

## Spiritually Mismatched

By Donna Hardee Krstulovich

The Global Initiative team travels internationally and in the United States to train and equip Christians to reach out in love to Muslim people everywhere. Invariably, wherever we go, concerned parents or other family members in the congregation approach us and say, “My daughter (or sister, niece, granddaughter, aunt, co-worker, friend) is dating a Muslim and they are planning to get married. What should I tell her?”

One phenomenon produced by globalization, international travel, immigration, and online dating sites is a rise in cross-cultural, interfaith interactions. When two people fall in love and decide to marry, both partners bring their own worldviews, family backgrounds, and expectations into the relationship. The absence or presence of faith adds another dimension to any relationship.

This article examines key spiritual differences by comparing and contrasting Christian and Islamic views on dating, marriage, family relationships, divorce, and children. The scenarios are composites of statements we hear repeatedly. The stories and examples are real people and true-life situations known by the author.

### Dating a Muslim Scenario 1

*Your Christian friend says she has met an incredible guy. She is dating a charming, handsome Muslim man and they plan on marriage. He is polite and respectful. She loves his accent and is enamored with his culture. He showers her with compliments, tells her she is beautiful, invites her out to meals, and gives her gifts. She says, “He is more respectful than the Christian guys I have dated.” She is convinced he is the man of her dreams. What would you tell her?*

A Christian girl who follows Jesus should first ask, “Is it biblical?” In the letter to the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul says not to be unequally yoked to unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). Mennonite missionary and author, David Shenk, grew up in Tanzania and served for over fifty years among Muslims in Somalia, Kenya, and the United States. In his most recent book, *Christian. Muslim. Friend.*, he writes a word of caution regarding romantic relationships between a Muslim man and a Christian woman. He cautions that children belong to the husband and he will raise them as Muslims: “These realities mean it is not wise for a Muslim and a Christian to become romantically involved” (p. 100-101).

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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 Brink**

International Director  
Global Initiative:  
Reaching Muslim Peoples



“**F**IRST of all, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all ...” (1 Tim. 2:1). This is the theme verse of the *Intercede* and it emphasizes that prayer is the first activity to effect spiritual breakthrough. When examining staggering spiritual challenges, such as the spiritual darkness that envelops the lost people of our world, some believers have a tendency to resort first to human weapons, such as strategies, finances, and human ability. However, prayer is our **FIRST** and most effective weapon to win spiritual battles. The acronym, **FIRST**, provides some insight into what constitutes prayer:

*in authority.*” In the New Testament “intercession” comes from the Greek *entugchano*, meaning “to appeal to” or “to plead for.” To intercede is “to plead or make request on behalf of others.” As we intercede, we stand before God for those who are lost, helpless, or in dire need of salvation. The Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints (Rom. 8:26-27) and the saints cooperate with the Holy Spirit to intercede on behalf of others. “Meaningful intercession comes only from a heart which through intimacy with the divine senses the burden of God’s heart” (Robert L. Brandt and Zenas J. Bicket, *The Spirit Helps Us Pray*, 1984, 708 Kindle).

## **R**-epentance

Repentance is also a crucial part of prayer. It’s a time for personal reflection followed by intercession for the sins of nations and people who are lost and hopeless without Christ. It’s a time for “reckoning”—a personal humbling and turning to God and then turning our prayers to others.

## **S**-upplication

Supplication means “to bring a petition.” In the New Testament, supplication implies an importunate, passionate pleading to God. It involves great intensity and persistence in prayer as we remind the Lord of His Word and rely on His promise to respond. The widow’s persistence before the judge gives us an example of supplication (Luke 18:1-8).

## **T**-hanksgiving

If a ruler offered you a great favor, you would express abundant appreciation for the favor. In like manner, *profuse-ly thank God for His answers*. Thank God for the salvation of souls; thank God for the advance of the gospel; thank God for His protection of missionaries; thank God for dreams and visions that bring the lost to the feet of Jesus; thank the Lord for breaking spiritual powers; and thank the Lord for His blessings in your life. Be the one leper who returns to give thanks to God for the unspeakable gifts He gives to His children (Luke 17:11-19). Join us every Friday to intercede for the salvation of Muslim people!

