

INTERCEDE

VOL. XXVIII, NO. 2

MARCH/APRIL 2012

God's 'Hello' to Muslim Women: Christian Friendship

By Lynda Hausfeld



If every Muslim woman and girl were to stand shoulder to shoulder in a straight line, that line would wrap around the world more than eleven times! Sadly, the vast majority of Muslim girls have never heard an adequate witness of the gospel — not even once.

It's a compelling statistic, but there is more to it. The line of believing women whose ministry focus is Muslim women would only be 83 miles long.¹ If outreach to Muslim women were to continue at this ratio, heaven for them would remain highly improbable — virtually impossible — for ages to come. Clearly, there are too few believing women doing the work of mission among Muslim women. If they are to stand even a chance of heaven, it will be because Christian women worldwide decide to act on their behalf and share Christ with them.² Muslim women aren't just overseas anymore; they are

also in our neighborhoods. The apostle Paul explains that “[God] determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26, NIV). He says, “God did this so that [mankind] would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him” (Acts 17:27, NIV). He makes Muslims our neighbors so that they can find Christ! We can be God's hello to them!

Jesus entrusts Muslim women to Christians because he loves them, and because he means to extend his redemptive mission to them through believing women, whom he also loves. This is true of Christian and Muslim women everywhere; whether the Christian and Muslim women live in America or in France; in Indonesia or in El Salvador — Christ wants believing women to say “hello” on his behalf, so that he can give Muslim women heaven.

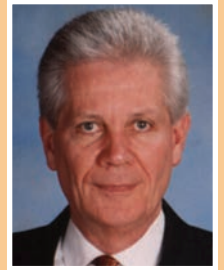
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Until All Have Heard

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

Jim Bennett
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



The author of our excellent lead article is Lynda Hausfeld, director of a new ministry called **Say Hello: Serving Muslim Women*. Lynda says, “We must *Say Hello* to the world’s Fatimas and Leilas. We have to start the dialogue if they are ever to know the truth. Did you know you can say hello to a Muslim woman at the grocery store, on the sidewalk, at a restaurant, or any other place, and actually open heaven’s door to her? Or that you can put tools into the hands of others who will *Say Hello*? It’s true. *Say Hello* will inspire, equip and mobilize the Church for effective outreach to Muslim women everywhere.”

In Global University’s *Women in Islam* textbook, the introductory remarks on page 7 are a fitting corollary for our lead article.

“Within the private world of her home and heart, the Muslim woman lives a complex life balancing the expectations of her culture, faith, and family. Life cycles from birth to death affect her sexuality, freedom of movement in the public world of men, opportunity for education, marriage, and work outside the home. She navigates the expectations of others and her own dreams, feeling the tension that what she does directly affects the family’s honor.

With both knowledge and sensitivity, we seek to enter the female Muslim’s world: she is our neighbor, store clerk, seatmate in flight, or one for whom we are praying. Understanding her role in upholding family honor, we approach our friendship by acknowledging the parameters of her faith and family. Appreciating core values of her culture – status, hospitality, and family – we adapt however we need to. We are convinced that these principles are true:

1. Muslims need to hear a fresh, clear proclamation of the gospel without Western trappings.
2. The prescribed boundaries in the lives of Muslim women demand that mainly women reach them with the message of Christ.
3. Men can facilitate ministry to Muslim women by encouraging and empowering women to spend time with Muslim women.
4. The messengers, both men and women, should be well



acquainted with the world of Muslim women in order to minister effectively.

Through eyes of faith, we see crowds of Muslim women around the throne of God with us, praising Him forever. Saved through faith in Jesus — purified through suffering, they may now lift their eyes to heaven in adoration of the One who paid the price for their honor and calls them His beloved.”

*To learn more about *Say Hello: Serving Muslim Women*, access www.sayhelloinfo.com, phone toll free at 1-866-816-0824, or write P.O. Box 5928, Springfield, MO 65801.



Muslim World News

Open Doors Persecution

Persecution increased most in Sudan, Nigeria, report says

Sudan and northern Nigeria saw steeper increases in persecution against Christians than 48 other nations where Christians suffered abuse last year, according to an annual ranking by Christian support organization Open Doors.

Sudan, where northern Christians experienced greater vulnerability after southern Sudan seceded in a July referendum, and where Christians were targeted amid isolated military conflicts, jumped 19 places last year from its 2010 ranking, from 35th to 16th, according to Open Doors' 2012 World Watch List. In northern Nigeria, a rash of Islamist bombings, guerrilla-style attacks and increased government restrictions on Christians contributed to the region leaping by 10 on the list, from 23rd to 13th place.

