



6 JUNE–5 JULY, 2016

**PRAYING WITH FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE
FOR THE MUSLIM WORLD**

30 DAYS

OF PRAYER

FOR THE MUSLIM WORLD



Contents

Our focus	2
Where we are praying?	3
What is Ramadan?	4
When is Ramadan?	5
Something is happening!	6
Days 1–30 prayer topics start	7
Millions on the move	20
Practical steps for loving Muslims	39
Keep praying throughout the year	40

Welcome to 30 Days 2016!

Dear Praying Friends,

Last year we saw participation in 30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World grow more than ever! With a series of inspiring articles drawn from the book *A Wind in the House of Islam* by researcher David Garrison, the prayer guide was an encouraging testimony to the effectiveness of prayer. We are thrilled to have more content from David this year, as we continue to explore the Nine Rooms in the House of Islam and discover how and where movements to Christ are happening across the Muslim world.

This year we are very aware of movements of all kinds within the House of Islam. As war and terrorism have swept across the Muslim world, millions of Muslims have been displaced, fleeing to new places for safety or for the hope of a better life. These displacements provide new opportunities for Muslims to encounter the living Christ. Even for those who are not forced to flee, such tragic situations prompt soul searching, so some of your prayers will be directed to Muslims whose faith journey is taking them closer to Jesus. As always, we also pray for those thousands who have yet to hear of Him.

We trust that this year you will also travel in your prayers around the Muslim world and further into an active understanding of God's deep love for them.

Thank you for praying!

The Editors, *30 Days International*

30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World: encouraging, educating and enabling since 1993

Though the issues faced by the Muslim world change from year to year, the aim of the *30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World Prayer Guide* remains to encourage, educate and enable. Through prayer, we engage in an act of love for Muslim people around the world — sharing their burdens, understanding their concerns and petitioning God to help them. In this way, we fulfil the command of Jesus to love our neighbours.

Encouraging

30 Days International began with a group of people who felt compelled to change the way they understood the Muslim world and to see them in the same way God does — as unique individuals, families and tribes. Readers are encouraged to pray for that same inspiration and let God direct their prayers with His loving knowledge of the Muslim world.

Educating

With more information at our disposal than ever before, it is necessary to use discernment in how we form our understanding about the world around us.

This guide draws its information about the Muslim world from people who live among Muslims with the aim of loving and blessing them and tries to echo their voices. 30 Days International believes that we can best understand what Muslims believe from Muslims themselves and hopes to help our readers recognise the diversity that exists in culture and theology within the Muslim world.

Enabling

Praying during Ramadan is a helpful way for Christians to identify with Muslims. During this time, many Muslims are seeking encounters with God and a better understanding of His ways. Each year, we receive reports that that is what God does — for both Muslims and the Christians who pray for them. This is a perfect time to talk to Muslim friends about what God is revealing to you, and to share with other Christians what you are learning as you pray.

For further information about the 30 Days prayer movement and ideas on how to pray effectively, please visit our website at: www.pray30days.org



Where are we praying?

The “House of Islam” (or *Dar al-Islam* in Arabic) is the name Muslims give to an invisible religious empire that stretches from West Africa to the Indonesian archipelago, encompassing 49 nations and 1.6 billion Muslims.

Within this house are nine geocultural areas of Muslim identity that we refer to in this guide as “Rooms in the House of Islam”. In these Rooms, movements of thousands of people turning to faith in Jesus are taking place. We’ll be praying through these Rooms (marked on the world map, right), and for people groups living in them, throughout this guide.

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What is Ramadan?

With over 1.57 billion adherents from diverse cultures across the world, Islam embraces a multitude of traditions, beliefs and customs. In the same way that Christianity and Judaism have different sects and denominations, the customs and practices of Muslims can differ greatly — as do the interpretations of Islam’s central commandments.

It is important, when getting to know Muslims, not to make assumptions about their beliefs based on what you may have read on the Internet or seen in the news. Every individual Muslim is on their own journey of faith, influenced by their family, culture and experiences.

Most Muslims, however, will acknowledge the Five Pillars of Islam as being important obligations to live a good and responsible life according to Islam. These Five Pillars are:

- Shahadah** sincerely reciting the Muslim profession of faith;
- Salat** performing ritual prayers in the proper way five times each day;
- Zakat** paying an alms (or charity) tax to benefit the poor and the needy;
- Sawm** fasting during the month of Ramadan;
- Hajj** pilgrimage to Mecca.

The purpose of the Fast

Sawm is the Arabic word for “fasting” and literally means “to refrain”. In the context of Ramadan, this means refraining not only from food and drink, but also from evil actions, thoughts, and words.

According to tradition, it was during Ramadan that the Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims mark this important event in their faith by fasting each day from sunrise to sunset. The fast is a strict one — no food and no drink of any kind, not even water. Smoking and sexual activity are forbidden, and Muslims must make an extra effort to avoid anything unlawful or impure. This observance represents a person’s commitment to the spirit of the fast — it is a time to practise self-restraint, to cleanse both body and soul and focus on the worship of God.

Throughout Ramadan, families and friends get together to share food and company in the evenings and through the night. It is a time to emphasise prayer, charity and reflection. Muslims are called upon to use this month to examine their life and faith, to make peace with one another, strengthen ties with family and friends, and generally strive to be a better person.



When is Ramadan?

The month of Ramadan is determined by the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar. This means Ramadan moves approximately 11 days earlier in the Gregorian calendar every year. The date of Ramadan may also vary from country to country, depending on whether the moon has been sighted or not.

Faithful Muslims get up before sunrise and take a meal, *Suhoor*, before dawn and first prayers. They do not eat again until after sunset when they break the fast at a meal known as *Iftar*. Exceptions to the fast are made for the old and infirm, young children, and pregnant and nursing mothers.

Why pray during Ramadan?

The 30 Days prayer event is planned to coincide with the Islamic month of Ramadan because it is a time when Muslims themselves are praying.

Christians can relate to Muslims in our shared practice of fasting and prayer — and breaking the fast together is a great opportunity to get to know one another better! Christians can be inspired to take their own prayer more seriously as they see their Muslim neighbours fasting and active during Ramadan. Our hope is that it will introduce moments where we can talk with one another about our faith and come to a better understanding of the journeys we are on to know God.

“It is important, when getting to know Muslims, not to make assumptions.”



Something is happening!

Islamic State! al-Qaeda! Boko Haram! These radical Islamic terror groups invade our news every day in stories of destruction and fleeing refugees that will mark history. But there's an even greater story unfolding across the Muslim world.

Islam is the fastest growing major religion, and has been growing since its inception in the Arabian Desert nearly 14 centuries ago. Every year, Islam adds more than the population of Canada — some 37 million people — to its ranks. While today most of this growth is the result of a high birth rate, historically Islam has also been a conquering and converting religion. Demographers predict that by 2030, Islam will have more than 2 billion adherents (some 26 per cent of the earth's population), and by 2050 will surpass Christianity as the world's most populous religion. In the midst of this unparalleled growth, another story is unfolding, one that has escaped the headlines. Muslims are turning to faith in Jesus Christ!

Since the birth of Islam in AD 622, Christians have challenged the advance of Islam with military might and missionary methods, but with little result. Just as

Christian militias have been rolled back by Islamic armies, so too have Christian apologists found scarce fruit among Muslims. Until now.

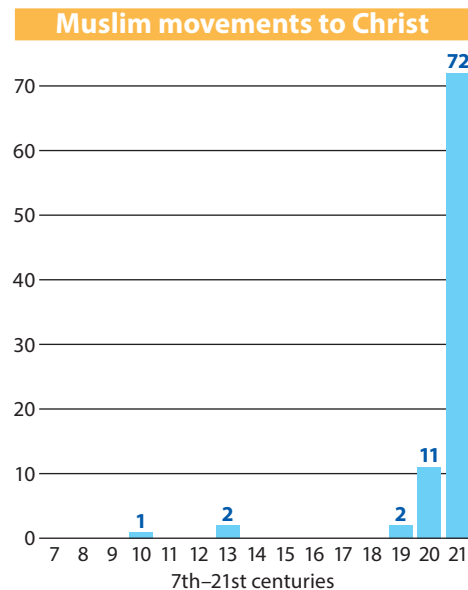
In the first seven centuries of Muslim-Christian interchange only three movements of at least 1,000 Muslims to Christianity were recorded. Then, five more centuries passed without a single Muslim movement to Christ. All the while, Islam was growing exponentially, largely in traditionally Christian lands in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe. Until now.

The tide began to turn in the late 19th century, when 10–20,000 Muslims in Indonesia left their religion and were baptised into the Christian faith. After two additional isolated movements in East Africa and North Africa, Muslim movements to Christ halted before further breakthroughs began to occur in the latter half of the 20th century. Between the years 1967 and 2000, tens of thousands of Muslims converted to Christianity in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Iran, Algeria, and Central Asia.

The greatest turning of Muslims to Christ in history, however, has been reserved for the 21st century. Since 2001, there have been a further 72 movements of at least 1,000 Muslims turning to Christ, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. It is no small coincidence that this great awakening in the Muslim world has coincided with

an unprecedented prayer movement for Muslims such as the one you are participating in now.

This year, we continue to pray through the House of Islam, recognising that the Spirit of God is moving through Rooms where thousands of Muslims are encountering Jesus and committing to follow Him for the first time in history. As always, we pray that we might better understand and contribute to this great ingathering of Muslims into the family of faith in Jesus Christ.



New ways for new movements

The first seven centuries of Muslim-Christian interchange saw only three movements of Muslims to Christianity. Then five more centuries passed without a single Muslim movement to Christ. Yet in the past 150 years, we have witnessed 82 movements of Muslims to faith in Jesus Christ; some of these have recorded hundreds of thousands of converts. Why now? What are we doing today that is producing so many Muslim converts to Jesus Christ?

Sometimes the question is not, "What are we doing?" but rather, "What did we stop doing?" For centuries, Christian approaches to Islam have been unchanged. We often lead with an "our religion vs your religion" approach. The problem is, Muslims do religion pretty well. Muslims who consider leaving Islam are rarely looking for a better religion. They know that religion cannot offer salvation, or they would simply retain their own.

Christians have also tried "our military vs your military". Though "Christian" armies at the dawn of Islam were vastly superior to the

rag-tag band of *jihadi* cavalries that streamed out of the Arabian Desert, these Christian forces found themselves defeated again and again. In fact, Islam excels as an underdog in a hostile environment. It's a potent religion of protest against

real and perceived injustices and has no difficulties rallying its adherents to religious holy war or *jihad*.

