



Five Key Factors That Influence Muslims to Follow Jesus

By Ken Ferguson

One of the great blessings of our ministry at Global Initiative is the opportunity to regularly interface with Christians from a Muslim background. It is amazing to note the variety of factors that influenced them to follow Jesus. For example, in the last few months we have heard incredible testimonies from three former Muslim women. One is Iranian, one is Kuwaiti, and one is a Chinese Uyghur who was born and raised in Kazakhstan. Amazingly, each of these ladies had a friend who shared with them the love of Jesus. While the influence of a Christian friend is one of the strongest factors in convincing Muslims to follow Jesus, it is not the only factor. In this article we will look at five of the most prominent factors Muslims cite that influenced them to follow Jesus as Savior.

The Influence of Christians

Many converts from Islam begin their testimony by saying, “I had a Christian friend...” The lifestyle, faithful love, and benevolence of Christians have tremendous impact upon Muslims. Referring to his Christian friends, one Muslim convert mentioned that they did not have a gap between the moral profession and the practice of their faith in Christ. This particular convert worked in a pizza shop and over time

he observed that a Christian employee would never “cheat on the ingredients” or “overcharge customers.” He was so impressed with the Christian’s integrity that he declared it to be “a main reason for my decision to become a Christian.”

This reminds Christians to live holy lives and abstain from any culturally perceived acts that might suggest otherwise. True disciples should strive to exemplify Christ’s holy character. The Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to address issues such as Christian concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Ephesians 4:32), attitudes (Ephesians 4:29-31), and morality (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). In Ephesians 5:1-5, Paul provides a powerful description of the kind of character that a true disciple should display:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place,



Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Brink

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Muslims live in constant fear—fear of evil spirits, called *Jinn*, and fear of their future fate. Thus, fear permeates the life of a Muslim. What a contrast to the life of a Christian whose heart and mind is at peace and lives with

the assurance of salvation and the constant presence of the Holy Spirit.

In our Global Initiative book, *Journey to Understanding*, the spiritual hopelessness of Muslims—and the constant presence of fear in their lives—is described in this manner:

Muslims by the millions flock to shrines, spirit practitioners, and imams in hope of some miracle to help them in their time of crisis. A wife may be barren; a child may be fatally ill or demon-possessed. A businessman may be worried about a future transaction; a woman may suspect a husband of infidelity. A government official may suspect a curse has been placed upon him by a political rival. **Islam has no answer for these kinds of pressing problems—except to fully submit to whatever fate Allah has decreed.** Most people are not ready to simply submit to their difficulty. They want to rise above it, to exert some measure of control over their fate. They want to find a source of power that can change their situation for the perceived good. Furthermore, their hearts yearn for a mediator to act on their behalf. (p. 92)

Our hope is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—the mediator between God and man. He provided the sacrifice for sin, abolished fear and hopelessness, and made it possible for us to have a relationship with God Almighty. Yes, our hope is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ!

This month's *Intercede* lead article explores key influences that draw Muslims to Jesus Christ. As you read this edition, open your heart to see how you might reach out to a Muslim in your neighborhood or community. Maybe your life is the potential "key" that will influence a Muslim to follow Christ.

Last, please grasp the burden for intercession on behalf of 1.9 billion Muslims! As we know the Lord's return is very soon, let us be busy about His Kingdom work. Join us at Global Initiative as we take the gospel to Muslim peoples.

Order a copy of *Journey to Understanding* on our website at <https://www.reachingmuslimpeoples.com/shop>.





Muslim World News

Iran: Christian Converts Imprisoned

Three Christian converts have been sentenced to five years in prison for “engaging in propaganda and education of deviant beliefs contrary to the holy Sharia” and “connections with foreign leaders.”

Ahmad Sarparast, Morteza Mashoodkari, and Ayoob Poor-Rezazadeh were informed of the verdict at Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court in Rasht. The three Christians, who were also fined 18 million tomans (around \$750), were convicted under the amended Article 500 of Iran’s penal code.

Attorney Iman Soleimani, who accompanied the Christians to court to receive the verdict, complained that his clients had been convicted only on the basis of the claims of intelligence agents of the Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC); that the judge, Mohammad Hossein Hosseinpour, had also taken on the role of accuser; and that there was no legal justification for the sentences, as his clients’ only “crime” had been to meet together for Christian prayer and worship.—*Article 18*

Uganda: Convert Burned, Loses Employment

The head teacher of an Islamic school in Uganda suffered third-degree burns and was fired after staff members heard him praying as a Christian. Yusufu Mwanje led Ibumbaz Primary School in Bugiri town, Bugiri District, converted to Christianity, but lost his job after the attack in April.

