

INTERCEDE

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HOW A RELIGIOUS MUSLIM LIVES



by
Phil Parshall

My friend, Dr. Ali, is a dedicated, moral, and gracious Muslim. This Bangladeshi has excellent academic credentials, and his professional expertise was recognized through his appointment as principal of a significant government college in Bangladesh.

Ali, however, would not want his primary identity in life to be focused on his educational attainments. Rather, he would like to be recognized as a man whose whole life has been centered on God-awareness. Submitting every aspect of his being to Allah is his consuming passion.

It has been my privilege to walk with Ali during the past 16 years of his spiritual pilgrimage. For 2 1/2 years we met together on the average of twice a week. He has declared me to be his best friend. Once Ali wrote, "You are my brother. No matter whether you are an American or profess the Christian faith. The bond of friendship between you and me is everlasting."

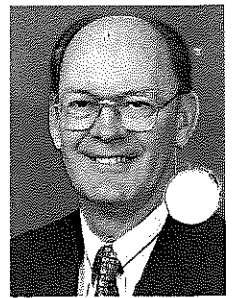
Practically speaking, how does this work out in Ali's everyday life? Without fail, Ali maintains strict regularity in the five times a day prayer ritual. The Ramadan Fast is an anticipated annual event during which time he strictly abstains from food and water during daylight hours for 30 days. Two and a half percent of Ali's income is given to the poor as per Islamic regulation. On Fridays, the Muslim holy day, Ali will always be found in the mosque joining his co-religionists in worship. Other days, he and his veil-shrouded wife will frequently be seen sitting on their personal ricksha, being cycled by their employee, making their way to the home of some sick or distressed friend. Their lives are constantly focused on God and others. As a result, Ali and his wife are highly esteemed in the community.

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Speaking on Behalf of Muslims

*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)*

Ron Peck, Director
Center for Ministry to Muslims



I am writing this at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, awaiting the plane that will take me home after two wonderful weeks of ministry in West Africa. My mind is filled with many vivid and positive memories of pastors and Christian workers who came to the training sessions eagerly desiring information and insight on how to communicate the gospel to their Muslim friends and neighbors. The regularly scheduled times of prayer and fasting were well attended by the participants and their prayer requests reflected intense burdens and concern for Muslims with whom they were personally acquainted.

Earlier today, as I checked in for my flight from Douala, Cameroon, to Lome, Togo, I had an interesting experience. Unsure of the gate from which my flight would depart, I asked a distinguished-looking African gentleman in the departure lounge if he knew. I discovered that he was on the same flight but travelling on to a different destination.

After telling me which gate we would leave from, he asked, "You are a pastor, aren't you?"

Since I was casually dressed and was sure my "halo" wasn't showing, I was surprised by his question. After responding that I was, he told me that he had been raised in a Muslim family, but had come to faith in Christ about 10 years before. As we continued to talk, the man shared with me the following testimony about a young West African man, I will call Abdul, who was the son of an influential Muslim leader.

One day two believers visited Abdul in his family home and gave him some Christian literature. When Abdul realized the content of the literature, he rebuked the young Christians and told them not to

distribute it in their community.

After the believers left, Abdul decided that he must destroy the literature. Thus, he went to the backyard and kindled a small fire. Before he got it all burned, his father came home and asked Abdul what he was doing. When he explained what had happened, his father blessed him for his wise decision and said, "You have done well, my son."


That night, however, Abdul's mind was troubled by the events of the day. He kept thinking about the Christians literature he had burned and could not sleep. After several hours, he remembered that his father had some literature about the Muslim faith stored in the house and decided to get up and read some of it—hoping to relieve his anxiety. But when he went to get the literature, it was not there. In its place were the papers he had

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Astonished and perplexed, he took it to his room and spent the rest of the night reading the "forbidden message" about Jesus Christ and His power to forgive sins. That message from the "papers that could not be destroyed," set him on a path of spiritual pilgrimage, which led him to accept Christ as his personal Savior.

Though his conversion brought him much persecution and suffering at the hands of his family, it also brought him much joy and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. This brother is now serving God faithfully in the capital city of his adopted country in West Africa.

As I listened to this testimony, I was again reminded that our intercessory prayers for Muslims *are* making an impact on many hungry, searching hearts of people like Abdul. May we continue to be faithful in this ministry of prayer. 



