

INTERCEDE

VOL. XXXVII, NO. 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020



The Dual Transformation of Prayer

By Daryl Grasinger

As we intercede for Muslims, we often are acutely aware of the barriers they face in accepting Christ. Muslims must navigate through many layers of religion, culture, and familial relationship, which often seem like an impenetrable wall. Yet, as followers of Christ, we can be reticent to examine our own hearts or, better yet, allow the Spirit to inspect our hearts to identify any barriers resident within us toward Muslims. Over my years of ministry to Muslims, I have learned to remind myself that the root of these barriers is a *spiritual* matter. There is a battle to prevent me from sharing Christ, and a battle to keep Muslims from receiving Christ.

Often our own natural reaction to people who do not accept our beliefs is to create a barrier. We quickly become defensive toward those who oppose our beliefs and attack us personally. I must confess, all too often my own personal biases come to the surface. Even as I ministered to Muslims in Central Asia, I quickly lost the love for my neighbors, people in the bazaars, and government officials. Our natural love for people can run out fairly fast, but when the Spirit touches our hearts, reveals the Father's love for us, and shows us His love for a spiritually lost person, God renews our hearts.

I know I need this constant renewal and it comes through prayer—not talking about prayer, but actually praying!

When we examine Scripture, it is not uncommon to see these biases among God's people. During the life of Christ, we see a parallel example of Muslim-Christian tensions in the relationship between *Jews and Samaritans*. Jews actually hated the Samaritans, considered them half-breeds, and insulted them by calling them "dogs." This animosity dated back hundreds of years to the time when the Assyrians captured Samaria in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Division can naturally lead to despising!

Jesus demonstrated His love for Samaritans, both in story and real life. Jews would loathe hearing the story of the Good Samaritan because Jesus confronted their thoughts and attitudes toward Samaritans! He showed them that Samaritans were not all evil. The same is true of Muslims today. To think Muslims cannot demonstrate love and kindness towards us is a great misnomer on our part. Our Muslim neighbors in Central Asia were extremely hospitable and would do anything to help our family.

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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



The lead article of this issue emphasizes the necessity of a dual transformation in our prayer life. While interceding on behalf of spiritually lost Muslims, we must also examine our own hearts to determine areas in need of transformation.

The ministry of *Global Initiative* depends on the spiritual disciplines of prayer and the study of God's Word. Duane Miller and Patrick Johnstone's 2015 study, as seen in *Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: A Global Census*, discusses the reasons why so many Muslims have come to Christ. They identify the number one reason as "the massive increase in prayer for the Muslim world and the increase in the information to pray informatively." *Global Initiative's* founding objective was to raise up a veritable army of in-

tercessors who would commit to regular intercession for the Muslim world. Today, tens of thousands of believers around the world regularly join *Global Initiative* in praying for further breakthrough in the Muslim world. It is the foundation of all that we do.

This issue's lead article also brings biblical illiteracy into focus. A recent LifeWay Survey found that only "45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they *never* read the Bible—essentially the same number who read it every day" (Ed Stetzer, "The Epidemic of Biblical Illiteracy in the Church," *Christianity Today*, July 2015). It is crucial that we know God's Word so that we can *effectively* share it.