“I wanted to keep my faith in Christ secret and began missing Friday prayers as I attended evening prayers at the church,” Mwanje said. “Some Muslim teachers noticed my absence and reported to the school management board.”

Mwanje’s home was stormed by a mob: “As I opened the

door, there were people outside my door. They began shouting, “*Allahu Akbar*. This is a *kafir*.” They grabbed me and took me inside the mosque and started beating me badly and accusing me of heading a Muslim school yet I had converted to Christianity. Others shouted, “A liar, a liar, a liar. ... He deserves the death penalty.”

“I remembered [a Christian friend] telling me that in times of persecution I should call the name of Jesus,” Mwanje said. “As I mentioned the name Jesus in a low voice, one attacker said, “*Azab Azab*,” meaning “punishment” in Arabic. Immediately, two Islamic teachers, named Ustaz Hamudan and Hashim Sajabbi, brought two old jerry cans and lit them with fire and started burning me with them. It was too painful. I fainted.”

Mwanje survived, but suffered second- and third-degree burns.—*Morning Star News*

Nigeria: Atheist Jailed for Blasphemy

A Nigerian court sentenced an atheist to 24 years in prison for making social media posts it found to be blasphemous against Islam in the West African nation’s northern region.

Mubarak Bala, a former Muslim, pled guilty to charges of blasphemy after a lengthy trial during which he spent nearly two years in prison. Bala is the president of the Humanist Association of Nigeria and activists said his conviction illustrates the risks of being openly faithless in northern Nigeria, which is predominantly Muslim.

Prosecutors in northern Kano state accused Bala of making Facebook posts that insulted Muhammad and Islam, and attempted to “cause a breach of the public peace,” according to court documents.—*Al Jazeera*

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but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Ephesians 5:1-5)

Muslims have often faced violence at the hands of other Muslims. A convert from a mystical Sufi village in Bangladesh recounted to me that a riot broke out between Sufi Muslims of his village and orthodox Sunni Muslims from a neighboring village over a theological issue. The Sunnis burned the Sufi village to the ground—causing great economic hardship for all of the inhabitants. To emphasize his point, the convert said, “I certainly never experienced that kind of hostility from Christians!”

Muslims notice how Christians exhibit concern for them as fellow human beings. Following the tsunami that rocked Indonesia in 2004 and left nearly a quarter of a million casualties, prominent Muslims noted that it was Christian nations who responded promptly with relief. Another illustration of Christian love is found in the extraordinary efforts that Christians have made to help Muslim refugees resettle. Jesus provided the basis for this approach when He said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you’” (Matthew 5:43-44).

Friendship evangelism is a great way to share Jesus Christ. During a board meeting of a particular ministry to Muslims,

one member asked the director, “What is your philosophy of ministry to Muslims?” The director answered, “You must drink fifty gallons of tea!” Of course, Middle Easterners drink tea from very small glasses. This obviously implies that one must spend much time to express genuine care for people. Expressions of love are the most important ingredient in reaching Muslims, but even in drinking tea, the ultimate goal must include the opportunity to share the Good News about Jesus.

Friendships play a larger role in reaching Muslim women than Muslim men. While men value friendship, women indicate that friendship plays a very important role in life. Global Initiative focuses on reaching Muslim women through *Say Hello*, a ministry focused on encouraging Christian women to reach out to Muslim women through friendship.

Witnessing the Power of God

Power impresses Muslims. The words *Allahu akbar* in Arabic mean “Allah is the greatest” or by implication “Allah is the most powerful.” The vast majority of Muslims believe, to one degree or another, in the spirit world, referred to as *jinn*. There are good and bad *jinn*. Muslims fear the evil effects of the bad *jinn* and commonly attribute demon possession, sickness, accidents, and other ill effects to the powers of the evil *jinn*. Muslims who believe in spirits, both good and bad, are identified as Folk Muslims. Some practitioners feel that at least 75 percent of all Muslims are involved in folk Islamic practices. Other experienced practitioners say

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that *all* Muslims are engaged in Folk Islam to one degree or another. Even Muhammad himself believed in the *jinn*.