Saudi Arabia

The release of 11 foreign nationals arrested in June for alleged Christian activities in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh has been confirmed. Eight Filipinos and one Dutch citizen detained by Saudi police in a sweep of arrests begun June 5 were deported to their home countries in mid July. Eight of the prisoners said they were investigated for distribution of Christian materials in the Arabic language, while one Filipino was accused of pastoring a church of expatriate Christians in Riyadh. In Manila, the deported Christians gathered on August 5 for a joint "thanksgiving celebration" with their families, friends and local church leaders.

—Compass Direct

Middle East & North Africa

SAT-7, a satellite television service for Christians of the Middle East and North Africa, has begun its third year on the air this summer with an emphasis on training Middle Eastern Christians for media ministry. Recently 87 people participated in two days of training held in Cairo. The next training session is being planned

in Lebanon. Equipment is being installed in their Lebanon studio, which will enable the production of more programs. New partnerships are being formed which will further the cause of Christ in the region in these momentous days.

—SAT-7 Uplink

World

This year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) has been set for November 5. More than 180,000 churches in over 130 countries are expected to participate in this worldwide prayer day.

An IDOP Resource Kit, available to those wishing to participate, contains a powerful video, a 20-page booklet, a Global Persecution Prayer Map, and information that can be reproduced for church use. The price is \$15; it can be ordered by calling 1-888-538-7772 (888-LetsPra). You can also visit the IDOP website at www.persecutedchurch.org

—Compass Direct

Uzbekistan

On August 15, it became illegal for anyone in Uzbekistan except a government-certified clergyman to talk about religion.

On the same day, private religious instruction—whether it's at Sunday School, a home Bible study or summer camp—was also formally banned. Any church with less than 100 members must close its doors and stop all activities. Church leaders who fail to comply will be subject to criminal charges. Every existing church, and every religious organization had to submit a complex set of documents by August 15 to be granted formal registration status by the Ministry of Justice—or be ruled illegal and forbidden to exist. Churches who manage to register are strictly forbidden to engage in any proselytism or missionary activity.

—Compass Direct

Maldivive Islands

Authorities in the heavily Muslim Maldivive Islands are cracking down on Christians. Just weeks after the start of Christian radio broadcasts in the local language, the government has arrested and mistreated at least two new Maldivian Christians. By June 29 at least 15 foreign Christians had been kicked out of the country and banned for life. Passports have been confiscated, along with Christian books and other personal possessions. A Maldivian newspaper says the government is trying to rid the country of people attempting to spread Christianity.

—Pulse



30 Days Muslim Prayer Focus

December 20, 1998

to

January 18, 1999

Please use the enclosed brochure during Ramadan and feel free to photocopy it if you need extra copies. See the brochure for order information for the complete prayer guide.

HOW A RELIGIOUS MUSLIM LIVES

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Morally, Ali carries impeccable credentials. As a highly-recognized educator, he is invited to conferences in various countries. He has told me of a number of times that attractive women have attempted to sexually seduce him. Secrecy would be guaranteed. His answer has always been, "I could never deny my Allah nor my family."

The bottom line is that I find it extremely difficult to identify intentional sin in the life of this humble, intelligent, and selfless Muslim. Both of us are committed to our own religious beliefs. We both long for the other to convert in our direction. But we are at a standoff where we find each of us fully satisfied that we alone have discovered ultimate truth.

The writings of Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth are among my favorites. During the Boxer Rebellion in China, the Goforths were desperately seeking to make their way to the safety of the coast. Along the way they had been beaten and stabbed by non-Muslim Chinese. As they stumbled through one village a large, friendly crowd surrounded them.

Goforth writes, "One poor old man insisted on my taking a pair of his old shoes, so worn as to scarcely hold together, saying they might keep my feet from

the rough ground. Women came with soiled children's garments, urging that the nights were cool and the children might need them."

"Why are they so kind?" one man was asked.

He replied, "We are Muslims. Our God is your God and we could not face Him if we had joined in destroying you."

During the 8 years we lived in two small towns in rural areas of Bangladesh, we had minimal security in our homes. Never did we have any type of thievery. It is only since moving to Manila that we put double-bolt locks on our three outside doors and each night

activate a motion detector alarm. We have had 17 robberies within half a block of us. These were all carried out by so-called "Christians."

WHAT ABOUT MUSLIMS AND WORSHIP?

