

INTERCEDE

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Hospitality's Key Role in Reaching Muslims



By Donna Krstulovich

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Hebrews 13:2)

The response to my question, “What comes to your mind when you hear the word “Muslim” or “Islam”, rarely elicits the answer “hospitality.” Yet, the practice of hospitality is an integral and endearing part of Muslim culture that Christians and Muslims can share. It is adopted from ancient practices that predate Islam.

An Afghan refugee woman was living on a plastic tarp in front of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Pakistan with her five children and their meager belongings. My church in Islamabad heard about her and went into action. A man offered her temporary lodging in an empty upstairs room he owned in a nearby city. Ladies spent the afternoon collecting essentials. They drove a van packed

with mattresses, utensils, food and a two-burner stove to the room of their new friend. As everything was being unloaded, she sent her oldest son downstairs and started sweeping the dusty floor. She laid the mattresses on the floor and motioned for us to sit down. Her son returned with a kettle of hot tea made with water boiled by a downstairs neighbor.

I was overwhelmed and deeply humbled by this woman's hospitality. She had lost everything. She saw her husband shot point blank, fled with her five kids to a foreign country, moved from a sheet of plastic to this empty room and yet hospitality was so deeply engrained in the heart of this precious Muslim woman, that her guests were her first priority. Now she is a refugee somewhere. She may be your neighbor.

If you are reading this article, you probably intercede for Muslims on a regular basis. Have you taken the next step to

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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 Hausfeld
International Director
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



“Please come to our home for supper tonight.” What? I had just met this Pakistani Muslim medical doctor and his wife at the International School in Islamabad. I thought to myself, “Is he serious? Does he mean for our family of five to come to his home for supper after this initial meeting?”


We had arrived in Pakistan just weeks before this kind invitation. This fine couple really did want our entire family to come to their home for a meal and interaction. In their relational culture it is vitally important to be hospitable, especially to foreigners.



My culturally inappropriate response was: “Thank you but we have other plans this evening. We certainly would like to join you another time.” These dear people were always pleasant with me in public thereafter — but the invitation to dine never came again. That experience 20 years ago still troubles me, yet it was a great learning moment.

You may think, “You had another engagement that night. You had the right to say you could not accept his invitation.” I did have the right and what I said was well within the boundaries of what is acceptable in my own culture. However I was not in my culture, but his. My ignorance ended a relationship before it began. A simple phone call — to change our inconsequential plans for the evening — would have solved it.

You will find that hospitality is a way of life in most Muslim cultures. If we are going to relationally engage Muslim peoples we have to put aside inconsequential cul-

tural norms (our own way of doing things!) and ask the Holy Spirit to lead us. You will find Donna Krstulovich's article enlightening, educational and inspiring. Read it 

Announcement

I have recently accepted the position as president of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (AGTS) at Evangel University in Springfield, Mo.

I want to thank you for the joy and honor I have had to serve as the international director of Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples since Jan. 1, 2009. The stellar missionaries and staff of Global Initiative are godly, called, loving and professional. I have looked forward to each day working alongside them while serving the Church and Muslim peoples.

It is a special honor for me to be able to share the great news that as of July 1, missionary Mark Brink, one of our Global Initiative team members, has accepted the role of international director. This ministry will move forward with vision and strength under Mark's leadership.

There are great days ahead for Global Initiative. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Mark, Daniela, Andrew and Luke. You can learn more about the Brink family in the next issue of *Intercede!*

Thank you for your continued prayers and support to see this Global Initiative ministry to Muslims fulfill its mission.

With gratitude, thankfulness and love,

Dr. Mark A. Hausfeld, President
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

Muslim World News



Churches ‘abandoned’ after Charlie Hebdo

Niger

In the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, the churches in the predominantly-Muslim West African nation of Niger experienced the worst attacks in their history. On the weekend of Jan. 16-17, hundreds of Islamists attacked and ransacked dozens of properties and churches.