*\*Used with permission. Article based on blog entitled “This is a National Crisis for Prayer” by Larry Stockstill, larrystockstill.com/blog/nationalcrisisforprayer, May 3, 2020.*



## **F**-ellowship

Prayer is the outgrowth of intimacy with the Lord. God wants to sense our dependence upon Him; as our Father, He enters into our pain through our communion. This fellowship starts with worship as we tell him of His worth. As we worship, we focus on who God is and enjoy increasing fellowship with God as our Father.

## **I**-ntercession

Paul mentions “intercession ... for kings and all who are



# Muslim World News

## **UN Chief: Islamophobia “Top Priority”**

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that countering anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia is his “top priority” and he “fully agrees” with the assessment that it could pose a threat to international peace and security.

Guterres gave the statement at the virtual meeting of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states at the United Nations (UN) in response to the comments from Pakistan’s Ambassador to the UN, Munir Akram.—*APP*

## **Nigeria 2020: 620 Christians Killed**

A Nigerian civil society organization estimates that about 620 Christians were killed and hundreds of homes, as well as churches, were damaged in Nigeria since the beginning of the year as attacks carried about by Fulani radicals and Islamic terrorists continue.

The Anambra-based nongovernmental organization International Society for Civil Liberties & Rule of Law, headed by Christian Emeka Umeagbalasi, released a statement highlighting the impact of the atrocities committed by terrorists across Nigeria thus far in 2020. The group reports the killing of “no fewer than 620 defenseless Christians and wanton burning or destruction of their centers of worship and learning” in 2020.—*Christian Post*

## **Belgium: 60 Radicals Set for Release**

This year and next, a total of 60 prisoners convicted of

terrorism and others who are known to have become radicalized are due for release, according to figures given by federal justice minister Koen Geens (CD&V). There will be 33 releases this year, and 27 before the end of 2021, Geens said.—*The Brussels Times*

## **Denmark: 3 of 4 Muslims Want Islamic Criticism Ban**

A report published in 2020 by the Ministry of Justice of Denmark reveals that nearly eight out of ten Muslims who live in the country want to see all criticism of Islam legally banned. The report, ‘Freedom of Speech in Denmark,’ surveyed attitudes towards freedom of speech held by all Danish citizens. Among the study’s findings was that 76% of migrants who had come from Muslim countries, or whose parents had come from Muslim countries, want to put a legal end to any criticism of Islam, as reported by *Samhällsnytt*.—*Voice of Europe*

## **Pakistani Official: Beheading for Blasphemy**

Pakistan’s minister of state for parliamentary affairs has called for the beheading of people who commit blasphemy. “Beheading is the only punishment for those who mock Prophet Muhammad,” Ali Muhammad Khan tweeted in the Urdu language. Khan made the comments in response to conflicting reports that Ahmadis had been given representation on the National Minorities Council. Ahmadis do not believe that Muhammad was the last prophet.—*UCAN*

Most conservative Muslims do not date. Many Muslim families prefer arranged marriages. Muslim women represent the honor of the family, so they carefully guard their daughters and do not permit them to go out alone with a man. Muhammad said if a man and a woman are alone, the third person in the room is Satan. Muslim men who travel to different countries, away from family pressures and responsibilities, do not always follow their own cultural norms. The Christian woman needs to learn about his culture and his religion even if she lives far from his country of origin.

The Quran allows a Muslim man to marry a Jewish or Christian woman, but does not allow a Muslim woman to marry a Christian man. As a Jewish American, Phyllis Chesler (2014), in her fascinating book, *American Bride in Kabul*, recounts her college days romance with her Afghan husband. Fifty years later, she describes her hard-learned lessons:

As soon as we arrived in Kabul, my Westernized husband became another person—one whom I had never before met. Thus, I learned that even a well-read scholarship student can be easily fooled by the man she loves and that a man who can easily pass for a Westerner in the West can just as easily revert to Eastern ways when he returns home. . . . My husband’s betrayal was not personal. It was cultural. He merely treated me as an Afghan wife, not as an American college student with serious intellectual and artistic aspirations (p. 207).