Christians, on the other hand, have difficulty rationalising invasions, justifying empires or championing colonial conquests. Such efforts do not reflect the pioneer of our faith who said, "Love your enemies ... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). After failed attempts



Today Christians are engaging Muslims as individuals



at medieval Crusades, and equally fleeting gains during the 19th-century colonial era, Christians today are less inclined to see conquest as a sustainable future.

Today Christians are engaging Muslims as individuals who, like us, are lost without a Saviour. Rather than following the

historic path of Crusades, colonisation and conquest — pathways that had more in common with Islamic *jihad* than the way of Christ — we are seeking to win hearts and minds to a Saviour who offers a spiritual kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

Likewise, missionaries are learning that it's not our religion that offers salvation to Muslims; it's our Lord! Testimonies of Muslim-background believers from West Africa to Indo-Malaysia reveal a common theme. It's not our religion, politics, economy, or civilisation that is prompting them to surrender their lives to a new faith; it's the Lord Jesus Christ.

LET'S PRAY:

- ◆ Pray that Christians will resist the temptation to imitate the Islamic model of military advance, conquest, and conversion (Zechariah 4:6).
- ◆ Pray that Christians will follow the supreme example of Jesus who, though "being in very nature God ... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7).
- ◆ Pray that we will stop following failed strategies of the past, but rather lift up the person of Jesus Christ who is fully able to draw all men, including Muslims, to Himself.

North Africa: the Lamb of God

North Africa was the vibrant homeland of Christianity for centuries before Islamic armies rolled across its shores and subjugated the population in the seventh century. Islamic *sharia* slowly choked the existing Christian communities, leaving one of the most concentrated Islamic populations in the House of Islam. Today North Africa's 100 million Muslims constitute 98–100 per cent of the population in Mauritania, Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.



NORTH AFRICA

Nations	6
Muslim people groups	82
Total population	100,631,350
Muslim population	99,029,643

North Africa has experienced waves of conquerors in its history, each leaving their mark, but it is the Arabs who continue to dominate both government and religious life. As North Africa emerged from European colonisation in the

20th century, North African governments have used Arab culture, and with it, Islam, to unify their nations against further foreign influence. Yet, at the heart of each North African nation is a stubbornly persistent aboriginal Berber populace whose roots are lost in antiquity. For the Berbers, North Africa is their homeland.

Despite centuries of cultural oppression, there remain at least 19 distinct Berber people groups in North Africa, with 30–40 million speakers of Berber languages. These range from the Moroccan Riffi (4–6 million) and Algerian Kabyle Berbers (5–6 million) in the north, to the nomadic Tuareg (1.2 million) of the Saharan Desert.

Though their numbers are difficult to determine, the appearance of new Christian churches in North Africa attests to a growing allegiance to the Christ who laid down His life as the Good Shepherd. Travelling through the villages of the Berber mountains, visiting homes and churches of believers, I often noticed the framed pictures of Jesus depicted as the Good Shepherd. Written beneath were words in a local Berber

language: *“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* A Berber woman named Zeinab explained to me, “The shepherd means so much to us because we are a people who have sheep. We know how the shepherd must love the sheep and hold the sheep close to his heart.”

These Berber believers are no longer sheep without a shepherd. They have found their Shepherd and are listening to His voice.

LET'S PRAY:

- ◆ Pray that the emerging Christian movements in North Africa will endure despite government efforts at Arabisation and Islamisation.
- ◆ Pray that new Berber translations of the gospel will awaken the faith of North Africa's indigenous Berber populations.
- ◆ Scripture translation, radio and satellite television, and indigenous witness are contributing to a rediscovery of the new yet ancient faith of Christianity in North Africa. Pray for the workers who produce these messages.

The Maures of Mauritania

Mauritania is almost three times as big as Germany and mainly consists of desert. Arabs, Berbers and black African people groups have met and mingled here. Around 70 per cent of the population speak Hassaniya Arabic and belong to the Arab-Berber Maures people group. One half of this group are called the *White Maures* and are made up of mostly merchants, noblemen, academics and other elite. The *Black Maures*, the other half, are descendants of slaves from Black Africa. The remaining 30 per cent of the

population represent various black African peoples living predominantly in the south and in the capital city, Nouakchott.

In 1957, 90 per cent of Maures still lived in tents as nomads and no major towns existed. A severe drought in the 1970s forced many to sell their surviving cattle and move to emerging cities, which have been growing ever since.

The Arabs spread Islam to the Sahara in the eighth century, which weakened the influence of the Berbers. In 1920 Mauritania became a French republic and gained independence as a state with Islamic jurisdiction in 1960. Revolutions in other

Islamic nations have led the population to observe Islamic law more carefully. For most of them this seems the only solution to all problems such as poverty, corruption, slavery, injustice, drought, etc. And yet, socially, many still practise a nomadic lifestyle — preferring to sit on a carpet rather than on chairs, showing little respect for traffic rules, and often marrying and divorcing several times.

Nowadays, the population of Mauritania is almost 100 per cent Sunni Muslim and there are only a handful of Christians in the country.

LET'S PRAY:

- ◆ Pray that this former nomadic people will find their way to Jesus.
- ◆ Pray for those believers whom God has called to demonstrate His love among the people of Mauritania.
- ◆ Pray that new Maure believers will grow strong in their faith and in courage to share it.



West Africa: the importance of self-discovery

In the House of Islam, the West Africa Room is a religious battleground between Muslims in the Saharan interior, Christians along the Atlantic coastlands and a stubbornly persistent animism that frequently bubbles up from beneath the surface of both religions. In both the Muslim north and the Christian south, African tribal religion still influences many ostensibly Muslim and Christian adherents. For many West Africans who are neither Muslim nor Christians, the practical question they face is, “What religion is powerful enough to protect me from the spiritual forces around me?”

Muslim-background believers in West Africa are drawn to Christ through different means. They speak of the vibrancy of Christian communities, and the impact of Christian schools, orphanages and community development projects. Many converts speak of the social justice they have sought and found in communities of faith that live out their gospel in everyday life. Permeating these effective outreaches is the fervent, passionate prayer of Christian

communities in West Africa who are known for their all-night vigils of prayer and fasting. Many Muslim converts attest to the

discovery for themselves that Christ is who He claims to be. Unlike the Qur’an, which can only be truly represented in

Arabic, the Bible begins with a translation into their local language. More than one Muslim-background believer commented: “I do not understand Arabic or the Qur’an. But I understand the Bible.”

When asked, “What do you say about Jesus?” a young Muslim convert replied, “The Qur’an says, ‘If you are in doubt, ask the people who were before you.’ I see Jesus as someone who clears my doubt. Jesus is someone who says you cannot come to the Father except through Him. I accept this; He is the truth and the life.”

Another offered this testimony: “As Muslims, all we did was five memorised prayers. But there was no assurance of heaven. No one could give me a good answer. This is what prompted me to look into who Jesus was.”

Once Muslims encounter Christ, through answered prayers, dreams and their own reading of

Scripture, they find a living Lord whom they cannot ignore, and for whom they are willing to give their lives.

LET’S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for the emerging movements to Christ in West Africa, that they will grow deep and strong in their newfound faith.
- ◆ Pray for protection from the forces of evil represented in Boko Haram, syncretistic religion, and social injustice.
- ◆ West African Muslims number more than 100 million (nearly a third of the region’s population) with more than 514 distinct ethnolinguistic people groups. Pray for those who remain unaware of the reality of Christ in this exceptionally diverse region.



WEST AFRICA	
Nations	18
Muslim people groups	514
Total population	335,556,076
Muslim population	105,239,092

The Garibou boys of West Africa

What started out historically as a method to train boys in Islamic values and memorisation of the Qur'an has turned in parts of West Africa into



These boys are deprived of their right to a childhood.



modern-day child exploitation, trafficking and slavery. *Garibou* or *Talibé* boys are a West African phenomenon and are found particularly in population centres in Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, or Guinea Bissau. These are boys sent by their parents for training in the Qur'an with a master or *marabout*. Objectives of this "apprenticeship" include memorisation of the entire Qur'an in Arabic (a language not understood by the boys) by the age of 19. By begging daily for food and money (quotas of which must be given to the *marabout*) the virtues

of patience, humility, suffering and good behaviour will be developed in the child. During the planting season, children will be hired out to farmers; the *marabout* receives all financial benefit.

If quotas are not met or memorisation not mastered, a child is punished with physical abuse. They live in fear, are prey to sexual abuse from older kids, and are victims of vehicular accidents due to begging directly in the road. Serious and chronic illnesses go untreated.

Child trafficking happens as well, with children being escorted by adults from one country to the other. For instance, in March 2015, two adults from Guinea Bissau were arrested attempting to traffick 54 children to Dakar, Senegal. At least 100,000 children are affected by this practice. Individual governments, under pressure from religious leaders, fail to enact their own laws or their international obligations, so the deaths of these children go unreported to authorities, though the bodies will be returned to the families.

These boys are deprived of their right to a childhood. If they escape from the control of the *marabout*, they typically prefer to live on the street, knowing that if they return to their family, they will be taken back to the place of suffering they have known.



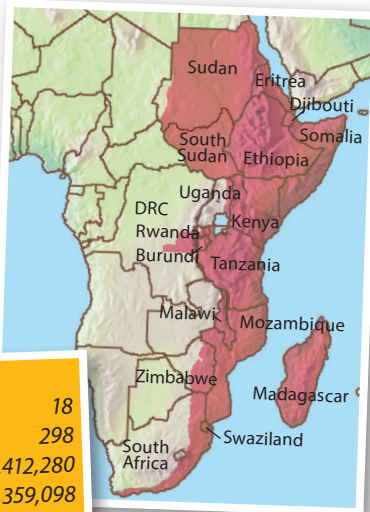
LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that West African governments would enforce laws that protect the rights and education of these boys. Pray that reports of abusive *marabouts* would be followed up and treated with justice.
- ◆ This regional system of Qur'anic training was originally different. Now, it is about financial gain for unscrupulous and false *marabouts*. Pray that those who exploit children under the guise of religion would be exposed and dealt with justly or that their hearts would be convicted of the evil they have been involved in "in the name of Allah".
- ◆ Pray for advocates willing to champion the rights of these children and for centres to multiply that can provide boys fleeing from these abusive situations with shelter, medical care, proper nutrition, love and education.

East Africa: becoming hyenas

The 19 nations of the East African Room stretch south from Sudan's Red Sea coast to South Africa's Cape of Good Hope. Arab traders dominated the slave and ivory trade here until the Europeans arrived in the 16th century, bringing Christian missionaries with them. Since then, Islam and Christianity have contended with African tribal religions for the region's 357 million inhabitants.