In order to experience deliverance and relief from the *jinn*, Muslims often go to “holy men” who are seen as “power individuals” who are in touch with the spirit world and purportedly have the power to “manipulate the spirits.” These holy men may recommend various medicines and practices, use spells, charms, and incantations, or offer quotations from the Quran. Seekers may seem to receive temporary or partial help, but then stronger spiritual forces come and put them in worse bondage. Jesus illustrated this kind of bondage by referring to an evil spirit who has gone out of a person: “Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first” (Matthew 12:45).

Jesus not only acknowledged the spirit world, but proved that He had ultimate authority over it (Matthew 8:28-34). One of the reasons Jesus appointed the twelve was that they might have authority or power to cast out demons (Mark 3:15). He told them, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons” (Matthew 10:8). Interestingly, most Muslims believe that Jesus heals. Therefore, do not hesitate to pray for your sick Muslim friends and for their problems. When you pray, do so in the name of Jesus. Pray with faith, believing that Jesus will hear your prayer.

Prayer is the key to spiritual warfare. When the disciples questioned Jesus as to why they could not drive out a certain demon, Jesus answered them saying, “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer” (Mark 9:29). Global Initiative believes that intercessory prayer serves as the “steam in the engine” and provides the necessary foundation for spiritual warfare. Therefore, we encourage all believers to engage in intercessory prayer by joining our *Jumaa Prayer Fellowship* and earnestly praying for Muslims every Friday.

Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, He said, “*You will receive power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8, emphasis added). In Acts 19:11, we learn that in the city of Ephesus “God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul.” Some Jewish exorcists, the seven sons of Sceva, who obviously had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, attempted to use the name of Jesus in casting out a demon. The evil spirit said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you” (Acts 19:15)? At

that point, the demon possessed man turned and gave them a humiliating beating! While Muslims engaged in spiritual power encounter need deliverance, we dare not enter into such an arena unprepared. Not only must we pray and fast, but we must also be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dreams and Visions

In a survey conducted by Woodberry, Shubin, and Marks, 27 percent of the converts from Islam reported dreams and visions as having a role in their conversion. The survey, prepared under the auspices of Fuller Seminary’s School of Intercultural Studies, provides an invaluable glimpse into some of the key means the Spirit of God is using to open Muslim hearts to the gospel. TEAM, a missionary organization, conducted a survey among 92 Muslim background believers in the Northwest Frontier of Pakistan. Their survey results indicate that 21 percent of the men were influenced to come to Christ through dreams and visions; 13 percent of the women who converted reported that their decision was influenced by dreams and visions.

The two previously referenced surveys reflect the increasingly large number of reports of Muslims describing dreams or visions about heaven, hell, or their personal future. A common feature of their dreams is the appearance of man in a white robe, usually identified by them as Jesus. In most visions, they understand who He is without being told. He usually speaks a few words, such as “Follow me,” “Read my Word,” or “I love you.” He gives them specific instructions that must be followed. Those instructions usually lead them to a believer who will share the gospel with them or give them a Bible. The intent of the vision is to expose them to the truth of God’s Word, which they have never read or heard, and, certainly, never accepted as truth. This divine encounter totally changes the direction of their lives. A video series entitled, “More Than Dreams,” chronicles the stories of five individuals from various parts of the globe who had such dreams. The title succinctly portrays how the dreams are not sufficient, in and of themselves, to lead a person to salvation. However, the dream gets the person’s attention and demonstrates his or her need to read the Gospels or have someone explain the biblical plan of salvation to them.

An Iranian convert described to me his “dream experience” while in an Iranian prison. This brother dreamed that a man in a long white robe identified himself as Jesus and said, “Come unto me and I will give you peace.” Once out of prison, he went from church to church seeking for someone

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to tell him about Jesus. Most Christians refused to talk to him, thinking he was setting a trap. Finally, he knocked on the door of the parsonage of an Assemblies of God minister who graciously said, “Come in; I know Jesus, and I can introduce you to Him.”

Dissatisfaction with Islam

Many Muslims have become disenchanted with Islam for various reasons. For example, radical Islamic terrorism has disappointed many Muslims who believe that Islam is a peaceful religion and question how Allah could condone such horrific acts, even against Muslims who might believe differently. Other Muslims readily see that the Quran emphasizes punishment more than love. Still others are not satisfied with a religion that does not offer assurance of salvation and freedom from the punishment of their sin.

