

30 Days

of Prayer for the
Muslim World

 **2012**
July 20 – August 18



PRAYING WITH FAITH FOR OUR MUSLIM FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

Front inside cover

Introduction

In the last 20 years, several million believers in the Messiah, Jesus, have prayed for Muslims during the month of Ramadan. Jesus commanded his disciples to ask “the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into His field.” God has been visibly active in the Islamic world during the last 20–30 years. Millions of Muslims have discovered the living Messiah in recent years. Efforts to take the Good News to Muslims have multiplied and people from the same background are increasingly taking the lead in these efforts. We invite you to join us again in this worldwide 30-day prayer movement to see the Kingdom of God come in the Muslim World. Nothing is too hard for God. Do we really believe in Him?

This call to prayer for Muslims originally came during a meeting of several Christian leaders in the Middle East in 1992. Believers involved in an international movement sensed God’s desire to call Christians to pray for the Muslim world. A prayer movement was planned to coincide with the Islamic month of Ramadan, which follows a lunar calendar (in 2012 this is from July 20th through August 18th). It was intended that “30 Days” should be during the month of Ramadan for two main reasons: (1) as a means for Christians to identify themselves with Muslims during a fixed period of the year and (2) to call upon God’s sovereign intervention in the lives of Muslims during a time of the year when they are acutely religious. Please note that praying during the month of Ramadan does not mean we conform ourselves to the Muslim practices of fasting and

See “*Understanding Islam*” on pages 8–9.
See our web site: www.30-days.net



Below: A crowd gathers before Friday prayers in Iran’s second largest city, Isfahan (population 3.5 million).

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Are we willing to believe God to bring salvation to the Muslim world?

prayer. As believers in Jesus, we differ with Islamic ideas, theology, and practice in several areas. However, the “30 Days” movement emphasizes God’s love for Muslims. We encourage all believers in the Messiah to cultivate a spirit of humility, love, respect, and service toward Muslims.

The Editors

Several million Muslims worldwide have come to faith in the living Messiah in the last 30 years.

Believing God's Ancient Promises

Over 4,000 years ago, God spoke to Abraham and his descendants. These promises form the foundation of God's activity on earth today.

God told Abraham, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18).

God spoke to Isaac, "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 26:4).

God spoke to Jacob (Israel), "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 28:14).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law in order that in the Messiah, Jesus, the blessing of Abraham, might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. . . . These promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed" (Galatians 3:13-14 and 16a).

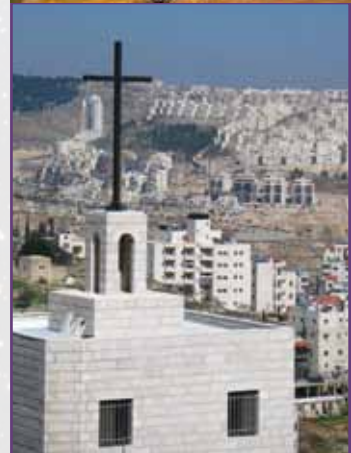
"And if you belong to the Messiah, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Muslims universally claim Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Ishmael as major figures in their religion. However, few Muslims know much about any of these men. The Qur'an and the traditions concerning Muhammad contain little information about God's promises to these patriarchs or information about their lives. Most Muslims have no idea the ancient promises on this page have their actual fulfillment in the Messiah — Jesus.

Many of us as Christians have lost sight of God's vision concerning the blessing for all the families of the earth. We have let ourselves be dominated by fear and sometimes prejudice when concerning Muslims. To overcome this we must repent of our fear and ask God again for faith, affirming God's goodness toward the peoples of this world. We must repent of our apathy and ask God for hope, His hope for the Muslim world. We must repent of our lack of love and ask God for His love so we can participate in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Kingdom of righteousness Jesus promised (Matthew 6:10 and 2 Peter 3:13).

"God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You" (Psalm 67:1-3).

"I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven . . . And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."





Challenging Followers of the Messiah to Love Muslims as He Does

Christian relations with Muslims have often been characterized by conflict, fear, and lack of love. This is the opposite of how Jesus taught his people to live. As his followers, we are promised a love which casts out fear. We are commanded to love our neighbors and even our enemies. The Radical Love Campaign is encouraging followers of Jesus to resolve to imitate and obey Him by making the following pledge:

*I will repent of any hateful feelings toward Muslims and pursue love.
I will pray for Muslims, that God will bless them and that they will experience His peace.
I will do at least one act of kindness for a Muslim this next year.
I will respectfully share the good news about Christ.
I will not spread negative stereotypes about Muslims, but rather fill my words with grace.
I will champion this cause, armed only with love, truth, and good deeds.*

*Be Radical like Jesus.
Champion this cause and change the world.*

I sign the pledge: _____

In addition, sign the pledge online at www.radicallovenow.com and mobilize 10 friends to do the same. Translations are available in several languages online at : Indonesian | French | Korean | Arabic | Portuguese. See also: www.facebook.com/radicallovenow



*He walked among us . . .
He walks among us still.*

*Jesus walked among us, full of grace and truth.
Am I following His example?
Do I walk with him now?
Am I full of grace and truth?
Am I abiding in the vine?*

Photos: Above: The Sea of Galilee and the Beit Shean Valley where Jesus walked obeying His Father. Left: Nazareth today.




But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

Ramadan 1433

The dates for Ramadan are established according to the Islamic lunar calendar of 354 days. Starting 11 days earlier each year, it takes about 33 years for this calendar to go through every season. In 2012, Ramadan will be from about July 20th through August 18th; though this can vary from country to country. The fasting period begins and ends with the sighting of the crescent moon. For more information consult the Islamic web site: www.moonsighting.com. Because of the changing nature of the Islamic year, the 2012 booklet is actually our 21st edition. There have been 21 Islamic lunar years since the beginning of "30 Days" in March 1993 (year 1433 of the Islamic lunar calendar).

Note: *The moon is not an object of worship in the Islamic religion.*

How should we use this booklet?



*Pray with faith in God,
the one who keeps promises.*

Over the coming weeks, you may pray and fast in a variety of ways. Some days five minutes may be all that God will ask from you as you participate in this prayer effort. However, participants will sometimes be guided to pray for longer periods. Individuals could use this booklet during their personal time with God. Likewise, groups could use it for special prayers during church services throughout the month of Ramadan. Many groups have organised special prayer meetings during the "Night of Power," which is a special Muslim prayer time (see Day 26 of this booklet). We would encourage you to find creative ways to involve as many people as possible in this prayer focus. Jesus gave special promises of blessing for Christians who pray and agree as a group (Matthew 18:20).

Please try to use the Scriptures as much as possible in prayer. We have included various Bible references throughout the booklet. It would be good to meditate on these texts and speak them out

in prayer. Proclaim them before God; ask Him to inspire you. This will build your faith and God can give you new insights for prayer based on His Word.

You could organise some weekly or twice-weekly meetings over this 30-day period with your church, youth groups, study groups, or children's groups. Have others join with you in a special meal using the prayer topic for that day. You could even research a particular culture, including food, dress, and music.

In groups, it is helpful if the leader and the group focus their prayers for one subject area at a time, rather than constantly changing focus. Each person should wait before moving on to a different topic, allowing each one to pray his or her prayers over the current subject area (1 Corinthians 14:40). God is creative, and has made us in His image, so we can expect creative ideas and prayers as we seek Him (Romans 8:26).

From Fear to Faith

Walking with Jesus, overcoming evil with good

Around the world believers now have a choice: are we going to believe God or be gripped with fear? Are we going to act in faith or react in fear? Islamic militants have intimidated many. An apprehensive dread of Islam has come into the hearts of believers and unbelievers alike. There is no denying minorities of Muslim fundamentalist suicide bombers and warriors have succeeded in propagating panic. Muslims themselves have become fearful, many of them having to live with the possibility of death. Fear and prejudice have caused many to simply dislike anything relating to Islam, and some of us may find it easy to criticize Muslims.

But how are we going to move forward as believers?

If we are critical of Islam and Muslims, we need to remember we, like them, are human beings. There are possibly many aspects of our lives, values, ideas, and thoughts which others could criticize. Criticism may sometimes be helpful, but it can also reflect a lack of love. If we are unloving we need to repent.

Let us be honest with God. God loves people in all ethnic and cultural groups. And He intends for them to be before his throne one day: "Because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). May God help us get our attitudes in line with God's values.

Light chases darkness. A single match can illuminate a large room. And if several candles are lit then a room becomes even brighter. The darkness and inky blackness cannot not succeed against light. Simply turning on a switch can flood a room with light. Are we ready to keep the light switched on?

Faith can replace fear. Even a little faith can move mountains. Let faith arise in our hearts. God can change the Muslim world, millions can still come to know the forgiveness of sins, and new life in Christ. Believe it.

Prayer and action ideas:

- ▶ *Encourage yourself by reading the testimony on the next page. Know God is at work in the Muslim World. He reaches behind veils.*
- ▶ *Pray for yourself. Are you afraid of Islam? Are you afraid of Muslims? Are we going to let fear dominate us? Are you critical? Submit yourself to God. Let His love fill your heart. Rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in His light.*
- ▶ *Pray for your family and church in a similar way.*

*Praying with
faith, hope
and love
assures victory
over fear.*





A Poem from Saudi Arabia

“He Inhabited the Depth of My Heart”

*I beheld his light from afar
from behind the mountains, from behind the horizon.
He arose like the light of the radiant morning filled with joy.
He arose within my soul so filled with darkness,
my lost and confused soul, my soul that did not know the meaning of rest.
Yet he visited me like the gentle breeze.
Like the fragrance emanates through the hills. He visited me . . .
He inhabited the depths of my heart and settled there within.
He filled my soul with purity, with life.
He is Jesus, the tender compassionate one Jesus,
the source of my joy Jesus, the anchor of my soul.
I adored him since I first met him, and have melted in passionate love for him.
And how could it be other-wise? For he has loved me from days of old.*

As we begin this time of prayer. Read and meditate on this poem written by a Saudi woman who believes in the Messiah. We can all ask ourselves if our own relationship with God has the depth and beauty we read in this text. Am I knowing Jesus in this way?

JULY 21 / DAY 02

Unwed Single Mothers

Moroccan women have special challenges

Like almost every country in the world, Morocco has difficulties concerning sex and marriage. However, Morocco’s “little maids” have an especially difficult situation.

Most of Morocco’s unwed mothers are poor, illiterate women from the countryside who started working as domestic servants, or “little maids,” as young as age seven. Handed over into enslavement by their families because of financial need, the girls spend long hours cooking and cleaning for better-off Moroccans. Their fathers take what little money they make. After years of this, many girls will have sex with any man that is kind to them and promises them marriage. Countless others are raped (being the ‘property’ of the man of the house). Those who get pregnant often end up on the streets—or worse. About half of the women who get pregnant out of wedlock have been promised marriage. Other big reasons for unwanted pregnancies are prostitution (14%), as well as rape and incest (7%).

