



INTERCEDE

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Muslim Beliefs

by Dale Fagerland

Christians and Muslims have serious theological differences—life and death differences. However, these deep disparities often obscure the common ground we share. Mutual understanding is further hindered by the fact that Islam and Christianity have many words in common, but often with very different meanings!

Consequently it is imperative for Christians to understand crucial differences in order to build on mutual values and beliefs. This understanding will help the believer establish and maintain Christ-like relationships with his Muslim neighbors and communicate the gospel of Jesus effectively.

Let's look together at the main beliefs of Muslims. This pursuit will help us develop an understanding of how our friends view God and man's relationship to Him. Followers of Islam worldwide, whether rich or poor, living in Saudi Arabia or Seattle, whether Sunni or Shi'ite, share similar beliefs about the nature of God, the role of created beings, the status of prophets, the importance of sacred writings and about life after death.

One God

Belief in one God is the cornerstone of Islamic faith. However the Muslim view of God is obscure because they believe God has not revealed himself, therefore He cannot be known. They believe God has revealed His will and His laws through many prophets and finally through the teachings of the Qur'an, but

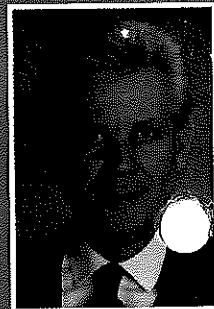
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Until All Have Heard

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, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



A Time to be Encouraged

CMM's mission statement reads: *We are a facilitating ministry to assist the Church worldwide in providing an adequate witness of Jesus Christ to every Muslim by every means possible.* Please allow me to share several reasons why it is a time to be encouraged.

- In January CMM concluded the inaugural Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS) in Amsterdam.
- As I write (April), the eighth annual IIS on a prominent seminary campus in the Asia Pacific region is in full swing. Attendees are the cream of the crop. Most are already working with Muslims or will go to a Muslim field.
- In April I presented two workshops at the 2nd Latin American Congress on Missions (LACM). Some 800 people attended the plenary sessions. In the next three years LACM is committed to: 1) Raise up a million intercessors for the Muslim world, 2) Generate two million dollars and 3) Send fifty new missionaries to the Muslim world—*but they're believing for 50 more in the next three years.* CMM will partner with them to set up an IIS in Latin America to train their missionaries.
- In May we will partner with the Indonesian field in opening an IIS.
- In August we will partner with the Center for Ministry to Neighbors in a major city of India to open an IIS.
- In September CMM inaugurates an IIS program on a strategic campus in West Africa.
- In November the Romanian IIS will gear up for its fourth

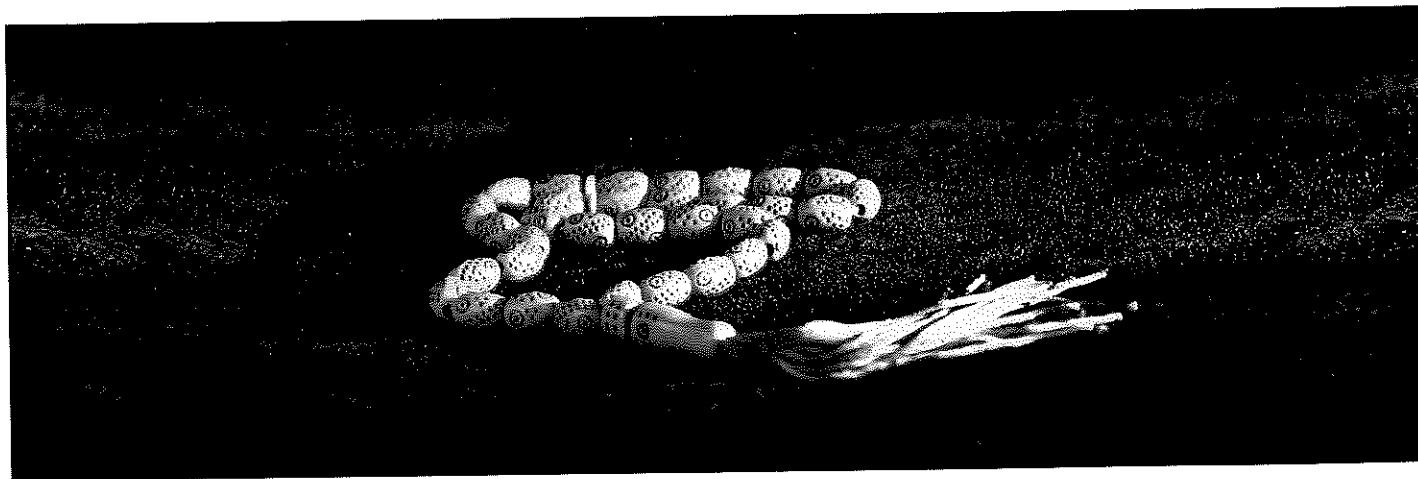
year. CMM provides most of the faculty for this IIS—which focuses on Muslims in Eastern Europe, Turkey and other Turkic-speaking areas.