Ten people lost their lives during that weekend; more than 70 churches were destroyed, as well as numerous Christian schools and organizations, including an orphanage. At least 30 Christian homes were also looted and burnt down.

Months on, the reconstruction work is moving slowly and proving very expensive. Most damaged churches and properties are still not rebuilt, and the financial support promised by the state is not forthcoming.

The violence also revealed the inability of the security forces to ensure the protection of Christians and their properties. In Niamey, looters roamed across the city on motor-bikes, in cars or taxis, without facing any resistance from security forces.

Various sources told *World Watch Monitor* that there were no forces around the capital's main churches — except the Catholic Cathedral, where a heavy police presence meant it was one of the few to escape attack. — *World Watch Monitor*

Asia Bibi’s last chance for freedom?

Pakistan

Pakistani Christian Aasiya Noreen (known as Asia Bibi) has been allowed to take her appeal against her death penalty for blasphemy to Pakistan's Supreme Court in the capital, Islamabad. Until the Supreme Court reaches its final decision, Noreen cannot be executed.

Commentators have praised the Supreme Court for its courage to hear the appeal in the face of strong public sen-

timent against anyone seen to denigrate Islam, with some calling it a “historic day for Pakistan”. Her lawyer, Saiful Malook, appeared in front of three Supreme Court judges at the first hearing July 22 in Lahore.

After her appeal in Lahore's High Court was unsuccessful in October 2014, this is now the last chance for them to appeal that her conviction should never have been allowed, due to inadmissible evidence.

Fifteen Pakistani Christians are currently believed to be facing the death penalty for blasphemy, including Sawan Masih, whose alleged blasphemy during a conversation with a Muslim friend in March 2013 resulted in the looting and torching of hundreds of homes within the predominantly Christian Joseph Colony in which he lived. — *World Watch Monitor*

Evangelism ends in arrest

Egypt

Three Christians in Egypt have been accused of showing disdain or contempt for Islam after an evangelism outreach to Muslims in Alexandria.

The three Christians were arrested on July 11 after at least one was stopped for handing out small bags of dried dates and copies of the Sermon on the Mount, according to human rights activists. In addition to the dates, a snack Muslims commonly eat when breaking the Ramadan daytime fast, the bags contained a statement about God's love and His omniscient nature: “The Lord knows all that occurs, for He is the mighty knower,” the message read. “He can carry on His shoulders all that is oppressive and exhausting and bring comfort and joy, for He loves you very much.”

The bags also carried the name of an Arabic-language website about Jesus and Christianity. All three were released on a 10,000 Egyptian pound (\$1,280) bond, awaiting investigation by authorities. — *Morning Star News*

Hospitality's Key Role

Continued

personally get to know a Muslim neighbor, co-worker, fellow student or refugee? If not, ask Jesus to bring a Muslim friend into your life. Many are curious about how Christians live. Would you consider inviting a Muslim to your home? A dear friend who lived in Jordan for many years said, "We make it so complicated and really, it is easy". Love opens the door of our hearts and our homes. Our hospitality creates sacred space for faith interactions when we ask Jesus to be part of our conversations.

As a Host

Women's magazines send the message that in order to invite guests one must have elaborate table settings, beautiful dishes, gourmet meals, and a spotlessly clean house. The thought of entertaining guests with the focus on performance brings on anxiety and trepidation. Hospitality, in contrast to entertaining, focuses on the guest. Open your home and share what you have. It can be scary at first. What should I serve? Will they like my food? Will I offend them?

Amy Oden states, "While hospitality can include acts

of welcoming family and friends, its meaning within the Christian biblical and historical traditions has focused on receiving the alien and extending one's resources to them." (Oden 2001, 14) Is your friend a student in your class at university? Are they refugees who have just arrived after fleeing war in their homeland? Is your doctor a Muslim who has immigrated here and raised a family? Is she the mother of your child's friend at school?

