



*The Podcast Focused on
Revitalizing Conventional Christianity
—One Person at a Time*

Inside Jimbo's Head™

Series 1, Cultural Christianity Versus Kingdom
Christianity

Episode 8, What Is Cultural Christianity? Part II,
Kingdom Christianity Works—More Proof©

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Introduction:

Alright, my friends. I hope you have been pondering what Father is doing in Iran over the last week. I have been walking with the Lord for almost fifty years, and this move of God has to be one of the most exciting moves during those five decades. We are going to get started in just a few minutes, with answering the question, "What is Kingdom Christianity?" and specifically finishing the proof that Kingdom Christianity works by finishing our look at the Iranian church's miraculous growth through disciple-making.

However, first, I want to say a few words about this episode's Story from the Frontlines of Ministry and the Frontline Production comedy skit. I want to focus on how they pertain to what we learned last week concerning why this move of God in Iran is an excellent example of kingdom Christianity.

Last week, we learned that this move of God in Iran is based on Father using social outcasts to accomplish His work. I find it interesting that it isn't the well educated, morally straight arrows, or "cream of the crop" that He has used. Nor were they people steeped in systematic theology, modern church leadership skills, and especially not American cultural Christianity.

Those Father has used were the socially unacceptable, disconnected, and often outcasts of their society. As I have said before, this has encouraged me because these are the young people I work with and have often felt they would make great leaders if we allowed Father to move in the U.S. in the same way He is moving in Iran.

Oh, please notice I said, "we allowed" Father to move. There is no doubt in my mind, looking at things from a biblical perspective, that Father wants to move in any country, in any place, at any time the way He is moving in Iran. The question is, "Will we allow Him to do so?" How? By moving from conventional cultural Christianity to a life focused on kingdom Christianity.

Many are praying for a move of God in this country, and on that basis alone, one would think Father is ready to move in such a way. However, I speculate that most of them praying for a move of God are unwilling to move from the cultural Christianity that antithesis us and holds back the hand of God and make the sacrifice necessary to live in kingdom Christianity. When our intercessions and prayers are connected to a kingdom lifestyle, we will see the miracle take place.

This episode's Story From the Frontline of Ministry goes even farther. One of the key aspects of the Iranian movement is how they are lead by the Holy Spirit in ways most American Christians, and even our leaders, at best, only give lip-service to. While I never had a chance to speak to the young man from our story, he has been a focus of my prayer life over the many years since that story took place. His poem sits in a prominent place on my desk, where I am constantly reminded of him and the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit when He nudges me to move forward in life situations.

One other aspect of the Iranian church movement that we saw last week is how they are never distracted from kingdom work by the things of this world. They are in a very obvious battle . . . Yet, so are we. Our battle here in America looks very different, but we must always remember that "we do not battle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places."

Far to often, our lives as Christians living in America sound very much like the squad of soldiers who, in the heat of battle, asked for pizza to be delivered to them on the battleground instead of reinforcing their fellow soldiers who were being overwhelmed by the enemy. Didn't they sound like wimps to you?

The problem here is, while the skit from the Frontline Productions was a simple story, our lives in Christ are anything but a story. They are a reality. Our lives as Jesus followers are deeply involved in a battle which we are often blinded to because of our "desire for pizza." In one of my books, I talk about being soldiers on the frontline of battle who want to fight from our lounge chairs while watching a big-screen television. We refuse to listen to the commands from headquarters by living/walking in the Spirit but listen to the commands of the flesh. And get this! We actually make excuses for why we can't follow the commands from headquarters.

The pizza and the lounge chair/TV analogies speak to the same thing. We are in a battle where the results have nothing to do with this world but eternity, and we are failing to move against the enemy and are failing to reinforce our fellow soldiers because we are not focused on eternity but making a better life in this world.

So let's go back and look at a group of brothers and sisters in Christ who are properly fighting the battle while correctly focused on eternity . . . And get this! They are winning! That in and of itself should speak volumes to us. Is it speaking to you?