Christmas Day 2011 found me surrounded by 20 Muslim leaders from one of the oldest Muslim people groups in East Africa. They had gathered to receive training in their newfound Christian



EAST AFRICA	
Nations	18
Muslim people groups	298
Total population	357,412,280
Muslim population	78,359,098

faith. Their teacher, Yusuf, was a middle-aged African businessman of Orthodox Evangelical background. Yusuf had adopted the Muslims in this region as his mission field and had led many of their leaders to faith. When I asked him about his key to effectiveness, Yusuf said, "I used to try to make them Christian. But now I try to help them come to the Lord without the religious blanket."

When I asked how many of them had been baptised, 19 of the 20 Muslim-background believers raised their hands.

"How are you able to do this without persecution?" I asked.

"There is persecution," they replied, and pointed to Sheikh Abu Salam.

"Since I began teaching about Isa," Abu Salam said, "I was chased from the mosque. Now I am fighting my case in the court. I'm defending myself as a Muslim follower of *Isa al-Masih [Jesus]*. I've told the court, 'This is my mosque! Why should I leave it? I have a right to worship here.'"

Abu Salam's courage was not lost on me. In a community ruled by *sharia*

law, by choosing to remain in the mosque, Sheikh Abu Salam risked a death sentence for the crime of apostasy.

"Why don't you just leave the mosque?" I asked, "What is the benefit of remaining there?"

Several voices answered, "To reach others! If we create another faith community outside the mosque, there will be a gap between us and the lost. Instead, we insert Jesus into all of our Muslim practices."

A Muslim woman spoke up, "Jesus came as a human to save humans, even though He is God. If God had wanted to save hyenas, He would have become like a hyena. We want to save Muslims and so we must go into the mosque. This is why our brothers and sisters risk themselves: to win others."

LET'S PRAY:

- ◆ Pray for followers of *Isa al-Masih* in East Africa to have wisdom and courage as they live their faith in their local communities.
- ◆ Pray for more freedom in this region for people to learn about and express their faith without fear.
- ◆ Some 80 million Muslims in East Africa do not yet know Jesus Christ: pray for more people like Yusuf to adopt this region as their mission field.

The Afar: journey into an unknown future

The homeland of the Afar stretches along the south-western coast of the Red Sea, from the south of Eritrea through the north of Djibouti, turning west into Central Ethiopia. It's a hot and dry area, including wide plains and deserts. As a nomadic people, the Afar have learned to live in this extremely barren land. Seemingly effortlessly, they travel from one meagre pasture ground to the next with their camels and their small livestock, living mostly on the milk of their animals.

The history of this people is passed on orally, with very few written accounts. Some of those testify to Afar history before Islamic times. The neighbouring peoples know the Afar for their courage and their dauntlessness in conflict. They have fought many battles to defend themselves and their land against enemies from outside.

But today the Afar face threats from new enemies that prohibit their traditional ways of living — namely, the lack of pasture land, civil wars and national borders. Many of them have moved to urban areas, where

these formerly courageous herdsmen and warriors live among other peoples as a minority with little political influence or self-determination.

Over the last few decades, a few people from the Afar have decided to follow Christ. They gather in small groups, shining as lights in a dark land. To this fledgling new community of Christ-followers the gospel means hope not only for themselves, but also for their whole people group. Some of them face persecution from their families and clans. But despite the challenges, they faithfully follow Christ and share the gospel fearlessly.

LET'S PRAY:

- ◆ For the few Afar believers to have courage and wisdom, sharing Christ with their fellow countrymen.
- ◆ For the Afar, whom God created with a unique identity, to find ways to celebrate their cultural identity in the midst of change.
- ◆ That keys to communicating the message of Jesus clearly to this people will be discovered and shared.



The Arab World: He knew! Amaal's story

The Arab World is the spiritual heartland of Islam. It is the birthplace of Islam, home to its holiest shrines, and guardian of the untranslatable Qur'an. Yet in reality, Arabic is a family of languages. Arabic dialects vary widely, and most Arabs today find the seventh-century Qur'anic vocabulary confusing. As a result, many Arab Muslims are seeking direction from other sources. Such was the case of Amaal.

Amaal was a 23-year old Muslim girl with a smile that could light up a room. Like so many Egyptians, she was warm and friendly, and curious about Westerners. This led her to a friendship with a Christian family from America who showed her the love of Christ and led her to faith in Him.

Amaal's immediate impulse was to share her new faith with her mother. After watching the *Jesus* film together, Amaal's mother sat motionless, then said, "I should kill you for this." Amaal was stunned, and soon became concerned that her uncle would do what her mother couldn't.

Amaal left home and found a job in a

resort hotel, only to have her boss attempt to blackmail her in exchange for sexual favours. Amaal fled again and was soon arrested by the police. "Tell us who has converted you," they demanded, "and we will let you go."

When I found Amaal a year later, she was hiding in the home of a kind Muslim couple. I gave her a New Testament and promised to meet her again. Knowing I would have only one day with Amaal before leaving the country, I wondered what were the most important Scripture verses I could share with this sister whose faith had cost her so much. I didn't have to wonder long. Amaal had devoured the first 10 chapters of Matthew's Gospel. "Listen to this," she said.

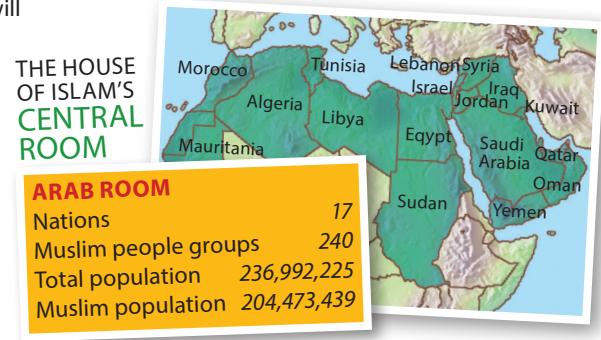
"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you ... On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." (Matthew 10:17-20)

Amaal looked up at me, tears glistening in her eyes. Her smile had

returned. "He knew," she exclaimed, "Jesus knew!" For Amaal, it was enough: Jesus knew her situation and would always be with her. "Jesus is inside me now," she said, pointing to her heart. "He will never leave me."

LET'S PRAY:

- ◆ Pray for Muslim-background believers like Amaal who suffer persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Pray for the youth of the Arab World to have the opportunity to learn about other faiths without persecution or threats.
- ◆ Pray for political and religious leaders in the Arab World to support freedom for their people to explore and pursue their own understanding of God.



Iraq: from empire to chaos

The area around present-day Iraq was very important in the centuries before Christ. Mesopotamia comprised the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and included the biblical city of Nineveh and also Babylon as a political and economic centre. More recently, Baghdad was a famous university city and the centre of art and science. But today, almost nothing of this has remained. Bombings have been part of daily life for many years. Two years ago, the extremist group Islamic State invaded large parts of Iraq, including Mosul, the second largest city in the country.

As if it was not bad enough that Islamic State is terrorising Iraqi Christians, other ethnic groups such as the Yezidis, and even Muslims, by expulsion, murder and enslavement, the Shia and Sunni Muslims in Iraq also fight each other through political and non-political means. Hostility between ethnic groups continues to divide the nation. There are many smaller, discriminated and persecuted minorities such as the Turkmen, Shabak and Kaka'i. The Kurds, after years of oppression, are now

strengthening their semi-autonomous part of Iraq, a development that is regarded with discomfort by Iraqi Arabs. Thousands of exiled people, most of them Yezidis, live in camps with little hope of returning to their home villages. The Christians have left the country in hundreds of thousands, seeking safety in the West. An end to this chaos is not in sight.

But there are moments where it appears that God is at work in the midst of all this! When the few remaining Christians show the love of Christ to Muslims and Yezidis in practical ways by offering food, blankets or counselling. When a hall is filled with people seeking to know more about Christ. When

the previously very secretive Yezidis question their traditional beliefs and want to follow Jesus. Out of chaos, we can see glimpses of a new Kingdom.

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ That those left grief-stricken by war will experience God's mercy and comfort.
- ◆ That a stable state can be created that will respect all the minorities.
- ◆ For the persevering Christians — that through their witness many will find Christ.



Turkestan: led by the Spirit

Atila the Hun, Tamerlane, the Golden Horde — the legendary names of nomadic Turkic tribes have struck fear across the plains of Central Asia for millennia. Today the descendants of these tribes number more than 200 million and are called Uzbeks, Uighurs, Kazakhs, Tatars, Turkmen, Azeris, and Turks. Nearly 160 million of these Turkic people are Muslims. Together they comprise a Room in the House of Islam known as Turkestan.

There are multiple movements of Turkic Muslims coming to faith in Jesus Christ today. In open countries, such as Kazakhstan and Russia, they meet in church buildings. More frequently, however, Turkestan's persecuted believers meet discretely in homes or private settings. "We often face troubles," said a Uzbek convert named Bek, "but still we are praising God. We have a saying, 'If you are arrested, praise God that you have not been beaten. If you have been beaten, praise God that you have not been killed. And if you have been killed, praise God that you are now with Jesus in heaven!'"

This spirit of thankfulness in the face of

trials has deep roots among believers in Turkestan. I witnessed it one January nearly 30 years ago among the intrepid pioneers I met serving beyond the Tian Shan mountains of Central Asia. It was bitterly cold and little heat was available in the city where three families struggled on £50 a month teaching English at a communist university.

That evening, one of the teachers named John introduced me to one of his students, Abdullah, a Muslim-background believer from the Uighur people. Abdullah was the first known Uighur to come to faith in Christ.

"How did you lead Abdullah to faith?" I asked John.

"We didn't," John replied. "The Holy Spirit and prayer did." John explained, "Abdullah came to me last year with a troubling dream in which someone gave him a sacred book to read. 'What could this book be?' he asked."

"I was nervous," John said. "In my desk drawer I had an old translation of the New Testament in the archaic Uighur script."

"Could this be the book in your dream?" I asked.

"Abdullah opened the little volume and said, 'Oh, it is in the old script. My father taught me how to read this.' I left

the book with Abdullah. A few weeks later he came to tell me that he had found Jesus as his Saviour and Lord."

"So you see," John smiled. "The prayers of God's people, and the Holy Spirit led Abdullah to Jesus."

