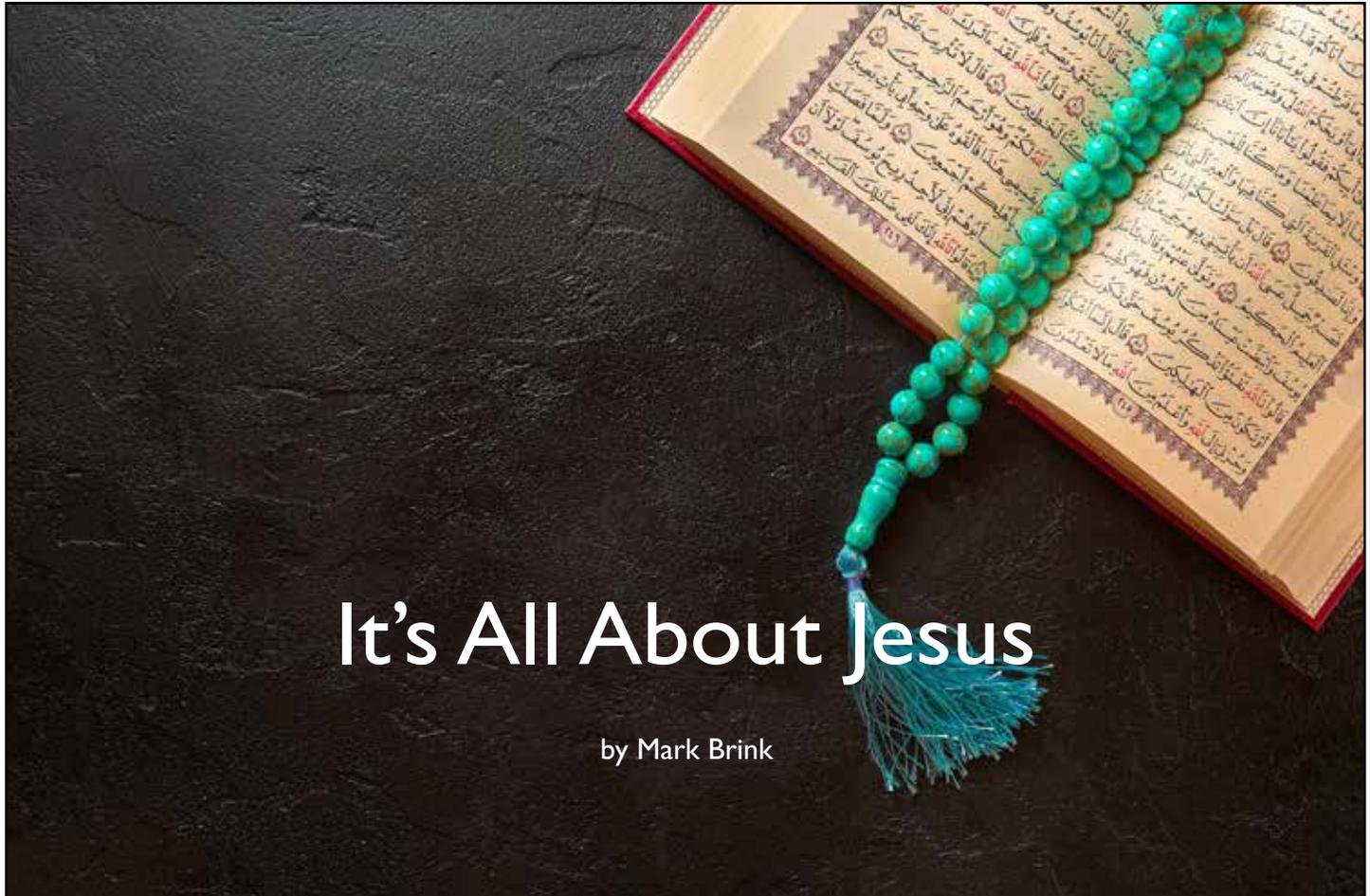


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It's All About Jesus

by Mark Brink

Regarding Jesus, the typical Muslim will say, “Our holy book affirms his virgin birth, his prophethood, his power to work miracles, and his soon return.” This statement sounds like something every Christian could easily affirm. However, the reality is that in most Islamic contexts the best thing a Muslim could do—embrace Jesus as Savior—is seen by the Islamic community as *the worst thing* he or she could ever do. The topic of Jesus is one of the most theologically charged conversations you will have with Muslims, and yet it is the most important one. We must always be aware of the Islamic redefinition of the person and work of Christ. Our loving witness to Muslims must be firmly grounded in the biblical facts of Jesus’ incarnation and crucifixion.

Comparing the Quranic Isa and the Biblical Jesus

In reading the Muslim holy book, the Quran, you will discover that Jesus is called Isa. Eleven times the Quran refers to Isa as Messiah. Other Quranic titles for Isa are: servant or slave of Allah, a prophet for the Jews, a messenger

(*rasul*) with a book (the *Injil*) from Allah, a spirit from Allah, and a sign to the people. As you interact with Muslims you will discover that the Quranic titles of Isa carry entirely different meanings than those of the Bible. There may be some superficial commonalities, but ongoing investigation reveals irreconcilable differences. The Quran bears its own special message about Jesus—meant to correct, reinterpret, and replace the earlier biblical revelation. When sharing the good news of Jesus with Muslims, it is important to understand that the two most important irreconcilable differences about Jesus are His incarnation and crucifixion. Let’s investigate the Isa of the Quran and the Jesus of the Bible.

In the Quran, Jesus is a Creation of Allah

The Quran is filled with incomplete narratives, especially regarding Jesus’ life, works, and purpose. While attempting to redefine the person and mission of Jesus, the Quran exalts the person and mission of Muhammad. Of the 93 places where the Quran speaks of Isa, the majority are references

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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