- In the last five months CMM personnel have held training sessions in Russia, Ethiopia, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Netherlands, El Salvador, Czech Republic, Azerbaijan and Bangladesh. In the next few months we will be in the Middle East, Africa, Indonesia, Russia, India, Albania, Ukraine and Romania. Additionally, many venues are scheduled for the United States.

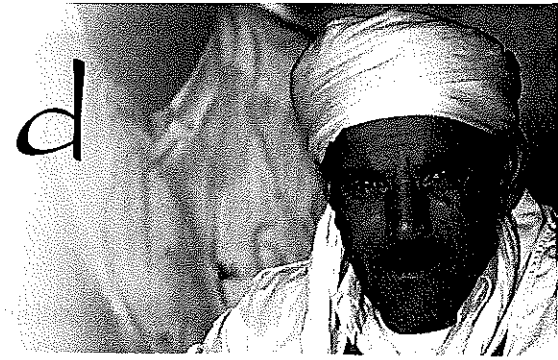
Everywhere CMM personnel travel, we hear miraculous stories of Muslims who have come to the Lord. Even in the face of the greatest missiological challenge the Church faces for this new century, we are encouraged.

I close with an example of how the Lord is reaching Islamic peoples. Muslims are adamantly opposed to the crucifixion of Christ. Yet, throughout the world Muslims have lined up to view *The Passion of the Christ*. While they may attend the movie thinking that it reinforces their preconceived notions about who killed the prophet Jesus, instead they are seeing a powerful presentation of the passion and redemption story of our Lord and Savior. Muslims are reported to weep during the film, while others ask for Bibles.

This journal is called *Intercede*—for a reason. Will you be encouraged to intercede with us for the 1.2 billion Muslims of the world?



Muslim World News



Central Europe

Last November a CMM team member taught a class on "Approaches to Muslims" in Vienna, Austria. Most of the students had Muslim friends. Many Muslims live in Vienna because OPEC, the UN and several other international organizations have major offices there. About 30 Iranians attend the church where the classes were held. The leaders of the group are believers from Iran who are working with refugees passing through Vienna. Many are Muslims who are in transition and seeking direction for their lives. It is an ideal time to share Christ with them and help them meet Christians who are truly born again. Later in Hungary, a short course on Islam was held at the national Bible school.—*CMM*

Zanzibar

Churchgoers on the tiny, Muslim dominated island of Zanzibar off the coast of Tanzania are aware of a growing threat by Muslim extremists suspected of carrying out recent attacks against church facilities. "There are some people who think they can do away with the Christians, and most of them are coming from outside (the country)," said Father Arbogast Mushi of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar. Tensions increased in March when the Islamist group UAMSHO (Revival and Propagation Organization) held an illegal rally despite a government ban imposed after previous demonstrations in which

UAMSHO distributed jihad-training videos and literature. The group urged killing secular politicians who refuse to impose sharia, or Islamic law. Five days later, arsonists set fire to a Roman Catholic church in the Jumbi district. The Associated Press quoted police official Hamad Issa describing the attack as "a deliberate act aimed at inciting religious hostilities in (Zanzibar)." —*Compass*

Turkey

People in this secular Muslim country have embraced Santa Claus—literally Noel Baba or Father Christmas—and the Western commercial aspect of the holiday in a celebration devoid of religious meaning. A Muslim public relations executive who has promoted Santa says that the jolly gift-bearer is neither Muslim nor Christian. "For me, he is first of all a symbol of goodness. But he is an industry. He makes money for us." —*Pulse*

Nigeria

Religious violence that erupted in the Nigerian state of Plateau in March has resulted in the deaths of eight pastors and 1,500 Christian believers, and the destruction of 173 churches. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) released the names of the martyred pastors who served Baptist, Roman Catholic, Assemblies of God and the Evangelical Reformed congregations, as well as the Church of Christ in Nigeria and the Evangelical Church of West Africa. Nigeria's