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for persecuted Muslim-background believers in Turkestan, for courage and fellowship and encouragement in their faith.
- ◆ Pray for courageous missionaries who are taking the gospel to each of Turkestan's 227 Muslim people groups.
- ◆ Pray that the nations of Turkestan would promote freedom in matters of religion, so that arrests, beatings and death would not be commonplace for those who are seeking.

TURKESTAN ROOM	
Nations	16
Muslim people groups	227
Total population	203,251,345
Muslim population	159,225,454



Turkey: a crossroads for refugees

Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey has a complicated history with a significant role in both continents. It has been thrust into the forefront of the European refugee crisis, with Syrian refugees fleeing from the destruction of their nation now numbering over 1.7 million.

Turkey started receiving refugees from Syria at the start of the civil war over five years ago, expecting that the conflict would be quickly resolved. As the war has stretched on this situation has created tension in Turkey, with refugees caught in limbo — unable to return home, but unable to get work permits or settle permanently in Turkey. Turks are increasingly concerned at rising rents caused by the increasing population and the risk of Islamic State forces bringing their conflict into Turkey. The terrorist group is suspected of causing the October 2015 bombing in Turkey's capital city, Ankara, which killed 102 people and injured many others.

Turkey's position in the Syrian refugee crisis has led them into negotiations with

the European Union and United Nations Security Council about their long-term role in providing for the placement of refugees in Europe. The outcome of these negotiations will have a significant impact on Turks and Syrians. Both remain at a crossroads, wondering what the future will hold for those who are native to the country and those who have been forced to settle there.

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for tolerance and patience on the part of Turks who are offering refuge and hospitality to Syrian refugees.
- ◆ Pray for peace in Turkey, and for the Church in Turkey to lead by example in unity and love.
- ◆ Pray for the refugees in Turkey who have been there for many years, longing for home. Though it may seem impossible, pray for peace in Syria. According to Psalm 46:9, "He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire."



The Persian Room: Haik Hovsepien

The Persian Room encompasses all of modern-day Iran and spills into neighbouring Iraq, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Its nearly 100 million inhabitants speak variations of the ancient Persian language. Unlike the Sunni Muslim majorities elsewhere in the House of Islam, most Muslims in Iran are Shi'ites.

When the Ayatollah Khomeini established an Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979, most viewed it as a horrible blow to Christianity. However, in the decades since, millions of Iranians have rejected the Islamic theocracy that has gripped their country, and hundreds of thousands have turned to Jesus Christ.

While thousands of Christian converts have been arrested, others have been forcibly driven out of the country. Still more live secretly inside Iran, worshipping in underground house churches or in the privacy of their own homes through the guidance of satellite-television broadcasts. This growing fellowship of believers has come at a cost to those who have long been witnesses to Christ, such as Iranian-Armenian Christian, Haik Hovsepien.

In 1980 Haik became first national bishop of the Assemblies of God churches. While the government allowed ethnic Christians, such as the Armenian Haik, to practise their faith, they did not allow them to share their faith with Muslims. Haik refused to yield to government pressures, saying, "If we go to jail or die for our faith, we will not yield."

One Muslim convert was the Reverend Mehdi Dibaj. In 1983, Dibaj was arrested without trial and pressured to recant his faith. Dibaj endured with the confession, "I am not only satisfied to be in prison for the honour of His Holy Name, but am ready to give my life for the sake of Jesus my Lord." In 1993, in a secret tribunal, Dibaj was sentenced to death for converting from Islam.

When Bishop Haik learned about the sentence he was faced with a choice. As an Armenian, Haik could remain silent and avoid persecution, or he could speak out. He refused to turn his back on his Muslim-background brother and went public with efforts to save Dibaj. These proved effective and in response to international outcry, Dibaj was released on 16 January 1994.

Three days later, Bishop

Haik was abducted from the streets of Tehran. His tortured body was found in an unmarked grave with 27 stab wounds in his chest. At Haik's funeral, Mehdi Dibaj spoke through his tears, "When Jesus died on the cross, only Barabbas knew that Jesus had died for him. When Bishop Haik died, I know that he died for me."

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for bold Christian witnesses like Haik Hovsepien to continue to take the gospel to the Persian World's Shi'ite Muslim population.
- ◆ Pray for the nations in Persia to allow greater freedom of religion, permitting people to make up their own minds about what they will believe.
- ◆ Pray for Iraqi migrants and refugees rebuilding their lives in new places, to be blessed in their new lands and a blessing to those around them.



PERSIAN ROOM

Nations	3
Muslim people groups	105
Total population	99,009,985
Muslim population	97,957,533

Tajikistan: seeking Jesus

The small Central Asian nation of Tajikistan is home to over 8 million people, 70 per cent of whom are under the age of 30. Are Tajik young people in this largely Sunni Muslim region curious about Jesus?

“How do we actually know if we are one of Jesus’ sheep?” asked Ali, a young Tajik student, as we were reading through the book of John together.

We were in the midst of a weekly Bible study with Ali and three other young Central Asian college students. It was good to see Ali’s interest in Jesus grow as we studied together. He asked for a Bible, which he read regularly, and even took with him when he travelled back to his hometown to

see his family on summer break.

Six weeks later, at the start of the school year, he returned to the campus. Without his Bible. I was a bit concerned and asked him who had taken his Bible from him. Had he got into trouble? Had his Bible been confiscated?

Ali shared a story that surprised us and gave us great hope: his sister, in her searching for materials about Jesus, had asked for his Bible to keep as part of her reading collection. As we

enquired further, Ali told us how she was always looking for more information — stories, films, music, anything — about Jesus. In Ali’s words she was a “Jesus person”. Still a good Muslim, yet seeking Jesus.

Jesus told us that the harvest is ready. Even in a poor, hard-to-reach mountainous nation such as Tajikistan, many Muslims — like Ali and his sister — are longing for truth and hope. And they are finding it in Jesus.

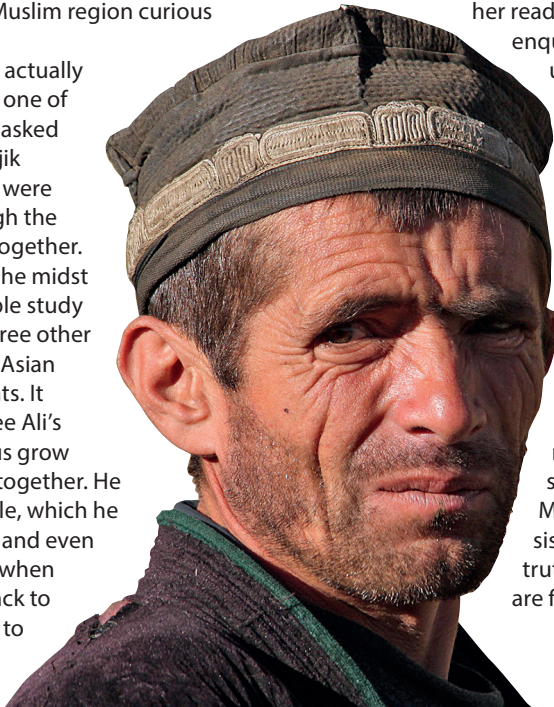


How do we actually know if we are one of Jesus’ sheep?



LET’S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that Tajik hearts would be further open to the good news of Jesus, and that many Tajiks would have opportunities to meet Christians who would lovingly share Jesus with them.
- ◆ Currently, there are very few believers in Tajikistan. Pray that the existing Church would be strengthened and obedient in sharing Jesus with others. Pray that the Church would multiply!
- ◆ Pray for a greater hunger among Tajiks both in Tajikistan and in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Russia. There are very few believers among the Tajiks living abroad. Pray that God would send more labourers into these communities (Luke 10:2).





Millions on the move: a *hijra* of faith?

by Steve Cochrane

The migration of millions of Muslims and Christians from particularly Syria and Iraq represents one of the most important events of the first part of the 21st century. Due to the Syrian civil war now in its fifth year, over four million refugees have sought safety in surrounding countries of the region as well as in the West. Two million have left Iraq, with another 1.9 million internally displaced inside the country. This intentional leaving of physical homelands parallels similar journeys that have happened in all three Semitic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham leaving his homeland of Ur in Mesopotamia, Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, and Jesus as a baby being taken by his parents to Egypt to flee Herod are some of the many times of movement in Jewish and Christian history.

In Islam there is also the concept of a journey of faith captured in the Arabic word *hijra*. Literally meaning “migration” or “journey”, the idea of *hijra* traces back to the Prophet Muhammad’s flight with believing companions from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. The *hijra* was due to persecution from the Meccan merchant establishment, and resulted in the consolidation of the first community of Muslims. It also became the beginning year for the marking of Islamic history, with dates written thereafter AH (*After Hijra*).

A similar concept in Islam is actually one of the five pillars, the *hajj*. Meaning “pilgrimage”, this refers to the obligatory journey of a Muslim (with some exceptions) during their lifetime to the holy city of Mecca. The two concepts of *hijra* and *hajj*,

“

For many refugees who have left homelands, there is no promise of ever returning.

”

though similar, also have subtle differences. Both are done in faith, both involve leaving the homeland for an intentional purpose. But in the *hijra* is implied a longer migration, perhaps one that will last the rest of life on earth.

The Prophet and companions did return victoriously to Mecca in 630 CE after eight years in Medina. For many refugees who have left homelands, there is no promise of ever returning. How many of them see their migration as a *hijra* central to their faith? That is of course uncertain, but living with the reality of a spiritual dimension could bring encouragement to their struggle. Another question to be considered is on the part of communities, especially in the West,

receiving these refugees. Does this *hijra* of faith involve a desire to convert European and other Western populations to Islam via getting visas to reside there? Prophet Muhammad’s *hijra* certainly involved leaving Mecca to escape persecution and strengthen Islam. It also involved a desire to convert those in Medina who were responsive.

But a concern whether Muslim refugees will seek to convert others, or even engage in terrorist activities as some have warned, should be subsumed within a hospitality of generous faith on the part of those receiving these Muslims (and Christians) from the Middle East as well as North Africa. Though having various motives, millions of these migrants are “true *hijras*”.

Egyptian Muslim writer Sahar El-Nadi has defined a “true *hijra*” as someone living out five important areas. First of all, they have a strong faith that even in great suffering continues to trust and depend on Allah. Second, there is knowledge that there is purpose in this journey and that it is not meaningless. Third, the “true *hijra*” continues to engage in regular habits and acts of worship even in their new homeland. Fourth, there is a continued desire for Allah that is not overwhelmed by societal pressures around them. And last, there is a commitment to a righteous life in the new environment.