Death! Not many of us want to think about our own departure from this world, but as we grow older, the inevitability of this appointment becomes a reality. The Bible makes it very clear that God knows the days of our lives (Ps. 139:16) and after death there's an appointment with judgment (Heb. 9:27). As believers in Christ, death and judgment are not to be feared. Death, when viewed through human eyes, appears as the "last enemy;" when viewed under grace, it loses its sting (1 Cor. 15:26). We know that we have "crossed over from death to life" when we are in Jesus Christ (John 5:24) and we will not be judged. On the other hand, our Muslim friends do not have the same confidence in their outcome on the day of final judgment before Allah.

Muhammad's early messages to his followers (and a central theme of the Quran) were warnings about the horrors of the coming Day of Judgment. Muslims are challenged to live honorably in view of the fact that one day they will be held accountable for their thoughts, intentions, and actions.

In Islam, all humankind will be resurrected and stand powerless before the throne of Allah to be judged. Each individual has two recording angels who will be summoned to produce the books containing the person's lifetime of thoughts and deeds. The evaluation of these thoughts and deeds is carried out by means of a scale, balancing the good deeds against evil deeds. Depending on the balance of the scale, the person will be accorded heaven or hell. When asked regarding their eternal destiny, all Muslims must answer with uncertainty.

Compare the difference between the Christian and Muslim on the Day of Judgment:

Christian

- Is confident of his/her destiny
- Trusts in his/her sonship
- Rejoices in the face of death
- Jesus assures Christians of their eternal home
- Christians immediately go to heaven

Muslim

- Is insecure of his/her destiny
- Trusts in his/her works
- Fears in the face of death
- Allah gives Muslims no assurance of Paradise
- Muslims go to a place of testing

When faced with death, the main difference between a Christian and Muslim is the difference between assurance and uncertainty. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). The difference is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It's all about Jesus Christ and what He has provided by His atoning death on the Cross. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

As you read this edition of *Intercede*, I pray that you will rejoice in what Jesus Christ has provided for you on the Cross and that you will grieve and be burdened for the 1.7 billion Muslims who still live in fear of death and the Day of Judgment. Pray that they find the love of Christ, which casts out all fear.