National Emergency Management Agency reported that religious violence in Plateau and Nasarawa states has resulted in the displacement of 25,000 people. Bauchi state official Alhaji Musa Lima told *Compass*, "About 50,000 displaced persons who managed to escape the hostility have temporarily relocated to some parts of this state," placing enormous pressure on local resources. On March 28, Muslim-Christian violence broke out in the state of Nasarawa, claiming the lives of 15 Christians.—*Compass*

Eritrea

Police hauled to prison a group of 51 Protestant Christians worshiping in secret in the Eritrean capital of Asmara on Sunday, February 15. Pastor Mengse Tweldemedhane of the Hallelujah Church was arrested along with his congregation in the Edaga Hamuse district of Asmara. The 34 men and 17 women were held at the Adi-Abyto military camp until Pastor Tweldemedhane was separated from the group and locked in an underground cell. The same day, all but four were transferred to the Sawa Military Training Camp where they remain incarcerated. The latest arrests bring to 347 the total number of Protestant Christians known to be jailed in at least nine locations across Eritrea for attending "illegal" Christian worship services, possessing Bibles or witnessing about their faith. Some of them, including a number of soldiers, have been incarcerated for nearly two years.—*Compass*



Muslim

by Dal

He has not revealed His nature, which is understood to be far beyond human comprehension. On one hand, He is perceived to be utterly distant, yet the Qur'an states that God Most High is closer than one's jugular vein.

Muslims believe that God knows all things, but is unknowable. Only God can know God. Whatever man can imagine about God, He is altogether different than that. Everyone and everything depends on Him, but He depends on no one or nothing. Man is not created in the image of God. The Supreme Ruler of the Universe created all things but is himself uncreated. He is eternal and is unlike anything.

The crucial differences between the Biblical and Qur'anic concepts of God cause Muslims and Christians to embrace contrasting views concerning the relationship between God and man. In the Qur'an, God is presented as a master who demands submission, whereas the Bible presents God as a loving heavenly Father who invites one to be His child. "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir" (Galatians 4:7).

It is not the Muslim's objective to reflect the nature of God, but to surrender to His laws. Muslims think that it absurd to strive to be like God, for this is impossible. The focus of Muslim life is not to know God but to be obedient to God.

Important similarities exist between the Islamic and Christian beliefs about God. Muslims believe that He alone is the Creator, Master, and Sovereign Lord of all. All the attributes of divinity exist in God alone, the Master of the destiny of humanity. He alone is Eternal; all else is transient.

Muslims accept God as Almighty, having spoken the worlds into existence by His infinite power. Every *surah* (chapter) of the Qur'an except one opens with the phrase, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." Yet they think He is unpredictable and not obligated to make or keep promises. No one can know what God will do—for if they knew, then God wouldn't be God! He is omnipotent, capable of doing anything He wills—both good and evil!

The bottom line of Muslim faith is the absolute oneness of God—the ruthless sovereignty of God. This rigid and inflexible monotheism does not accept the Biblical concept that God became flesh. Although the Qur'an clearly declares that Jesus was the virgin-born son of Mary; the concept of Jesus, the Son of God, is unthinkable.

For Muslims, God is "out there" (somewhere!), He is not "down here." Islam says, "There is one God and no mediator between God and man." The Bible says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). In Islam, God is forever hidden.

Created Beings

Islam affirms that God is Creator of heaven and earth. He created the physical universe as well as spiritual beings such as angels and jinn. God created humankind innocent, but they made bad choices. Nevertheless, they are not fallen creatures but are finite persons who are honored by God as His representatives on earth. They are not inherently sinful, but are weak, imperfect and constantly forgetful of God.

According to the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (traditions of Muhammad), God created angels from light, they worship God continually and bear up His throne. They are sinless agents who execute His commands. They record every human thought and deed, question the dead in their graves, receive the souls of the deceased and witness for or against them on Judgment Day. They guard the gates of hell.

Muslims recognize four archangels: Gabriel is believed to have dictated the Qur'an word for word to Muhammad, Michael is the guardian of the Jews, Israfil will summon to resurrection on Judgment Day and Izra'il is the angel of death. Gabriel holds the most prominent place in Islam due to his perceived function as the bearer of divine revelation.

A separate species of spiritual beings between man and angels are called jinn (same root word as "genie"). They are believed to be created from fire, are powerful and possess freedom of choice. Jinn can be good or evil.