Muslims have dietary restrictions similar to Jewish *kosher* restrictions. Food is *halal* (clean or allowed) or *haram* (unclean or forbidden). Pork and pork products including lard and gelatin are considered unclean or *haram* and should be avoided. Chicken, beef or fish are good choices to serve with rice, vegetables and fruit. Some Muslims are very strict about the dietary practices and will not eat at a house where these laws are not practiced. Don't be offended if they refuse your invitation.

Generally, Muslims consider dogs unclean, so put your pets away when guests come to visit. Always serve something to drink and eat when a guest arrives, even for



e in Reaching Muslims

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an unexpected visit. Eastern politeness demands that you refuse food or drink that is offered at least three times, so it is normal to refuse the first offer. A Muslim college student said that when he first arrived in America, a fellow student offered him a Coke. He was thirsty, but politely declined the first offer. The American did not offer a second time so the student went away thirsty and wondered why the American was not more insistent.

Do you wonder what to talk about? Family, culture and customs are good conversation starters to help you get to know your new friend. Muslims are family oriented and experience loneliness when separated from large extended families and communities in their home country. Conversations about God are natural.

Include your guest in your normal activities. If you pray before your meal, say “It is our custom to pray in the name of Jesus to ask God's blessing on our food.” Ask God to bless your guests as well. Muslims often offer thanks to Allah after a meal is finished. They will appreciate your desire to honor God.

As a Guest

Our Turkish neighbors prepared a dinner for my husband and I on the night we returned from a trip and left a note on our door inviting us for dinner. Not aware of this invitation, we had already made arrangements to eat with the friends who had picked us up from the airport. When we told our neighbors they said, “your friends are welcome too!” whereupon they opened their door and fed all of us spontaneously.

A Muslim woman's home is her sphere of influence and hospitality is an integral part of her life. Accept your friend's invitation to come to her house. Pray for God's blessing and direction for your visit. Muslims see guests as a blessing from God. Hospitality, a measure of the host's honor, dictates that the table will be full of many different dishes with more food than the guests can possibly eat. My friend Selma says that every piece of food has someone's name written on it, so even if you arrive unexpectedly, that food was meant for you.

A small gift of flowers, candy or fruit is an appropriate gift, especially for your first visit. If you notice that your host does not wear shoes inside the house, take your shoes off at the door. Conservative Muslim men will not

shake hands with a woman. Men greet men and women greet women.

In some Muslim homes men will sit in one room and women in another due to the practice of *purdah* or gender segregation. For conservative Muslims it is inappropriate for women to interact with men outside their family and for this reason Muslim women wear a veil in public.

Sharing Holidays

Holidays provide perfect occasions to invite your Muslim friends to your home and to visit them in theirs. On Christmas and Easter the stories about the birth of Christ and His resurrection become a focal point of con-



versation. Thanksgiving provides an opportunity to share the history of this nation and treat your friend to turkey, pumpkin pie and all the traditional favorites. These may be unusual foods to your Muslim guest. My Pakistani friends were not used to eating sweet and salty dishes at the same time and thought it strange that cinnamon, a spice they add to rice, would flavor a dessert made of a vegetable like pumpkin. Birthdays and weddings are also times that your Muslim friend would enjoy sharing.

My Pakistani landlady invited me to her home for her Muslim holidays of *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Adha*. She said they were just like my Christmas and Easter. However, at *Eid-ul-Fitr*, Muslims celebrate the coming of a book, the Quran, while at Christmas, Christians celebrate the coming of a Savior. On *Eid-ul-Adha* Muslims celebrate Abraham's obedience to sacrifice his son by sacrificing an animal and sharing the meat with family, neighbors and the poor, while at Easter Christians celebrate the resurrec-

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tion of Jesus, the final sacrifice. As we share our holidays, lives and beliefs, opportunities arise around the table to share about Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God.

The Greatest Invitation

God's generous heart of hospitality is woven through the Bible. Dramatic stories of miraculous provision, divine healings, deliverance from demons, and life-changing conversations occur in the context of hospitality.