Muslim World News



Pakistan: 10 Years After Blasphemy

Asia Bibi's daughter, Eicham, was nine years old when she saw her mother beaten and charged with blasphemy against Muhammad. For nine-plus years, Eicham visited Bibi on death row in Pakistan. Now a young woman of 18, Eicham and her older sister appear to have been reunited with their mother and her husband, Ashiq Masih, to start a new life in Canada.

Asia Bibi had been on death row for blasphemy, after offering drinking water, which she, as a Christian, was considered to have made unclean by her touch. She got into an argument over this, which later provoked a blasphemy charge, to which she allegedly confessed in front of the same mob.

Many Pakistani Christians—who account for about 2% of the population—are children of converts to Christianity from the downtrodden untouchable Hindu tribal caste. Their families converted in the late 19th to early 20th centuries in the villages of what is now the central Punjab of Pakistan. This untouchable caste status is at the root of several blasphemy charges against Christians.—*World Watch Monitor*

Iran: Church Shuttered

An Assyrian church in northwestern Iran has been closed down and the cross removed from its tower, reports advocacy organization Article 18. A “large number” of agents from Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and EIKO, reportedly stormed the 100-year-old-church on May 9, changed all the locks, tore down the cross, and ordered the church warden to leave. Article 18 quoted a source as saying, “They made it clear that the Assyrian people are no longer allowed to hold any worship services there.”

The source said church members had been fearful since Christmas, when pastors from other churches were prevented from visiting for a joint service with other Assyrian and Armenian Christians.

In Iran, members of the historically Christian Assyrian and Armenian communities are a recognized religious minority, whose freedom of religion is protected by national law. However, churches that have attracted Muslim-born Iranians by holding services in the Persian language have been forced to close, or to at least stop those services and hold them only in their respective native languages.

Church members who are found to have evangelized Muslims, such as the Assyrian pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz, have been charged with “actions against national security” and handed long prison sentences.—*World Watch Monitor*

Egypt: 156 Churches Legalized

Egypt has legalized 156 more churches and service buildings, bringing the total of approved religious venues to 783, reports *Egypt Independent*. Since 2016, more than 3,700 churches have applied for legal status under a new law that was designed to make it easier to establish and build churches in Egypt.

A report issued by the Project on Middle East Democracy in December said the approval of church building projects actually had slowed under the new law, as reported by World Watch Monitor.

Egypt has approximately 5,000 unlicensed churches, most of them Coptic Orthodox. Some have been waiting on licensure for more than 20 years, enduring mob attacks on a regular basis.—*World Watch Monitor*

to his nativity. The Quran wants to refute and reframe the former Scriptures (the Bible) regarding the incarnation.

The two main passages in the Quran that deal with the birth of Isa are Sura 3:33-49 and Sura 19:16-34. The Quran and Bible agree that an angel was sent to the Virgin Mary to announce the birth of a son. In the Quran, Mary is told to name her son “Isa al-Messiah.” In the Bible, He is to be called “Jesus the Messiah.” The Quranic Isa is merely a creation of Allah’s power (3:47) and a physical offspring of Mary (19:35). The Quran mentions Isa as the “Son of Mary” 23 times—emphasizing his natural birth and deemphasizing his eternal existence.

Quranic Miracles Attributed to Isa

As a baby, Isa speaks from the cradle (3:46)—obviously derived from apocryphal fables. In Sura 19:30-33, Isa again speaks from the cradle and claims to be a servant of Allah. The baby Isa goes on to claim that he was given a book (the *Injil*) and was appointed as a prophet. While yet an infant, Isa then creates doves from clay and breathes life into them by Allah’s permission (3:49). In adulthood, Isa heals the blind and lepers, and raises the dead (3:49). Sura 2:87 states that the miracles attributed to Isa are clear proofs that he was sent as a sign from Allah to the people. It is important to note that Isa does these things by the “leave of Allah” (with Allah’s permission)—and only as a created being. Ironically, the fa-

mous Muslim commentator Yusuf Ali affirms Isa’s ability to do these things in the Quran, but rejects similar accounts from the Bible. The redefined Isa of the Quran is a prophet with a unique birth narrative, a created being who is a slave of Allah, and a sign to the people. The Quran carefully, but clearly, denies the truth of the incarnation.