A woman is supposed to be a virgin when she marries, and needs to have a ‘certificate’ of virginity. Not being a virgin brings shame on the family. Since extramarital sex is the ultimate cultural taboo, unmarried mothers are ostracized, harassed, and even threatened with death by their own families. So-called “honour killings” are illegal and rare in Morocco, but do occur, usually in rural areas. In Morocco, it is unusual for a young girl to live on her own, and it is difficult for her to find a job to provide for herself and her baby. Some turn to prostitution and about 40% of the unwed mothers abandon their babies anywhere they can, even in garbage bins, to avoid social ostracism. According to one woman, “If I were to abandon my child, I would live as a zombie: alive but dead inside.” An unwed mother can be persecuted for adultery/fornication and get sentenced to

Muslims in Alsace, France

prison for up to six months (though this punishment is not often carried out). Some mothers leave the hospital right after birth without having gotten proper medical care for fear of being prosecuted.

Some believers in Morocco care for single mothers, helping them keep their babies and finding employment for them.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for a renewed concept of fatherhood across the land: that fathers would start to value their daughters more than the family honour.*
- ▶ *Pray for the working with single mothers: for courage to stand against the accusations and incomprehension of general society.*
- ▶ *Pray for the mothers: that they would know that there is a God of love that will extend forgiveness to them and care for them, that they would get to know Him as the 'protector of widows and orphans' (Ps 68:5).*

Alsace has the third highest percentage of concentrated immigrants in France, though not in terms of absolute population. In addition, a good number of immigrants have become French citizens, and many of them Muslim. It is estimated 120,000 Muslims live in the Alsace area, which forms the Eastern Border with Germany. The largest Muslim communities are found in Mulhouse and Strasbourg. In Mulhouse, one person in four is from an Islamic background. One in five among the immigrants are Turkic. The Muslim community in Alsace is well organised. Their formerly improvised mosques are giving way to well built Islamic centres. A significant number of fundamentalists are making their impact on the Muslim community.

Despite the strong presence of Muslims in the region, few mission agencies are present. However, there is a significant presence of believers in the area. Through their testimony numerous Muslims have come to faith in the Messiah. Some are found in "Oasis groups," which use culturally adapted expressions of the Christian faith.

A Testimony from Alsace : I come from a modest Muslim family of Algerian background. I had an opportunity to read the Bible for the first time in my home country. I was especially touched by John 3:16, where I discovered that God is love. During my studies in France, I met a believer from a Moroccan background who brought me to an Oasis group. The testimonies given by group members inspired me to repent and draw near to God. I was baptized and I began living a new life in relation to a local congregation. God leads me, even through difficult circumstance, to a greater life in the Messiah.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for open doors in the Muslim community and a well-adapted Christian witness.*
- ▶ *Pray for the dynamic efforts among the youth in several urban areas.*
- ▶ *About 30,000 Turks are in Alsace. They are hardly touched by the Gospel.*

Understanding Islam:

Muhammad's life

No one can fully understand Islam without knowing something about the life of Muhammad. All Muslims revere him as the last and greatest prophet. In Islam, Muhammad is considered the ideal example. Muhammad is in no way considered divine, nor is he worshipped, but he is the model for all Muslims concerning how they should conduct themselves. No images of Muhammad are permitted in order to prevent idolatry.



The Early life of Muhammad: The prophet of Islam was born in AD 570 in Mecca, a city in present day Saudi Arabia. He was a member of the Hashim clan of the powerful Quraysh tribe. During much of Muhammad's lifetime pagan idol worship abounded in Arabia. An estimated 360 gods and goddesses were worshipped by the Arabs in Mecca, which was a major centre of idolatry in the region. Muslim historians speculate that even as a boy, Muhammad detested idol worship and lived a morally pure life.

Initial Revelations: According to Muslims, at the age of 40, in AD 610, Muhammad began to receive revelations and instruction that he believed were from the archangel Gabriel (Jibrail* in Arabic). These "revelations" form the basis of the Qur'an. Muhammad proclaimed his revelations were the final and superior message from the One Supreme God — even though at the beginning Muhammad even doubted he was a prophet. He banned the worship of idols, and established civil and religious order in Medina and, eventually, Mecca. Muhammad died in AD 632 in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

Relations with Jews and Christians: During his life, Muhammad met many people who were nominal Christians. He also learned many religious ideas and customs from Jewish clans that were living in the region of Mecca and Medina. Muhammad's claim to be a prophet was not accepted by the Jews, leading to serious conflict. However, Jewish and Christian ideas, practices, and history are prevalent in the Qur'an, although they are often distorted.

***Note:** Muslims refer to "Jibrail" as the "holy spirit."



The Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Practicing Muslims worldwide orient themselves toward this building while praying.



The Islamic Story of God and Man

Following is a broad explanation of the story of God and man, as understood by many Muslims. This comes from stories in the Qur'an and the Hadiths (traditions about the life of Muhammad, which proscribes for many Muslims how they should live, collected some 250 years after his death), and there may be variations of it among different Muslim communities.

The Earliest Times:

The creator God made all that exists, including Adam and Eve (called Hawa). God placed this first couple in a heavenly paradise, but they sinned and they were thrown down to the earth. Adam and Eve then lived in the region of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, where Adam built the first house of God, "the Kaabah," in Mecca and practiced an early form of Islam. After the flood of Noah (Nuh), the Kaabah was rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael.

The Ancient Prophets:

The Qur'an and Islamic tradition mention several prophets who preached an earlier type of Islamic religious law. However, the general story is vague and not well rooted in history. Here are the names of some prophets recognized by Islam: Adam, Noah (Nuh), Abraham (Ibrahim), Lot, Isaac (Ishaq), Ishmael, Jacob (Yaqub), Job (Ayub), Joseph (Yusuf), Moses (Musa), Samuel (Shammil), David (Daoud), Solomon (Sulaiman), Elisha (Elyas), Jonah (Yunus), Hud, Salih, Daniel, John (Yahya), Jesus (Isa) and others.

Jesus (Isa) from an Islamic perspective:

The Messiah, Jesus (known as Isa in Islam), was born miraculously through Mary (Miriam). Jesus (Isa), the good prophet, preached an earlier version of Islam to the Jews. He then ascended into heaven without dying or rising from the dead. Judas, his disciple, died on the cross as a traitor in Jesus'

place. God transformed Judas' face to look like Jesus, but Jesus did not suffer.

The Life of Muhammad AD 570-632:

The life and prophethood of Muhammad took place mainly in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. (See the previous page for more information).

7th Century after Christ to present:

Islam was spread worldwide through trade, preaching, and jihad. Islamic law, Muhammad's example, tradition, and Islamic jurisprudence have dictated Muslim behaviour and values.

An Islamic View of the Future:

Jesus (Isa) will return and will work to establish Islam around the world. An Anti-Christ figure (Al-Dajjal) will be overcome by Isa and Al-Mahdi (another long awaited, Islamic political religious leader) establishing Islam worldwide. Jesus will marry, have children, die, and be buried in Medina, Saudi Arabia. Later, there will be a resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgement, and the rewards and punishments of paradise and hell.

Notes: God (Allah) in Islam is a total unity (there is no Trinity). Christian Arabs use the word Allah when referring to the God of the Bible. However, the Islamic and the Christian ideas of God differ significantly. While Muslims recognize Jesus as Messiah (Al-Masih) and acknowledge His miraculous birth, they do not recognize His divinity. Most Muslims do not understand the term "Messiah," and do not generally know that the Messiah is actually God's anointed King.



*Above: The Qur'an
This book is about
the length of the New
Testament. The word
Allah is indicated in
red. Arabic is read
from right to left.*

I Married a Muslim

Yet even though I knew I had married a Muslim . . .

Everyday I wake up next to the man that I married. He is a Muslim and I am a follower of Jesus. When we decided to get married, neither of us was practicing our respective faith, so it was an easy decision. In fact, our faiths looked quite similar in many ways, and my husband had convinced me that they were indeed very similar.

Even though I knew I had married a Muslim, his decision to renew his Islamic religious activities (just one year after getting married) came as a huge surprise to me. It totally upset the balance in our marriage, because each of us had only been nominally religious. Along with anger at him for changing, I also felt a growing resentment towards his religion which I perceived as stealing my loving, caring husband and replacing him with someone who was so focused on rules, regulations, and merciless rituals. Our romantic relationship took a serious turn for the worse.

Ironically, it was his sudden fervour which drove me back to my roots — my relationship with Jesus. I had come from a Christian family, grew up attending Sunday School,

Bible Camp, and even Bible College. I was a leader and a role model in my church. What was my problem? In one short word . . . pride. I never thought it could happen to me. I was firmly against marrying a non-believer, but in some circumstances, we are capable of doing anything.

Lately, I've been grappling with how I will respond when my husband wants our daughter to pray in an Islamic way. This probably won't happen for a while, but I dread the prospect of it. I do not want my daughter to say that Muhammad is a prophet or to deny the divinity of Jesus. I keep praying that my husband will come to know the Messiah before this becomes an issue.

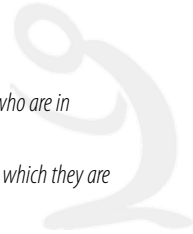
I have found the following verses to be helpful (1 Peter 3:1-2). God is faithful. There may be hundreds of thousands of women and men around the world who are experiencing similar situations in their couple/family. Nothing is simple for them.



In some Muslim cultures, women who are marrying have henna decorations to add to their beauty but also to give them good luck.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for people you may know or those in your city, region, or country who are in circumstances similar to the one described above.*
- ▶ *People in such situations need to be well connected to a church body in which they are understood and supported.*
- ▶ *Pray for unity, wisdom, and discernment concerning child-rearing issues.*
- ▶ *A profound knowledge of God's love is needed for believers married to non-believers. Followers of Jesus need courage to trust God for the salvation of their spouses.*
- ▶ *Pray against fear concerning the future. Uncertainty concerning the future can be scary, especially when married to a Muslim. Pray for increased faith and trust.*



“Lift up your head, you are an Egyptian!”

The “Arab Spring” continues . . .

The events of January 2011 marked an important date to Egyptian history. Through a largely peaceful uprising, the people forced President Mubarak, who had ruled for 30 years, to resign. “Lift up your head, you are an Egyptian!” This was the slogan of the cheering crowd on Tahrir Square in Cairo after this victory. Whether this event really will go down in history as a real revolution remains to be seen. The challenges of the country with its almost 85 million people are huge. More than 50% of the Egyptians are below 25 years of age; all want to have a place to learn, study and work. The population growth remains high at a rate of 1.3% annually. Severe inflations rakes the country and salaries lag behind in the price growth. Unemployment rate is around 15%. More than half of all Egyptians are illiterate.

The country was influenced by the Christian faith right from the first century AD. However, beginning in the 7th century Islam became the most influential force. Christians number about eight million people. The believers of Egypt constitute the largest Christian minority in the Middle East. However, in many areas of public and political life, they are being discriminated against. In government offices, academic institutions, and the military, Christians rarely occupy senior positions. In the labour market, people from the majority religion are usually preferred. Activities of churches are restricted to church owned grounds and buildings. Authorisations for the registra-

tion, repair, and construction of new churches are difficult to obtain. The growing Islamisation of society gives much ground for worry among Christians. In general, Christians react to these challenges in the following ways:

Conversion: *Between 10,000 - 20,000 mainly nominal Christians convert to Islam annually — mostly due to economic or marriage problems.*

Emigration: *Many Christians do not see any future for their children, and emigrate to the West. This leads to a serious weakening of local congregations.*

Isolation: *Christians tend to withdraw from Egyptian society, maintaining contact with only other Christians. If possible, they avoid having contact with Muslims at all.*

Evangelism: *More and more Egyptian Christians and congregations realise their responsibility for the majority population around them. Several hundred workers have been trained in intercultural ministries among non-Christians within and outside Egypt. Some are working in neighbouring countries.*



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ Thank God for Christian satellite television which has been a big encouragement to believers in Egypt. Pray the teaching and evangelistic work through internet, radio, and satellite TV will bear fruit.
- ▶ Thank God for both large and small prayer meetings being held annually in Egypt. Pray that congregations will understand and act on their responsibility to train and to send labourers into the harvest. Christians need to be willing to be sent for ministry among people of the Islamic faith, both inside and outside the country (Acts 9:10-17).
- ▶ Pray Christians will participate in helpful and Biblical-based ways in the social and political life (remember the examples of Joseph and Daniel).