For Muslims, Satan (*Shaitan* or *Iblis*) has been the source of evil even before the creation of Adam. Satan was the first creature to disobey and lead a rebellion against God and is the chief deceiver, leading people from the path of God.

Prophets

According to Islam God chose prophets to call everyone back to submission to His will, to guide humankind in the straight path. In Islam, prophets are bearers of God's message, not those who prophesy of future events.

Muslims believe that God did not reveal His entire will to

Beliefs



any of the prophets, but rather unveiled His laws over the centuries beginning with Adam. All prophets form an unbreakable chain. Their message, even that of Jesus, is believed to be basically the same: Believe in God, submit to His laws, serve Him by doing good works and shunning evil. Muslims generally accept all the prophets previous to Muhammad, but believe their messages were lost, corrupted or incomplete. Since they recognize Muhammad as the final prophet—the “seal” of prophethood, Muslims consider it a step backwards spiritually to accept Jesus, who is mentioned 93 times in the Qur’an, as anything more than a prophet.

They insist that because prophets were human, there is no room for the Christian doctrine of incarnation—God in flesh. The Qur’an gives Jesus such titles as the Messiah, the Word of (from) God, the Spirit of (from) God, a Sign unto men, and Mercy from God. Even though these titles are significant, to Muslims they lack the content of deity. However, these titles may serve Christians as bridges to Biblical truth.

Holy Books

According to Islam many of the prophets were sent with books embodying God’s teachings. The Qur’an refers to Jews and Christians as “People of the Book.” Four books are well known to Muslims: The Torah was revealed to Moses, the Psalms to David, and the Gospel to Jesus. However these revelations were changed and corrupted, and there was a need for the most sacred book in Islam—the Qur’an.

Muslims believe that the Qur’an, which contains 114 *surahs* (chapters), was sent by God word for word through the archangel Gabriel beginning when Muhammad was age 40 until his death at age 62. These revelations, compiled 20 years after Muhammad’s death, were to correct the errors in the corrupted books, to finalize the truth and serve as a roadmap for this life and the life to come.

It is not accurate then to compare Jesus and Muhammad, because to Muslims the Qur’an—a book—represents God’s primary revelation to humankind. For Christians, Jesus—a person—performs that function.

Judgment Day

Muslims believe this life is a preparation for a life of eternal bliss in Paradise or damnation in hell. Muhammad’s early messages to his followers (and a central theme of the Qur’an) were warnings about the horrors of judgment. People are challenged to live honorably in view of the fact that one day

they will be held accountable for their thoughts, intentions and actions. All humankind will be bodily resurrected and stand powerless before the throne of God to be judged.

Each individual’s two recording angels will be summoned to produce the books, which contain the person’s lifetime account of thoughts and deeds. The judicial process is carried out by a scale, balancing the good deeds against the bad.

The final process of judgment is crossing on an unusual “bridge” over hell. The references in the Qur’an are quite obscure, but the *Hadith* supplies details. This bridge is as thin as a hair, as sharp as a razor and hotter than fiery charcoal. Each individual must cross on the bridge. The more devout the person has been, the easier it will be to cross, some passing like lightning, others like wind and still others like horses. The least devout and most disobedient to the teachings of Islam will be crawling; and unlike the faithful, those condemned at the judgment will not be able to cross successfully but will fall into the abyss of hell!

The Qur’an describes hell as a place of torment—blasts of fire followed by boiling water poured over the heads of those suffering in agony. However hell is not forever! According to Islam, when God decides someone has been sufficiently punished, He will rescue him and launch him to Paradise.

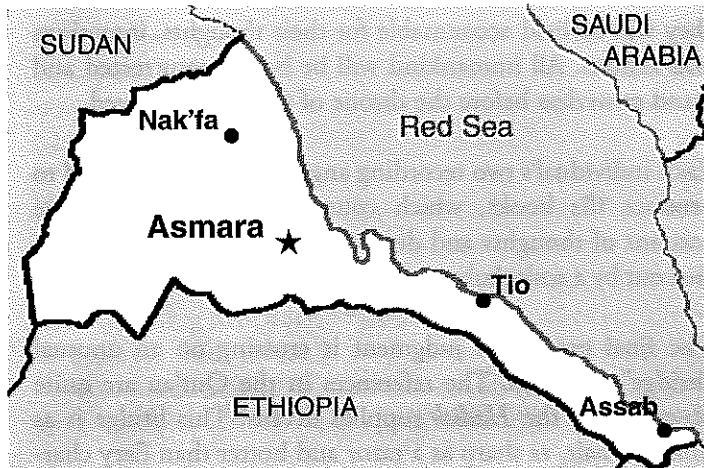
Paradise is described as a place where people indulge in whatever their hearts desire, including sensuous pleasures. Clear water will be abundant with beautiful garden vegetation, pleasant shade and delicious wine from which people will suffer no intoxicating effects.