Inside Jimbo's Head Theme Music

Overview of Where We are Going

Last week, we looked at who these brothers and sisters in Christ leading the Iranian move of God are, how they are dealing with persecution, and some key aspects of this move of God in Iran that exemplify kingdom Christianity. Two things we did not get to were a review of the Discipleship Making Movements, which are key to how Father is moving in Iran and the effects of the Iranian church leaders on the western missionaries who have spent a tremendous amount of time with them.

Today we are going to review both what we learned last week and give an analysis of the Iranian Disciple Making Movements. However, I want to hold off on that at this point. I would like to begin this episode by sharing with you the quotes of the western missionaries on how being with these Christians focused on kingdom Christianity and how seeing what Father is doing has affected their lives and their outlook on ministry. In doing this, we will also look at how they have come to see the futility of how ministry and "doing church" are done in the West, especially in America. Some of these quotes reinforce what we had already learned last week, but they are all significant enough that I have included them this week to focus us on this tremendous move of God, which I believe is an example for the church in the west. Oh, and by the way, these missionaries believe the same thing.

One thing you might like to do, sooner than later, is to relisten to last weeks "Inside Jimbo's Head" segment. It might help you track along better with this episode. I can't over emphasize how important the lessons from the Iranian move of God are to those of us who, because we take our Father and His word seriously, are dissatisfied with conventional Christianity and are looking at alining our lives and our communities made up of other Jesus followers to authentic kingdom Christianity.

Impact of the Iranian Church on Western Missionaries in Their Own Words

Here is what the two hosts of the documentary film, "Sheep Among the Wolves, Part II," are saying about how the move of God in Iran has impacted them and what they believe the Lord wants to say to the global church through this example of kingdom Christianity. By the way, all

the quotes from the last episode and this episode come from this documentary film you can find simply by googling "Sheep Among the Wolves, Part II." Here is the first set of quotes.

While Iran has been fueling a massive movement of spreading Shia Islam all across the region, another movement has been growing up under their noses within Iran's borders itself. I believe what is happening in the church of Iran is going to become a measuring stick for the global Body of Christ. It's not something that we can look on and admire from afar. It's going to be something that's required of us to participate in. It's going to disrupt our lives. It's an invitation from Jesus to say yes to more. Because where we're headed, it's going to require more. What we have now is not enough. What we need is something that Iran right now is touching. And it's our responsibility, as the global Body of Christ, to say yes to this invitation.

In the book of Revelation, we get a picture, a description of what the end-time church looks like. She is bruised and bloodied, but she is also triumphant and victorious. It says that the church overcomes by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives unto death. Today the church in Iran is already walking in that. And I believe that the Lord is going to take this issue of the testimony, the story, the witness of the church in Iran and thrust it into the heart of the global Body of Christ that we would follow in their footsteps and learn from them. I believe the Lord is putting their message on blast for us in this hour to prepare us for the days ahead.

The simple thing that strikes me as a difference between the church in Iran and the church in the West, the church where I serve, is that we seem to believe that people can sit in a seat, in a congregation for a really, really long time and maybe at some point in their life they'll begin to follow the Lord in a striking, in a significant of enough way, that they might actually be and make disciples. It could happen. It's possible. But when I compare that to the church in Iran, it seems as though in Iran, a person comes to know the Lord, and immediately, they're activated into being and becoming and making disciples. It's a striking difference. If you want to know one of the key ways I think that we need to flip the script and learn from the church in Iran, it's the timing or the time between coming to know Jesus as Lord and Savior and actually becoming a disciple-maker.