Though there are many good things about sincere, devout Muslims, there are also significant problems within the worldwide community (*ummah*) of Islam. Let's consider two of them.

One high profile issue relates to violence and the concept of holy war (*jihad*). There are terrible violations of human rights. Muslims have blown up commercial planes and an army barracks full of U.S. soldiers. The bombing of the World Trade Center caused an onlooking world to gasp in fearful horror. How can such dastardly deeds be carried out in the name of a sovereign, creator God?

Islam slices the world conceptually into "we" and "they" camps. Muslims declare their motive for using violence is only to defend against attacks from "they." Their actions, they argue, are totally defensive and not offensive in nature. They point to the Israelis and Serbs as such aggressors who must be dealt with.

Christians, however, must realize that, in the name of Christ, our worldwide community has likewise committed grave injustices against others who are not of our religious persuasion. The most gruesome example, and one few Christians are fully aware of, are the Crusades of the 12th and 13th century. In that terrible moment of history, hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Jews were slaughtered as they tried to defend their homeland against the European Crusaders who were seeking to occupy Palestine.

In more recent times, there have been fringe Christians who have felt compelled by their religious convictions to bomb abortion clinics and even murder offending doctors. We can only condemn such wanton acts of violence, committed in Christ's name, as extreme aberrations of biblical principles that command us to love our enemies and to turn our cheek to the aggressor. This doesn't mean we approve of anti-Christian activities. It only suggests that our means of "warfare" are to be spiritual and not bullets and molotov cocktails.

The average Muslim decries violence. He or she

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is just basically interested in making a living and raising honorable children. It is as wrong to extrapolate the media's presentation of a Muslim terrorist onto the broader 1.2 billion community of peace-loving followers of the Islamic religion as it would be to say that all of our 1.9 billion community of Christians are advocates of murder.

A second widely known "problem" among Muslims is their reluctance to allow any person within their community to convert to Christianity. Many are the illustrations where such persons have been pressured to return to their Islamic faith. In more extreme instances, converts have been killed.

This aspect of Islam frustrates me to no end. But Muslims argue: "Allah has given absolute truth. We are to be its guardians. If we do not protect the honor of God, then He will judge us on the Last Day." Yet not all Muslim converts are killed.

In the mid-60s more than 2 million Muslims became Christians in Indonesia, and there was little opposition to their conversions. In more recent times, thousands of Muslims have come to Christ in Ethiopia and Bangladesh. By no means are *all* of these converts being persecuted.


Actually in the past three decades probably more Muslims have become Christians than in any other similar time span since Islam was conceived. So the picture of religious persecution is not totally bleak.

NOW, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN TO US?

It suggests we are not free to stereotype Muslims by using their most crude and extreme acts as



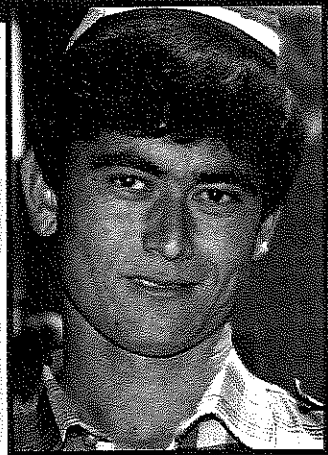
"ammunition" to denounce them as individuals or as a community. Let us see the masses as non-violent, gracious people—generally friendly and responsive to acts of love and kindness.

I know this is true because I have had the privilege of ministering among Muslims for the past 35 years in Bangladesh and the Philippines. This time of ministry has been rich and rewarding. 

This article is condensed from a chapter in a book by CMM called "Through Muslim Eyes." You can receive a copy of this book, by sending \$3 to CMM, 2032 E. Kearney, #205, Springfield, MO 65803.

CAPTURED BY THE POWER OF THE CROSS

controversy arose in 1986 over a cross that had been erected 32 years before between the Protestant Chapel and the Catholic Chapel on the University of Ibadan campus in Nigeria. A mosque was officially commissioned on campus that year. The controversy continues to this very day.



Why is the Cross such an anathema to Muslims? Why will they do anything within their power to destroy it? Because Muslims realize that it is in the Cross that the real power of Christianity rests. Without the Cross, Christianity would be just like any other religion—an empty form.