For Christians, the most appalling aspect of Paradise, as described in the Qur’an and the *Hadith*, is God is not there. Perhaps some holy men, considered saints, will experience the presence of God in some way, but common Muslims don’t expect eternity in God’s presence. Countless Muslims fear their eternal destiny and have no assurance of salvation. In Islam, God is unpredictable and forever hidden.

Though Christians and Muslims have serious theological differences, the good news for our Muslim friends is: The New Testament plainly shows the final victory over sin, death and Satan was gained at the Cross. In Jesus, a person can be forgiven by God, become a child of God, receive the Spirit of God, know God personally, and spend eternity in His presence.



Eritrea



Population: 4 million

Religions: Muslims 52%, Christian 45%

Official Language: none, Tigrinya, Arabic, English used

Peoples: Tigrai 54%, Tigre 19%, Danakil 8%, Bilen 3%

The state of Eritrea is situated on the Horn of Africa, bordering Sudan, Djibouti and Ethiopia. It was absorbed into the Ethiopian empire on November 14, 1962, and from then on, government troops battled armed Eritrean secessionist groups, including the Muslim-led Eritrean Liberation Front and the Christian-dominated Eritrean People's Liberation Front.

Eritrea's economy is based on livestock herding and subsistence agriculture. Because of unreliable rainfall, soil erosion and locusts, Eritrea's overall agricultural output remains poor.

PRAY THAT...

...God will grant favor and wisdom to the missions agencies that are bringing the gospel to the Danakil.

...the Lord will anoint the gospel as it goes forth via radio to the Danakil.

...God will reveal himself to these precious people.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP...

DANAKIL

Location: Asaemara, (red ones) more prestigious and powerful nobles living along the coast and the Adamaara (white ones) who are the commoners living in the mountains and the Danakil Desert.

Population: 328,800

Religion: Muslim (Sunni) 99.9%

Language: Afar

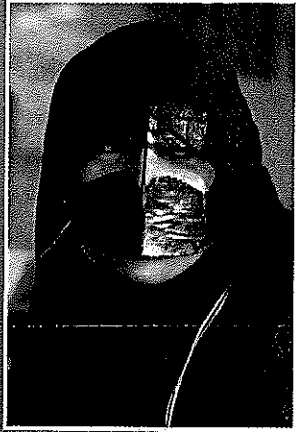
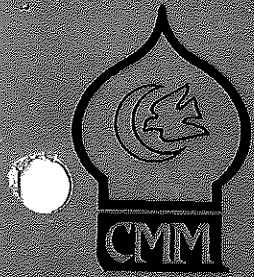
The Danakil claim to be descendants of the son of Noah. They are located in the East African countries of Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Danakil prefer to be known as the Afar, finding the Arabic word *danakil* an offensive term.

Most of the Danakil are nomadic herdsman. A man's wealth is measured by his herd. The women are responsible for tending the sheep, cows and goats. The men care for the camels and donkeys. There is a great need for pure water sources for the Danakil. In recent years, they have suffered because of famines and drought in the region.



Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!



Friday, July 2, 2004. Please pray

...for an Arab Muslim living in Canada who has a Christian contact. Pray that Jesus will be revealed to him as the source of his salvation.

...for peace in Jerusalem. Pray that the Lord will continue to reveal himself to Muslims in the city and throughout Israel and Palestine.

...that this generation of leaders in Afghanistan will realize that violence and hatred are counter-productive. Pray that Christian workers will have a positive influence on them.

...for the CMM team member who will be teaching an Islamics course in Bangladesh the next two weeks. Pray for responsive students.

Friday, July 9, 2004. Please pray

...that missionaries attending workshops presented by CMM at the annual School of Missions next week will accept the challenge concerning outreach to the Muslim populations of the countries where they have been called to work.

...for a Christian brother who is actively evangelizing in Turkish shops in England. Pray for his protection and encouragement.

...that the survivors of the earthquake in S.E. Iran last December will receive help and find comfort that only the Lord can give. Pray for Afghan refugees who have been living in Bam.