The Quran Denies the Death of Isa

For Christians, Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, became flesh in order that He might atone for the sins of mankind. Muslims consider it unthinkable that Allah would allow the revered prophet Isa to suffer the humiliation of dying on the cross. This helps Christians understand why the Quran configures a way for Isa to escape the cross. Before he could be crucified, Allah rescued Isa by “taking him up” (Sura 3:55). In Islamic theology, there is no need for the atonement. Everyone is born pure and when a person sins it is just a mistake. Man’s real sin is forgetfulness and forgetfulness is not considered “an egregious sin against Allah.” In Islam, there is no need or place for a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. In order to pay for his or her own sins, each person must fulfill Allah’s requirements, including doing enough good works. Sura 19:33 speaks of Isa referring to “the day I die,” and in Sura 4:157, the Jews boast that “we have killed Christ Jesus.” Nevertheless, the Quran emphatically states that “they killed him not nor crucified him. But so it was made to appear to them” (Sura 4:157).



out Jesus

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Various interpretations of Sura 4:157 include:

1. Allah caused the likeness of Isa to be upon another, whom they crucified. When they saw the dead man they said, “The face is the face of Isa but the body is not his body” (Al-Jalalain).
2. Allah told Isa he would take him to heaven. He said to his friends, “Who is ready to take my likeness upon him and be crucified and enter paradise?” One of them responded and Allah cast the likeness of Isa upon him and he was killed and crucified (Al-Baidawi).
3. The words, “It appeared so to them” mean they imagined it to be so, or they presumed that they killed and crucified him. But he is still alive because Allah took him to himself (Al-Zamakhshari).
4. He was on the cross, but then taken down from the cross alive, recovered, traveled to Asia, and died a natural death many years later in Kashmir (Ahmadiyya).

Keep in mind that in the early centuries the Docetists, heretical Christians, disagreed with the truth of Scripture and

taught that the Messiah could transform himself from one image to another. The Docetists said that when Jesus’ enemies came to arrest Him, He cast His likeness on to another man who was crucified instead of Him, but He himself was lifted up to the one who sent Him. They did not believe God would let the Messiah be crucified. A few Docetists lived in the Arabian Peninsula. There were suggestions that Simon of Cyrene, the widow of Nain’s son, or even the devil took Jesus’ place. The Gospel of Barnabas (a discredited fifteenth century document) tells of angels who rescued Jesus and cast His likeness on Judas. Again, while Islamic interpretations of Sura 4:157 vary, all mainstream Muslim scholars agree that Isa was not divine and that he did not die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

The issue Muslims raise seems similar to that which troubled the Jews—it was too difficult to believe that God would allow the Messiah to die such a death. They refused to accept a suffering servant Messiah instead of a kingly Messiah ruling triumphantly. Yet several verses in the Quran clearly state that when messengers have been sent to people with an unwelcome message, some have been abused and even killed (Sura 2:87; 3:183). So what was different about Jesus? Jesus’ divinity and atoning death on the cross as a sacrifice

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for sin simply did not fit the Islamic theological framework; thus, Islam felt the need to “invent” a way to have Jesus evade the episode of crucifixion.

Sharing the Jesus of the Bible

In his book, *Jesus in the Quran*, Geoffrey Parrinder speaks of the Quranic description of Allah. He paints a vivid picture of how Muslims must live with a god who does not reveal himself. Instead Muslims live with a mysterious, unknowable, and capricious deity:

As in no other book, the [Quran] portrays an absolutely overwhelming being who proclaims himself to a people that had not known him. Not even in the Old Testament do you have such an extreme omnipotence and transcendence. And in no other place is God revealed as so utterly inscrutable, so tremendous and so mysterious.