## Scenario 2

*Your Christian friend tells you about a recent conversation with her intelligent and charming Muslim boyfriend she met online. She really likes him. She tells him she is a Christian and he tells her, “Muslims love Jesus. Jesus is in the Quran.” He tells her that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. They both believe in angels, holy books, prophets, and the last day. She says, “The religions don’t seem so different after all.” What would you tell her?*

Many people today refer to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as “Abrahamic Religions.” However, Islam rejects the key defining issues of the Christian faith—the person and deity of Jesus Christ, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Muslims say that Isa in the Quran is Jesus, but Isa is not the Son of God, or the Savior of the world, as Christians believe, but only a prophet. Islam offers no assurance of salvation. Muslims believe Isa did not die on the cross but was taken alive to heaven and will come back as a Muslim. Because

many Christian women have never studied Islam and do not know how to defend their faith, they accept what their Muslim boyfriends say, and are drawn in by spiritual deception.

When I taught a class in the Philippines for students from Asia, a bright young Pakistani Christian student shared a revealing conversation he had with a Catholic girl who was on a flight with him. She told him she had a Pakistani Muslim boyfriend and they planned to marry. Surprised, he asked, “How can you marry him since you are a Christian?”

“It doesn’t matter; we are the same,” she responded. “In the Quran, God is called Allah, and Jesus is called Isa. The names are different but we worship the same God.”

“Actually we are not the same. Jesus and Isa are two different personalities. In the Bible, Jesus is the Son of God. In the Quran, Isa is only a prophet. Isa never hung on the cross for your sins, but Jesus died and hung on the cross for your sins. Jesus rose again, but Isa never rose again. So, how can we be the same?” he answered.

After this conversation, my student realized that Muslim men deceive Christian girls into marrying them by falsely saying they both worship the same God.

A Muslim husband and his family often pressure a wife to convert to Islam. A British nurse and a Muslim doctor worked together in England, fell in love, and decided to marry. She knew nothing about Islam. They were married in a Muslim ceremony conducted in Arabic. Without knowing what she was saying, she repeated the *shahada* (the Islamic creed). Later she was told that she had converted to Islam. She felt deceived and betrayed. They moved to his country where she decided to follow Jesus. She had constant struggles with her husband’s family, and eventually they moved back to England. She said that her children really struggled with identity as they did not fit into either culture.

Some Christian women marry Muslim men convinced they will lead their husbands to Christ. However, there are no guarantees that this will happen. In fact, many wives who have unbelieving husbands pray for years without seeing any movement toward Christ in their husband’s lives. A widowed Christian received a phone call from a Muslim friend whose wonderful wife had recently died. He asked her to marry him. She was flattered. He was such a fine man and she thought she would be able to lead him to Christ. He came to the United States for the marriage, got his green

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card, then went back to his country, and told her never to call him again. He broke her heart.

### Scenario 3

*A Christian friend loves joining international students on her campus for meals and conversations. She is interested in learning about different cultures and loves to experiment with different types of cooking. A Muslim student from the group wants to marry her. She is impressed with his devotion to Islam. He does not drink. He prays five times a day and fasts during the month of Ramadan. His culture sounds fascinating and she appreciates his sense of family and community. What would you tell her?*

The influence of culture and religion cannot be underestimated in a marriage relationship. Cross-cultural marriages between two Christians or two Muslims from different countries will encounter cultural differences, but by practicing the same faith, the couple can experience spiritual compatibility. In a Christian/Muslim marriage, if the Muslim man and the Christian woman are more secular and nominal in their religious practice, they will still face cultural adjustments. For a Christian to marry a Muslim who has grown up in the West, the cultural adjustment may not be as great as with a Muslim who has grown up in a predominantly Islamic society. However, if either the non-practicing Muslim or Christian begins to seriously pursue their faith and obey the teachings of their respective holy book, the spiritual differences inevitably surface, revealing stark incompatibilities.

Couples remaining in the wife's home country after marriage, speaking the same language, and living in familiar surroundings with freedom of mobility, lessen the cultural stresses. Wives who return to the husband's home country face challenges with language, living arrangements, gender segregation, and family expectations.

I met a Canadian lady who married a Muslim doctor and converted to Islam. While living in Canada, the family went to the mosque together and fasted during Ramadan. Her husband decided to bring her and their two children back to his home country. They moved into a house with two unmarried sisters who did not like her. Her family no longer attended the mosque together because only men attend mosque there. His extended family controlled her. She had to wear clothes from his country in order to be modest and they gave her a Muslim name. Her children suffered. She said everything changed when they moved to his country. Eventually they moved back to Canada.