We Christians know, “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). God’s power is revealed through the Cross and He is using it to supernaturally bring the light of the gospel to the hearts of many Muslims.

Even though Hassan’s* Muslim home was not *religious* by Muslim standards, he hated Christians. He knew that they prayed to a picture and worshiped three gods: God the Father, Mary and Jesus. But the one thing that really inflamed Hassan was to see Christians wearing crosses around their necks. Every time he saw a cross on the neck of a Christian, he

wanted to rip it off and shove it down that person’s throat. The sight of the cross and Hassan’s inner turmoil fueled his great hatred of Christians.

Hassan got to where he would do almost anything to break up Christian meetings. One time he even threw a packet of firecrackers into the room where a group of Christians had gathered for prayer.

One night he had a dream that greatly disturbed him. In his dream he was the one who was wearing the cross, and people were coming to him, asking why he was wearing it.

The next morning when he awoke, he remembered every detail of the dream. He realized that Jesus had indeed died on the Cross for him and he began searching for a Christian he knew who could give him a Bible to study to clarify his newfound faith.


That dream revolutionized Hassan’s life. A once-hated cross now hangs around his neck and the One who died on the Cross lives in his heart.

Mustapha*, another religious Muslim, faithfully prayed five times daily. Each time he would roll out the same prayer mat, pray the same prayer, go through the same prostrations, and routinely repeat the same phrases, yet Mustapha never found peace.

One day as he bent at the waist with his hands on his knees during prayer, he saw a square wooden post standing in the ground with a horizontal beam near the top. He recognized it as the cross of Christ and he was horrified.

Though he kept trying to begin his prayers, Mustapha was confronted with the vision of that *terrible* cross every time he tried. Finally, in exasperation, he jumped up, ran and grabbed his Qu’ran, and threw it down in front of his family member exclaiming, “This book does me no good. I am going to become a follower of Jesus.”

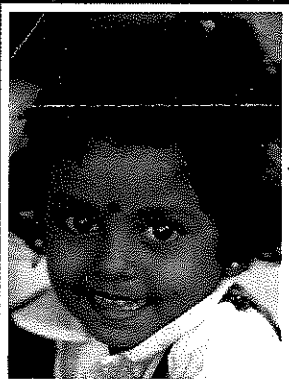
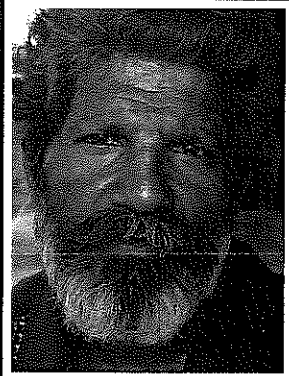
A recent report related the story of a large group of Muslim men who were diligently reciting the many names of Allah in a Sudanese mosque. Suddenly they became silent as they gazed up in the sky and saw a vision of Christ on the cross. Many were convicted of sin and gave their lives to Jesus.

The Spirit of God is moving among Muslims more than ever before. They are being captured by the power of the Cross. Pray that the Lord will continue to use such supernatural experiences to reveal himself to seeking Muslims. 

*denotes pseudonym

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims Around the World!



*I urge, then, first of all
that requests, prayers,
intercession and
thanksgiving be
made for everyone.*
—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)

Friday, November 6, 1998. Please pray

...for the CMM team member who is teaching an Islamic bloc session at Southern Asia Bible College. Pray that many students will respond to the challenge to reach out to Muslims.

...for those who are following Jesus in the midst of difficult circumstances in Afghanistan. The Taliban has increased restrictions on women so that they cannot leave their homes. Pray that God may miraculously sustain the widows even as He did the widow of Zarephath.

...for the CMM team member who is finishing his teaching ministry at a Bible college in Bulgaria, and preaching the Bible college's missions convention.

...for the first School of Missions to be conducted in Nigeria from November 2-14. A CMM team member will participate in training Nigerians involved in mission activities.

Friday, November 13, 1998. Please pray

...for the CMM team member who is on his way to Macedonia for two weeks of training national church leaders in ministering to Muslims.

...for the indigenous Arab population of the United Arab Emirates who have little exposure to the gospel. Pray for radio broadcasts and a wider use of videos to share the gospel.

...that many Christians will observe the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on November 15 and begin to pray regularly for those suffering for the sake of the gospel.