The Ansari People of India

Craftsmen who need to meet the Creator

Islam arrived in the Indian subcontinent about 150 years after the death of Muhammad in Arabia in AD 632, through Islamic armies as well as traders and Sufi devotees. Muslim kingdoms ruled much of the subcontinent for 700 years, until the British rule and independence. Today there are over 145 million Muslims in India.

The Ansari are one of the largest unreached people groups in the world, with a total population of about 16 million people. They are also one of the largest Muslim groups in

India (around 10 million). Most Ansari live in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and most speak Urdu, but other commonly spoken languages include Bhojpuri, Bengali, Telugu, and Gujarati.

The Ansari are almost 100% Sunni Muslim, and practice a syncretistic form of Islam known as folk Islam. They frequently go to a “mazar,” a tomb of a Muslim saint, whom they believe can mediate between man and Allah. Many Ansari also wear amulets made of verses from the Qur’an wrapped in cloth and tied around their necks or waists. These amulets are supposed to ward off evil spirits and curses.

Traditionally, the Ansari are textile workers and weavers of silk saris. However, economic need has required many Ansari to diversify into other handicrafts, such as brass and woodworking, and while others have left the artisan trade and have become farmers or small business owners. Weavers work for and at the behest of, mostly, Hindu agents and traders who give them advances and supplies. They struggle for up



to 12 hours a day, wages are low, and families are usually in debt. Children often learn weaving at the expense of education, and the literacy rate, especially for females, is frighteningly low.

Suicides, starvation deaths, and the spread of chronic diseases are common among the weavers. Some of the health hazards include poor work conditions (lack of sanitation, water, and fresh air), worsening eyesight, and diseases of the lungs and skin. Along with these work-related hazards are problems related to poor hygiene and sanitation. An estimated 80% of all health problems, and one-third of deaths, in India are attributable to water-borne diseases.

Satan has attempted to destroy Ansari families through rejection, injustice, poverty, and death, but God is seeking to redeem the Ansari to their full potential. There are some

scattered efforts to reach the Ansari, and in the past two years, over 80 fellowships have been started among the Ansari Muslims, but much remains to be done.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for more workers, and especially for Indians to reach out to their Muslim neighbours with the love of God.*
- ▶ *Pray for justice within the silk industry, opportunities for income generation, and a release from poverty for the indebted Ansari.*
- ▶ *Pray for educational opportunities, especially for girls.*
- ▶ *Pray for freedom from evil spirits and deception (Mt 8:16; 10:1, Acts 16:16-18).*
- ▶ *Pray for revelations of Jesus, the one who will set them free!*



The Siddis of Gujarat, India

Population: 20,000 to 65,000 (estimates vary greatly)

Today in India, lost among the mosaic of different cultures and communities, are tens of thousands of African descendants known as Siddis. Having lived in India for generations, most of them are unaware of their own history.

Many years ago, long before African slaves were brought to America, Brazil, and the Caribbean, the Siddis were sold as slave soldiers for India's princely states. A large number came or were brought from different parts of Africa to serve in the Muslim armies of the Nawabs and Sultans — from whom they adopted their Muslim faith. Being Indians of African origins, the Siddis are socially and economically marginalized. They are trapped between two societies, and can neither assimilate with the mainstream India society, nor retain the originality of their African culture. While they speak mostly Gujarati and Hindi, their songs have a touch of Swahili. In fact, their music, song, and dance are their only links to their African history.

Most Siddis live in the western state of Gujarat. The village of Jambur, located deep in the Gir forest, is one of two exclusively Siddi settlements. It is profoundly poor. According to one commonly accepted legend, the founder of this Siddi settlement came from Nigeria via Sudan on his Hajj in Mecca. This leader was a wealthy merchant by the name of Bawa/Baba Ghor who first settled in the Rajpipla Hills before arriving at Jambur.

Siddi adults are typically daily labourers, engaged in organised odd jobs. They leave early in the morning to work in

the fields, forests, or on the roads to earn 50-60 rupees (about US\$1.50) a day. Children are often left to fend for themselves, parents often unaware of their activities. Few Siddis finish primary school and even fewer go to high school. Women are especially marginalized, and have no knowledge of the outside world.

Some of the social issues of the Siddis include alcoholism (men spend a major amount of their small earnings to buy local liquor, thus depriving their families of basic necessities); school drop outs; broken families; poor hygiene and a lack of health care; poverty and powerlessness. Their lack of education and consequent slavery into menial jobs degrades them below the so-called social strata.

Siddis are mostly Sunni Muslims, but also have connections to a Sufi leader, Baba. They would probably receive the message of Jesus as Good News, but because of their isolation, few carriers of the Gospel have reached them.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for a revelation of the love of God in the Messiah.*
- ▶ *Pray for family unity and love, especially for neglected children.*
- ▶ *Pray for freedom from addiction/alcoholism.*
- ▶ *Strong leadership is needed: despite the presence of a village chief, there is a need for new leaders to rise up to help the Siddis' societal and political positions.*
- ▶ *May God to send people specifically to reach the Siddis with the Gospel, health care, education, agricultural development, etc.*

India has one of the world's largest concentrations of unevangelised Muslims. There are possibly 150 million Muslims in India. Most live in the vast Ganges Plain. India has more Muslims than all the following countries combined: Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Egypt. But God loves them all.

Testimony of an Iranian

I come from an Iranian Muslim family. I practised the five daily prayers and the Ramadan fast. At the age of 20, I came to Switzerland. I had never seen a Bible, nor had I been able to meet a Christian in my native land. In Lausanne, Switzerland, I met several Iranian Christians who had fled persecution in Iran. Through them I was able to meet other believers and attend some church services. I began to read the Persian language Bible, which someone had given to me. I discovered many new things that I had never heard. I was especially touched by the warm hospitality of these new friends. At the beginning, I kept my distance because I had been taught to not trust “infidels.”

However, as I spent more time with the people who follow Jesus, I discovered more about the Good News found in the Bible. I was especially touched that God revealed Himself as one who is near, living, and desiring to relate to us personally. Until that time Allah was so high, he was inaccessible.

I had learned in Islam that Jesus was a great prophet, but that Muhammad was the last prophet, and that the Qur’an replaced all other writings. However, obeying the commandments of Islam did not give me the peace I had long desired. I struggled for some time, and even decided to go neither to the mosque, nor to church. Instead, I went to night clubs and drank

alcohol. However, I kept thinking, “Where are you? When are you going to choose between Islam and the Messiah Jesus?”

A work accident gave me some months of free time to reflect. My Christian friends prayed for me often. One evening, exhausted and alone, I prayed out loud, invoking Jesus, “If You are really the Saviour, the one who gives us peace with God, then reveal Yourself to me!” Then I went to sleep. When I awoke my anguish was gone and I was at peace! I called my friends to tell them the news.

I keep discovering many new aspects of my new life and God’s power to transform us. Now, I pray each day in order to have the capacity to love my neighbour and to make Jesus known to others.

Lausanne, Switzerland, population 125,000, on the shore of Lake Geneva (below) is almost a sleepy village in comparison with Tehran, Iran (above) with its population of about 9,100,000.



Nashville, Tennessee in the USA

Muslims in the Capital of Country Music

Nashville, Tennessee, the Capital of Country Music, is home to 11,000 Kurds and 8,000+ Somalis and Somali Bantus, as well as other Muslim ethnic groups. The Nashville area has as many as 30,000 Muslims. Several years ago, a local pastor in Nashville felt burdened. "All around our city were new Muslim neighbours, people who had moved to Nashville from all over the world," He said. "But as I looked more closely, I noticed most Christians here were ignoring them. Either out of lack of awareness, fear, or ignorance, members of the body of Christ just weren't forming friendships with those whom God was bringing to our doorstep."

So he began to learn as much as he could about these Muslims, their faith, and their world view. And whenever he could, he encouraged others to do so as well. As he met

like-minded people who were reaching out, it dawned on him – there would be no real success in bridge-building for the Gospel unless God was at work. So he began to pray. "After a while, I realized that God was calling me to call others to pray – to pray specifically and regularly for Muslims in Nashville, as well as all around the world. Spiritual change occurs only through the power of God. And God's power is released when His people pray."

Like Nashville, many other cities in the United States have become the home of thousands of Muslims. Over the years, God has been raising up workers. Communicating, connecting, and shared resources have helped people to start reaching out. People have begun to welcome the new immigrants and specifically pray for them. Very few conversions to Christ have been reported, but increasing numbers are now curious seekers. Several believers have begun living out and communicating their faith boldly and verbally to Muslims, while cultivating warm, trusting relationships. Prejudices and fear remain against Muslims in Nashville, even among Christians, but for some believers, Jesus' call to make disciples has overwhelmed both fear and prejudice. Jesus rejected the prejudices of the Jews against the Samaritans, and reached out to the Samaritan woman correcting her theology and transforming her life (John 4:4-34).



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for believers in Nashville to be more and more motivated to cultivate good wholesome relationships with Muslims. The followers of Islam are people with needs, problems, as well as cultural and religious preconceptions/baggage which make it hard for them to understand the Good News about Jesus. Muslim immigrants often have difficulties adapting to Western, individualistic, or urban culture. Followers of Jesus can offer real and appropriate friendship to Muslims caught between cultures.*
- ▶ *Ask God to give believers favour with Muslims in Nashville. Pray that He would begin significant movements of Muslims coming to Christ from among the many people groups in the city.*
- ▶ *Nashville is not unlike several large cities in the southern United States. You can also pray for Muslims in Memphis, Atlanta, and Louisville.*



Iraqi Widows

The pain and suffering of three wars

Iraq has been involved in three major painful, ugly, costly, divisive, and destructive wars in the last 32 years:

- *The Iran - Iraq War 1980-1988 (300,000+ Iraqi deaths)*
- *The 1st Gulf War in 1990-1991 (100,000+ Iraqi deaths)*
- *The Iraq War from 2003 - December 2011. 100,000+ Iraqi deaths)*

While December 2011 ended foreign involvement in Iraq, some troubles are continuing through terrorist activities. In addition to the wars, there were also Saddam's murderous dictatorial oppression, a failed Shiite uprising against the regime in 1991, and Saddam's repressive anti-Kurdish nationalist actions in northern Iraq. All these caused tens of thousands of deaths.

As a result, there are approximately 1,000,000 widows in Iraq (approximately 9% of the women in the country). Often, the recently widowed young women, with only one or two children, find new husbands. But for older widows, and those having more children, remarriage is rare and sometimes impossible. Several foreign governments actively helped the widows while their military forces were in Iraq. Likewise, the Iraqi government itself has also made significant efforts to help the women, but the sheer scale of the problem is overwhelming for governments agencies and their budgets.