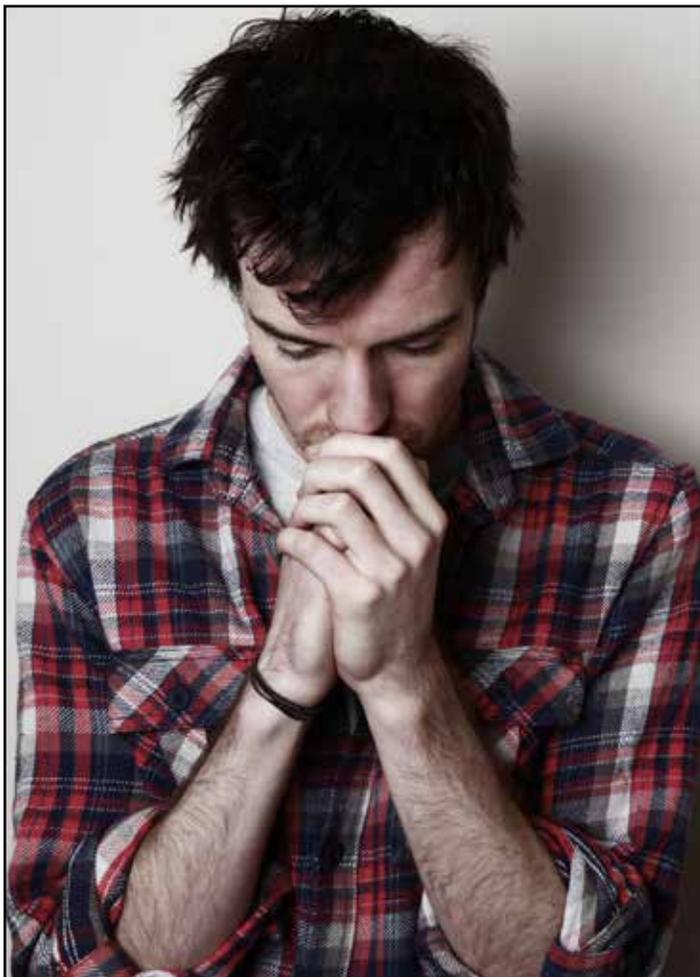
As we intercede for Muslims to come to Christ this year, let us recognize that the Word of God is our unchanging foundation. In his book, *Missions in the Age of the Spirit*, John York beautifully makes this point:

Since God is primarily known through His written Word and since both the lost and found need to know that Word if they are to please God, those who would deliberately represent God to others must also know that Word.

As you begin this new year of 2020, would you make a commitment to the daily reading and study of the Word of God? Here are some practical steps to root yourself in the Word of God this year:

- Commit to a daily Bible reading program
- Join a weekly small group Bible study
- Make memorization of Scripture a practice
- Use your Bible as a prayer guide

I want to thank you for joining *Global Initiative* this year as we intercede for the 1.7 billion Muslims in our world who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior. We know the first step in missions is intercession, and that God works when we pray according to His will and His Word.





Muslim World News

Pakistan: Blasphemy Prisoners Forgotten

Freed Pakistani Christian Aasiya Noreen, known to the world as Asia Bibi, has pleaded for the many others like her accused of blasphemy who, she says, are still “lying in jail for years – their decisions should also be done on merit. The world should listen to them.”

“The way any person is alleged (to have committed) blasphemy without any proper investigation, without any proper proof, that should be noticed. This blasphemy law should be reviewed and there should be proper investigation mechanisms while applying this law. We should not consider anyone sinful for this act without any proof.”

She made this appeal from her refuge in Canada through a series of answers she provided to the *Sunday Telegraph*.

It’s hard to get a specific tally of the number of Christians and Muslims known to be imprisoned, either awaiting trial – sometimes for years – for blasphemy, or already convicted. One figure *World Watch Monitor* (WWM) saw quoted but could not get confirmed, after Asia Bibi was finally freed in May, was that Christians make up 17 of the 40 current ‘blasphemy’ prisoners. Christians form around 2% of Pakistan’s total population, according to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, its Co-Director Gina Zurlo told WWM.—*World Watch Monitor*

Eritrea: At Least 150 Christians Arrested

At least 150 Eritrean Christians were arrested by government officials during July and August 2019, with some of them held in an underground prison made up of tunnels.

The most recent arrests occurred August 18, when Eritrean security officials detained 80 Christians from Godayef, an area near the airport of the capital, Asmara. They were taken to a police station and have been held there ever since, a local source told WWM.

Eritrea’s current government clampdown on Christians began June 23, when Eritrean security officials arrested 70 members of the Faith Mission Church of Christ, in Eritrea’s second city, Keren.

Eritrea ranks seventh on the Open Doors 2019 World Watch List of the 50 countries in which it is most difficult to live as a Christian.—*World Watch Monitor*

Afghanistan: Islamists Recruit at Universities

While the Afghan government is engaged in peace talks with the hard-line Taliban movement, radical Islamist groups are spreading their ideology at universities.

Basira Akhtar, a 22-year-old student, was beaten twice in 2019, at her university in the capital, Kabul, when her headscarf slipped from her head. In both cases she was accused of being a bad Muslim and of promoting Christianity.