These five marks of a “true *hijra*” are

certainly consistent with one following Judaism or the Christian faith. They also provide a framework for hospitality from lands these “true *hijras*” are arriving in. For all three faiths the concept of a *hijra* or journey that will last a lifetime and indeed into eternity is a commonly held reality. The idea of a “true *hijra*” provides another bridge between faiths so needed in this 21st-century context.

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Western South Asia: a new name!

Western South Asia is one of the most crowded and volatile Rooms in the House of Islam. It is home to more than 300 million Muslims whose 186 ethnic people groups are often in conflict with one another and, throughout history, with outside imperial forces. In the midst of this embattled region, God is drawing thousands of Muslims to new life in Jesus Christ.

Akbar al-Masih was a Muslim-background believer from Afghanistan who I met in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Like many of his fellow Pushtun people group, Akbar's life had been torn apart by war. When he was young his people fought the Russians. After the Russians were expelled, his Sunni Muslim tribe battled against neighbouring Shi'ite Muslim tribes. Then, after the US invasion in 2012, Akbar joined the millions of refugees who streamed into camps and slums in Pakistan. It was here that Akbar met a Christian family who disciplined him and helped him rebuild his life. I asked Akbar to tell me how he had come to faith in Jesus.

"My name at birth," he said, "was

Muhammad Akbar." The name meant "Muhammad is the Greatest." It was also the name of a Pushtun hero who had driven the British out of Afghanistan in the 19th century. Many Afghan families named their sons Muhammad Akbar.

"It was between the wars," Akbar said, "that I was in an open country looking for a job. One day I came upon a cinema that was showing a film about the life of the Prophet *Isa* [Jesus]. I decided to go inside."



WESTERN SOUTH ASIA	
Nations	3
Muslim people groups	186
Total population	713,922,175
Muslim population	315,998,874

"I watched the film alone and learned many things about the Prophet *Isa* that I did not know. I was broken-hearted when I saw how they beat him and nailed him to a cross. I said to myself, 'Now *Isa* will have his vengeance! He will call down the fires of heaven to destroy these evil men!'"

"Instead, *Isa* looked down at them with compassion. *Isa* said, 'Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.'"

"It was at that instant," Akbar said, "that I said in my heart, 'That is for me.'"

"That is when I became a follower of *Isa*. I knew that this is what my people were missing. We were always seeking revenge, 'an eye for an eye.' But *Isa al-Masih* [Jesus the Messiah] showed me a different way."

"And that is why I changed my name," he said, "from Muhammad Akbar to Akbar al-Masih, 'the Messiah is the Greatest One!'"

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for the war-torn nations of Western South Asia, that they find a new path forward through the Prince of Peace.
- ◆ Pray for courageous witnesses like Akbar al-Masih and the missionaries who disciplined him.
- ◆ Pray for the 300 million Muslims of Western South Asia who do not yet know the peace that passes all understanding that Jesus offers them.

The Deoband and Deobandis

With a population of 100,000, the town of Deoband in North India is small compared to the many megacities and large towns across the region. Fields of sugarcane and mango trees surround it, and in the town there are more



motorbikes and ox carts than cars. Yet the Darul Uloom *madrassa* (an Islamic centre of learning) in Deoband is significant for tens of millions of Muslims around the world.

Darul Uloom opened in 1867 with the purpose of protecting and promoting conservative Sunni Islam across the Indian subcontinent. Since then many thousands of men have studied there, and Darul Uloom graduates have started *madrassas* in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, South Africa, Great Britain and North America. Twenty per cent of Muslims in India and Pakistan consider themselves to be Deobandi (over 75 million people) and in Britain over 40 per cent of the mosques are Deobandi.

For many Sunni Muslims, Deoband represents a scholarly, conservative, and pure Islam. It cannot shake the reputation, however, that it is also connected with militant extremism. The Taliban traces roots to Deobandi *madrassas* in Pakistan, and suspicion about extremist ties grew so great that in 2013 Darul Uloom issued a *fatwa* (a public statement) denouncing terrorism.

Muslims come from all over the world to visit Deoband. Some come as tourists, others stay for seven or more years to be fully trained as mosque or *madrassa* leaders. An Iranian Sunni gentleman, Ibrahim Bhai, visited for two weeks one winter. He was

so happy to be in Deoband even for a short time. "This is a place where God does great things," he said. May it be so Lord!

Imagine what it would look like if Deobandis were filled with an awareness of who Jesus is and what He has done for us. The influence of Deoband has spread across nations. There are networks that span continents and a people who are passionate about what they believe and sharing that with others. May that commitment and passion be for the glory of Jesus.

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ For the town of Deoband itself to be a place of peace and blessing. That the Hindu/Muslim tensions that often erupt in the region would have no place there.
- ◆ For truth, justice and peace to flow through Deobandi networks around the world.
- ◆ That Deobandi women, most of whom are hidden from sight, would know their value to the Father and find His love through Jesus.

Eastern South Asia

With nearly 850 million inhabitants, Eastern South Asia comprises the most crowded Room in the House of Islam. Nearly 284 million people in this region are Muslims. Sufi Islam — a mystical form of Islam — is widespread across the Muslim world, but may have its origins here where Islam’s rigid monotheism collided with the mystical strains of South Asian Hinduism.

Today it’s possible to find dozens of movements, each with several thousand baptised Muslim-background believers loving and worshipping Jesus across Eastern South Asia. These movements to Christ have come at the cost of severe persecution through brave witnesses and skilled Bible translators who have laboured to make the gospel known in ways that local Muslim populations can understand.

Recently I had the opportunity to survey several of these movements, asking scores of converts, “What did God use to bring you to faith in Jesus Christ?” One of many memorable testimonies came from a believer named Sharif.

“As a young boy,” Sharif said, “I was expelled from the Muslim school for asking the teacher difficult questions. The teacher shouted at me, ‘You are a sinner boy, and you are going to hell!’ My father was so angry. He kicked me out of the house and forbade any family member from talking to me.”

“One day, I was surprised by a white-haired missionary who spoke to me, ‘Hey brother, do you want to ride with me in this rickshaw?’ Before he left, the missionary gave me a New Testament.”

“That night, I read it. The pages seemed to turn themselves until the sun began to rise the next morning. I was reading the Gospel of John. In chapter three verse 17 it said, ‘Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.’”

Years later, as Sharif recounted his story to me, the tears streamed down his cheeks, “You see, I *wasn’t* condemned to hell, I *wasn’t* just a sinner boy. Jesus had come into the world to save *me*.”

Over the next decade, Sharif faced many trials for his faith in Jesus. His father threatened to kill him; a gang of Muslim thugs beat him severely, and twice left him for dead. “It doesn’t matter,” Sharif said. “If they cut my body into a thousand pieces, every piece will cry out, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord!’”

Sharif eventually led his father to faith in Christ. “A church now meets in our home,” he

told me. Today, Sharif is part of a movement of Muslims to faith in Jesus Christ that may number more than 100,000 believers.

LET’S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for the movements of Muslims to Christ in Eastern South Asia to multiply.
- ◆ Pray for bold witnesses like Sharif to endure persecution and remain faithful to Christ.
- ◆ Pray for the 284 million lost Muslims in Eastern South Asia to come to faith in Jesus Christ.



EASTERN SOUTH ASIA	
Nations	4
Muslim people groups	65
Total population	844,398,260
Muslim population	283,393,591

Bihar

Abdul has spent all of his 23 years in Baisi, a town of about 10,000 people in Bihar, India. As we arrived in Baisi we asked several different men if there were any Christians or churches nearby and most of them gave us boastful variations of “No, this place is only Muslims and some Hindus, there are no Christians here. If you want a church you should go to Purnia.” (Purnia is a city about 25 miles away.)

Baisi is a town locally famous for being a stronghold of Islam; young men from across the region come there to be trained in the ways of Islam. Yet somehow, when

we found Abdul and his father working in their roadside shop we discovered they had a deep interest in Jesus and His books. For the last few months they have been studying the books of Jesus, obeying what it says, and even leading similar studies with their friends and relatives. A few of the Muslim leaders in the town have begun to show a desire to read these books and hear more about Jesus. Something is happening in Baisi.

The state of Bihar contains approximately 100 million people living in villages just like Baisi. Only a few decades ago Bihar was referred to as “the graveyard of missions” because no ministry ever seemed to take root and grow. Things are changing but Bihar still only has a Christian population of 0.05 per cent, which rivals regions such as Somalia and Afghanistan for the lowest overall percentage in the world.

Little has been done to reach the 17–20 million Muslims of this state. Muslims like Abdul, his family, and many others in villages like Baisi throughout Bihar are still waiting to hear the good news about Jesus. In the

future, when someone in these villages asks where the Christians or churches are, what will be the reply?

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that the Lord of the harvest would raise up workers in Baisi and throughout Bihar.
- ◆ Pray that the Spirit of God and the Word of God would draw Muslim leaders and whole family groups throughout Bihar to Jesus.
- ◆ Pray that Isaiah 55:11 will come to pass in Bihar: “... It is the same with my word. I send it out and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.”



Indo-Malaysia Room

The Indo-Malaysia Room in the House of Islam includes Malaysia, Singapore, the southern Philippines, and Indonesia's sprawling chain of more than 17,000 islands. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world with a population of 250 million, 87 per cent of whom are Muslims.

INDO-MALAYSIA

Nations	5
Muslim people groups	282
Total population	283,696,115
Muslim population	201,000,020



Long before the arrival of Christianity and Islam, the peoples of Indo-Malaysia spent centuries steeping in a soup of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Today, these ancient religious flavours continue to season the region's societies and cultures.

Indonesia saw the first modern movement of Muslims to Christ in 1870, then in 1967–71 the largest turning of Muslims to Christ in history, as over two million Muslims were baptised into Christian churches. Today, many Muslims in Indo-Malaysia are responding to a simple five-step approach to sharing the Christian faith, “Any-3: Anyone, Anywhere, Any Time”, that a man named Mike Shipman adapted from Jesus’ discourse with the Samaritan woman in John 4.

- **STEP ONE** is to get connected with a Muslim. Most Muslims in Indo-Malaysia never hear the gospel because they don’t know any Christians.
- **STEP TWO** is to welcome a God conversation. In this region, Muslims love to talk about God. Mike suggests asking your new Muslim friend, “What do you do in your religion to please God?” — a great starter for a conversation about spiritual things.
- **STEP THREE** involves exploring the results of our efforts to please God and often leads to questions about assurance of salvation. Many Muslims accept that we

cannot know the will of God or have any confidence that He will save us.