One can imagine the distress of women who have lost their husbands in a society which restricts female work and social activities. Having enough well paying work to raise a family is beyond their ability, and even possibility, for many. A number have even turned to short or long term prostitution.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Read aloud the texts of Psalm 68:1-6 and James 1:27. Proclaim God's faithfulness and ask for his interventions so the widows can have daily bread and necessities for themselves and their families.*
- ▶ *Pray for eternal salvation for these women in distress, that they would meet God and know Him (John 17:3).*
- ▶ *Pray for creative ideas and abundant funding for the Iraqi agencies which deal with widows and orphans (See Romans 13:3-7). Jesus surprised everyone through his feeding of the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes (See Luke 9:13-17). Miracles are possible, but a good administration of resources is necessary. Pray for inspiration and courage for the government and community leaders.*



Manama, Bahrain
© Jayson De Leon CC-BY
Women above: US Department of Defence

Bahraini Arabs

330,000 people of Bahrain's 820,000 population

Bahrain lies between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and consists of over 30 islands in the Arabian Gulf (also called the Persian Gulf). Unlike its neighbours, Bahrain's oil reserves are depleted and it suffers from significant unemployment. However, the future appears hopeful with the Bahrain Development Bank's report of creating 20,000 job opportunities (Dec. 2011).

The majority of Bahraini people speak either Arabic or Farsi, and increasingly English, while Bahrain's Gulf Arab people speak Gulf Arabic and Baharna. They consist of both Sunnis and Shiites, who need to hear how God's peace can bridge their significant differences.

The country's openness to expatriates from the West and the East enables Bahrainis to hear new and different perspectives on life. One possible result is reflected in the situation of Bahraini women. The women have more opportunities and privileges than most Arabic women, including holding respectable jobs.

Moreover, while open evangelism is not permitted, Christians can worship and minister using their Bibles and Christian literature, as long as they are sensitive to Arab culture. Christian professionals, workers, and entrepreneurs find opportunities to engage Gulf Arabs in Manama, Bahrain's capital and economic centre. Also, the Manama Souq market, the heartbeat of the city, offers believers conversational opportunities, perhaps over tea with friendly shoppers.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for believers to creatively use existing opportunities to meet and build relationships with the Gulf Arab people.*
- ▶ *Ask God to provide jobs for people who want to minister long-term in Bahrain.*
- ▶ *Pray that Bahraini businessmen, particularly in the rapidly growing banking economy, come to know Jesus and are used for God's purposes.*

The Rawther People in India

There are no known believers among them

Descendants of horse traders who came to India from Egypt, the Rawther people number about one million as a subgroup of Tamil Muslims who speak Tamil. More than 700,000 Rawther live in the southeastern state of Tamil Nadu. The capital and largest city, Chennai, draws visitors from around the world to its many sea front beaches.

Another 270,000 Rawther live in India's largest state of Rajasthan, which lies in the west bordering Pakistan. These people are part of the small minority (8%) of Muslims living in a mostly Hindu population. Rajasthan is popular among tourists who enjoy colorful art, traditional music and dance, majestic palaces, and desert forts.

The Rawther are known for being entrepreneurs and working at many different occupations. They place a high value on education, giving girls and boys an equal opportunity for learning.

The Rawther have not heard about the love and truth of Jesus Christ, and there are no known believers among them. Indian Christians have a unique opportunity to share about the Messiah with their Rawther neighbours and should be encouraged to do so.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray that God reveals Himself to the Rawther, and that they become receptive to the truth and love of Jesus Christ.*
- ▶ *Pray for teams of committed workers to answer the Lord's call to share about the Messiah with the Rawther. ("Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" Isaiah 6:8)*
- ▶ *Pray for God to raise up strong local believers, leaders and churches among these unreached and unengaged people.*

Around the Taklamakan Desert

15 million Muslims and possibly 850,000 Christians

Western China is home to at least five million Muslims, most of whom live around the edges of the vast Taklamakan Desert in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Several times in recent years we have encouraged prayer for the largest ethnic group, the Uyghur people, which has a population of 11 million. The list on this page indicates several other ethnic groups living in Western China. It is estimated of the total number of believers among these ethnic groups is less than 1,000 people. In recent years, the massive immigration of Han Chinese (the majority ethnic group in China) into the area has caused some frictions and resentment as the local peoples seek to protect their "homeland" from outsiders. There are possibly 850,000 Christians (about 75% in house churches) among the Han Chinese minority (about 7.5 million people). However, they are largely isolated culturally, linguistically, and religiously from the Muslim majority groups.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray that the Han Chinese believers will be motivated to reach out to their Muslim neighbours from different cultures. The Chinese are only now beginning to think seriously about cross-cultural outreach (Isaiah 52:10).*
- ▶ *Pray for the various ethnic groups to come to know Jesus! Declare their names before the Lord, asking for His intervention (Psalm 2:8).*
- ▶ *Pray for Christian radio broadcasts and other media that is going out across Xinjiang province. Pray for open hearts to receive the Word of God.*
- ▶ *Pray for believers to boldly share with relatives, neighbours, and friends, and for house churches to multiply in cities and the country areas (Acts 16:13-15).*



| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Kazak | 1,706,000 |
| Kazak, Qinghai | 3,400 |
| Kyrgyz | 218,000 |
| Salar | 137,000 |
| Tajik, Sarikoli | 40,000 |
| Tatar | 7,500 |
| Uyghur | 10,779,000 |
| Uyghur, Lop Nur | 40,000 |
| Uyghur, Taklamakan | 300 |
| Uyghur, Yutian | 64,000 |
| Uzbek, Northern | 20,000 |



Swedish Muslims

Radical demographic change

The Rinkeby district in Stockholm is one of the most multicultural areas in Sweden. There, about 90 % of the inhabitants have a foreign background. An international church meets in the community hall every Sunday for services in Swedish, Arabic and Spanish. Every Friday at noon, the same hall is filled with Muslims gathering for prayer. Rinkeby is sometimes called “Little Mogadishu”, because so many Somalis live there. Rinkeby is just one example of many similar areas in Sweden’s larger cities. It serves to illustrate what many call, “The New Sweden.”

The Swedish population has changed radically over the past 50-60 years because of immigration. Nearly 20% of Sweden’s population has a foreign background. One can find people from almost every nation living in this Scandinavian country and many of them are Muslims. There are an estimated 450,000 Muslims living in Sweden, making up about 5% of the total population. The majority of them are cultural Muslims who do not actually practice Islam to any great extent. Around 110,000 Muslims including children and adults are members or regular participants in Islamic oriented activities and gatherings. The largest ethnic groups include Arabs from the Middle East, Iranians, Bosnians, Turks and Somalis.

Many unreached peoples from far away countries now live in Swedish neighbourhoods. Only a minority of Swedish churches have risen to this opportunity to share the Gospel, but



nonetheless many Muslims in Sweden have discovered Jesus, the Messiah, often through testimonies from the new believers from among their own people.

In areas like Rinkeby, there are also many young people searching to understand and discover their own identity. They seem excluded from Swedish society, but at the same time they are not completely at ease in their parents’ home culture. Where will they find their identity and their sense of belonging? Many have already turned to gangs and criminality while others seek their identity in radical Islam. While some are well integrated into society, relatively few young people ever discover salvation through Jesus.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray that believers in Sweden will befriend immigrant Muslims and share God’s love and God’s word with them.*
- ▶ *Pray that the believers from Muslim backgrounds will proclaim the Messiah to their fellow countrymen.*
- ▶ *Pray that the young generation living in multicultural areas will encounter Christ.*

Testimony from Abdullah:

When I was 15 years old my father was killed in combat. A clan leader wanted to kill me as well. My mother arranged for me to escape to Sweden by selling our home. After one year in Sweden, I received a message that my mother, my younger brother and sisters had been killed. I was alone. I tried to take my own life, but I did not succeed. I was depressed and I could not sleep at night. A friend of mine told me about Jesus. I also met a pastor and attended an Alpha course and prayer meetings. It felt so good. After a few months I accepted Jesus as my Messiah. Following my baptism the strength, confidence and peace of the Holy Spirit came into my heart. I have received a new family through my church. The text, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1) is one of my favourite Bible passages.

Gaining the Love of Allah ?

Muslims believe that it is possible to win Allah's love and affection. The following text (in italics) is taken from an Islamic site (www.rasoulallah.net), but similar messages (texts and videos) can be easily found online. This information is presented to teach believers about Islam.

"30 Days" does not endorse this message.



The Taj Mahal in India is one of the world's most beautiful buildings. It was built by the Muslim Emperor Shah Jahan (completed in 1653).

How can you gain the Love of Allah the Almighty?

The most important thing in the daily life of any Muslim is following the Way (The Sunnah) of the Prophet – PBUH – in all of his actions, deeds, and sayings in order to organize his life according to the Way of the Prophet, from the morning to the evening . . . in his morals, deeds, orders and actions.*

Allah the Almighty said: "Muhammad, Say to the Muslims, 'If you should love Allah, then follow me, in order that Allah will love you and forgive your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful' (Qur'an Al-Imran: 31).

Al Hassan Al Basri said, explaining the above mentioned verse: The sign of their love to Allah is following the Way of the Prophet . . . because the rank of the believer can be measured by the extent of following the Prophet

(PBUH) therefore, as much as he is following the Sunnah, Allah will give him a higher rank.*

*The Sunna concerns all of the daily life of Muslims: their worship, eating, drinking, dealing with people, ceremonial washings before prayer, their coming in and going out, wearing clothes and all their activities and actions during the day.***

This text goes on to say explicitly say that one advantage of applying Muhammad's manner of living (the Sunnah) is "Reaching to the rank of love by Allah."

** (PBUH) means "Praise be upon him."*

*** (The Sunnah - "the Way of the Prophet" is very specific concerning even which foot to place first on the floor when rising out of bed in the morning).*

"30 Days" Comments:

According to this text one can gain or win Allah's love. One can even attain the "rank of those loved by Allah." It is evident that Islam and Christianity are not teaching the same message, either concerning God himself or concerning the manner to please God. Christians are universally in agreement that it is impossible to merit God's love, and indeed, the New Testament indicates it is impossible to please God on our own (Hebrews 11:5-6, 13:16; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 John 3:22). We cannot win God's love by our efforts. God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). This is the opposite of Islamic thought and practice.

North America

15

The yellow area of this map is the 10 / 40 Window where most of the unreached peoples of the world still live (between the 10th and 40th latitudes).

South America

22

Europe

7

19

Central Asia

24

Asia

18



Middle East

Africa

Southeast Asia

32

The numbers on this map indicate the page numbers of various articles.

Muslims are "on line" and "linked in" . . .

The top 10 sites in Saudi Arabia listed below are very similar to what one finds in many other non-Muslim countries. The Saudis are "linked in."

- 1. Google.com.sa (in Arabic)
- 2. YouTube.com
- 3. Facebook.com
- 4. Google.com
- 5. Windows Live
- 6. Yahoo
- 7. Maktoob.com (Meaning - "It is written." This is the largest Arab Online Community.)
- 8. Sabq.org (Arabic)
- 9. Twitter
- 10. Blogspot.com

Around the world Muslims are more and more connected to the worldwide web and to the worldwide telephone network. Here is a Blackberry with an application indicating the Islamic prayer times in one location. This type of technology is being used by Muslims all over the world.



