

Meet Yusef and Zahra

“This has changed our lives!”



Yusef and Zahra* grew up in Iraq. Both came from Christian families, but neither of them went to church. Though they had both heard the gospel, neither had a full understanding of it or a personal encounter with God. Yusef and Zahra met, married, and later fled Iraq together. The couple lived in a refugee camp before being relocated to another city where Yusef found a job in a restaurant.

In 2014, Yusef and Zahra attended a conference led by Dr. B., OTAN’s Middle East ministry manager. Though the event was designed to train and equip pastors, the gospel was clearly

presented. Yusef and Zahra believed and were baptized!

Almost immediately, Yusef wanted to tell others about Jesus and to share some of the truths he had learned at the conference. While picking up a food box donation at a local church, Yusef told the pastor that he had recently learned how to study the Bible and have a personal devotion time. He asked the pastor, “Can I teach these things to the people who are coming for food boxes?”

Yusef began teaching the Word of God and the basics of biblical study as well as giving Bibles to those without one. He continued coming to pastoral trainings and later started a small church in his area. To date, Yusef has planted 11 churches—some meeting in homes and others in designated buildings—in the provinces near his city.

Zahra works with and leads groups of women in the churches, and it’s a cultural “must” that Zahra is present when Yusef communicates with or follows up with women. Her help and input are invaluable.

When Yusef looks back on that first conference 10 years ago, he says, “It changed our lives! We believed in Jesus, started studying the Bible, and now we teach God’s Word to others. We praise God for that!”

*For security, names have been changed, and Yusef’s image is a representation only.



Refugees from Iraq and Syria study the Bible at an OTAN conference.

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