- **STEP FOUR** gets to the heart of the gospel message and the narrative of Jesus’ death for our eternal life.
- **STEP FIVE** invites your friend to receive salvation through Jesus.

This simple approach to sharing the message of Jesus is easy for new believers to follow. As a result it is spreading throughout Indo-Malaysia. Thousands of Muslims have prayed to invite Jesus to be their Saviour, and are now following Christ as His disciples.

LET’S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that effective gospel methods such as satellite television, the *Jesus* film, personal Christian witness, and Any-3 will continue to spread the gospel across Indo-Malaysia.
- ◆ Pray for the persecution that always accompanies the emerging movements in Indo-Malaysia.
- ◆ Pray for Indo-Malaysia’s more than 280 million lost Muslims in 282 different people groups, many of whom have yet to receive any Christian witness.

An Indonesian journey: *merantau*

“And the priest said to them, ‘Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord.’”

Judges 18:6

Particularly among the more simple, rural class of people on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, the idea or concept of *merantau* is very popular. *Merantau* simply means “to wander about”.

The Indonesian concept of *merantau* usually involves a young person, particularly a male, leaving home in his late teens or very early 20s. Where he is headed or how long he will be gone is uncertain. It contains

the idea of possibly seeking his fame and fortune. The attitude is often that the wanderer will go from his familiar rural area and head to the city. He will take almost any job with the hope of a brighter future and looking for an “experience” both in the form of a job or profession, but also looking for life experiences.

Often unclear as to what he is looking for, and just going on a journey for a few years

hoping to find something, a wanderer is often more open and feels much less social pressure from family, friends and neighbours while on their *merantau*. It is easier and less risky to share the gospel with these young people outside their villages, as often where they have come from is quite staunchly Islamic.

The reverse is also true. It is possible to send young Indonesian missionaries to new places and have them simply show up and explain to the local people that they are on a *merantau* or journey. This is an acceptable way to start getting to know a new community and share the message of Jesus.

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for Indonesians on a *merantau*, that those wandering aimlessly would wander right into the Kingdom of God.
- ◆ Pray that Christians, particularly businessmen, would see these young men as potential people they can invest in, both for a business experience and for the Kingdom of God.
- ◆ Pray for the release of young enthusiastic missionaries to go on a *merantau* to tough unreached areas to see God's Kingdom established in areas where at this time there is no witness of the gospel!



Western Cham of Cambodia

Kandi was worried. Living in rural Cambodia with serious health problems in 2000, it was hard to find good medical care. Left by her husband to raise her children alone, Kandi was relieved to find a couple whom God had sent to meet her at this time.

The couple had studied Kandi's language and listened carefully to her. They prayed with her and referred her to the Mercy Medical Centre where more of God's people offered low-cost medical care to the very poor. Here, Kandi heard more of Jesus and the perfect sacrifice given for all people.

Kandi's people are Cham. They can be found in nearly every province of Cambodia, generally where large river systems are located. Cham people originated from the ancient Champa kingdom in present-day Vietnam. Due to conflict with the Vietnamese long ago, the Cham migrated west in large numbers to Cambodia and became the Western Cham: their current population is approximately 400,000. Remnants of the original Cham continue living in Vietnam and are known ethnically as the Eastern Cham

(about 80,000 people). Very few Cham have heard or understood who Jesus is.

In 2000, God nudged one of his servants to begin to pray weekly for the Cham to come to faith in Jesus. Another woman joined her. In 2014 there were ten or more believers from different countries joining to pray for the Cham. It continues today and is the key to the Cham journey to faith in Jesus. Today, through this guide, we will add hundreds of thousands to that number, praying for the Cham.

It was many years later when the above mentioned couple met Kandi again. God had answered their prayers by healing her. She had also become a true believer in Jesus, together with her son, and her husband had returned. Kandi had many questions that other people asked her about her faith that she didn't know the answers to. So the couple encouraged her to begin a Bible study

in her own village, starting with her family. So the journey of the Cham towards faith in Jesus goes on!

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for Kandi and her son to grow in their faith and for the rest of her family and village.
- ◆ Pray for the ongoing translation of the Scriptures in their heart language.
- ◆ Pray for a movement of Cham people to faith in Jesus.



The journey of faith

The path that a Muslim takes to become a follower of Christ is not a straightforward or easy one. Yet the stories told to one researcher by over a thousand Muslim-background believers reveal that there are markers along the way that regularly point Muslim seekers from all over the world in this direction.

One marker is the Qur'an. As many Christians do with the Bible, Muslims have clung to the Qur'an as the core of their faith. They have memorised and treasured it, even though they have often not even understood it. But this is changing. Before his death in 2005, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia sponsored the translation of the Qur'an into languages all over the world. Thinking it would advance Islam, Fahd would be amazed to learn that it's had the opposite effect.

Abdul, a movement leader in South Asia, was asked how he came to faith in Christ. He answered, "It began when I read the Qur'an in my own language. Before that I had memorised most of it in Arabic, even though I did not understand Arabic. When I read it in my own language, I understood

for the first time: it had no plan of salvation, no assurance that if I was a good Muslim I would go to heaven." For Abdul, that was the beginning of his search for salvation, which ended with his reading the New Testament and surrendering his life to faith in Jesus Christ.

Another marker is raised in the stories about Muhammad. Muslims revere the Prophet Muhammad, but those who diligently study the Qur'an and the *Hadiths* (stories taken from the life of Muhammad), report contradictions with the common legend of a gracious and generous leader. They are disturbed by a prophet of God who would alter the divine revelation when it suited him, amass wealth at the expense of conquered foes, and spread his religion at the point of a sword. Such discomfort can be the first step on a journey to another way of believing.

One final marker, echoed in the testimonies of many Muslims who have journeyed to a new faith, is found in the endemic violence that has plagued Islam for 14 centuries. The idea that Islam is a religion of peace is shattered by Muslims who live with the reality of war and violence every day. When we see outbreaks of Islamic

violence reported, remember that most of the victims are Muslims, and many of these Muslims are rejecting that violence to follow the Prince of Peace.

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for Muslims who are questioning their faith, that they will meet others who have walked that journey and found it led them to Christ.
- ◆ Pray for scholars and teachers to study Islam with honest, seeking hearts and courage to question.
- ◆ Pray for those Muslims who decide to follow Jesus, that they will find fellowship and peace within their new faith.



My journey: seeking God's presence

A testimony from a Muslim-background believer:

"I was born into a Muslim family. Some of my family members were secular and worldly, and some were religious. My Sufi father was very religious, and had a strong influence in my life. At the age of ten, I started to search for God. I was eager to seek His presence and did all that was in my power to come closer to Him."

"As a youth I continued to search with even greater intensity by praying, fasting and going to mosques. I was not only doing the regular prayers, but I was calling upon God with all my heart. Those years of searching after God in Islam ended in the

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Come and see for yourself:
Jesus is alive, He heals and sets
people free.
”

realisation that God was no nearer to me, in fact he seemed very distant from me. By the time I entered college I had given up on my search for God."

"One evening while walking together with

friends, I heard the gospel for the first time. A born-again Christian, introduced to me by a common friend, was testifying and sharing the message of Jesus to me openly on the

streets of Cairo. One week later I attended church with him — only four weeks later I would receive Jesus as my Saviour! My experience was exactly as the young believer had explained to me: 'Come and see for yourself: Jesus is alive, He heals and sets people free.'"

"That evening I prayed to Jesus for the first time. I asked Him: 'What is the way? Is Christ the way to God?' The answer was 'Yes.' I said in my heart, 'OK,' and experienced immediately God's presence, heavenly joy and peace. I became a Christian when I said OK to Jesus!"

"Sometime afterwards I suffered strong persecution from family and the local community, but the presence of the Lord was so strong in me that I did not care about the loss and the risk I took by becoming a follower of Jesus."

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that Muslims will seek God Himself and not a religion.
- ◆ Pray that Muslims who follow Christ in nations that do not have freedom of faith will find ways to be a clear testimony to their relatives and friends.
- ◆ Pray for Muslims who are longing for a greater understanding of God's presence, that they will find Him through any possible means.



Luton: a stand against extremism

Forty miles north of London, England, lies Luton. A multicultural island in a sea of affluent white towns, over 25 per cent of Luton's 215,000 people are Muslim. Since the 1990s Luton has rather unfairly been known as a hotbed of Muslim extremism, but more recently also of anti-Muslim "far right wing" extremism.

In March 2009 a protest by a very small group of Muslim extremists at a British Army parade provoked a near riot by local townspeople. In the following weeks tensions ran high, with threats and demonstrations, and the firebombing of a mosque, resulting in the formation of the anti-Muslim English Defence League (EDL), which soon spread nationally.

Witnessing the chaos that day was a local church community worker, Peter Adams, who has a call to peace-building and reconciliation. In the following days he watched the rise on social media of anti-Muslim hatred. Talking to church leaders as well as to Muslim friends, who like the majority of their community totally condemned and opposed all

Islamic extremism, he determined that the extremists would not separate the town. Standing alongside the imam of the firebombed mosque and senior Christian and Muslim leaders at a press conference covered on national news in May 2009, they made a commitment:

"... these groups do not represent the majority of our community. As Muslims and Christians in Luton we are committed to grow in understanding of each other and to work together for good. In doing so we are inspired by words that lie at the heart of each of our Holy Scriptures where we are commanded to love God and our neighbour. As neighbours in this town we will work to discover the things that unite us and celebrate those. Where we are different we are committed to seek understanding and trust, rather than resorting to hatred and strife. Let us respect each other, be fair, just and kind to one another, and live in sincere peace, harmony and mutual goodwill."

That commitment has held, and grown. While the EDL has been a force for division, the friendship between faith and community leaders is growing and has allowed difficult issues to be addressed.

Peter is clear: "In a time where many are convinced that Islam and Christianity/

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My Muslim friends know I am passionate about my faith, and respect me for it.
”

Western democracy will only ever clash, I'm determined to point to another way. Sadly, Christian voices are often quoted in support of conflict. We must find another way! My Muslim friends know I am passionate about my faith, and respect me for it. They know I'd love to see them come to faith in Jesus Christ. But Christ will be the loser if Christians are known for hatred and fear."

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ 1 John 4:18 says: "Perfect love drives out fear." Repent of fear and ask God to fill you and your community with love for Muslims.
- ◆ Pray for opportunities to challenge the negative stereotypes of Muslims.
- ◆ Pray for opportunities to show love to Muslims you encounter as neighbours and fellow citizens.