Among Brazil's Muslims

A testimony of God's grace

Salim was born in the Middle East, to a very religious Muslim family. Here, he was raised according to Islamic teaching. In his teen years, Salim enlisted in a terrorist group to fight for the cause of Islam. He became a potential suicide bomber. At one point, he actually tried to carry out a suicide bombing. Fortunately his bombing attempt did not work, leaving him frustrated and embarrassed. Later, following a serious confrontation with religious leaders, Salim fled his own country. After travelling through several countries, he ended up in Brazil. There, even though he became involved with gangs and drugs, Salim never stopped reading the Qur'an, nor did he neglect his daily prayers. Salim became one of the most dangerous criminals of his area and, eventually, had to live in the forest in order to hide from the police.

One day, tired of all his misery, hopelessness, and homelessness, he decided to pray differently. "That night, I knelt, lifted my face to the sky and questioned: 'I don't know who You are there up in heaven; I'm not an atheist, I know there is someone greater than this, creator of the heavens and the earth, but I don't know who You are. Who are You? Are You Buddha, Mary, Allah, Jesus

of the Christians? Whoever You are, I only ask You this: free me from this my present life and I will follow You forever.'" God answered that prayer. As a Muslim, Salim had prayed five times a day for 35 years, but never once experienced anything happening in response to his prayers. This time, things were different as Jesus presented Himself to Salim several days after his prayer of desperation.

Six days later, a believer went into the forest where Salim was hiding and told him: "Jesus loves you". "Is it so?" argued Salim. "Can He free me from drugs, crime, and this misery?" He then remembered the word of hid prayer. Guided by the believer to a hidden place, Salim studied the Bible, learned to pray differently, and got to know some Christians. Salim faced many struggles as people tried to kill him — his own people persecuted him, he was beaten and humiliated several times. But Salim understood his sufferings were small compared to Jesus' suffering on the cross. Now, Salim desires to proclaim the Messiah to his own people, "I encourage all Christians to take the Gospel to my people. They are religious, but they don't know the loving God manifest in Jesus."

Photos: Sao Paulo, one of the world's largest cities. Muslim community leaders in Brazil estimate that there are between 70,000 and 300,000 Muslims in Brazil (the higher number being nominal Muslims). Above: A mosque in Sao Paulo.



Prayer ideas

- ▶ Ask the Lord to reveal himself to more people like Salim, remembering God is able to transform lives (Rom. 4:17-21).
- ▶ Ask God to motivate, encourage and train Muslim background believers for outreach among Muslims in Brazil and abroad.



From Isolation to Openness?

God remembers war-torn Libya

Little cities and villages pass by, then fields and olive groves. Sharaf, my Libyan friend and I are sitting for many hours in the car. We only met one or two days ago, but we connected instantly. Our conversation rarely ever lapses into silence. Suddenly, he asks forthright: “Can you please explain what exactly you Christians believe? Who is Jesus for you? And what kind of book is the Bible?”

I was surprised. I have lived for many years in the Arabic world among Muslims and talked a lot with people about Jesus Christ – but I hardly ever experience such an unfeigned, honest curiosity. For hours our conversation turns to stories in the Bible and questions about why Jesus had to come into this world. When we said good-bye a few days later, Sharaf happily accepted a Bible as a gift.

Libya is a country which has been largely isolated from the international community. This has meant that among the general public, there is a huge openness, almost a longing, for contact with the world outside of Libya. One of Gaddafi’s basic

principles was to only allow a single religion into the country, Islam. In his “green book,” which summarizes his basic philosophy, he writes that only through this means could the unity of the country be sustained. Today, there is a certain curiosity about anything and everything new, including the Christian faith. This is not necessarily a spiritual openness, but it is a good foundation on which a relaxed and simple conversation about Jesus can start.

After many years of isolation it has been possible in recent months to bring thousands of Bibles to Libya. The relative openness of the interim government seeking help from foreign countries also opens new doors for believers. At the same time, the Islamist elements in the new government are not in favour of the proclamation of the Gospel. At this point, none can anticipate how the social and political situation will develop in Libya in the next years. Yet, at this moment, there are more opportunities to proclaim the Gospel than in the past.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for the new government of Libya: pray that through their guidance the people in Libya can live in peace and freedom.*
- ▶ *Pray that it will become, and be permanently possible, to bring the Bibles into the country and distribute them.*
- ▶ *Pray God will send workers to the harvest in Libya during this time of relative openness and curiosity. Pray that especially those followers of Jesus who have a linguistic and cultural understanding of Arabic Muslims will answer the call.*



Turkmenistan

Living under the eye of the State

Turkmenistan, located in Central Asia, on the northern border of Iran, is one of the most closed countries in the world. It was part of the Soviet Union until 1991, when the country suddenly became independent. In this arid region, which is 80% desert, live the Turkmen tribes. Until about 80 years ago, they were nomads who roamed with their cattle and camels. Today, the country thrives from its huge gas and oil deposits. The wealth from the exploitation of fossil fuels has, in part, been invested in monumental buildings and magnificent parks in the capital and other parts of the country. Some of the buildings and parks seem like a fantastic fairyland. But the reality behind the glossy facades is sombre.

Testimony: Maral is worried. Her husband works for a construction company and has been unpaid for months. The company managers apologized saying that, in fact, they themselves were not paid on time by the state. School will soon begin for Maral's youngest son. The school officials want to take him, but only if they are paid about six months' wages as unofficial "fees." Where will Maral and her husband get the money?

Aggul, her neighbour, offers to pray in this difficult situation, saying Jesus knows of her distress and can bring her comfort. Maral is amazed. What is this Jesus all about? Who is He? She had never met a Turkmen woman who spoke of her faith in Jesus. The message of Jesus is still unknown in

many parts of the country. The government in Turkmenistan is one of the most restrictive in the world, denying both religious liberty and freedom of speech. In recent years, some evangelical churches were allowed to officially register after being banned for years. But any religious activity outside their own four walls is illegal. Bibles and Scriptures in local languages are also prohibited. The omnipresent state apparatus monitors the people down to the smallest detail.

How can the Turkmen people in this isolated country be reached with the Gospel message? In spite of hindrances and obstacles God is going to lead people into His Kingdom. Muslims are coming to faith and there is a small shaking below the surface. Let us believe God for a breakthrough!

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray that God brings a spiritual breakthrough in the country so many men and women of Turkmen origin will be transformed by the Messiah (Acts 8:5-8).*
- ▶ *Pray for more workers, and that the few workers who are there can manage well until more help arrives (Acts 8:14).*
- ▶ *Pray for the revision of the New Testament to be completed in Turkmen and safely distributed to the people (Acts 8:26-38).*



Syria

Islamic Awakening in Syria along with Democratic Aspirations

Naima explained, "Of course we've always been Muslims. I've never doubted that. Even as a child I knew that I should pray five times a day — but what does prayer mean? I would hear the call to prayer from the mosque, but I felt so far from God." Naima pulled her black headscarf lower over her forehead, fingered her string of prayer beads, and murmured a short prayer before she continued her story, "I was often overcome with such sadness, I didn't know why. Then, when I was 17, my friend invited me to the mosque. The mosque preacher explained to us how prayer could bring us closer to God. She talked about the joy of loving God, until we were all close to tears. From then on, I went along every week. We learned the Qur'an by heart and slowly I received strength to change my life and live according to God's commandments, praise God! If I'm ever sad now, I say a verse from the Qur'an to myself and my heart is filled with peace again."

About 90% of people in Syria are Muslim, and about 75% of them are Sunni Muslim. But this doesn't mean everyone practices

Islam. However, in the recent decades many Muslims have turned back to their religion with increasing conviction. Islamic preachers are trying to renew society with an Islamic ideology. Religious events are booming. Many long for God. They fill their hearts with Qur'anic verses which they seek to obey. Most of the Christians in the country (10% of the population) do not witness to the Muslims, either out of fear or indifference. They often think it is pointless when they see how their society is becoming increasingly Islamic. At the same time, the uncertainty of the past few months has thrown up new questions for many Muslims. Since March 2011, a protest movement has been unsettling the country that has been suppressed by the government by force. Thousands of Syrians have been killed, and many more imprisoned, interrogated, and tortured. However, there are also many who support the government, especially among Christians. They fear that the process of democratisation will bring violence against Christians.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray God will reveal the falsehood of the apparent peace of the Syrian religious Muslims, that He makes them discontent with Islam, and will lead them to question their increased religious knowledge (Luke 10:21).*
- ▶ *Pray the Syrian Christians will place their hope firmly in God instead of in the government during this time of turmoil.*
- ▶ *Pray they will move beyond fear and indifference, while believing that, for God, nobody is out of reach (Acts 9).*
- ▶ *Pray for an end to the strife and violence, a just government and a strong Christian witness.*





Testimony: Daouda, a businessman, believes in the Messiah



Coming from a family of Muslim parents and grandparents, Daouda dreamed of living in Europe. In 2000, he decided to attempt to go to Europe through Libya. However, upon his arrival in Tripoli, he heard a recurring voice which appeared to come from God Himself. Daouda knew he was not to go to Europe, but rather, he go to Togo instead. The “voice” became more and more insistent. Finally Daouda decided to go to Togo through Burkina Faso. As he passed through the city of Bobo Dioulasso (a city with an important Muslim community), Daouda decided to buy a hotel and he confided the business to a professional. Daouda continued on to Togo and set up the transport company there. Upon his arrival in Lomé, the capital of Togo, Daouda’s new landlord offered him a New Testament and he began to read it.

In December of the same year, Daouda went back to Bobo Dioulasso in order to see how things were going at his hotel. To his great surprise, the hotel 300 metres away, which was less spacious and less comfortable than his hotel, was booming with business. His hotel manager encouraged Daouda to go see a famous marabout (a Muslim religious leader) who had supposedly been the cause of the success of the other

hotel. In fact, the marabout insisted Daouda come to see him personally. The marabout wanted Daouda to sacrifice a white ram without defect to ensure the success of his hotel. The slain animal was to be buried at the front door of Daouda’s hotel.

That night Daouda could not sleep, and he thought about the situation. He wondered if business really would pick up if he did as the marabout instructed him. What kind of remuneration would the marabout really desire? What kind of djinn (spirits) would the marabout invite to the hotel? A text from the New Testament came back to his memory (Luke 4:18-19). Daouda decided to return to Lomé and follow Jesus, being convinced it would be useless to earn all the money in the world and lose his own soul (Luke 9:25).

Despite great financial problems, during the six months following his baptism, Daouda walked in peace and serenity. The Good News of Jesus had transformed his life. With Jesus the poor can say, “I am rich,” and the weak can say, “I am strong.” There are things which money cannot buy.

Isa Al-Masih

- *Muslims think of Jesus as a great prophet who preached an earlier form of Islam. They believe Jesus is God’s Messiah (Isa Al Masih), based on the Qur’anic texts, but more often than not, they have no idea that actually means that Jesus is God’s anointed King and Saviour for all humanity.*
- *Muslims generally believe they can earn God’s approval through religious activities (prayers, fasting, giving money). They usually think this was the message Jesus preached.*
- *Muslims do not think they can know God as in John 17:3 or Jeremiah 9:23-24. They think they can know about Him but knowing God personally is not taught in Islam.*

عیسی

Above: The name Isa in Arabic

Muslims do not generally realise :

- ... *that Jesus has all authority.*
- ... *that Jesus, the Messiah, is to be obeyed.*
- ... *that Jesus has the ability to forgive sins.*
- ... *that Jesus has conquered death.*
- ... *that Jesus has power over evil spirits.*

The Manya in Guinea

The Messiah overcomes sorcery

Guinea, with its approximately 10 million inhabitants, is located on the coast of West Africa. It is home to some 40 ethnic groups who, for the most part, were Islamised during the course of their history. Although Guinea is rich in mineral resources, it is one of the poorest countries in the world. In Macenta, a local government centre in southeastern Guinea, live around 50,000 members of the ethnic group called the Manya.