Radicalization is increasing, even among her professors, the law-student told the news site *Gandhara*. Meanwhile authorities also confirm radical groups like Islamic State (IS) use university campuses to spread their ideology and to recruit new fighters. Since IS was driven out of Iraq and Syria, it appears to have its sights set on Afghanistan where the group is expanding, reported the Associated Press.—*World Watch Monitor*

The Dual Transform

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The teachings of the Islamic faith are not peaceful and loving toward Jews and Christians, but we must realize that not all Muslims are “out to get us.” According to Jesus’ instructions, we are to respond in love and compassion—even to those who view themselves as our enemy. We must remind ourselves that Muslims are not evil. Like us, Muslims need a Savior! Their sins, just like our sins, can only be eradicated through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ!

Jesus further illustrates His compassion and love for Samaritans in a real life situation! In John 4, we read about Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well. At that time, Jews would never pass through the city of Samaria. The shortest route from the area of Judea in the south, to Galilee in the north, was straight through Samaria. Nevertheless, Jews would veer eastward and walk over twice as far just to avoid the detested Samaritans.

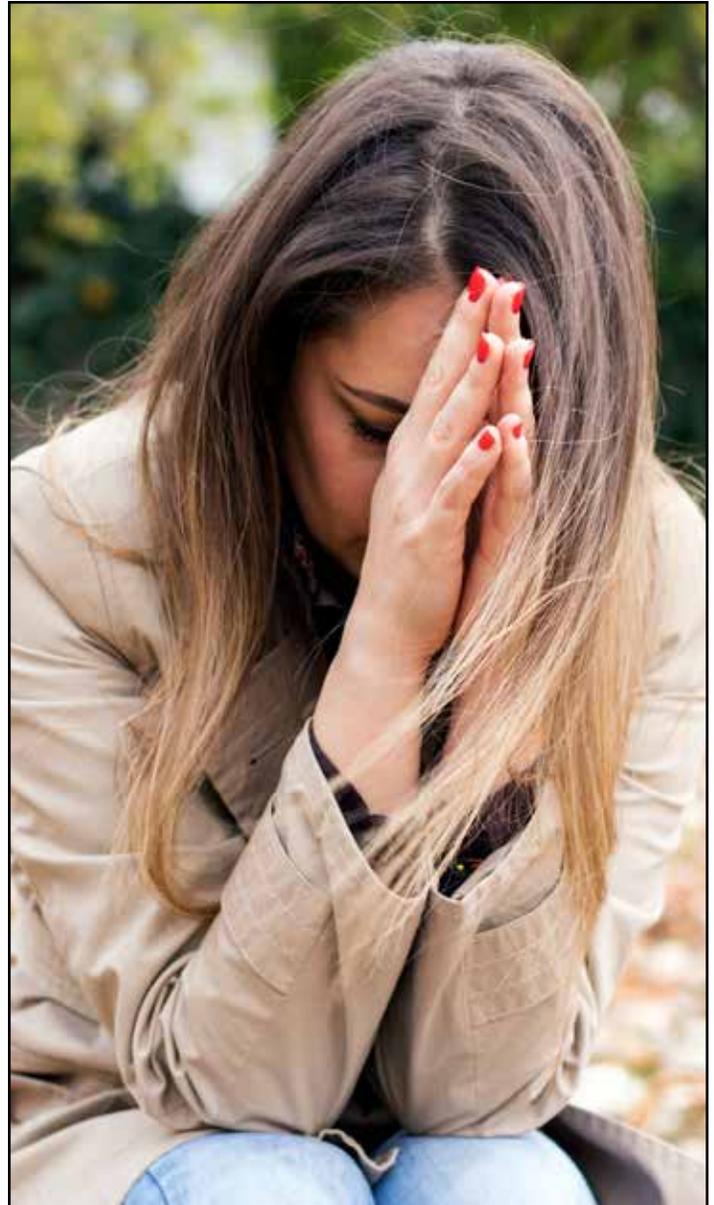
Jesus, on the other hand, goes out of His way to cross several barriers. She’s a Samaritan (“the enemy”); she’s a woman alone at the well; and she’s a sinner! As a result of this interaction, however, not only does the woman accept Jesus as the *Christ*, but Jesus decides to stay in town for two more days and many Samaritans believed in Him!