One highly educated man in Jordan, who was a high-ranking military official from a respected clan, stated that he did not believe in his wife’s “Christian” religion, but he no longer believed in the foolishness that Islam taught. Another man from Egypt described his conversion experience as “escaping from Islam.” He said that before coming to Christ, he felt like a bird in a cage, but once Jesus came into his life he was set free. A third Muslim man confided that he believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but he said, “How can I leave Islam? I am trapped by my family, my culture, and my society.” This man reflects the predicament of many, many Muslims who recognize Islam can never satisfy their deepest spiritual longings, but face incredibly complex “traps.”

The Islamic community (*umma*), which includes governments, goes to great lengths to deter co-religionists from leaving Islam. Adherents to Islam face unimaginable pressures to remain among the faithful. Muslims who leave Islam endure varying levels of persecution, ostracization, imprisonment, and even martyrdom. Islamic society seeks to isolate converts, silence their witness, and pressure them to revert to Islam. Converts may suffer unemployment, divorce, or even loss of children.

Although Muslims insist that Muhammad never put an apostate to death, in reality, the threat of death for apostasy remains constant in a number of Islamic countries. In some countries, “honor killings” come as a result of a conversion that brings shame on the family. In these cases, authorities usually turn a deaf ear, excusing the incident as a family matter. Don McCurry, in *Healing the Broken Family of Abraham*, clearly describes the reality of life in the Muslim world: “It should be remembered that when Orthodox Mus-

lims discuss the idea of ‘religious freedom,’ they mean that all others are free to become Muslims, but Muslims are not free to change their religion” (p. 294).

The Superior Nature of the Bible

Muslims are taught the Bible has been corrupted. Nevertheless, upon reading the Bible, many Muslims discover the power of the Word of God. The great themes of the Bible are convincing. Muslims never read such truth in the Quran. Themes like God’s forgiveness, His love for all, the life and teachings of Jesus, and the assurance of salvation speak convincingly to them—and bring conviction to their hearts.

One lady in India insisted that we should not waste our time giving Bibles to Muslims, saying that they simply would not read them. However, I have discovered that many do read the Bible when given the opportunity. I met an Iranian man in Brussels, Belgium, who told me that when someone gave him a Bible in his language of Farsi, he could not put it down. He found Jesus through reading the Bible. Another former Muslim told me that the Bible enlightened him as to who Jesus really was and shed light upon all of the misinformation that his leaders at the mosque had given him about Jesus. Shormily, from Bangladesh, told me that she struggled with finding forgiveness. Then she read in the New Testament that Jesus was God’s *korbani* (sacrifice) and that through His sacrifice she could find forgiveness for her sins.

Many Muslims have come to faith in Jesus through reading truth in the Bible. A striking example is the story of Khalil, a radical Egyptian terrorist who was changed from a murderous “Saul” to a forgiving “Paul.” Khalil set out to discredit the Bible and in the process of studying the Holy Scriptures was overwhelmed with “the power of the Gospel, especially the setting forth of the truth about Jesus Christ.”

A Muslim sheikh (holy man) in Africa buys hundreds of Bibles each year and distributes them to Islamic jihadist fighters in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. His intention is that the jihadists will read the Bibles and be better prepared to refute the Christian infidels. Let us pray that as the jihadists read the Bible they will be overcome with the unique and powerful truth of God’s Word!

McCurry, Don. *Healing the Broken Family of Abraham: New Life for Muslims*. Colorado Springs: Ministries to Muslims, 2001, p. 294.
“Reasons Why They Chose to Follow Jesus: A Survey of 92 Participants.” TEAM Mission, Pakistan Northwest Frontier, 2008.
J. Dudley Woodberry, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks. “Why Muslims Follow Jesus.” Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2007.



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

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[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*

Friday, July 1, 2022. Please pray for

...*Christian workers*, who report a steady stream of converts among the 1 million Muslim Turks in France.
...*the gospel seeds being sown at a Christian school* in the Netherlands. Of its student body of several hundred, 70% are Moroccan or Turkish Muslims. Each week begins with worship songs to Jesus, with parents present.
...*workers in a London refugee detention center* who are finding opportunities to talk about faith, especially with Muslims.

Friday, July 8, 2022. Please pray for

...*the ministry of the Far East Broadcasting Company* heard in 145 languages and 50 countries (many predominately Muslim) totaling 1,571 hours of programming per day.
...*an internet team in a 99% Muslim North African country* reaching out through Arabic social media. They are finding there are more seekers than team members to do follow-up. Pray for security as team members meet with seekers.
...*the war-weary people of Yemen*, especially the small Christian community. An aid-worker recently counted 30 air strikes in a battle between Saudi and Yemeni forces.