US migrants: a global gateway

A World Bank study indicated that more than 250 million people today are immigrants. The number one destination for these immigrants is the United States. Among these millions are some of the world's least-reached peoples — Kurds, Yemenis, Pushtuns, Somalis — who for centuries have been isolated from the gospel. For the first time in history, they reside in New York, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, as well as Toronto, London, Amsterdam, Vancouver



and other gateway cities.

God is doing a *new* thing! He has brought the ends of the earth to the doorstep of one of the world's most Christian nations. How will Americans respond?

In 2001, a young missionary named Chris went to Mali, West Africa, to work in a remote village among the 160,000 Bambara-speaking Wassoulou people. The Muslim Wassoulou had no known Christians or churches. As he learned their language Chris found the Wassoulou to be surprisingly open.

The rigours of life in a Wassoulou village, however, soon took their toll as Chris became deathly ill and had to be medevacked from the country. The mission determined that he could not return to West Africa, but Chris did not give up.

On a survey trip to New York city in 2006, Chris and his wife discovered a Wassoulou community living in Harlem. A middle-aged Wassoulou man named Jamal told Chris, "I became a follower of Jesus Christ in Mali 22 years ago as a result of dreams about *Isa al-Masih* [Jesus Christ]. When I told my family they threatened to kill me. For several years I had to move from city to city to escape persecution, before finding my way to New York city."

Jamal was the first Wassoulou believer Chris had ever met. Then Jamal told him, "For

22 years I have been praying for God to send me a brother to help me reach my people. You are the answer to that prayer."

A few months later Chris and his family moved into Harlem. Today there are more than 100 Wassoulou followers of *Isa al-Masih*. Through Jamal's connections, doors were opened to the gospel in his and other Wassoulou villages in Mali, which contributed to the first Wassoulou churches in West Africa.

Find out more about missionaries who work to disciple the ends of the earth in other gateway cities at Global Gates (www.GlobalGates.info)

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that the millions of unreached immigrants leaving their homelands in search of a new life may find new life in Christ there.
- ◆ Pray that American Christians will respond with Christ's love to the unreached millions that God is bringing to their shores.
- ◆ Pray for churches and ministries such as Global Gates that are crossing cultural barriers to engage these unreached people groups that God has brought to our cities.

The Rohingyas, a people between worlds

The homeland of the Rohingya people lies on the border between the South Asian and the Indo-Malaysian Rooms of the House of Islam. It is this location between huge ethnic, linguistic, religious and political blocks that causes specific challenges for this people group.

The Muslim Rohingyas have been living in the northern part of the Arakan Mountains on the coast of the Bengal Gulf for centuries. Much of that time they lived peacefully with their mostly Buddhist neighbour peoples. When Burma (known as Myanmar today) gained independence in 1948, the Rohingyas faced an overwhelming majority

population of Buddhists. In the beginning, they were recognised as a minority with equal rights. But in 1982, the military dictatorship issued a law that didn't accept the Rohingya people as citizens any more. That left their two million people as one of the largest ethnic groups in the world without recognised citizenship.

The growing discrimination reached its sad climax in 2012, when violent turmoil broke out between Buddhists and Rohingyas. Hundreds of people were killed and many Rohingya villages destroyed. Since then, 100,000 Rohingyas have been kept in refugee camps or ghettos — often only a

few kilometres from their original place of residence. This situation has led to a growing refugee movement. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas have fled into neighbouring countries and beyond. Sadly, they often fall victim to human trafficking or end up in criminal activity.

The Rohingyas are on a journey into an uncertain future — uprooted and without a homeland, without advocates, and without hope. But God “does not forget the cry of the afflicted” (Psalm 9:13 ESV). In some places, Rohingyas have found hope and joy by faith in Jesus Christ. But most of these precious people still have no chance to hear the gospel.

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ For justice in the resolution of this conflict.
- ◆ That the Rohingyas can live in peace in their homeland and the areas they flee to.
- ◆ For global efforts that are trying to give the Rohingyas the opportunity to thrive, live in dignity and offer their children a better future.



Syrians on an uncertain journey

Until recently, Syria was a stable country. The agriculture and oil sectors provided a sufficient income for most. Children went to school and young people on to higher education. Under the authoritarian regime of Assad, ruthless action was taken against political enemies, but religious and ethnic minorities enjoyed a peaceful coexistence with the Sunni Muslim majority.

With the coming of the Arab Spring the situation changed dramatically. In 2011 a civil war erupted that becomes worse year after year. More than half of the population has had to leave their homes and start on an uncertain journey. Many fled within the country to relatives and friends. More than 4 million are now living in neighbouring countries where they are increasingly perceived as a heavy burden. Many survive

on handouts and children often have no access to schools. No one knows what the future holds.

But this uncertain journey has also made it possible for Muslims to escape a tightly controlled social environment, enabling them to show interest in the Christian faith more openly. In addition, the atrocities perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State extremists challenge many Muslims to question the values of their religion. who offer them practical love through distribution of food packages, blankets, heating material and counselling. God is at work in and through these circumstances. In some areas, churches are full of new

believers, in others there is openness and many opportunities to talk about faith.

A family in Beirut told how they fled from Syria into Lebanon, leaving everything behind. They live in a small apartment. It is difficult to feed the whole family, and their

children cannot go to school every day. But in the midst of these circumstances they say: "We have lost our home, but in Jesus we found something much more precious."

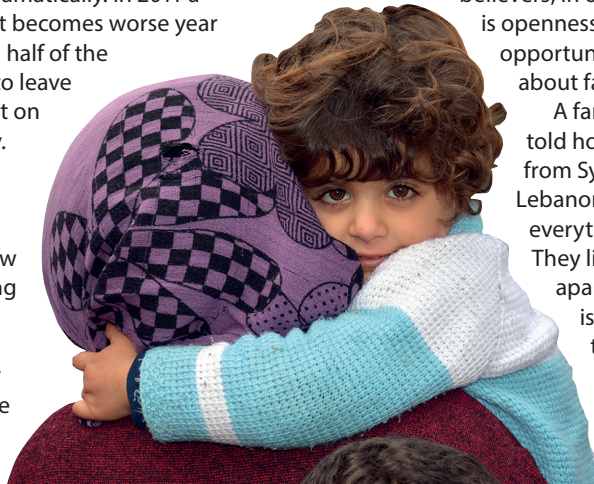


Many Muslims are open now to invitations to churches



LET'S PRAY

- ◆ For the end of the conflict in Syria. Humanly speaking this seems impossible, but God is able.
- ◆ For the millions of refugees and their physical and psychological needs.
- ◆ That the church will respond wholeheartedly to help and support refugees with both immediate and ongoing needs as they integrate into their new homelands.



Yida camp — refugees as messengers of Christ

In the Bible we find stories of people who were driven from their homelands, and still today refugees are longing for safety and shelter. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have found a safer home in South Sudan, the youngest state in the world.

Dagig, Ashron, Lira, Moro, Shad and Tabanya are names of just a few of the Muslim ethnic people groups who have fled from the Nuba Mountains in Sudan.

Repeatedly bombed by the Sudanese military in an ongoing civil war, they have lost their homes, family members and

livelihoods. Now they endure life in refugee camps such

as the one in Yida, South Sudan, where they receive only the most essential supplies through various aid organisations.

Among these refugees, there are a few who follow Jesus. They have formed small fellowships within the camp and aim to reach out with the gospel to their Muslim countrymen. The local church leaders have set an ambitious goal to engage all of the more than 70 ethnic groups in the Yida

camp. One of the major challenges is that the majority of people in the camp speak languages that are not written. Only very few among the refugees are literate. Therefore they do not have translations of the Bible either.

Jesus taught the people with stories and parables. Following his example, motivated believers are trained to tell biblical content in exciting ways and to answer questions from their Muslim compatriots. God is at work! Muslims are hearing about Jesus for the first time and becoming His followers. In this way the sojourn at Yida camp turns into a unique opportunity for the gospel to be made known to these Muslim refugees. If eventually they have the opportunity to return to their ancestral lands, these young believers will take the good news back to those who stayed there.

LET'S PRAY

- ◆ For these new believers to grow in unity, encourage one another in fellowship and love, and be a light in the Yida camp.
- ◆ For safety in the camps and for good stewardship of aid resources so that the needs of the refugees are met.
- ◆ For peace in the region so that these refugees can return to their homes in the Nuba Mountains and the believers among them will take the gospel there.



Night of Power: dream catchers

The 27th night of Ramadan is called *Laylat al-Qadr*, which translates as “Great or Valuable Night”. It is also known as the “Night of Power”, the “Valuable Night” and the “Night of the Divine Order”.

Laylat al-Qadr was the first night of the revelation of the Holy Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad by the Archangel *Jibrail* (Gabriel). Muslims regard this as the most important event in history. They spend much of this night in prayer and worship as prayers offered on this night are thought to be worth all the prayers of one thousand months; many expect that on this night they will hear from God in dreams.

Muslims often attest to the role of dreams in their life. Keith has worked in the Muslim world long enough to listen to Muslim dreams of a “being of light” who haunts their slumber and leaves them seeking a higher truth. One of these Muslims was a Pakistani taxi driver named Ahmed.

“What dreams have you had?” Keith asked Ahmed. Ahmed’s eyes lit up at the question. “I have had this dream many times,” he said, “of a man glowing bright as the sun.

I couldn’t make out his face, but he was reaching out to me in love.”

Taking an Urdu-language New Testament, Keith turned to Matthew 17. “Would you read these first two verses? I think you’ll find them

interesting.” Ahmed read the opening verses:

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.” (Matthew 17:1–2).

Ahmed looked up at Keith, his eyes wide with amazement. “That’s the guy,” he said, “the guy in my dreams. Who is this?”

Keith has learned to be a dream catcher for Jesus. He recognises that the Holy Spirit can use extraordinary means to reach Muslims. “Jesus promised that ‘when the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict the world of sin, judgment, and righteousness,’” Keith says. “Muslims are a part of that world, and dreams might be the way that God is convicting them of their need for Jesus.”

LET’S PRAY

◆ Pray for Muslims on this Night of Power, that God will reveal Himself to them in many ways.

- ◆ Pray for dreams of Jesus to encourage Muslims all over the world to find out more about Him.
- ◆ Pray for dream catchers — believers who can help Muslims understand who the “being of light” in their dreams is and how He wants them to follow Him.

“

Muslims often attest to the role of dreams in their life.

”

Bridges of God: Muslim idiom translations

Though Islam, like Christianity, is a global religion that seeks the conversion of all people, Islam is challenged by a particular approach unavoidably tied to seventh-century Arab culture. Muslims around the world struggle to pray in the Arabic language, memorising a holy book only available in Arabic.