The picture is an extreme contrast from the Bible, where God creates man for fellowship, seeks man even when he sins, and offers redemption from his state of sin. From the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, our loving Father is always seeking relationship with His creation. What an amazing story we have to share with our Muslim friends! We have the wonderful privilege of telling them how Jesus is foretold in the Old Testament and is fully revealed in the New Testament.

Jesus Christ: Immanuel and the Lamb of God

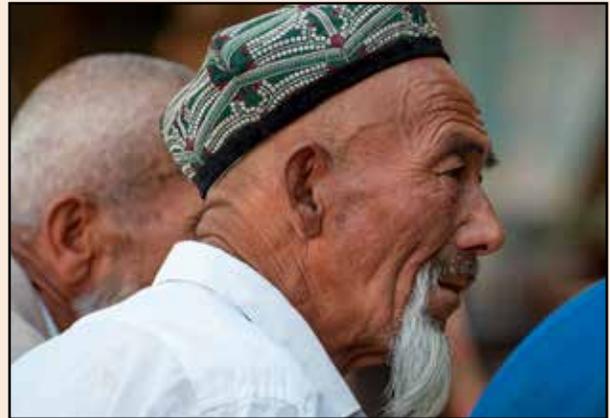
So, where do you start in your attempt to share the Jesus of the Bible with Muslims? The two names that illustrate His incarnation and atonement are a good place to start. Jesus is Immanuel, the Almighty God who has come in the flesh. He is also the sinless Lamb of God, who alone takes away the sins of the world.

In *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, former Muslim Nabeel Qureshi tells of his struggle in understanding the biblical Jesus: “I could not believe it. It simply could not be true. Jesus could not be God. There had to be some other explanation, or else my family and everyone I loved was caught in a lie. If Jesus truly did claim to be God, then the Quran is wrong and Islam is a false religion.” Qureshi had a Christian friend who faithfully read the Scriptures to him and patiently presented Jesus as the answer to all his questions. Slowly, but surely, the powerful light of the gospel opened Qureshi’s mind and heart. He surrendered to Jesus as Immanuel and Lamb of God! I pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you to share the Jesus of the Scriptures with your Muslim friends.

Prayer Profile: *Uyghurs of China*

Population: 11.6 Million

Religion: 99% Islam



Most Uyghurs live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China. Many Uyghurs raise cotton, grapes, melons, and fruit trees through an ingenious irrigation system that pipes mountain water into the desert oases. Uyghurs follow a folk Islam mixed with superstition. Few Uyghurs are aware of the time in history when the majority of Uyghurs were Christians. Today about 50 known Uyghur Christians meet in two small fellowships in China. In recent months, due to perceived insurrection efforts, the Chinese government has forced large numbers of Uyghurs into “re-education” camps.

Prayer Points

- The Chinese church to develop a burden to reach the Uyghur
- Uyghurs who have been placed into “re-education” camps
- The need for pioneer workers/missionaries to reach the Uyghur
- Uyghur language Bibles to be distributed
- For radio programs currently beamed into Uyghur territory
- Protection and favor for the small number of Christians

*For additional information about the Uyghur, 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, September 6, 2019. Please pray for

...*Pamir Radio programs* that are produced by Afghans for Afghans. The Dari language “Christian” programs contain teaching, songs, poems, and drama. Of Afghanistan’s population of 38 million, 99.8% are Muslim.

...*Global Initiative team members* teaching equipping classes in Romania during this current week and through September 13, and in India during September 9-13.

...*Sawsan, a former Muslim in Iran*, who says: “I passed an alley and heard singing. I went inside and heard a girl’s testimony. She rejected Islam and was beaten by her Dad. My heart was moved and I cried out to receive Jesus. It was the best day of my life.”

Friday, September 13, 2019. Please pray for

...*a network of small fellowships of Muslim background believers* in southwestern Kyrgyzstan. They are forced to operate in secrecy due to strong opposition from local mosques. Kyrgyzstan’s population of 6 million is 86% Muslim.