Through our own will or power, we will never successfully eliminate the barriers that prevent us from sharing the gospel with Muslims. Transformation only comes by the work of the Spirit as we pray!

Our Need for Transformation

As believers, we must examine our heart and mind to determine areas in need of transformation. First and foremost, we must come into an understanding of God’s heart toward Muslims. How do we know what God’s heart is towards Muslims? The Assyrians, another people group the Jewish people hated, provide another parallel in Scripture. Jonah, in his mind, had good reason not to go to Nineveh. Why should the Assyrians have an opportunity to repent and turn to God? But God’s heart and perspective was different than Jonah’s. The caption of Jonah chapter 4 spells it out plainly: *Jonah’s Anger and the Lord’s Compassion*. While Jonah stewed with anger because the Assyrians repented and turned to God, God asked Jonah, “Why should I not pity Nineveh?”

Besides the narrative of Jonah, a cursory review of the all too familiar verse of John 3:16 reveals the heart of God. Due



to its repetitive use, both inside and outside of the church, we can easily lose the eternal impact of this verse. So it bears reviewing here: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” That “world” includes every Muslim person (good, bad, or indifferent) that is willing to repent and confess Jesus as Lord. That is the heart of God!

So you and I must ask ourselves, “Do I have God’s heart toward Muslims? Not always have I been able to answer that question with a whole-hearted “yes.” Certain activities will

Information of Prayer

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definitely not lead to a transformation of my heart: listening to the evening news, following social media, reading books about evangelism and church planting, talking with other believers about the need to love Muslims, or even talking about praying for Muslims. Developing Jesus' heart for Muslims only comes when I set aside time in God's presence and open my heart through prayer. Actually, it requires praying for God to show me His heart, asking God to change my heart, and then interceding for Muslims who are locked in spiritual darkness. This is the only opportunity for lasting transformation to happen!

Personal biases toward Muslims are one critical area in need of transformation. This is a natural barrier that God can supernaturally remove. Paul's letter to Philemon provides my favorite example of the removal of personal biases. Reflect with me for a moment. Here you have three individuals who naturally would have so many barriers to prevent them from interacting with one another. Philemon was a wealthy Gentile and a slave owner. Onesimus was Philemon's runaway slave. Paul was a former fundamentalist Jew who was imprisoned for his faith in Christ. Were it not for Christ removing their biases, these three men never would have communicated with one another or developed a friendship. Paul met Onesimus in prison and discovered that he belonged to Philemon. Truly, God orchestrates our lives for divine appointments. Philemon had every right to prosecute Onesimus for being a fugitive slave, but Paul, who had adopted Onesimus as a spiritual son, appeals to Philemon to receive him back gently and lovingly. Only the Spirit of God could bring about this change. It is a powerful testimony to the transformation Christ had made in each of their hearts.

In like manner, God can dismantle our biases and prejudices towards Muslims. As we pray, the Spirit can break down the barriers that divide us and move us toward a relationship that reflects the loving heart of God! Christians generally respond toward Muslims in three ways: fear, anger, and apathy. Through prayer, God transforms fear to faith; He converts anger to love; and He replaces apathy with compassion!

Our Muslim Friend's Need for Transformation

When we acknowledge the spiritual reason for why Muslims resist accepting Christ, it makes it easier to discern the key issues they face in making this decision. Paul spells it out clearly: "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the

light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

We, too, were blinded to the truth and light of Jesus Christ. Paul clearly indicates that the gospel is veiled to those who are perishing. Remember when you first came into faith in Christ? Remember when the "veil" was removed for you? It was like entering into a brand new world. Your mind was transformed; your heart was transformed; and your very soul was transformed!

This is why it is critical that we consistently and fervently pray for Muslims. A spiritual battle is raging in every person's life. We know that Satan, the god of this age, is blinding them, and he wants them to stay in that *condition*. Prayer is the key to a spiritual breakthrough. Although you may not know all the people who prayed you into God's Kingdom—perhaps a parent, a distant relative, a neighbor, a work colleague, or a fellow student—I am confident that prayer was associated with your salvation and continued walk with the Lord.