Testimony: Khalid is 50-years-old. As a boy he attended the Islamic school until he was old enough to work in the fields. At home, he saw his parents perform the Muslim prayers and witnessed the annual period of fasting. But neither his father nor his mother explained to him the Islamic religion in detail. In addition, his father's behaviour did not conform to that of his religion.

When Khalid was eight-years-old, his father left Khalid's mother and took another wife. Through all this, Khalid could not attend school. He had to work hard in the fields in order to eat and survive. As Khalid got older, he began to do the daily rituals of a fetishist (a kind of sorcerer). Khalid says, "I worked with the devil." However, at the same time, God was beginning to speak to him in different ways. As time went by, Khalid could no longer perform the rituals of revenge as a fetishist, because he felt such great shame.

One day, a woman came to his village speaking about the

Good News of the Messiah. Khalid immediately understood and believed in the Saviour. He burned his fetishes and was baptized. Several of the elders among the Manya resisted his decision, but finally allowed him to make his own choice. Khalid is daily grateful to Jesus for his liberation from shame and his old life. With joy he witnesses to his fellow Manya, yet grieves, because so many of his own ethnic group are in great distress. They, as Muslims, have entangled themselves in the occult-like practices and rituals of the sorcerers.

There are few known Christians among the Manya peoples of Guinea. However, the Toma people live close to the Manya. Among the Toma, there are congregations of believers. Unfortunately, cultural differences, tradition, and timidity hinder the Toma believers in spreading the Good News to their neighbours.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for better family relationships. Men often take several wives, but have difficulty providing for all their wives and children. To survive, some women return with their children to their family and place of origin (Ephesians 5:25 - 6:4).*
- ▶ *Ask God to empower the Toma to be witnesses of God's love in word and deed to the Manya (2 Timothy 1:7).*
- ▶ *Pray for the alphabetization of Manya and a Bible translated in their language.*

Makua Naharas of Mozambique

Islamic animists who are faithful at their local mosques

Muslims make up approximately 20% of the population of Mozambique. Mozambique is located along Africa's south-eastern coast; most of Muslims live in the north, near the Tanzanian border and along the coast. The majority belong to the Makua Nahara tribe. They are poor, often illiterate, and many speak little or no Portuguese, which is Mozambique's official language. Due to famine and disease, their average life expectancy is a mere 50 years. Some believers are providing medical help in this region where health care is lacking.

To be Nahara is to be Muslim. They proudly say, "We are Makua Naharas and we are Muslims. The other Makuas from the hinterland, a long way from the sea, drink alcohol and eat pork or snakes - but not us! We go to the mosque on Fridays!"

While the Naharas call themselves Muslims, in reality they practice a mix of Islam and animistic ancestral religions. The life of the Naharas is maintained by counteracting their fears with enchantments. "Grandfather Abdul died in the civil war in 1990, but

he is still present. Even if we can't see him! If he's upset with us, he can cause trouble! That's why we offer him cigarettes. We know he liked them so that's bound to appease him!"

While there are several small churches in the region, a Makua Nahara is not likely to let his or her shadow darken the door of a church. "Those are only for the newcomers. They despise those of us who have been here forever." This is one of the reasons why there are almost no Nahara churches among the 200,000 Makua Naharas. The few Nahara believers attend churches which are culturally and linguistically foreign to them.

But many believers with Muslim backgrounds from other regions are coming to visit the Naharas. The Naharas listen carefully as they tell what they have experience of Jesus and some are opening their hearts. Recently, some Naharas along the coast have become "Jesus Followers" and have been baptized. These believers are leading their families to faith in Jesus, but the ministry among the Naharas is still in its infancy.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray that key people among the Makua Naharas would meet the living God through their contacts with believers (Acts 6:6 and 13:4-12).*
- ▶ *Pray the new believers would grow in their faith, learn God's word and experience Jesus in everyday life, forming a strong group with a desire to follow Jesus (Acts 2:41-45).*
- ▶ *Pray that believers who are reaching out would be protected during many dangerous journeys into the bush (2 Corinthians 11:25-27).*



The Palestinian Territories

Living near Bethlehem but not knowing the Messiah

Generations of Palestinians have lived in Gaza and the West Bank as refugees. Poverty is widespread and unemployment is high. Palestinians are not allowed to leave the Territories easily. Infrastructure and services are generally poor. Difficulties and grievances give Islamist groups, like Hamas, opportunities to impose their agendas through violence and terrorism.

The Palestinian Territories are almost exclusively made up of Arab Muslims. The small Christian minority is dwindling fast, and many of them are tired of being crushed on the front lines of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many have turned their backs on the Territories because of the bad economic conditions and have emigrated elsewhere, and others are trying to go that route as well. The result is that now, in Bethlehem and surrounding areas, there are very few remaining Christians. At the place where the Messiah was born more than 2,000 years ago, today one hardly finds anyone who believes in Him. Yet there are Muslim Palestinians who choose to follow Jesus. Some have met the Messiah through dreams and visions. Deciding to become a believer almost always comes with serious consequences. Often, their families turn their backs on them in rejection.

In the Territories, the bonds of family and old traditions are much more pronounced than in the Western world. The decision to leave Islam is regarded as the loss of family honour.

Thus, Muslims who come to faith in Jesus are often excluded from family, rejected by relatives, and disinherited. Because of this, they are become destitute and need urgent assistance. Also, as new additions to the family of God, they need instruction in the Word of God — the Bible. Only with this help can their faith stay strong and survive in an environment that is so hostile to believers.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray former Muslims can sense God's comfort and care, and that they are welcomed into the Christian community (Psalm 3:3, Psalm 103:1-6).*
- ▶ *Believers need protection, deliverance from evil, and favour in maintaining relations with their Muslim neighbours (Romans 12:17-21).*
- ▶ *Pray Islamist extremism and violence does not flourish and dominate those who seek peace in the Palestinian Territories (Jeremiah 15:20b-21).*
- ▶ *Ask God to call more believers to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to proclaim and demonstrate God's love. May God open hearts among the Muslims to receive the Messiah.*



The Druze in the Middle East

Related to Islam but still very much on a different path . . .

The Druze are a people with their own unique religion. In the Middle East, there are about one million Arabic speaking Druze. They are often counted as Muslims, although they do not consider themselves as such. About a thousand years ago, they separated from the Shiite branch of Islam. They still revere the Qur'an as one among other holy books. The Druze never pray at a mosque, but the religiously inclined among them meet together every Thursday evening. At these gatherings their elders explain the philosophies of the Druze religion. Their teachings come mainly from the Book of Wisdom, which is treated as secret and sacred. The Druze community is an exclusive one, avoiding social interactions. No one from another religion can ever become a Druze, not even by marriage.

The Druze emphasise belief in the reincarnation of souls. Their belief in reincarnation is also linked to the practice of "speaking out," which is essentially an effort to encourage small children to practice a kind of divination. Some children and adults do

apparently have revelations, and speak about details of other people's lives that are impossible for them to know otherwise. When young children "speak out," it is considered a sign and even a proof of their reincarnation. The "speaking out" practice affirms the importance and social status of the child and family in the eyes of the Druze community.

Testimony: Rachid grew up in a Druze family, without being initiated into the Druze teachings. He received a scholarship for his medical studies in an eastern European country. There, he and his wife, Sarah, pursued a different path in their search for God. Sarah read the Qur'an and adopted an Islamic lifestyle. She even chose to wear the veil (known as a hijab).

On the other hand, Rachid had a Lebanese Christian friend who shared with him about the Christian faith from the Bible. For a time, Rachid and Sarah's marriage seemed to fall apart, since each one insisted on their own religious pursuit. However, one day Rachid put his faith in the Messiah. Over several months, Sarah observed the change in her husband's life. Being disappointed with Islam herself, she also began reading in the Bible and discovered faith in the Messiah.



Photo: A Druze marriage

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray the Druze will question the practice of speaking out. Paul's experience in Philippi could be instructive (Acts 16:16-24). It is possible great opposition could be placed on anyone questioning or seeking to stop the practice of "speaking out."*
- ▶ *Pray they will discover God and come to a real understanding of how to worship Him (Acts 16:14). As the Samaritans were outcasts to the Jews, the Druze are largely rejected by traditional Muslims. They have developed their own beliefs loosely linked to Islam like the Samaritan beliefs were loosely linked to Judaism.*
- ▶ *Pray the Druze believing in Jesus would share a life of testimony in their own communities.*



Muhammad's Heart Cleansing

According to Muslims, Muhammad's heart was opened to religion and purified in a most extraordinary way. They believe God commanded the angel, Gabriel (Jibrail), to literally open the chest of Muhammad in order to cleanse it and fill it with wisdom, knowledge, and faith. Many believe this occurred when Muhammad was about six-years-old (AD 576), living among the Banu Sa'd in the desert. And then once more during his adult life (AD 621), just before he left Mecca for Medina.

Gabriel (Jibrail), the angel, came to the Messenger of Allah when he was playing with the other boys. Gabriel took hold of him and threw him to the ground, then he opened his chest and took out his heart, from which he took a clot of blood and said: "This was the Shaytaan's (Satan's) share of you." Then he washed it in a golden bowl that was filled with water from the Zamzam well in Mecca. Gabriel then returned Muhammad's heart to its place put his chest back together. The boys went running saying . . . "Muhammad has been killed!" They went to him and his colour had changed. Some say that they used to see the mark of that stitching on his chest. As the Qur'an says: "Have We not opened your breast for you, Muhammad?" (The Qur'an ash-Sharh 94:1)

Christians believe that only the blood of the Messiah's sacrifice cleanses from all sin. (1 John 1:7)



Macedonian Muslims

God has not forgotten them

About one third of Macedonians are from a Muslim background. This is a group of about 650,000 people out of a total population of just over two million. The principal Muslim ethnic groups are: Albanians (about 80%), the Romani near the capital and Turks in the eastern part of the country. Macedonia's practicing Christian community is fairly small but it is growing well. However, the Albanian Muslims are almost completely unreached and have no church.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ Read Isaiah 52:10 and proclaim aloud the faithfulness of God. May his salvation come.
- ▶ Many Muslims do not practice Islam in a devoted manner. Others like the Romani (80,000 people) are especially involved in folk superstitions. Pray for God's unexpected interventions (Exodus 3:1-6).
- ▶ Pray the Lord opens doors for witness and motivate Macedonian believers to reach out. Centuries of religious strife and prejudice between Muslims and Christians can only be overcome by the love of God manifest on the cross. Paul first preached the Gospel in Philippi in Greek Macedonia (Acts 16:9-40). God is able to cross all barriers! God sent Paul to Macedonia. He still sends people.

Photo: The city of Tetovo west of the Macedonian national capital of Skopje is an unofficial "capital" of a predominantly ethnic Albanian region of Macedonia..