"Nigeria continues to be the country where the worst atrocities in terms of loss of life occur, with over 300 Christians losing their lives this year,

though the true number is thought to be far higher," according to the Open Doors report.

Both Sudan and northern Nigeria saw their persecution indices rise more than other countries' – Sudan by 16.5, from 37 in 2010 to 53.5 last year, and northern Nigeria by 9, from 44 to 55. The persecution index for three other countries rose by at least 5 points – Egypt from 47.5 to 53.5, Ethiopia from 30 to 36, and Indonesia from 26.5 to 31.5.

Egypt landed at 15 in the 2012 list after being ranked 19 last January, before political chaos loosened the grip on Islamic extremists; Ethiopia went from 43rd to 38th place, and Indonesia from 48th to 43rd place. Most of the countries on the list, 38 out of 50, have an Islamic majority, including nine of the top 10.

"As the 2012 World Watch List reflects, the persecution of Christians in these Muslim countries continues to increase," said Carl Moeller, president/CEO of Open Doors USA. "While many thought the Arab Spring would bring increased freedom,

including religious freedom for minorities, that certainly has not been the case so far."

In the case of Sudan, the secession of mainly Christian southern Sudan left Christians in (north) Sudan "much more isolated under President Omar al-Bashir," who is wanted for crimes against humanity, according to the Open Doors report.

A new addition to the list is Kazakhstan at 45th place. Kazakhstan moved onto the list due to the passage of "an invasive and restrictive religion law" requiring the re-registration of all religious communities.

After North Korea at No. 1, the top 10 on the list are Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Iran, the Maldives, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Pakistan. Pakistan entered the top 10 for the first time after a spike in radical Islamist violence that included the assassination of the nation's highest-ranking Christian politician – Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti – for his efforts to change Pakistan's blasphemy law. — *Compass*

God's 'Hello' to Muslim Women

Continued



When a Christian woman prayerfully befriends a Muslim woman, she embarks on a remarkable journey. First, her commitment to her new friend heralds her own reliance on the Holy Spirit for the will to begin a process that can lead scores of others to salvation encounters with Jesus. Muslim women who respond to friendship have family and friends who join in on the relationship. Second, with the uttering of that first “hello” the Christian woman not only speaks Christ into the life of another, but she embraces the opportunity for rich friendship and personal growth. It’s not to say that every attempt to befriend a Muslim woman will result in her salvation, but the experience always teaches. It can and often does help to brand one’s heart with unrelenting love and passion for these ladies who need Jesus. And that compels.

How does one start the journey? Ask the Lord to lead you. Whether the opportunity is spontaneous or planned, He can help you know whether you are to initiate dialogue or not. Be ready at all times to begin conversation with a Muslim woman, but be prepared to be spoken to first, as well. God opens doors that way!

Simply say, “Hello!” We won’t undermine the struggle in this first step. Satan does not like this sort of dia-

logue to take place. He fights us. We also have well-founded inhibitions that can work against us. Most of our exposure to Islam is conflict-related, about terror and wars. We hear that women are oppressed, and we see the veil as a Muslim woman’s warning for us to keep our distance. Mystery halts us: our lack of knowledge fosters unfounded fears, so instead of stopping to greet the Muslim woman at the grocery store or PTA meeting, we often pick up the pace to pass her by. The truth is that she probably would love for someone to speak to her.

It is true that a Muslim woman who veils does so for a very important reason, but it is not to scare off friendships. Her veil pronounces deep devotion to Islam’s modesty code. Because the Muslim woman is typically her community’s honor vessel, she must make sure her attire does nothing to provoke another man’s irreverent attention. She is simply doing her best to be a good Muslim woman. Even if she doesn’t wear a veil, she lives beneath a figurative one. The veil of Islam keeps her alienated, but her own protects her.

Attributing godly sentiment to a Muslim woman’s veil can help dissipate its mystery and marginalizing qualities. It can help you say “Hello.” Think of how different

Women: Christian Friendship

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you will feel if every time you see a Muslim veil, you recall that Christ became the temple veil that was torn at his crucifixion! Consider that instead of bearing the emblem of Islam, your Muslim sister bears the very symbol of her redemption — giving her existence prophetic voice and significance. Christ was torn so that she could have direct access to the Father. He became sin so that she might have life. She wears the symbol of Christ's sacrificial love for her, but she doesn't know it! She needs you to tell her the Good News.

You will find it helpful to know a few things most Muslim girls hold in common, and what your friendship responses to them might be.