...for the hundreds of ethnic Chinese women and children who have been raped and mutilated by Muslim mobs in Jakarta and elsewhere during Indonesia's rioting earlier this year. Pray that God will bring healing and wholeness to them.

Friday, November 20, 1998. Please pray

...for the 3-week Islamic bloc session being taught by a CMM staff member at a Bible college in Belarus. Pray that many students will give themselves to full-time ministry among Muslims.

...for an 18-year-old girl in Djibouti who wants to learn to read in order to read the Afar New Testament herself. Pray that others will share that same desire.

...that God will be at work in the hearts of Muslims in Israel, that they will respond to the gospel message that they receive from various media sources.

...for the many who lost family members or were injured in the earthquake in the province of Adana, Turkey, on June 27. Ask God to provide encouragement and help to those affected by this tragedy and that some will respond to the Lord.

Friday, November 27, 1998. Please pray

...for the thousands who have been fleeing from Kosova to Albania and Montenegro because of the deteriorating political situation. Pray that many will come to Christ out of this desperate situation.

...for the aggressive stance of the Ethiopian churches. According to Luis Bush, Protestants have grown from .8 percent of the population in 1960 to 14 percent by last year.

...for 7 new Tatar fellowships in the C.I.S. There are only 300 known converts from Islam out of 7 million Tatars worldwide.

...for a small group of evangelical Christians who were denied a meeting place in Ethiopia dominated by the Orthodox Church. Pray also for the Muslims who gave them a place to meet.

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims Around the World!



Friday, December 4, 1998. Please pray

...for the Turkish pastor and fellowship in the city of Diyarbakir, Turkey. They are being challenged with a great influx of refugees fleeing from the Kurdish war in Eastern Turkey. Pray for unity among the believers and deliverance from fear.

...for a former Muslim who is imprisoned in the U.S. He recently helped baptize almost 20 men who gave their hearts to Christ. Pray that God will continue to make his ministry fruitful among his prison mates who need Christ.

...for a 13-year-old from a Shiite Hezbollah family as she grows in the Lord. Pray that she will not be forced to marry a Muslim.

...that God will continue to build his church in Kazakstan. A cell-church movement, focusing on each of the 15 people groups in Almaty, is growing rapidly.

Friday, December 11, 1998. Please pray

...for the outreach of a Christian book and video ministry in Amman, Jordan, that was torched by Islamic extremists early this year. It has been rebuilt. Pray that fear will not hinder the effectiveness of this work.

...for the efforts by Far East Broadcasting Association to reach the Maldives, an island nation just south of India, by shortwave radio programs.

...for the Maldivian Christians who have felt the heavy hand of the Muslim government. The government is trying to rid the country of people attempting to spread Christianity.

...that Kurdish refugees in Europe, Lebanon, Australia and the U.S. will hear the gospel.

Friday, December 18, 1998. Please pray

...for an outreach ministry in Kenya that supports large numbers of evangelists in a country that is a prime target for Muslim missionary penetration. Pray they will see much fruit.

...for the man who threw the bomb at the Christian bookstand in Gaziantep, Turkey, last fall who turned himself in to the police. Pray he will find peace and forgiveness in Christ.

...that the increased economic woes in many Muslim countries will cause Muslims to reevaluate their lives and seek God during these days of hardships and struggles.

...that religious freedom may continue in Senegal. Pray that the government's resistance to pressure from extremists to set up an Islamic state may be firmly established.

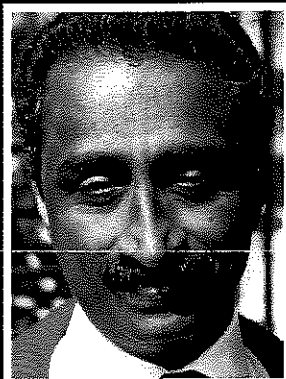
Friday, December 25, 1998. Please pray

...that the ongoing misery in Algeria will be brought to an end. Muslim militants murdered a popular Berber singer in June. This death and other situations sparked rioting.

...for believers in Mauritania to have the courage and strength necessary to take a stand for Christ in this country where they can be imprisoned and tortured for their faith.

...for the 100,000 ethnic Dungans living in Kazakstan. Pray that a church may be established among this Muslim people group.

...that God will intervene in the situation in Uzbekistan. A newly-passed law now restricts all mission activity and prohibits a person's conversion from one religion to another.



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—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)