Friday, July 16, 2004. Please pray

...for 30 Iranian Christian refugees who currently need Canadian churches to sponsor them. Pray that Europe, the United States and Canada will be willing to open their doors to refugees needing religious asylum.

...that the many who are receiving training in Muslim evangelism in various locations throughout the States will use this training to effectively share the good news of God's love for Muslims.

...that the Persian Bible which has been translated will be widely distributed and used by many Muslims to read and know the truth about Jesus.

Friday, July 23, 2004. Please pray

...for Iraqis who are being ministered to through relief efforts by several organizations.

...for the many Palestinian Muslims who are coming to Christ, despite persecution.

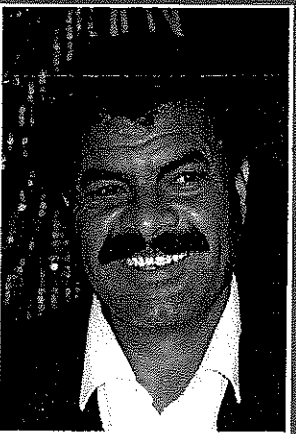
...for the country of Syria in this year-long commitment of fasting and prayer for that nation. May God do marvelous things because of the prayers of His people.

Friday, July 30, 2004. Please pray

...that greater freedom of religion may come to Libya as President Ghadaffi seeks a better relationship with the West.

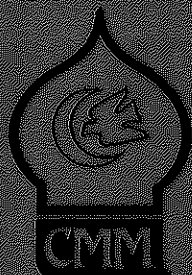
...for the many young children who are forced to care for their siblings and sick parents who have contracted AIDS. More than 12 million children are orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

...for the thousands of uprooted people who have crossed the border from western Sudan to Chad because of fighting. Pray that they will receive ample medical care and have an opportunity to hear the gospel.



Urgent requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

1 Timothy 2:1, NIV



Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!



Friday, August 6, 2004. Please pray

...for the nearly 400 prisoners known to be imprisoned in Eritrea because of their faith. Pray that the Lord would meet them in the midst of their suffering and use them to win others.

...for freedom in Tajikistan and that the government leaders would be more open to the assistance of foreign workers and non-government agencies in economic development.

...for churches and their leaders to seek God for strategies to reach Niger with the gospel and that they would be obedient to carry out His plans.

...for God's direction in a consultation being held in Orlando, Florida next week to coordinate training in Islamics throughout Latin America.

Friday, August 13, 2004. Please pray

...that the rights of non-Muslims will be recognized in Somalia. Pray for the orphans who have been left as a result of the carnage in that country. Pray for the transitional government.

...for those workers who are busy rebuilding everything in Afghanistan from housing to public infrastructure. Many lives also need to be rebuilt. Pray that this too may be accomplished.

...for the children who are being abandoned in the Samarkand region of Uzbekistan. Some are being sold by their mothers in desperate circumstances.

...for the CMM team member who is teaching Third World workers for outreach to Muslims in Central Asia. Pray that the participants will respond with eagerness to learn how to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.

Friday, August 20, 2004. Please pray

...for Christians caught in the midst of the conflict raging in northeast Sri Lanka between Hindu Tamils and the Muslim Congress Party. Pray that the fragile peace pact between the government and the rebels will hold.

...for the outreach that is happening in internet cafes. May the Lord continue to reveal himself through the teaching and friendships that are occurring on-line.

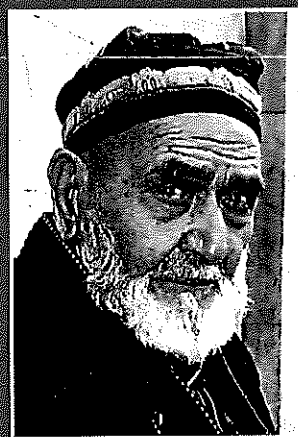
...that spiritual hunger and a quest for the truth will invade the hearts and minds of Lebanon's political leaders.

Friday, August 27, 2004. Please pray

...that God will work in the hearts of the Evangel University students who are taking the Introduction to Islam class for the next two weeks. Pray that they will be challenged to the prospect of ministry among Muslims.

...for the struggling churches in Algeria. Most of those who are becoming believers are very poor and come from an under-developed part of the country. Pray for wisdom for the leaders.

...for over 20 Egyptian converts to Christianity who have been arrested and those who have been helping them. Pray for courage, endurance and faith for all.



*I urge, then, first of all
that requests, prayers,
intercession and thanks-
giving be made for
everyone.*

1 Timothy 2:1, NIV