

INTERCEDE

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COPIING WITH ADVERSITY

In this fallen world, adversity is part of our everyday lives. Sickness, floods, accidents, untimely deaths—all seem to be part of human existence. Not only do these adversarial situations tax our strength, they also challenge our sense of order, of right and wrong, and of justice. They compel us to try to protect ourselves from their grievous assaults. They demand an explanation. It is human to want to know why we face such trying situations. But how do we even begin to understand adversities in our lives?

Different religions have different systems for interpreting adversity. They also offer diverse strategies for trying to insure that adversity doesn't happen or is minimized.

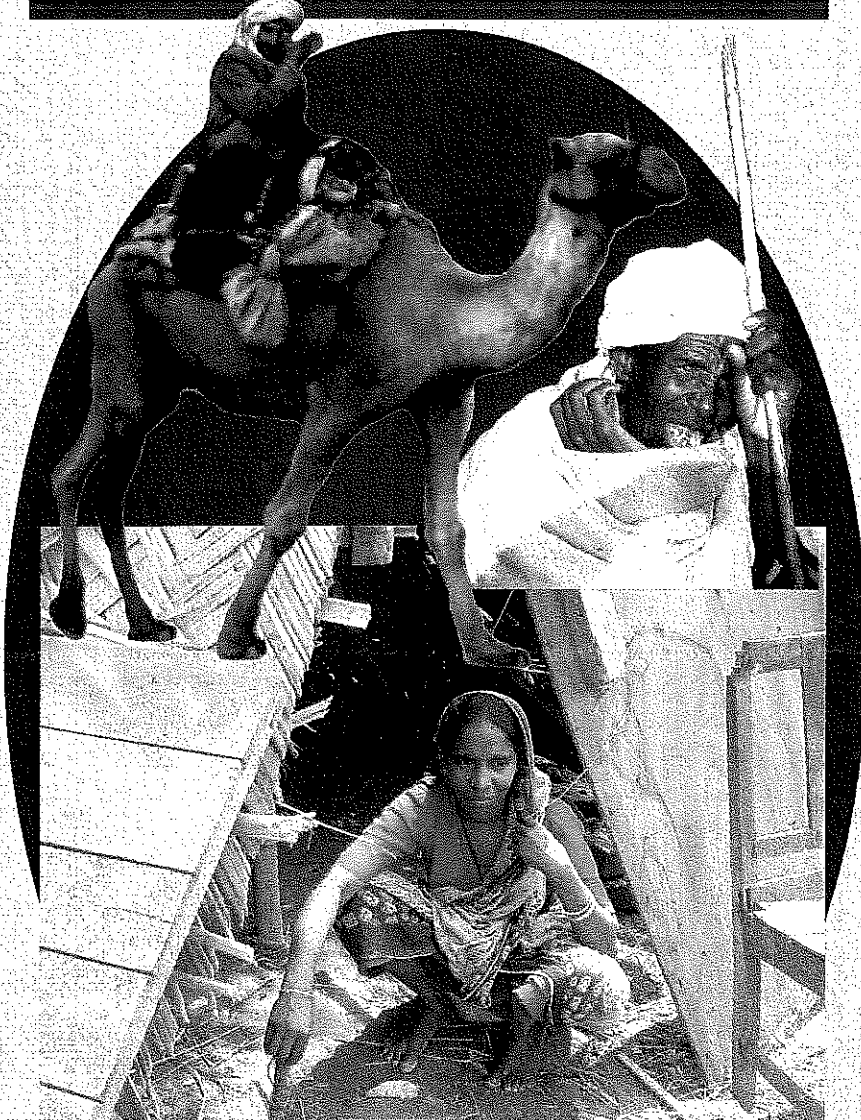
Islam is divided into a number of Muslim "denominations." Within those religious groups, a variety of approaches to the problem of adversity are pursued. Folk Islam represents one of these approaches.

Folk Islam is basically animism, occultism, and pre-Islamic superstition mixed with classical Islamic words, forms, and practices. The "pure" orthodox Muslim would not see Folk Islam as "Islamic" at all. However, among Islam's more than 1.2 billion followers, the vast majority are influenced to some degree by Folk Islam.

Folk Muslims have different beliefs and practices that surface in their endeavors to deal with the unseen world. They are more concerned with different questions, approaches, people, and places than "regular" Muslims.

The overriding emotion associated with Folk Islam is fear; the primary concern is power, not truth about God or eternity.