We're sitting in the room with all the leaders, and I was sitting in the back just looking at everyone, and one of the leaders leaned over to me, and he said, "You know, the thing that's so amazing about all the people in this room is that just several years ago, despite all that they're doing now, everyone in this room was either a radical Muslim, they were addicted to drugs, suicidal, or even in prostitution. And when he said that, I just choked up. I mean, just the thought of it just gripped me. But then I actually heard their personal stories, I heard their testimonies, and it absolutely broke me. I love these people so much. Hearing how unique and personal everyone of their stories are, is mind-blowing. There are these common denominators across the board with all of them,

you know dreams, visions, miracles, healing, signs, and wonders, there are these common denominators. But the thing that's unique is that in every single one of their lives, is this story of personal intervention where the Lord interrupted their lives in a personal way that is deeply connected to their own trauma, their own rape, their own addictions, their own internal struggles, their own family trauma. Some of the stuff is brutal and horrific, but this is where Jesus displays His glory, I think, in the most beautiful ways, amidst human brokenness. And the thing that blows me away is that every single story is so personal, so unique, so standalone. And I think this testifies to the glory of God, that He's deeply personal, and He's after each human being, and He's after each individual heart. And this, to me, is one of the most powerful elements of this whole story of the Iranian awakening.

One of the things that I think surprises a lot of people when they first meet a lot of the leaders in the underground church is that the majority of them are actually women. It's just overwhelming when you see the number of women, young women, oftentimes, even teenage women who are at the heads of significant disciple-making movements. Women who are willing to lay their lives down. Women who have looked their husbands in the eyes and said, "This message, this fire that I carry in my bones is so significant that if it cost me my life if it costs me my body, I am not afraid. One of the significant truths that the realities that exist in Iran is that when you're caught, you know carrying this Christian message, you can not only lose your life, but you can be raped. For a woman to say that this message is so important, this message is so significant, that I'm willing to look at my life in light of eternity and recognize that Jesus has bought me at a great price my body is not my own. And if the cost that I have to pay, the price that I have to pay to see the gospel go forth in my nation is the laying down of my body . . .

Here is what a wife of one of the older missionaries sees in these testimonies:

You know I come from the West. I come from where life is easy. We live for our own pleasure, we live for our own comfort, we live for our own safety. Basically, we live for ourselves. And these ladies live for Jesus. Meeting these ladies changed me. And when I see all of these young and old women who are leading one of the most powerful resistance movements in the earth, it's a Godly resistance movement against the oppression of Satan . . . They're my heroes.

Here is the viewpoint of a young man who grew up in the western church. Here is what he has to say about what he has learned from the Iranian church discipleship movement.

I'm a PK or a pastor's kid. I've been in and around the church my whole life. I have a lot of affection for the body of Christ all around the world, so many awesome experiences and great leadership. But if I'm honest, I do see some coming shifts in the way that we as leaders begin to operate, particularly in the body of Christ. One of the things that I've learned from the leaders in the church in Iran when they see a 19-year-old, or a 20-year-

old, 21 years old begin to come to faith, begin to get passionate about the ministry of the Gospel when they see that person they're visualizing that in a year's time that person could be leading a church. That's revolutionary in the way we think.

Traditionally, if someone's passionate about ministry, maybe they go to some years of training, they serve for 10 years in a row and then maybe at some point 20, 30 years down the road, they would lead an expression of Gospel Ministry somewhere. I think what's exciting is where we see the church multiplying so rapidly we see this different kind of philosophy and perspective where instead of trying to continue to build up the center of what we're doing they're actually beginning to see people as leaders and empower and release them to go run and build themselves. Where they're actually saying to people, "God has put a passion in you? Just run and go for it." And I think that's one of the keys I see where the church is multiplying rapidly is that heart and that sentiment to say "I see the work of the Lord in your life, I see the anointing on your life. Go for it!" When we give people that kind of permission, I think that's where we begin to see the fruit begin to be born so rapidly. But here's the other thing, we have to be willing to go through the mess that producing creates. A graveyard has perfect order, but in nurseries, there's life. So there is this shift where we should be saying, "I'm not afraid of things being a little disorderly. I'm not afraid of how people might perceive me or my ministry. I'd rather have life. I'd rather have new babies around the house. I'd rather see people learn and grow by making mistakes early so that they can lead boldly and powerfully."

Here are is an interesting analogy one western missionary makes about the western church.

If we can use the computer analogy, the hardware that we have right now in the West can't run the software of the Gospel in the Middle East. In fact, I don't even think it can run in the U.S., I don't even think it can run in Europe, but we're still perpetuating this model, and we're still selling the hardware, even though we haven't quite realized in the West that our software doesn't run on it.