It is our desire that many Muslims will come into God's Kingdom as believers or groups of believers commit to intercede on their behalf. The light of the gospel will come to them through the power of prayer and the power of the anointed Word of God that will break down the many layers of opposition Muslims face as they experience the true transformation of accepting Christ as their Lord and Savior. Let's look at several of these layers of opposition.

Religion – The effect of Islam permeates all aspects of Islamic society. Americans generally accept the concept of separation of church and state and keep government and religion separate. There is also a dichotomy in our thinking of what is sacred and what is secular. For the Muslim, however, there is no separation of church and state or sacred and secular. For Muslims to be removed from their religion is such a foreign concept. They are taught from birth that they are Muslim (submitted to Allah) and cannot be anything but a Muslim!

Culture – In addition to their traditional faith, depending on where they were born and reared, there are also deep cultural attachments. They face a layer of syncretized practices that have been added to their Islamic beliefs. Many Muslims grew up in cultures that participated in animistic practices,

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which often involve spiritual and demonic activities. This affinity and dependence on these practices must be broken through prayer!

Familial Relationships – This is perhaps one of the deepest issues Muslims must address when they come to faith in Jesus Christ. The familial ties and loyalties are integrated with their faith. In many cases, the two are inseparable. For most Muslims who turn to Christ, it often means, at a minimum, being ostracized or completely disowned by their family. In other cases, it includes physical persecution and sometimes death. The body of Christ needs to become the new community for these new believers. We must pray that Christians will receive former Muslims into the Church. Prayer is also critical for the former Muslim to have the Spirit's grace and strength to face family persecution.

Social Pressure – An additional layer pertains to the social pressure Muslims who turn to Christ experience outside of the family. Taking a public stand for Christ can cost the new believer his or her employment, bring on persecution while attending school, or elicit public mockery and disdain. With our religious-freedom mentality, we have difficulty processing what this means in day-to-day life, but it is the reality many new believers in a Muslim context face when they put their faith and trust in Christ!

When our Muslim friends accept Christ, they are truly taking on a whole new identity. This is a long and difficult process because it involves a spiritual battle. The first battle is for them to come to faith in Christ, but the battle continues as they are discipled into their newfound faith in Christ! As you can see, it is critical for believers to be interceding on behalf of Muslims.

Prayer is a dual process of transformation. If our hearts are not transformed by the Spirit to love them with the compassion of Christ, what hope do they have? How will they break through the barriers that come with being Muslim, if we do not commit to pray for them? This spiritual battle is won through the power of the Holy Spirit defeating the “god of this age” and allowing Him to influence their life and ours!

Join us in faithfully standing in the gap and interceding for Muslim people around the globe. We encourage you to pray for a specific people group or a specific individual in your own community. You will be transformed as you pray for them, and we believe that their lives will be transformed for eternity because you prayed. Prayer brings dual transformation—in your life and in their life!

Intercede 6

Prayer Profile: *Uyghur in China*

Population: 11.8 Million

Religion: 99% Islam



Most Uyghurs live in the Xinjiang Province in western China. Many Uyghurs raise cotton, grapes, and fruit trees through an ingenious irrigation system that pipes mountain water into the desert oases. Uyghurs struggle for the survival of their culture, language, and religion in China due to severe and systematic oppression by the Chinese authorities. As of late last year, over 1 million Uyghurs were being held in “re-education” camps in China. 99.9% of Uyghurs follow a syncretistic version of folk Islam mixed with superstition. Pray for:

- imprisoned Uyghurs to be released and treated properly
- Han Chinese believers to show the compassion of Christ towards Uyghurs
- the few Uyghur believers to be strengthened in the Lord
- protection for the few “Christian workers” who remain in Xinjiang.

*For additional information about Uyghurs, please visit: www.joshuaproject.net.