### Marrying a Muslim

Marriage is God's idea. In the book of Genesis, God created men and women in His own image, both as male and female (Gen. 1:27). Marriage is a covenant relationship with God (Mal. 2:14) between one man and one woman. Husbands leave their parents and are joined to their wives to form a new family unit (Gen. 2:24). Through marital intimacy, the husband and wife become one (Matt. 19:6; Eph. 5:31). The marriage bed is not to be shared with anyone else (Heb. 13:4). Christ compares the marriage relationship with His sacrificial love for the church, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).

My Iranian friend who met Jesus said that in Islam the husband buys the wife. Islamic marriage is a *contract* whereas a Christian marriage is a *covenant* before God. The Quran permits a Muslim man to marry four wives, provided he treats them equally: "Marry women of your choice, two, three or four. But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one" (Quran 4:3). Christian wives feel heart-broken and betrayed if they find out that their handsome, charming Muslim husband has another wife in his home country. Even Muslim women fear that one day their husbands will take another wife. I talked with a Pakistani Muslim woman who is the first wife of a man she rarely sees. Sadly, she told me that her husband married a Dutch woman and lives with her in Holland.

A Muslim husband has sexual authority over his wife. The Quran tells him that "your wives are as a tilth (a place of sowing seed) unto you, so approach your tilth when and how you will" (Quran 2:223). She must be available to him any time he wants. In contrast, the Bible says that "husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph. 5:28). The Christian husband and wife have mutual authority over each other's bodies (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

Domestic violence occurs in every country. Whereas the Quran condones it, the Bible does not. Christian husbands are to love their wives and not be harsh with them (Col. 3:19). The Quran permits a husband to punish his wife for disobedience (arrogance or rebellion) by first admonishing her, then refusing to share her bed, and finally, by beating her (Quran 4:34). Muslim husbands can be very over-protective by guarding their wives and monitoring their activity because wives' actions can reflect negatively on his honor

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and reputation. A woman's freedom of movement can be curtailed because she is not trusted to go out on her own without a chaperone or be in the company of other men.

## **Divorce in Islam**

In the case of divorce in the West, legally the mother usually receives custody of the children and the father has visiting rights. In Islam the children belong to the father. Divorce in majority Islamic countries is easy for a man and difficult for a woman. A Muslim man can easily divorce his wife by saying "I divorce you" three times. Some of the reasons a husband divorces his wife include not bearing sons, conversion to another religion, and aging. For women, divorce is more difficult and allowed only in the case of the husband's impotence or insanity.

## **The Extended Family**

Initially, a Christian wife may be enamored by her Muslim husband's tightly knit family, their hospitality, and regard for community. She may not see that she is marrying the whole family with all its expectations, financial and social responsibilities, and endless obligations. In the West, the nuclear family is the main family unit. Muslim family structure is very different. His extended family will greatly influence his decisions. Western Christian women do not understand the influence wielded over a husband by a Muslim mother-in-law. A Christian woman who expects to have the primary relationship with her Muslim husband will experience sadness and disappointment when her husband listens to his mother instead of her. The husband finds himself caught between his wife and mother, who both compete for his attention.

The wife of a Muslim man will generally be expected to put his family first in every way—financially and otherwise. The oldest son is responsible for the other siblings. Wives who save money for their own family become discouraged to find their husband sent the money to his relatives. A wife will be expected to entertain her husband's family and guests who may come and stay any time.

## **Children Belong to the Husband**

One of my most heart-breaking memories happened while traveling back into the Islamic country where I lived. I sat down to wait for my early morning flight. My attention was drawn to a European woman who was inappropriately dressed and seemed uncomfortably out of place in the room of staring men. I sat down beside her and she began to pour out her heart. She had fallen in love with a Muslim man years earlier while studying together at a university. They married and had three children. Without warning her hus-

band took the children back to his country. Desperate and determined to find them, she was traveling to her embassy in the capital city hoping they could help her. I volunteered to drive her there and she asked me to sit in on the meeting. A very gracious embassy official motioned for us to have a seat at his desk and he listened as she painfully poured out all the difficult details. He had a far-away look in his eyes. "These mixed marriages..." he said, as his voice trailed off. "There is very little we can do. The children belong to the father." She begged him to do something. As we drove away, past a playground, she suddenly screamed, "There are my children!" Could it be? I stopped for her to get a closer look and she broke down in hysterical sobs when she realized they were not hers. She returned to her country alone, dejected, and heart-broken.

