

# **Dr. Issam Raad: Pastor, physician and medical missionary**

August 19, 2020

Dr. Issam Raad, a leading expert and physician inventor in the field of health care-related infections and infections in cancer, is the founding senior pastor of [Arabic Church of Houston](#). He also is the founding president of [Health Outreach to the Middle East](#)—a Christian medical missionary organization focused on the Middle East—where he has served for 30 years.

From deep in the heart of one Texan, Raad shares his background and thoughts on ministry in his context. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated leader to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

## **Background**

### **Where else have you served in ministry, and what were your positions there?**

- Assistant pastor in an evangelical church in Beirut, Lebanon, while in medical school (1980-84)
- Main team leader with Campus Crusade for Christ in Lebanon, also while in medical school (1978-81)
- Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Fla. (1986-89)
- Sunday school teacher at Sugar Creek Baptist Church in Sugar Land (1997-2001)

- Currently, distinguished chair and professor of medicine at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston

## **Where did you grow up?**

Beirut, Lebanon

## **How did you come to faith in Christ?**

I was a student at the American University of Houston, searching for freedom and being a rebel, wanting to change my society and make it free from corruption. Then I discovered, with the help of a friend who was a believer, that unless the Son sets you free from internal corruption, you cannot be free indeed. I accepted Christ in 1974, and he changed my life.

## **Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?**

- Medical doctorate from the American University of Beirut, 1982
- Residency in internal medicine and fellowship in infectious diseases from the University of Florida, 1989
- Ordained as a pastor at the Sugar Creek Baptist Church in Sugar Land, 2003

## **About being a Christian in health care**

### **Why do you feel called into health care?**

I believe it is a profession through which I can show the compassion and loving-kindness of my Savior who is the Great Physician.

### **How does being a Christian influence your decisions in health care?**

Being a Christian makes me a better physician, because it gives me a deep

sense of putting the patient first and practicing sacrificial Christlike love and treating my patients the way I would like to be treated.

## **About ministry life**

### **Why do you feel called into ministry?**

After much prayer, the Lord spoke to me from John 21:15-17. I was persuaded that if I love him, I should feed and care for his sheep. I have done that for the last 26 years as a pastor, while also being a practicing physician.

### **What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?**

Shepherding, pastoral care, preaching and teaching.

### **What one aspect of ministry gives you the greatest joy?**

Soul winning makes me share in the joy of heaven.

### **Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your ministry.**

Ministering to people from different countries, backgrounds and faith, many of whom are refugees and immigrants.

### **What is something distinct about your congregation?**

There are 22 Arabic countries, mostly in the Middle East and North Africa, that speak the Arabic language, although the dialects are different.

Our Arabic church has people from Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, mostly. Some came to the Christian faith from a Muslim background, but most were raised in Christian homes.

Lebanon, where I grew up, is the only Arabic country led by a Catholic president. All other leaders are Muslims. Lebanon is a country very open to the West and modernized. Lebanese can speak at least three languages, and most of them are highly educated.

## **What do you wish more people knew about your ministry, and ministry, in general?**

We need more people to help us minister to Arabs—including help with youth, young adults and children. This is the mission field right here in your backyard.

## **About Dr. Raad**

### **Why are you Baptist?**

Baptists are Bible-based and emphasize the unity and priesthood of believers.

### **Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?**

- My local pastors in Lebanon—Pastor Melki and Pastor Saddi
- The head of Campus Crusade for Christ in Lebanon—Pastor Masri
- Dr. Marc Erickson, a physician who also is a pastor of a large evangelical church
- Dr. Gerald Bodey, the previous chair at MD Anderson Cancer Center

### **What did you learn on the job you wish you learned in seminary?**

How to unite, motivate and mobilize the people of God to serve as lay ministers.

## **What is the impact of ministry on your family?**

All three of my children are committed to Christ. They are married to committed Christians and seek to serve the Lord daily.

## **Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors.**

- A.W. Tozer's *Pursuit of God*
- Warren Wiersbe's Be Series
- David Wilkerson's *Hungry for More of Jesus*

## **What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?**

1 John 3:16. Jesus laid down his life for us, and hence, we need to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Romans 8:35. *Nothing* can separate us from the love of Christ.

## **Who is your favorite person in the Bible, other than Jesus? Why?**

Dr. Luke, because he was a physician with a mission who portrayed Christ as the compassionate Savior and healing physician.