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*Jumaa Prayer is now on
Facebook. Please join today:
[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*

Friday, January 3, 2020. Please pray for

*...Algerian Christians. Authorities have upped their campaign to close churches and limit Christians' freedom to worship.
...over 1 million expatriate Christians who work and minister in the Arabian Peninsula.
...eight secret "safe houses" in the Middle East, helping abused women from Muslim backgrounds who follow Jesus.*

Friday, January 10, 2020. Please pray for

*...the ministry of Brother Ibrahim, a self-described "evangelist to Muslims" in Indonesia. He was jailed after sharing his faith with a taxi-driver, but was recently released on bail after serving part of a four-year sentence,
...protection of Christians in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, whose villages are often attacked by Islamic militants.
...the country of Azerbaijan, whose population of 10 million is 85% Muslim. Another 15 million Azerbaijanis live across the border in Iran. Less than 1% of all Azerbaijanis identify as Christians.*

Friday, January 17, 2020. Please pray for

*...former Muslims in Indonesia who are under intense pressure to return to Islam.
...the growing number of Somalis inquiring about Jesus via a Somali-language website.
...discipleship programs for the ongoing harvest of souls in Iran. More Iranians have become Christians in the last 20 years than in the previous 1,300 years since Islam came to Persia. Iran's population of 83 million is 98% Muslim.*

Friday, January 24, 2020. Please pray for

*...Pastor Hashem in a Muslim-majority Middle Eastern country. He says, "We have 150 members but for security reasons we don't all meet at the same time. We have three weekly meetings and members know which group to attend."
...Afghanistan. A worker there says, "Thank God for salvation among increasing numbers of Afghans."
...Christians in Sudan, where the Traditional Military Council has affirmed that legislation will continue to be based on Sharia (Islamic) law. Sudan's population of 43 million is 90% Muslim.*

Friday, January 31, 2020. Please pray for

*...the effectiveness of social media, TV and radio ministries in India as they share the Good News with Muslims.
...ministry outreaches to Muslims in France. France's population of 65 million includes at least 5 million Muslims.
...Bangladesh, where Islamist groups have demanded that secular content be removed from Bangladeshi school textbooks and replaced with Islamic material. Bangladesh's population of 162 million is 87% Muslim.*

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

Friday, February 7, 2020. Please pray for

...*approximately 1 million Chinese Uyghurs* who have been placed in “re-education camps” in the Xinjiang Province.
...*Amira, a convert from Islam in Kyrgyzstan.* She fled to a safe house after her family tried to marry her to a Muslim.
...*Eveline in Wum, Cameroon.* Her husband, a Bible translator, was killed by Islamic militants. Eveline’s request is, “That God will use my faith and perseverance to draw my Muslim neighbors into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Friday, February 14, 2020. Please pray for

...*a recent seminar attendee* who said, “Lord, remove my anxiety over terrorism and replace it with a desire to see Muslim men and women rescued from the dominion of darkness and placed into the Kingdom of the Beloved Son” (Col. 1:13).
...*for Christians in Turkmenistan,* who are cut off from fellowship with believers elsewhere.
...*Malaysian pastor Raymond Koh,* who was abducted by suspected Islamic militants in 2017 and no one has heard from him since. Pray for spiritual endurance and strength for his family. Malaysia’s population of 31 million is 56% Muslim.

Friday, February 21, 2020. Please pray for

...*Roksari, a 65-year-old convert from Islam in Iran.* Police raided her home, seized her phone and Bibles, and kept her in detention for 10 days. She has been sentenced to a year in jail, but is presently free on bail.
...*eight Christians in Pakistan* who remain on death row, after being convicted under the country’s “blasphemy laws.”
...*former Muslims in Eritrea* who have decided to follow Jesus. In a recent two-month period, an estimated 150 believers have been imprisoned in Eritrea. Eritrea’s population of 3.3 million is 45% Muslim.

Friday, February 28, 2020. Please pray for

...*an end to the four-year-old war in Yemen.* The few believers there are extremely isolated. Ask the Lord to intervene, change hearts and minds, and build His Kingdom in Yemen. Yemen’s population of 29 million is 99% Muslim.
...*continuing refugee camp ministries* – primarily to Muslims – located along the Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Iraqi borders, and in Greece.
...*the ministry of Shahla,* a former Muslim Turkish lady who says, “I was in the market and a woman gave me a DVD about Jesus and said that it would change my life – and it did!” Now, Shahla’s “ministry” is to share as many Jesus DVDs as possible.

**All personal names used herein are pseudonyms.*

Intercede is a bimonthly publication of Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples
P.O. Box 2730, Springfield, MO 65801-2730
1-866-816-0824 (toll free)
www.reachingmuslimpeoples.com
www.jumaaprayer.org