A mosque with a minaret

Jakarta, Indonesia

A city that displays many stark contrasts

Indonesia: population of 240 million. The 4th-most populous nation on earth. It straddles the equator across thousands of islands, and is home to 300 different people groups, boasting 700 different languages. In the centre of this shimmering archipelago on the island of Java is the capital city, Jakarta. Here all the threads come together as the politics and the economy of the nation are decided. Jakarta, while lacking any real power of attraction for tourists, holds much promise for every Indonesian who wishes to try his luck here. It is so alluring to the Indonesians, that as many as 26 million people live in the urban radius of influence of the city (known as Jabodetabek), and each year many hundreds of thousands more join them. Every ethnic group in Indonesia is represented in Jakarta; in the meantime the Muslim Betawi, the original settlers of the area, have shrunk to a small minority.

Few cities display such stark contrasts. Side by side with the ever-growing number of luxury shopping centres (the “Malls”) and modern high-rise office blocks, are impoverished slums. Many live in shanty dwellings along the railway tracks and the canals overflowing with filth. Only on the streets is there equality for all; in the daily traffic jams, the new Mercedes comes to a halt just the same as the rusting, welded-together minibus.

There is one more severe contrast that leaves an imprint on the city and, indeed, on the whole country: 85% of the population are Muslim, and around 13% Christian. Officially there is freedom of religion, yet discrimination against the Christian minority is daily in evidence. Jakarta shelters militant Islamic fringe groups, but also a series of missions-minded Bible colleges and organisations. But whatever happens, the future of Indonesia is determined by what happens in Jakarta.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for the Jakarta administration, led by Governor Fauzi Bowo: that they will have wisdom in leading matters both local and national and for peace in the nation of Indonesia.*
- ▶ *Pray for every effort to aid Jakarta's poor – both spiritually and materially. Several organisations are endeavouring to ease the needs through a variety of projects, and in the process, also to tell about Jesus.*
- ▶ *Pray that God will send a day of grace for the Betawi, among whom only about 100 are known to be Christians.*
- ▶ *Pray for the Christians in Jakarta, who are by no means without influence. Many churches are still not thinking about reaching out. Ask for God's strength, courage and protection for those believers who are sharing the Gospel.*



Testimony: 'The Times, They Are A-Changing'

by David Garrison

In January 1991, a friend and I travelled 4,000 miles through Indonesia, surveying the world's least evangelized Muslim people groups. Each evening, we were reminded that the first Gulf War was being fought 3,000 miles to the west as we watched the brilliant sunsets of dying light filter through the burning Kuwaiti oil fields. From the Bugi-men of Sulawesi to the "stabbers" of Madura -- so called because they stabbed missionaries -- to Banda Aceh, the front porch of Mecca, we probed openings for the Gospel in these neglected corners of the Great Commission. Everywhere we went, we asked provocative questions: "What people group are you from?" followed by: "Aren't your people a Christian people?" The latter question aimed at testing responsiveness. The response was always, "No! We are not Christian. We are Muslim!" We followed with a smile and a further naive question, "Why not? Why aren't you Christian?" The answer heard again and again still rings in my ears, "You cannot change your mother." Their response, though firm, was never hostile. For them, change was impossible. No doubt this was the first time they had heard this question. This was the plight of millions of Muslims, not only in Indonesia, but throughout the Islamic world. For us, the Spirit changed their words into a Macedonian call: "Come over and help us!" (Acts 16:19)

Two decades later, the times they are changing, and so is the Muslim world. Across the Islamic world, we are seeing historic openness and response to the Gospel. Two decades ago we would have been hard pressed to find a single movement of 1,000 Muslims baptized into the Christian faith; today, there are more than two dozen such movements. From West Africa to Southeast Asia, God is reaping an unprecedented harvest in the House of Islam. Many of these movements are occurring in the most hostile corners of the earth.



Prayer at Jakarta's huge Istiqlal Mosque



In the spring of 2011, twenty years after my initial survey trip, I found myself back in Indonesia. This time interviewing dozens of former Muslims who had come to faith in Jesus Christ in a movement which has already produced nine generations of churches planting churches! It was an emotional experience, to hear these brothers and sisters share their story of how Christ had given them forgiveness and new life, and how the Spirit of Christ had sustained them through the persecution which accompanied their decision. Perhaps the most striking discovery came when we asked the question, "What did God use to bring you to faith in Jesus Christ?" Prepared to hear any number of answers, we were surprised by the simple response from individual after individual: "Someone told me the

Gospel." Perhaps we missed it. The times were changing. But it was not Muslims who were changing, it was Christians. A new generation of Christians who were now gently, yet faithfully and boldly, sharing the life-giving message of the Gospel.



Boko Haram in Nigeria

Testimony: Saved by the name of Jesus

Mr. Ousseini is a Fulani pastor born in Jos, Nigeria. This former Muslim chose to believe in the Messiah, Jesus, during some Christian meetings about 20 years ago. He continues to work in his own business while also working as a pastor. Pastor Ousseini is known by his former Muslim acquaintances and friends as a practicing believer. Many of them joined a Muslim cult group called Boko Haram.* Recently, Pastor Ousseini was with several members of his church in a bus coming back from a Christian gathering when their vehicle became a target for hidden gunmen. All the believers cried out the name of Jesus each time they heard shots.

The driver was able manoeuvre the vehicle so they could escape and head directly to a hospital. The hospital staff were surprised most of the people on the bus were not injured, and those who were, did not have haemorrhages or broken bones. All were able to return to their home the same evening.

This was not the first time that Pastor Ousseini had been a target of snipers from the Boko Haram movement. Each time he has seen how Jesus was his real protection, a fortress which saved him. Pray for the Christian community in northern Nigeria and in particular for those in the states of Borno and Jos. Pray for their deliverance from those who would seek their lives. Pray for a more peaceful coexistence and for the salvation of many Muslims.

Various fundamentalist and conservative Islamic groups are at work in Nigeria (population 155 million), and about half the country has an Islamic background although there various degrees of adherence to Islamic teaching and lifestyle.



**Understanding Boko Haram*

The Boko Haram group is a radical Islamist group which began in 2002, and came to international attention in 2009 when the Nigerian military had several clashes with armed members of the group leading to the death of over 700 people. The term “Boko Haram” comes from the Hausa word “boko” meaning “Western or non-Islamic education” and the Arabic word “haram” meaning “forbidden.” Boko Haram opposes not only Western education, but Western culture and modern science as well. The group has been the author of several attacks against Nigerian police and several Christian congregations and individuals in recent years. Many have suffered the loss of several members of their congregations.



The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (James 5:16).

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for courage and wisdom for the Nigerian governmental, Christian and Islamic authorities who have to deal with the Boko Haram group and others (Romans 13:13-14).*
- ▶ *Pray for the families of the hundreds of victims of the terrorist attacks. Interior healing, counselling, God's comfort, and concrete help are all needed (Isaiah 61:1).*
- ▶ *Pray for a revelation of Jesus among the Boko Haram militants and people who may be tempted to join them.*

Below: A list of the principal Muslim ethnic groups in Nigeria. Please pray for one or more of these peoples that the Gospel might be spread among them):

Over 1 million people:

Hausa (19.9 million), Yoruba (8.35 million), Yerwa Kanuri, (4 million); Sokoto Fulani (2.2 million), Haabe Fulani (2.2 million), Bororo Fulani (1.95 million)

Under one million but more than 100,000 people:

Adamawa Fulani (975,000), Bauchi Fulani (701,000), Manga Kanuri (617,000), Igbo Fulani (520,000), Egba (418,000), Bade (310,000), Songhai (260,000), Arab, Shuwa (205,000), Bura (112,000), Igala (108,000)

The Rashaida of Sudan

The descendants of Arabs in the African desert

Early in the morning, coffee beans are roasted on a small open fire in a metal tin. Women roll up the sides of their tents to let in the light of a new day. Boys follow their fathers as they herd camels and sheep. Little girls run barefoot half a kilometre to visit cousins. The sand is kicked up by wind and scorpions hide under the cool carpets set down on the desert floor. It is another slow, simple day in the desert.

The 100,000 people of Rashaida tribe of Northeastern Sudan are a Bedouin group that originated in Saudi Arabia. They fled to the region around 150 years ago. The language of this tribe is Arabic and their religion is Islam. The car of choice is a 4x4 Toyota pick-up from the 1980's that boys learn to drive when they are around 12 years old. The marrying age for girls is 14-17 years. This generation is the first to be educated. Many Rashaida, especially women, above the age of 30 are illiterate. Their Bedouin heritage is one of orally passing down their history, religion, and remembering the ancestry of their camels.

There are many social classes among the Rashaida tribe. Most are businessmen who trade goods. In general, the people are not poor, but rather choose to live a simple lifestyle. Their homes are usually small huts or tents that are convenient for their nomadic lifestyle. They invest their money more in gold and camels. The Rashaida run smuggling operations over the border of Eritrea into Sudan, creating tension between them and the local government as they avoid paying taxes. However, they easily escape

authorities by turning off their headlights and speeding through the desert as they follow the stars. A man from this tribe can tell his location by the smell of the sand.

This people group has purposefully isolated itself. They seldom interact with other nearby Bedouins or the local Sudanese. The Rashaida are pure Arabs and have not intermarried, claiming to have a direct bloodline back to the prophet Muhammad. There are few believers in their region from Ethiopian descent. Some Rashaida on the Eritrean coast joined the military some years back and were exposed to Christ by other soldiers. Other than this, their culture and belief system has never been challenged. They are an unreached, unengaged tribe.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray Isaiah 45:2-3 over the Rashaida. Pray for efforts to reach the Rashaida. May God down the 'iron bars' (all the barriers) keeping the Rashaida from knowing the Gospel. Pray for Jesus to become their treasure, when he is fully revealed he is hard to resist.*
- ▶ *Ask God to send sacrificial workers who are willing to build relationships with this nomadic people group.*
- ▶ *Ask God to empower the few Rashaida believers to be peacemakers with hostile neighbours in this war-torn region.*



The Night of Power - Laylat al-Qadr

The night that Muhammad is said to have received his revelations

ليلة القدر

Fatima is excited. Her husband, Salim, has invited the family of his teacher to celebrate the breaking of the fast with them. Leading up to this day, Fatima has had many encouraging conversations with Sarah while the men were talking and the girls were playing. During Sarah's last visit, she had offered to pray for her. Fatima experienced a strange sense of peace while she was being prayed for by Sarah, and is now hoping for some more prayer. Sarah and her family are followers of the Messiah, Jesus.

Fatima isn't excited only about Sarah's visit, but even more about today's Laylat al-Qadr, the night of power. Fatima intends to stay up praying all night in the hope that her prayers for a son might be answered. With eager anticipation and great relief she is looking forward to being able to pray this year. Two years ago, she started bleeding right at the end of Ramadan which made her unclean and unable to pray. Soon after that, she fell pregnant, which again disqualified her from fasting the following year, due to her nursing the baby. Fatima has given birth to 3 daughters, but Salim has not rejected her; yet her mother-in-law has cursed her for not bearing a son. She has encouraged her son to take another wife. Fatima was greatly worried by that threat and made a pilgrimage to the grave of a holy man to plead for a son. She also has worked very hard at keeping all her religious duties. Today she has great hopes, for this is the night of power.

According to Sura 97 (chapter 97 of the Qur'an), Muhammad received his first revelation of the Qur'an during this night. Muslims believe that prayers offered during this night are particularly well received. Some believe that prayer during this night will compensate for the omission of regular daily prayers. The night of power occurs during the last 10 days of Ramadan and most Muslim clerics believe it is on the 27th day. Each new day starts at sunset, therefore this year's night of power will be on the night of the 13th August.