The message has always been the same. The gospel message hasn't changed. We have to evaluate how we are reaching people. We cannot fall in love with a method, but we have to stay in love with Jesus, and then we have to do, we have to figure out how to connect with people. It's a connection with people, it's a relationship. It's not a system or a methodology, we just can't fall in love with methods and practices. It's about the person of Jesus coming, giving His life, and this person knowing that there's a need inside of them, and He's the one that fulfills the need. But sometimes these structures have created places that actually make it harder even though the intent was not that in the beginning.

The software of the Gospel will not run on the hardware of the western church . . . We need to have different hardware to run the software, and until that happens, we are going to be unable to see the Gospel advance and take root . . .

Let's pick up on this analogy and look at a key issue that other western missionaries are saying

about our "hardware."

When we talk about church planting in the West well, generally, what we're talking about is a pastor or a teacher starting a community that's built around the pastor and the teacher, who listen to him give speeches for half an hour or an hour once a week. This is foreign to the Iranians. This is foreign to the Afghan church. Because the expression of church planting in the Muslim world today is not planting churches, it's making disciples.

If we do a case study on all the places that the Gospel is advancing right now in the Middle East and we do a study of the kind of leadership structures that have been implemented at the foundational ground level, what we see is that the leadership is decentralized and it's distributed. Meaning it's not based around a particular model, is not based around a particular individual or skill set or gifting. It's built around an Ephesians 4 framework of empowering everyone in the body to be all things to all men with the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit being manifest through all of them. Now, when Paul was writing to the church in Ephesus, he said, "guys, look, the same grace that was given to me, to be an apostle is the same grace that has been given to each of you, to all of us." This means if the same grace that was available to make Paul an apostle, if that same grace is available for the entire body of Christ, that means that the entire body of Christ should have the yoke of leadership upon them for disciple-making, for the apostolic, for the prophetic, for the evangelistic, for the pastoral and for the teaching. But if we reduce the church to pastoral and teaching ministry and we sever the rest of it, and we just try to throw evangelism in or throw the prophetic in or throw the apostolic in, it's going to undermine the churches ability to actually be Church.

The paradigm shift, when it comes to structures, is the realization that Jesus isn't looking to inhabit buildings. We've had buildings. Obviously, as we look out on the nations, it hasn't worked. If we can begin to perceive the people as the stones, the living stones, the people as the structure that's gonna' bring the habitation of Jesus in our midst, if we can believe that and buy into that, then we can commit to cultivating and developing human structures of people, discipleship making movements, where we're bringing people together understanding that is actually the pathway that brings the glory in the presence of Jesus.

The church structures in the West for a very long time have been very centralized and very non-distributed. There have been historically if we're honest, dictators in the body of Christ, and their time is gone. Their hour is over. The gospel, it belongs to everyone. In the West, it's a pyramid structure of a few people leading the many. What we see in an age of distribution is that we see the many distributing leadership among themselves very broadly. I believe that's at the heart of the Iranian church.

I think if we were to try to characterize the days that we're living, we're living in days of radical decentralization and the distribution of everything that possibly can be distributed.

I remember having a conversation with one of the leaders in the church in Iran, and I was asking them, you know, what is the secret to the power dimension that's flowing through the body there. His answer was not what I expected but really insightful. He talked about how the body . . . He used the living stones passage where we're living stones being fit together. It's those living stones that become the habitation of Jesus on the earth. He was saying how collision happens. The cool thing is they don't have anywhere else to go, so instead of breaking off and starting another church, they stay together and endure the positioning of their lives, these living stones, and they're fitted into an actual spiritual and physical structure, a collection of human beings that now become the habitation of Jesus in their region.

Wow! Everything we have heard from these western missionaries who have developed deep relationships of understanding with the Iranian leaders is so impactful. Yet, before we break this down, I want to share a few more quotes. I believe these are the most impactful—the most pertinent—to kingdom Christianity and any move of God in our time, in our place, or at any time or in any place for that matter.