## **Consider the Cost**

- If you truly want to follow Christ, do not marry an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14).
- Do not let emotional entanglement cloud judgement.
- You could be pressured to convert to Islam.
- In the majority of marriages, Muslim husbands do not convert to Christ.
- Muslim men can have four wives.
- In Islamic law, your children belong to your husband, and he will want to raise them as Muslims.
- Know the Bible so you are not deceived.
- Understand what Islam actually teaches.
- Realize that Jesus and Muhammad treat women radically different.
- Seek the godly counsel of your pastor.
- Talk to other Christian women who married a Muslim to learn from their experience.

## **Conclusion**

At Global Initiative we often receive letters from Christian women who married Muslim men against the advice of their families and friends who now express many regrets due to spiritual mismatch. The Bible clearly states in 2 Corinthians 6:14 that a Christian should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. Emotional entanglement, naive thinking, and spiritual deception can blind one to reality. Unfortunately, a Christian girl charmed by a Muslim man never thinks these stories can happen to her and often thinks her marriage will be the exception. Please pray for Christian girls who are considering marrying a Muslim man to think clearly, consider the consequences, and count the costs to avoid entering into a spiritually mismatched marriage. Please pray with Christian women who are married to Muslim men that their husbands and children will meet Christ.



# JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

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## **Friday, July 3, 2020. Please pray for**

...*several flourishing churches* among the Kabyle Berber people in the mountainous eastern area of Algeria. The Kabyle number 5.7 million in Algeria, of which less than 1.8% are Christians. Of Algeria's 43 million people, 97% are Muslim.  
...*Yasmina, a young believer in Morocco* who is under pressure from her family to marry a Muslim and renounce her faith.  
...*an ongoing translation project* to record audio versions of the New Testament in local Tunisian Arabic dialects. Many will hear God's Word in their local dialect for the first time. Of Tunisia's 11 million people, 99% are Muslim.

## **Friday, July 10, 2020. Please pray for**

...*provision of micro-enterprise projects to help Egyptian widows* who have fled villages due to radical Muslim pressure.  
...*the Republic of Maldives*, with a population of 500,000. Islam is the only recognized religion and the government requires that all citizens be Muslims. The tiny number of Christians are carefully watched.  
...*the growing number of Muslim seekers who are sending inquiries to a prominent Arabic website*. In a recent 3-month period, 93% of visits were made on a mobile device. Almost all inquirers were "interested" Muslims.

## **Friday, July 17, 2020. Please pray for**

...*the nomadic Afar people* in Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. Of 2.5 million Afars, almost all are Muslims.  
...*compassion ministries* among Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Refugees from Syria now comprise approximately 40% of the population of Lebanon, most of whom are Muslims. Of Lebanon's 6.7 million people, 59% are Muslim.  
...*the Sisaala and Dagomba people groups* in Northern Ghana, the majority of whom are Muslim.

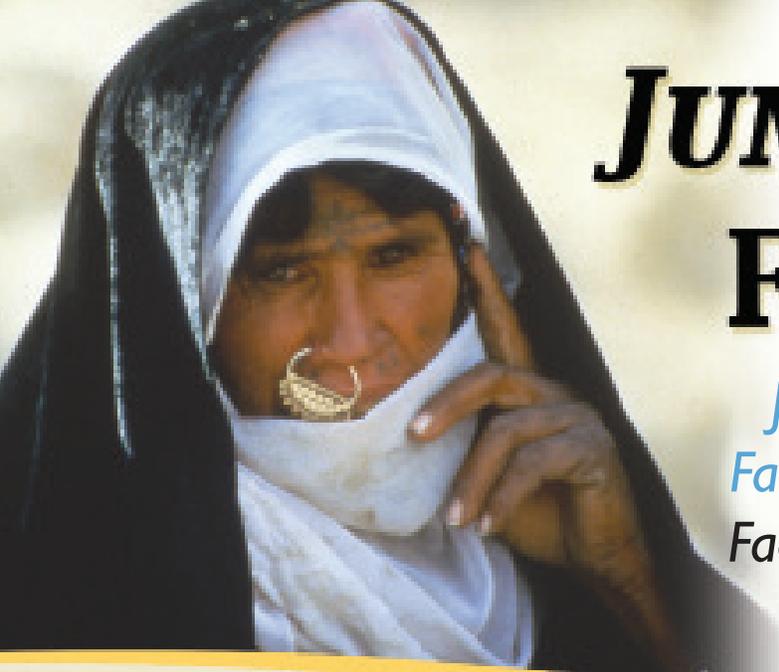
## **Friday, July 24, 2020. Please pray for**