Initial reticence to friendship might be due to suspicions she could have about your intentions. Her Quran cautions her against friendships with non-Muslims, but it also tells her to behave honorably, particularly if the friend she is making has no interest in persuading her away from Islam.

Be genuine. Reach out to her because you love her — not because you want to reach a Muslim for Christ. God can give you that love, and he will reward it by giving you a rich, reciprocated relationship with your Muslim friend. Your life will validate your words, and Christ will do the work through you.

Your Muslim friend will have been taught to venerate her Quran. In her own home she will keep it on a shelf higher than all others, most likely in a specially made cover. Even if she is not devout, she will never defile her Quran by writing in it. Likewise, handle your Bible respectfully when you are with your friend. Don't set it where anyone sits or walks; keep its pages clear of handwriting and treat it with reverent, deep affection.

Muslims are all about hospitality. To them it is as important as modesty. Gather contact information as early as you can, so that you can invite your friend into your home. (Never serve pork, and try not to cook food in a receptacle where pork has been cooked. Many Muslims strongly dislike dogs because Muhammad preferred cats. Whatever pet you have, be willing to crate it or put it in another room until you are sure your friend is comfortable in its presence.) Be ready to accept her invitations to her home, as well! Don't be afraid to ask her what you should

expect if she has a husband, parents or extended family. She'll graciously teach you things you need to know, and she'll feed you very, very well!

Many Muslims live with extended family, and extended family is always part of a tightly knit larger community. Your comportment among them will be your best testimony, at least initially. Make sure you dress modestly; you may want to draw cues from your friend in that regard. When you visit, you will want to show special respect to parents and grandparents. Be careful about being too forward with brothers, cousins and male elders. In some cultures women do not touch or let their gaze meet a man's unless the man is an immediate family member. You may want to ask your friend if there is anything special you should know about this sort of expectation. Be prepared to eat what you are offered. Most Muslim women are wonderful cooks — make sure you are complimentary and thankful!

Because of modesty codes and careful regard for sexual purity, in some Muslim contexts there will be obvious segregation of sexes. Some homes will have two living rooms: one where women entertain female guests and one where men entertain male guests. Because of this modest ethos it is always critical that girls befriend girls and boys befriend boys. When you meet male siblings or other boys, your friend will help you navigate the setting if you ask her to. She will appreciate the fact that you are sensitive to those issues. Remember that impropriety on your part can hinder your own reputation and can cause a lot of trouble for someone else.

Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day. A diligent prayer life is part of their requirement for paradise. Their reverent regard for prayer often makes them willing, if not eager, for you to pray for them. Bless your Muslim friends often, and expect God to work miracles in their midst.

Muslims work hard to please God. Whether or not they achieve paradise when they die will depend largely upon their deeds on earth. Although they believe in Jesus, they know him only as a prophet — not the Son of God. Your Muslim friend will expect you to know about your faith, since you are a Christian, so enjoy patient, polite sharing. Most Muslims love to talk about the things of

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God. Don't debate. Listen well. Be gracious, particularly when God opens doors for spiritual impact. Be attentive to your Muslim's friend's needs. A Muslim girl needs to feel valued much like a Christian one does. She generally fears the prospect of remaining single, divorce, or the possibility that her husband might take another wife. Barrenness or the inability to have sons makes her particularly vulnerable for potentially devastating consequence or pain. Pray for wisdom should your friend experience such challenges. Love her genuinely and pray with expectancy. Jesus will help you and her through difficult seasons.

Many Muslim girls have little hope for heaven. The Quran establishes their eligibility, but Muhammad tells them it is harder for women than it is for men to get there. Perhaps this is why they are often remarkably drawn to the love of Jesus. Your life in Christ will speak Christ into hers. Make sure Christ is central to everything you do in relationship with your Muslim friend. Give her every opportunity to experience him. There is no greater love than Christ's, and no greater hope than his promise of heaven to all who believe.

In a Fuller Seminary survey 750 Muslim converts shared about what attracted them to Jesus. First rated was the lifestyle of Christians (Woodberry, Shubin and Marks 2007). Christ in us is key to fruitful friendship with Muslim women. He resources us for the privilege of relating Christ to them. He makes our friendships remarkable.

Endnotes:

1. Based on broadly used statistics that say 6 percent of all Christian workers focus specifically on Muslims. The estimate would be that 3 percent of all Christian workers focus on Islam's 750 million Muslim women. Not a scientific stat, but estimate is mathematically conservative.
2. This article features Christian woman to Muslim woman outreach because careful observance of Islamic gender boundaries in relationships is critical.

