others.** Due to the displacement, many people are living in camps and there are many opportunities to help one another. The churches are no more a place where we just go to attend the service or hear the sermon and go come back home. Church is a place for real fellowship. We know each other; we care for each other, share what we have and we witness together. The doors of the church are open

now even to those who used to belong to other religions... We all belong to the body of Christ. "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." Revelation 7:9



4. **"When you live in Iraq, you will feel related to the great people of faith mentioned in the Bible.** You will remember the prophet Daniel, who lived in this land during the exile. He was thrown to the lions for being faithful to God and by his witness led a great heathen king to make a decree. "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel!" Daniel 6:26





**5. "When you live in Iraq, you have the privilege of being persecuted for your faith."**

Here we have to pay a high price for our faith: displacement, discrimination and sometimes even death. But is it not a privilege to die for your faith rather than die of cancer or Alzheimer's or any other illness? We solved the problem of death long ago when we believed that we will be raised for eternal life!

"The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." *John 12:25*"

*\*Name changed for security reasons*



What an amazing perspective! Long ago I reached a point of clarity in my thinking that in the West we need persecuted Christians to teach us how to read our Bibles, and indeed how to pray. Their starting position is markedly different from our own. Mona's answers to the question demonstrate this eloquently. The common denominator here for me is a direct answer to the question in *Psalms 27*, "Whom shall I fear?" David answers this question very directly in the psalm by saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, so why should I be afraid? The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble?" As you can see from Mona's testimony, for persecuted Christians globally, it is not the memorisation of this psalm (as important as it is) that makes the difference, it is the Lord who makes the difference. The power isn't in the verse, it is knowing the fortress Himself.

My prayer is that, that is our testimony too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eddie'.

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