...*Global Initiative team members* teaching equipping classes in Belgium during September 13-21, and in Romania during September 16-20.

...*“secret Christians” from Muslim backgrounds* in northern India. Due to fear, they are often cut off from fellowship and discipleship opportunities. Of India’s population of 1.3 billion, 179 million are Muslim.

Friday, September 20, 2019. Please pray for

...*Christians in the United Arab Emirates* to be salt and light. Only 11% of people who live in the UAE are citizens; the rest are mostly migrant workers. Approximately 800,000 residents would call themselves Christians.

...*Global Initiative team members* teaching equipping classes in Honduras during September 20-21, in Romania during September 23-27, and in Papua New Guinea during September 23-October 4.

...*Haile, a police officer in Ethiopia*. Authorities arrested and dismissed him after he was heard talking about his conversion from Islam to Christianity. After refusing to return to Islam, he was forced to move to another area.

Friday, September 27, 2019. Please pray for

...*the need for New Testaments* in a large Middle Eastern city. A pastor says: “Due to the great number of Muslims converting in the house churches, we needed more New Testaments. In April, we printed 20,000 and now we need more.”

...*a Global Initiative team member* teaching equipping classes in Argentina during September 30-October 4.

...*pastor Samson and his network of churches* in Muslim areas of northern Nigeria. Muslim converts are endangered as Boko Haram radicals search them out and persecute or kill them. Of Nigeria’s population of 200 million, 47% are Muslim.

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

Friday, October 4, 2019. Please pray for

...*Hassan, a Muslim convert in Iran*. His Christian friend convinced him to view the *Jesus Film*. His reaction: "Now I am totally convinced that Jesus is true. I want to belong to Him."

...*the growing church in Algeria*, which is nearly all made up of converts from Islam and their children.

...*safety for the Christian former governor* of Indonesia's capital of Jakarta. He was released after two years in prison for allegedly blaspheming the Quran and invoking "hate speech." Of Indonesia's population of 269 million, 82% are Muslim.

Friday, October 11, 2019. Please pray for

...*Lukman and Amar, two Syrian Kurdish Muslim refugees* who recently accepted Christ in a large European city. They request "favor" as they now plan to share their conversions with their Muslim families.

...*Ahmed, who lives in a large city in Turkey*. He reports: "Since January, more Muslims have rejected Islam and repented in Jesus' name than we have ever seen before."

...*Holy Spirit anointing on the personnel* who manage the Arabic Maarifa ministry website. Maarifa is enjoying a fruitful ministry, but their efforts are experiencing strong Satanic attacks.

Friday, October 18, 2019. Please pray for

...*believers from Muslim backgrounds in Uzbekistan*. Despite a more tolerant attitude from the new president, converts from Islam still face persecution. Of Uzbekistan's population of 33 million, 81% are Muslim.

...*Burkina Faso, Africa*. In recent months, radical Muslims have attacked churches and killed leaders.

...*Shahin, a Muslim convert in Iran* who witnesses to Muslim women. She received a note with the words "Watch yourself. Repent and go back to Islam." Shahin's reaction was: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Friday, October 25, 2019. Please pray for

...*the country of Turkey*. President Erdogan continues to push an "Islamization" program. In the Hagia Sophia, one of the world's oldest churches, Islamic prayer is to be performed weekly. Of Turkey's population of 83 million, 96% are Muslim.

...*repentant hearts for Sudan's leaders* who systematically carry out persecution against Christians in Sudan. Of Sudan's population of 42 million, 90% are Muslim.

...*house churches in a large Middle Eastern city*. A worker reports: "We now have more than 32 house churches. Muslims continue to bring their friends and relatives. Many of our 'pastors' have previously been in prison, so they are not afraid."

**All personal names used herein are pseudonyms.*

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P.O. Box 2730, Springfield, MO 65801-2730

1-866-816-0824 (toll free)

www.reachingmuslimpeoples.com

www.jumaaprayers.org