Citation:

Woodberry, Shubin and Marks. "Why Muslims Follow Jesus" *Christianity Today*, Vol. 51, no. 10, 2007.

Recommended Reading:

Loewen, Joy. *Woman to Woman: Sharing Jesus with a Muslim Friend*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2010.

People Focus: *Praying for 750 Million Muslim Women*

- Pray to have a right heart attitude toward Muslim women. The first step in being able to pray effectively for Muslim women is to see them through God's eyes. Every Muslim woman is someone who God loves.

- Pray for Muslim women to find their true identity in Christ. In most cases, a Muslim woman's identity is through her father or husband. Every woman must be covered by the authority of a man. A Muslim woman's value is often half that of a man and there are countless rules and regulations that keep a Muslim woman in an inferior state.

- Pray for Muslim women to be set free from fear. Fear is one of the greatest strongholds for a Muslim woman. Muslim women often fear infertility, divorce, mistreatment, gossip, religious leaders, religious police — and not least — evil spirits.

- Pray for Muslim women to understand that God "sees them ... and loves them." In Genesis 16 we read the story of Hagar as she fled into the wilderness after conceiving Abram's son Ishmael. There, in the wilderness, an angel of the Lord told Hagar to return to her mistress Sarai, and Hagar named the place "Beer Lahai Roe" meaning "the God who sees me."

Today, Muslim women perceive God as distant and impersonal — Allah does not see. But the true character of God is the one who not only sees them, but also loves them, hears them, and weeps over them, not wanting any to perish.

JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

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Friday, March 2, 2011. Please pray

...for a Somali MBB (Muslim Background Believer) in the city of Janele, Sofia Osman. She was deemed an apostate and punished with 40 lashes.

...for the upheaval in Nigeria. Boko Haram Islamic militants continue to rampage in Africa's most populous nation, with violence blanketing the country.

...that Muslims in Egypt will hear witness of Jesus Christ, despite hardline Islam that is threatening the political balance.

Friday, March 9, 2011. Please pray

...for Muslims in Kenya to hear about the love of Jesus Christ, despite growing Islamic unrest.

...for government leaders across the Muslim world. Pray that through divine intervention, windows of opportunity would open, allowing millions of Muslims to truly have the chance to learn about Jesus Christ.

...for Muslim women in Pakistan. They are often subject to sharia law and have little opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ.

Friday, March 16, 2011. Please pray

...for MBBs in the Maldives. The government refuses to acknowledge a single one.

...for Muslims in the 'closed' country of Libya during a time of upheaval and change.

...for Muslims in Syria. The country remains on edge with protests, arrests, imprisonment and many deaths.

Friday, March 23, 2011. Please pray

...for God to work a miracle in the lives of Chinese Muslims.

...for Muslims in Yemen. Despite hostility toward Christianity, pray that Yemen's Muslims would come to know Jesus Christ.

...for Christian believers in Lebanon to be filled with wisdom and the vision to share Christ with friends and neighbors.

Friday, March 30, 2011. Please pray

...for God to move in the lives of Indonesia's 205 million Muslims.

...for Muslim youth across Europe. Pray that they would have unprecedented opportunity to learn about the truth and love of Jesus Christ.

...that God will protect and bless MBBs in Bangladesh.

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



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*Jumaa Prayer is
now on Facebook.
Please join today.*



Friday, April 6, 2011. Please pray

...for millions of Muslims attending mosques today. Pray that the Lord would reveal His love to them in miraculous ways.
...for expatriate Christian workers in Saudi Arabia to gain opportunities to witness about Jesus. A large percentage of Saudi Arabia's population is made up of foreign workers.
...for millions of Muslim families in Europe. Pray that the Gospel would reach the hearts of so many hungry people.

Friday, April 13, 2011. Please pray

...for Muslims in North Africa. Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would sweep across this stretch of countries.
...for the tense situation in Muslim areas of the Philippines. The past 40 years of violence have seen thousands of deaths.
...for Sufi Muslims across the Islamic world seeking to know more about God.

Friday, April 20, 2011. Please pray

...for the Muslims of Zanzibar. Muslims make up 97 percent of the population, and tension is consistently high between the Islamic community and the Christian minority.
...for Muslims in Palestine as unrest continues and the potential for upheaval remains.
...for indigenous Christian pastors in Central Asia. Many toil under intense danger.

Friday, April 27, 2011. Please pray

...for Muslims in Russia. By itself, Moscow is home to 3 million Muslims, most without official registration.
...for Muslims in Turkmenistan, which is currently the most closed country in Central Asia.
...for the 4 million Muslims of Thailand to have an opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Intercede is a bimonthly publication of Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples
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