Fatima is representative for thousands of Muslim women eagerly anticipating the night of power. Unfortunately, there are only a few who have a Sarah to introduce them to Jesus.

Prayer ideas:

► *Pray for supernatural revelation of Jesus in dreams and visions during this night. Think of Muslims in your city, your region or your country or elsewhere. Ask God to guide your prayers. At the same time pray that people who have revelations will soon meet believers who can help them become disciples (Acts 10:1-48).*



Hadith recorded by Sahih Bukhari

Narrated by: Abu Huraira The Prophet said, "Whoever fasted the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith (i.e. belief) and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his past sins will be forgiven, and whoever stood for the prayers in the Night of Power out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven."



“Give, and it will be given to you.”

Important words from Luke 6:38

The Apostle Paul accomplished his ministry in a variety of ways. We read that sometimes he was obliged to earn money through tent making, while at other moments people provided for his needs so that he was able “devote himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah” (Acts 18:5).

In Philippians 4:10-19, we read about the Apostle’s attitudes. We know that he had learned to be content in whatever circumstances he found himself. He knew how to get along on humble means, and also how to live in prosperity. When Paul received gifts so he could more easily devote himself to preaching and teaching, he was not seeking the gifts themselves, but he sought the credit that others would receive from God because of their gifts. Paul even described some gifts as a “fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.” Paul encouraged givers that “God would supply all their needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Muslim ministries around the world need funding. International media ministries through radio, Internet, video, literature, and satellite TV need significant funding. Some of these ministries are proclaiming the Gospel to multitudes of Muslims. Often these ministries receive email, text messages, and phone calls from tens of thousands of first-time inquirers and people seeking to become disciples each month.

Traditional “hands on” missions efforts at a local level are still producing fruit around the world as well. In many Muslim contexts, believers have often taken normal jobs in order to gain access into countries closed to the proclamation of the Gospel. Often these believers fill important roles in society through their jobs. Sometimes their work is well remunerated, but sometimes it is not and the workers still need to receive additional funding.

Despite the accusations, which are sometimes made by Muslims, Christian ministries have never adopted a policy of “paying people to convert.” Most efforts to implant new communities of believers in the Muslim world are based on the Three-Self Model. This model encourages every newly established group of believers to be:

Self-governing: having its own local, indigenous leadership.

Self-supporting: being able to financially sustain itself and its ministries from its own resources.

Self-propagating: being able to reproduce itself through establishing new faith communities.

Sometimes circumstances of persecution, economic hardship and natural disasters cause the three-self model to fall short. It is perfectly okay for believers to express solidarity with their brothers and sisters (2 Corinthians 8:1-21).



Prayer and action ideas:

- ▶ “30 Days” encourages its participants to give toward Muslim ministries. Let us all “seek first the kingdom of God” with our finances. You might spend some time actually seeking God concerning how you can give. Pray for increased giving toward Muslim ministries worldwide. Pray for the different aspects of Muslim ministries mentioned in this article using the Scriptures indicated.



The Izhār ul-Haqq

Answering Muslim accusations against the Bible

The *Izhār ul-Haqq* is a Muslim book which discourages and weakens the faith of many Christians living in Muslim countries, especially those from a Muslim background. The book ridicules the confidence that Christians place in the Bible and directs Muslims away from the Bible by declaring the Bible utterly corrupt. Meanwhile, the book presents the Qur'an as completely free from any defect.

The contents of *Izhār ul-Haqq*, written originally in Arabic, came out of a live debate with a German missionary over 150 years ago. Muslim debaters and teachers made use of 19th-century Higher Criticism of the Bible written in Europe in an effort to back up traditional Muslim accusations that the Bible is corrupt and falsified. The *Izhār ul-Haqq* is still considered by many Muslims so effective that it continues to be printed with its original content and is distributed widely by extensive networks of orthodox Muslim leaders. Moreover, arguments from the book are used by almost all major Muslim debaters and teachers in the world, including Shabir Ali, Jamal Badawi, and Zakir Naik. These arguments are in turn broadcasted by 24-hour satellite TV channels to viewers all over Asia. Yet

surprisingly, no book-length answer to the full range of accusations in *Izhār ul-Haqq* has been written to encourage Christians and challenge Muslims.

There is a great need for an answer that is respectful toward Muslims, responds to the questions Muslims ask about the Bible, and brings in the latest scholarly research on the Qur'an. The New Testament manuscripts, for example, are on a much stronger footing than the manuscripts of the Qur'an. Recent decades have seen the appearance of a great deal of helpful scholarly literature which asks questions of the Qur'an as difficult as—or in many cases more difficult than—the questions scholars ask of the Bible.

Some believers are now working to produce a book-length answer to the *Izhār ul-Haqq*. The objectives of the project are not only to defend the Word of God from false accusation, but also to encourage Muslims to actually read the Bible itself instead of merely falsely accusing and dismissing it.



Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for the work to answer Muslim accusations against the Bible. May God continue to raise up the appropriate people with the right understanding, abilities, gifts, and character to be effective in this ministry. For the difficult Izhār ul-Haqq project, such things as intellectual acumen or ability to debate will not suffice. Rather, there is a need for divine power to enable the Christian writers to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.” The goal, as God’s Word expresses it so well, is to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to the Messiah” (2 Corinthians 10:5).*
- ▶ *After a full response to the Izhār ul-Haqq is finally produced appropriate distribution channels will be needed to spread the material in print and audio-visual formats. Pray for God’s guidance, grace and provision.*

The Rohingya People

2,000,000 + people seeking a new home, peace and freedom

It is difficult to find accurate population estimates concerning the Rohingya, as they are not recognised as citizens in any country. Most Rohingya are located in Rakhine State, Myanmar. They are refugees located in Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Thailand. There are a few hundred believers in the Messiah among the Rohingya, all coming from a small Sufi sect of Islam.

The Muslim Rohingya people originally come from Myanmar (Burma). They are and have been highly persecuted in their homeland and as refugees even as far back as the Second World War. The current military rulers of Myanmar rely heavily on Burmese nationalism and Buddhism to bolster their rule and, therefore, heavily discriminate against minorities like the Rohingya.

The Rohingya are now scattered throughout South and Southeast Asia. There are roughly 111,000 refugees housed in nine camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. Many of Rohingya have remained in refugee camps or temporary locations for long periods waiting for opportunities to emigrate elsewhere. Unfortunately, due to their bad reputation, it is often very difficult for them to be accepted. In Malaysia the Rohingya refugee children are not allowed to attend local schools and are growing up with no hope of a better future. In recent years a number of schools have been set up for them, but there are difficulties concerning funding and qualified

staff. Some Rohingya communities have opposed education efforts by non-Muslims. Their lives as refugees are often filled with fear, uncertainty, trauma, abuse, and injustice.

Bible translation: an Arabic based font (Arabic plus some extra accents and characters) is being used in Myanmar for publishing some written materials in the Rohingya language and a Roman character based system is already in use on the web. A significant number of Rohingya people have lived in Bangladesh as refugees have a preference for using the Bengali script. As a consequence it seems inevitable that the Scriptures will have to be in at least three different alphabets.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *At this time there are 21 Bible stories being translated into Rohingya and it is hoped they will be available for distribution in the coming months. Deciding what texts to translate and how to make them available is a challenge. Good communication and careful coordination of the translation projects is important.*
- ▶ *Please pray for this people and the efforts to make the Messiah known among the Rohingya. Some believers have sought to help them. May God raise up others.*



Large Gatherings in South Asia

Thousands upon thousands gather following Ramadan

Left: The Agra Mosque on the grounds of the Taj Mahal (which is Mausoleum). We have indicated some YouTube videos of these gatherings on our web site: www.30-days.net



The Shah (King) Faisal Mosque in Islamabad Pakistan has a capacity of 75,000 people in the building and the surrounding courtyards. Up to an additional 200,000 other people can pray on the grounds outside.

Around the world during the next three days Muslims will be feasting and enjoying themselves at the end of Ramadan. This holiday, the Eid ud-Fitr, is also a significant moment for major religious gatherings. Tens of thousands of Muslims will gather at places like the Agra mosque facing the Taj Mahal in India. In neighbouring Pakistan, thousands more will gather at the Faisal mosque in Islamabad and in the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore. These gatherings leave profound impressions on Muslims. However, the largest and most impressive gathering is in Mecca itself, where over two million pilgrims can pray at one time at the Haram Mosque during the annual pilgrimage which occurs about 70 days after Ramadan.

Muslims meet friends during these gatherings, and are often led by adept leaders in times of prayer. Muslims consider these gatherings as evidence of the superiority and growth of Islam. Jesus said that His Kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed. Muslims have generally not seen that healing, life, and salvation come through the cross and the resurrection. It is often in weakness that the strength of the Lord is made evident, and not through impressive numbers, great speakers, or manifestations of earthly power.

Prayer ideas:

- ▶ *Pray for Muslim families in your town, your region and your country that they might meet true believers who could share with them the bread of life during the feast (See Psalm 34:8, John 6:55-58).*
- ▶ *Pray for Muslims in your country who will be attending large religious gatherings. May God get their attention. Pray for revelations of the crucified, resurrected and now living Jesus during the three day feast.*



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Our Values: "30 Days International" as a movement maintains a positive attitude toward Muslims. Our prayer effort is not interested in denigrating or criticising Muslims or their beliefs and practice. Islam is not merely a religion or a philosophy. Islam concerns people. Jesus said, "Love your neighbour as yourself." This prayer booklet is not designed to be used as literature for evangelism. It is produced to inform believers and encourage prayer.

Recommended web sites: 30 Days International does not necessarily endorse or agree with all the arguments, ideas or attitudes presented by the web sites listed on this page. These sites contain at least some valuable material. They may have some negative and unhelpful content as well. It is possible that they are not the best sites available but the editors are simply familiar with them.

Christian Sites about Islam:

www.answering-islam.org
www.quranandinjil.org
www.engagingislam.org
www.carlmedearis.com

Muslim Sites:

Wikipedia: Islam Portal
www.quran.com
www.answering-christianity.com
www.islam-christianity.com
www.islamicity.com
www.al-islam.org
www.muxlim.com
www.topmuslimsites.com
www.salat-time.com
www.talkislamic.com
www.understanding-islam.com
www.alim.org

Muslim – Christian Discussion:

Search Christian Muslim Dialogue in Dubai on YouTube.com
<http://cmcu.georgetown.edu> (Prince Alwaleed Center)
www.peace-catalyst.net
www.acommonword.com
www.grace-truth.info

Testimonies:

www.morethandreams.tv
www.muslimjourneytohope.com
www.albahethoon.com (The Seekers)

The Messiah for Muslims:

www.isaalmasih.net
www.kalimatullah.com
www.the-good-way.com
www.fatherzakaria.net
www.injil.org

People Groups / Mission

www.joshuaproject.net
www.missionfrontiers.org
www.lausanne.org

Other Sites:

www.opendoorsuk.org/
(Open Doors – Persecuted believers)
www.iraqprayer.org
(Prayer for Iraq)
www.cryoutnow.org
www.pray-ap.info
(Prayer for Middle East)
www.memritv.org
(News from the Middle East)
www.barnabasfund.org
(Persecuted believers)
Prayershorts channel on YouTube
(numerous prayer videos)