Friday, July 15, 2022. Please pray for

...*the Voice of New Life gospel broadcasts* being beamed into 99.6% Muslim Somalia. A Somali businessman sends good news: "I have introduced many people in three neighborhoods to the broadcast. They are listening and are amazed."
...*Christians in northwestern Pakistan* who are targets of Tehrik Taliban Pakistan, a Muslim terrorist group.
...*the 220,000 Mahris, a south Arabian Muslim people group* in Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. There are no known believers among the Mahri. Pray for dreams and visions to come to them—and for a church to be planted among them.

Friday, July 22, 2022. Please pray for

...*an Arabic radio ministry in Egypt*. Record numbers of Muslims have called in; a few are antagonistic, but most are sincerely asking about "the great questions of life."
...*the most streamed program on SAT-7*—an Arabic prayer and worship program called "As in Heaven." The program has been watched in whole or in part 9,000 times. Pray for the Spirit's refreshing of its presenters, singers, and crew.
...*Bahrain, a small island off the east coast of Saudi Arabia*. Of Bahrain's population of 1.7 million, 84% are Muslim.

Friday, July 29, 2022. Please pray for

...*outreach ministries in the United Kingdom* who work among the 300,000 Turks (or Turks of Cypriot origin).
...*Christians in northern Mozambique*. An ISIS-affiliate group in the northern part of the country is abducting children and forcing them to fight as child soldiers in their jihad against enemies of Islam. Of Mozambique's population of 32 million, 17% are Muslim.
...*the Kanuri (Yerwa) Muslim unreached people group (337,000)* who live in the southern province of Sudan. Ask God to use the small number of Kanuri believers to share the gospel with their friends and family.



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*Jumaa Prayer is now on
Facebook. Please join today:
[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*

Friday, August 5, 2022. Please pray for

...*a Christian radio station broadcasting into the North Ossetia Republic of Russia*—with a population of 712,000, of whom 30% are Muslim. They receive dozens of inquiries every day from Christian and Muslim listeners.

...*Sassan, an underground pastor in Iran*: “Some women wear Islamic burqas to protect their identities. At the end of meetings, for safety, we have to leave the meeting place one by one. In spite of this, His church is growing.”

...*Zaina, a new believer from a Muslim background in Iraq*. She rejoices that “in Christ, I found that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. To God be the glory.”

Friday, August 12, 2022. Please pray for

...*a new church in the Chittagong area of Bangladesh*. Pastor Tubel says, “Even being persecuted we are near 50; some from a Muslim upbringing. If we have to sacrifice our lives, we will. Jesus is our Savior and we will die for Him.”

...*Pastor Jamal, who leads a house church of 37 believers from a Muslim background in a Middle Eastern Arab city*. Of a recent meeting, he says, “We worshipped Jesus for about two hours. More Muslims are coming.”

...*Muhammad Kace, an Indonesian Christian from a Muslim background* who has been arrested on blasphemy charges. His sermons about Jesus, the Son of God, attracted many Muslims, some of whom became followers of Christ.

Friday, August 19, 2022. Please pray for

...*160 Eritrean Christians* in a maximum security prison in Asmara charged with “unlawful exercising of religion.”

...*four Chinese businessmen* who have been imprisoned for distribution of audio Bibles among Muslims in the Guangdong Province of China. Authorities cracked down after learning that large numbers of Muslims had requested copies.

...*Pastor Arsalan, a house church leader in the Middle East*: “Though our ministry owns no fine church buildings, we can say that hundreds of Muslims are coming to Jesus—a direct result of the prayers and efforts of God’s people.”

Friday, August 26, 2022. Please pray for

...*Zohre, a 27-year-old convert from Islam in Central Asia*: “I got the courage to take my mother and siblings to a house meeting, where the three of them accepted Jesus...our house has become a church, with 30-40 believers gathering weekly.”

...*Ibrahim, who works in an underground printing house in North Africa*. Recently authorities dragged him from his car and said, “You will die if you speak about Jesus one more time.” His response: “I will serve God no matter what.”

...*a cricket team in a major city in Pakistan*. The leader says, “We are spreading the good news by the use of sports (cricket). By the grace of God we are playing not only with Christian teams but also with our ‘neighbors.’”

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