Christianity, in contrast, translates into local human cultures and languages. In the Christian faith, the eternal God of all creation translated Himself into a local human form and adopted the language and culture of the Jewish people. In the same way, Christianity has advanced by translating that eternal gospel into local cultures.

Around the world, Christian communities worship God in their own language. They call God by a thousand different names, each infused with meaning by the translated Bible that reveals to them the “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5) that we all share. While the gospel is being faithfully translated into every language on earth, it

remains the same faith that was “once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).

It’s become popular for some Christians to draw the line of faithful translation at the name “Allah”. Apologists have argued that Allah is, in fact, a different god. Some even point to its roots as an ancient Babylonian moon goddess. Other philologists argue that the name “Allah” more likely relates to the ancient Semitic word for God (*Elohim*) that appears in our Hebrew Bibles. What is irrefutable, though,



Christianity has advanced by translating that eternal gospel into local cultures.



is that Muslims do not worship a moon goddess, nor even admit the existence of a moon goddess; Christians must certainly agree with this. Perhaps more important is that Arab Christians worshipped God as “Allah” long before the birth of Muhammad. Arab Christians, and indeed several other major language communities such as the Hausa of West Africa (35 million) and the

Indonesians of Indonesia (250 million), continue to use the name “Allah” exclusively to refer to the God of the Bible. They recognise, as all believers should, that the importance of a name lies in the sacred revelation — in our case, the Bible — that gives it its meaning.

Every movement of Muslims to faith in Christ today has coincided with a local language translation of the Bible. Translators call these local translations in Muslim communities, “Muslim idiom translations”.

The beauty of the Christian faith is that it translates into local cultures and languages. We should rejoice that God has chosen to reveal Himself to each people group in their own language and culture. The non-negotiable in this translation is the Bible meaning that infuses each word.

LET’S PRAY

- ◆ Pray for the continued translation of the Bible into local Muslim languages and dialects so that all Muslims will understand the gospel message.
- ◆ Pray for unity among Christians who make efforts to convey the truth of the gospel to the Muslim world.
- ◆ Pray that non-Arab Muslims will recognise that they don’t have to abandon their own language and culture to approach and worship the God of all creation.

Bridges of God: institutions and viruses

In 1884, France constructed the magnificent St Louis Cathedral in Carthage, Tunisia. The Bey (monarch) of Tunis ceded the cathedral property to the French crown in perpetuity to serve as the leading cathedral for all Africa. The Byzantine-Moorish edifice with its soaring cupolas, stained-glassed windows and six-ton great bell was expected to anchor Christianity in North Africa for a thousand years. A century later, however, worship in the cathedral had ceased, and the building was relegated to concerts and social events under its new name, the Acropolium.

Buildings do not a movement make. With the eyes of the world, we see “Christian” buildings and institutions as trophies of conquest and evidence of advance, while viewing the absence of buildings as evidence of ... well, the absence of movements. But this is not the case.

In a neighbouring North African country, I conducted interviews in a nondescript church building where more than two dozen church elders, all of them converts from a

Muslim background, had gathered to tell their stories of new life in Christ and how the gospel was spreading across their North African homeland. The loss of the cathedral has not prevented movements to Christ happening.

The Christian mission enterprise has long been seduced by the hope that by establishing church buildings, hospitals, and schools, they are somehow establishing outposts of the Kingdom of God. In reality, the Kingdom of God is established through born-again men and women who submit their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Movements take place when people hear the gospel and respond. The evidence of this Kingdom advance is found, not in buildings and institutions, but in the viral spread of the gospel evidenced through transformed lives, sharing the message of Christ with others and gathering together for fellowship and study of God’s Word. Buildings follow.

The viral transmission of the gospel in North Africa is spreading in the same way it permeated the ancient Roman Empire. It’s the way the gospel continues to spread across the Muslim world today. Buildings, cathedrals, hospitals and universities will follow, but they never precede viral movements.

LET’S PRAY

- ◆ Pray that Christians will see the Kingdom of God as communities of born-again believers, not as buildings.
- ◆ Pray that Christians will invest resources in demonstrating and sharing the gospel in discipleship rather than in the construction of buildings and institutions.
- ◆ Pray for emerging movements in North Africa and across the House of Islam that are spreading from person to person by the thousands.



Now What?

Practical steps for loving Muslims

Christians often ask, “How can I participate in the unprecedented movements of God among Muslims today?” The answer is simple, “Love Muslims.” Simple, yet difficult to achieve. Islam has made itself among the most feared religions on earth. This reputation stems from a long history of conquests, forced conversions, discrimination, and terrorist atrocities that stream across our news media every day. This perspective is not limited to Christians. It’s a view held by Hindus, Chinese, Socialists, and Buddhists. Islam, with its stark assessment of “others”, separates itself from every non-Muslim people on earth.

However, Muslims are not Islam. Muslims are individuals, men and women, boys and girls. For centuries, Muslims in many parts of the world have isolated themselves in communities that reinforce the stereotype that Christians are ignorant, worldly and slaves to the hedonism that the world so readily offers. This stereotype needs to be challenged!

A Muslim-background immigrant from Iran, named Ali, recently told me his story.

“A Christian friend invited me to attend a weekly fellowship dinner at his church,” he reported. “When I learned that the menu included pork barbecue, I politely declined.” Two weeks later Ali was invited again. This time the church changed their menu to avoid any items that Ali would find objectionable. “When I learned that they had gone to so much trouble just for me,” Ali said, “I could not decline.”

Within a few weeks, Ali had got to know a community of faithful God lovers who also loved him in Jesus’ name. Today, Ali is a follower of Jesus Christ. He takes every opportunity to share with his Muslim friends, and to encourage Christians to demonstrate their love for Muslims as a pathway to sharing their faith.

It can be tempting for us to fear, flee, and even fight Muslims. But when we do so, we follow a script that Islam has used for centuries to depict Christians as “others” who must be contested or avoided.



The most direct path to loving Muslims is to pray for them. When we pray, we take on the very heart of God. God loves Muslims so much that He sent His only Son into the world to love them, forgive them, and save them.

As we pray for Muslims, we find that our heart begins to change.

We begin to see

them as God sees them. They are not the unknown purveyors of a dangerous and threatening ideology. They are men and women, boys and girls, who are lost — as we once were — and in need of a Saviour.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2

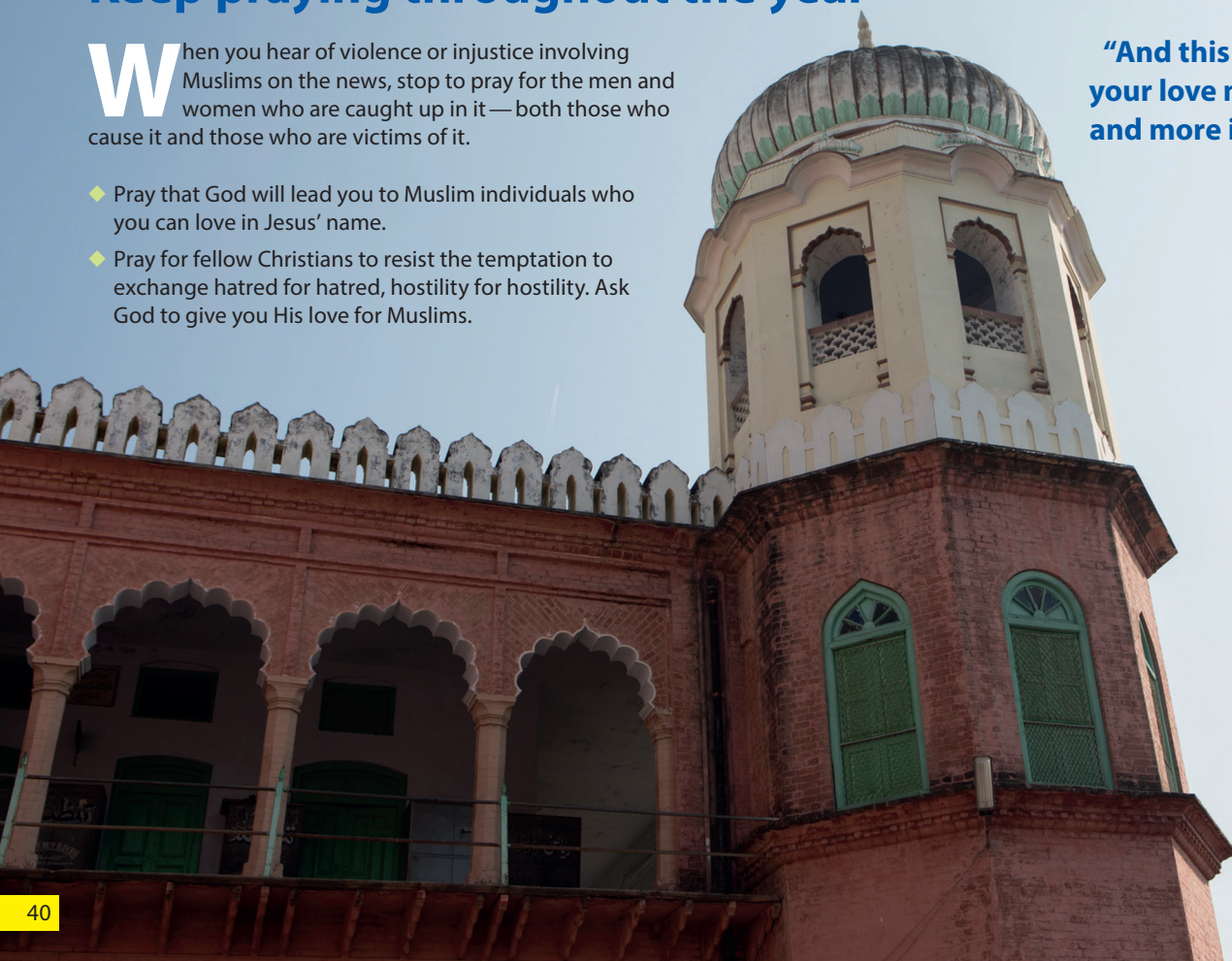
Keep praying throughout the year

When you hear of violence or injustice involving Muslims on the news, stop to pray for the men and women who are caught up in it — both those who cause it and those who are victims of it.

- ◆ Pray that God will lead you to Muslim individuals who you can love in Jesus' name.
- ◆ Pray for fellow Christians to resist the temptation to exchange hatred for hatred, hostility for hostility. Ask God to give you His love for Muslims.

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,”

Philippians 1:9





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