...*Aisha, a Somali woman* who recently left Islam and accepted Jesus as Savior. She has already led three others to faith. Of Somalia's 15 million people, 99.6% are Muslim.  
...*SAT-7* as they celebrate their 22nd year of broadcasting throughout the Middle East. A recent release said, "Last year we saw amazing responses to our programs. Over 900 people now contact our viewer support teams every day."  
...*218 Pakistani Christians* who face blasphemy charges against Islam. Of Pakistan's 215 million people, 98% are Muslim.

## **Friday, July 31, 2020. Please pray for**

...*Christians in Burkina Faso* targeted by Muslim jihadist groups. Armed militants will arrive at a village by motorbike, abduct and kill the leaders, and burn schools and businesses. Of Burkina Faso's 20 million people, 55.7% are Muslim.  
...*the effectiveness of satellite TV programs* beamed into the homes of Bahrain's 1.6 million people.  
...*the isolated Rohingya Christian community* in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The majority Muslim Rohingya refugees launched multiple attacks on the small group of Christians, seriously injuring many, including children.

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

**Friday, August 7, 2020. Please pray for**

...*the effectiveness of a Turkish Bible correspondence ministry.* Its staff reports, “On average 450 people in a week request and receive a copy of the New Testament.” Of Turkey’s 83 million people, 96% are Muslim.

...*the suffering people of Libya,* where chaos has reigned since the overthrow of Gaddafi in 2011. More than 200,000 Libyans are internally displaced, and 1.3 million need humanitarian aid. Of Libya’s 6.7 million people, 97% are Muslim.

...*the majority Muslim nation of Oman* in the Arabian Gulf. Of Oman’s 5 million people, 90% are Muslim.

**Friday, August 14, 2020. Please pray for**

...*secret Saudi believers,* known only to their Father in Heaven, that they may be encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

...*Christians in Turkmenistan,* especially converts from Islam, as they face difficult times, especially in their dealings with the authorities. Of Turkmenistan’s 6 million people, 94% are Muslim.

...*a group of young Uzbeks,* all former Muslims, whose meetings at a local church were disrupted by police. After being detained and warned at the local police station, all were released. Of Uzbekistan’s 33 million people, 83% are Muslim.

**Friday, August 21, 2020. Please pray for**

...*Afghan converts from Islam* who have been returned from Europe to Afghanistan, putting their lives at risk from the government, which could execute them under Afghan law. Of Afghanistan’s 38 million people, 99.8% are Muslim.

...*the family of Nigerian Pastor Lawan Andimi,* who was beheaded by Islamic militants. In a hostage video produced for his family, he said, “Don’t worry, but thank God for everything.” Of Nigeria’s 200 million people, 51% are Muslim.

...*protection and anointing on the ministry of Pastor Alireza,* leader of a house church “network” in Iran. He reports, “Soon we will have four baptismal services for 175 Muslims who have left Islam to follow Jesus.”

**Friday, August 28, 2020. Please pray for**

...*a ministry distributing The Jesus Film and The Life of Christ DVDs* in Islamic countries: “In one country 45,000 Muslims have received DVDs, and in one location 380 Muslims said ‘yes’ to Jesus after watching the Life of Christ.”

...*ministry outreaches to Muslims in the United States.* Estimates of Muslims in the U.S. range between 4 and 6 million.

...*the provision of adequate housing* for 40 couples pioneering church plants in Muslim communities of Indonesia. They live very simply and face great hostility. Of Indonesia’s 269 million people, 82% are Muslim.

*\*All personal names used herein are pseudonyms.*

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