I am a grateful recipient of gracious Muslim hospitality. A foreigner always remembers acts of kindness and a welcome. Whether hospitality happens among friends who sit on a Tajik *dostarkhon*, a Pakistani *charpai*, an Afghan *toshak*, a Persian carpet, or a sofa in an American living room, it always opens hearts — even when communication is limited to gestures, signs, laughter, and shared bits of broken language. As Christians, our hospi-

tality is transformed into sacred space when Jesus is present. He answers prayer, heals people and changes lives.

However the greatest hospitality we will ever receive is yet to come. God has invited us to His home in Heaven. Jesus Christ is preparing a banquet for His bride — the Church — which includes people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have believed in Him for eternal life. Your neighbor is an invited guest but they need to receive the invitation. Will you deliver it? 

Oden, Amy. And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Prayer Profile: Shaikh in Bangladesh



There are 136 million Shaikhs in Bangladesh; 99.9% are Muslims. Spiritual darkness has prevailed over the land of the Shaikh for many centuries. The majority belong to the Sunni sect of Islam. The Bengali language is widely spoken, with an influence of Urdu and Arabic. There are only a few believers in Jesus among the large Shaikh community of Bangladesh. Pray for:

1. Bangladeshi churches groups who are reaching out to the Shaikhs.
2. The few Shaikh-background believers; that they will be protected.
3. Dreams and visions to break through the spiritual veil.
4. For Bengali Scripture distribution.



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Friday, Sept. 4, 2015. Please pray

...for Christians in Iraq and Syria as ISIS continues its persecution.

...for a Global Initiative team member who is conducting an Institute of Islamic Studies in South America, Aug. 31-Sept. 11.

...for classes at the Institute of Islamic Studies in Brussels, Belgium, Sept. 7-11.

Friday, Sept. 11, 2015. Please pray

...for Christian outreach in Senegal, Africa, a nation of 15 million — 90% Muslim.

...against the fear that often grips Muslims and hinders many from making a commitment to Jesus Christ.

...for the 1.5 million unreached Muslims of Gansu Province in China.

Friday, Sept. 18, 2015. Please pray

...for Somalia, East Africa, a nation of 11 million; 99% Muslim.

...for the 25 million Muslims of Saudi Arabia, where it is illegal to be a Christian.

...for the church in Zanzibar, Tanzania, constantly under pressure from Islamists.

Friday, Sept. 25, 2015. Please pray

...for Christian workers in the Maldives who are forbidden to bring Bibles into the country or even to worship in private.

...for church planters among Muslims in West Bengal, India.

...for Christian workers who are studying Muslim languages in order to share Christ.

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. — 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



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Friday, Oct. 2, 2015. Please pray

...for the Coptic Church in Egypt. Copts account for 10% of Egypt's population and are often a target of radical Islamic groups.

...for Pakistan, where violence erupts frequently. 98.9% of Pakistan's 191 million people are Muslims.

...for the small Christian community in the Gaza Strip.

Friday, Oct. 9, 2015. Please pray

...for radio and satellite programs reaching Muslims. Pray for a genuine move of the Lord through this medium.

...for 'Muhammad' in Eritrea, who lost his family and job after he decided to follow Jesus.

...for the Urumqi Province of China, home to 10 million unreached Muslims.

Friday, Oct. 16, 2015. Please pray

...for missionaries in Europe who are witnessing to newly arrived Muslims.

...for Muslim outreaches in Canada. Although only 2% of Canadians are Muslims, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the country.

...for 'Samar', a young woman living in Saudi Arabia, facing death for her conversion.

Friday, Oct. 23. Please pray

...for the millions of Muslims attending mosques today. Pray that the Lord would reveal His love to them.

...for the country of Afghanistan. 99.8% of its 33 million people are Muslims.

...for the 200,000 Muslim Turks in Berlin, Germany.

Friday, October 30. Please pray

...for hundreds of 'former Muslims' in Palestine who have become followers of Jesus.

...for ministries to Muslims in France, where for each Evangelical Christian there are 10 practicing Muslims.

...for protection for Christians in Nigeria. Violence and persecution are regularly aimed at churches and believers.

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