Just a little side note. To understand the following quotes, you must realize that the western missionaries could never meet with the Iranian church leaders in Iran. They have been meeting with them in various parts of Europe.

It's impossible to come to Europe and not be confronted with the reality of dead religion. As we've been bouncing around from city to city across this incredible continent and pondering, and wrestling with what the Lord is doing in Iran, I can't help but feel that the Lord wants to confront the dead religion in our lives and He wants to do it through the church in Iran. Now historically, when the Lord confronts the spirit of religion, what He does is He takes insignificant women, and he puts them in the middle of the room, and He allows them to express themselves in their affection and their love and their allegiance to Him. And He allows the confrontation, the collision of that thing to take place. I really believe the church in Iran is like a corporate Mary of Bethany that is confronting all of the opposition in our own hearts to giving everything that we have for the Lord.

When I look at the witness of Scripture, and I look at the witness of Christian history, what I see is that whenever ease and affluence and power are given to the church, it seems to disease. It does all kinds of damage. Not only does it introduce the kind of motivational corruption that just diseases the church, but it just seems to produce lethargy and indifference.

What's in front of persecuted Christians frequently is what the Gospel is all about. What's in front of affluent Christians in a free society is not only that but a whole range of options for life, and for time, and for the use of money. That is a dangerous thing.

If we are confessing Jesus with our mouths as Lord, we should not only begin to be like Him, but it should change everything about our lives. When you are with these women,

you can see, they've been with Him. They're just fiery and fruitful, and I could not honestly say that right now in the environments I've been in, that would be true. I'm believing, and we're praying, we're hoping that that will be true. I believe the Lord wants to deal a decisive blow to dead religion in us and around us. I believe that the church in Iran is the instrument that He wants to use in our generation to catalyze this globally. I really do believe that meeting Jesus should change everything in our lives. If it's not, then I don't know if we know Him.

Final Words and Jimbo's closing

Oh, man! And I thought I was radical. You see, my friends, you can't have a full, complete, intimate, experience relationship with Father and not be radically different than the culture around you. As we have seen in these western missionaries, you can't hang around Christians living the reality of kingdom Christianity without the response of repentance and being transformed into the same kind of radical lifestyle they are living. Here's the bottom line. The way these missionaries have responded to the move of Father in Iran has put me to shame. My heart cries out for forgiveness every time I read what they are saying.

Remember, the key to this whole thing, as seen in those quotes, is that it must begin with me—and you—one person at a time. It is my prayer that as you heard me read those quotes, Father so struck you with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that you were brought both low and raised you up at the same. Our lack of commitment brought on by allowing cultural Christianity to permeate our lives should bring us low. Yet, at the same time, the excitement, hope, and power as the Spirit show us the possibilities and the future should fill us up like rising helium-filled balloons and move us forward as the breath of the Holy Spirit blows over our lives.

I know I told you that we would finish looking at the Iranian church and how it serves as an excellent example of kingdom Christianity. But last week, I know I went way over time. So I am not going to make that mistake this week. I am going to stop right here. Next week we will do two things, I promise. First, we will review everything we have learned from both the Iranian church leaders and the missionaries who have spent countless hours with them. Remember, we are doing this to give us a close up look at the question "What is Kingdom Christianity?" Then we will look at a Biblical definition of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, are they one or two things, and an understanding of when the kingdom is to come.

For those of you who have been waiting to dig into the scriptures, you will love the next few episodes.

Oh, yes. Please let me remind you to subscribe to this podcast, click the support button, and consider making a small monthly donation to my ministry with hurting youth and young adults. Please also consider leaving us a message with your responses to what you

are learning or what you think about this podcast. And be sure to check out the Hello, Jimbo Speaking website at jimbo-speaking.org, where you can get transcripts of each of the "Inside Jimbo's Head segments" as a pdf download as well as many other interesting things.

So, as I do every week, but this week with a slight twist, I encourage you that as you move through your life, go out there, and by God's grace make it a great week that honors and glorifies Him in the way He tells us to honor and glorify Him. Settle for nothing less. See you next week.