Their basic assumptions about life are shaped by a sense of God's (Allah's) great distance from His world. Not only do they perceive that God is a long way off, they are also persuaded that He is not especially interested in



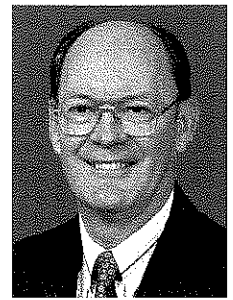
by
Dr. Robert C. Douglas

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Speaking on Behalf of Muslims

*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)*

**Ron Peck, Director
Center for Ministry to Muslims**



The worldwide Muslim community is made up of 1.2 billion people...many of whom live under extremely diverse conditions. Daily facing the problems involved in human existence, they often try to solve their problems and cope with life by turning to questionable religious practices that do not conform to the values of their own faith.

This method is understandable because when people are in desperate straits, they will resort to anything to meet their needs...no matter who they are or what their religious preferences might be.

The feature article in this issue of *INTERCEDE* deals with some of the ways Muslims cope with life's problems. It is very sad when we think that Muslims are unable to turn to Jesus...the One to whom Christians can turn during difficult situations that confront them.

In thinking about this, I am reminded of the situation where Jesus met a desperate woman from Samaria. Though we cannot fully understand that woman's problems, we know that she had struggled with broken relationships in five marriages.

Jesus approached her, desiring to help her. In an ordinary, down-to-earth manner, he asked her for a drink of water. Then, in the course of the conversation, Jesus made a very significant statement. He said, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asked you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

When I consider the Muslim community, that statement comes to mind. "If you knew the gift of God...you would ask of him." Yet they don't ask because they don't know or understand who Jesus really is! Because they don't know, it is the responsibility of the church to minister to Muslims in such a

way that they come to know Jesus as God's gift to us.

Life's problems are difficult and often urgent. The Savior is waiting to give living water to satisfy the deep thirst of life and bring lasting spiritual satisfaction to all who struggle in desperation. But before they can obtain this satisfaction, they must receive the message about God's gift of redemption. And to receive this gift, they must know who Jesus is.

The Samaritan woman's understanding of who Jesus really was progressed. At first, she saw him as a Jewish man who was requesting a drink of water. She understood only that he was a man with an unusual willingness to talk to a woman of another culture.

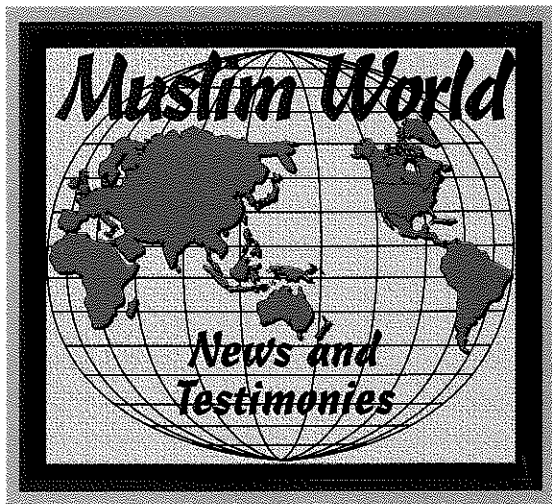
Later, when Jesus revealed to her some things from her past life, her perception changed. She said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet." His insight into her relationship problems caused her to believe that Jesus had received His revelation from God.

Muslims firmly believe that Jesus was a great prophet who brought a special revelation from God. This belief is true but it is incomplete.

Later the Samaritan woman went to her neighbors and friends and said, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The question she posed influenced the village leaders to ask Jesus to stay with them for two days so they could "know the gift of God." That knowledge changed their lives.

Let us pray earnestly that God will give us the skills necessary to communicate the truth about His gift to the desperate and the needy. May we always be willing to work patiently with those whose understanding of Jesus is incomplete. Step by step, may we guide true seekers to see Jesus as the Christ who can give them the water of everlasting life. ☺

*May we always be willing
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Nigeria

As a result of a recent move of the Holy Spirit, the Assemblies of God of Nigeria has surpassed the 1.4 million mark in members and adherents in over 6,000 churches.

Recently General Superintendent Charles Osueke challenged his church leaders to place a stronger emphasis on outreach and church planting in the predominately Muslim region in northern Nigeria. To meet the challenge, an Intercultural School of Missions was held November 6 to 20, 1998, at Evangel Theological Seminary in Jos. The Center for Ministry to Muslims was invited to partner with the Nigerian Assemblies of God in this important effort.

In spite of a fuel crisis, some 60 missions personnel met for training and strategy sessions. CMM team member Jim Bennett taught classes on *Reaching Muslims* and *Missions Research Methodology*. Bennett related that "The Holy Spirit stirred hearts to renew commitments and find creative ways to take the gospel to the 40 million Muslims of northern Nigeria."

During the sessions, a national missionary shared a dramatic account of his ministry among the 10 million nomadic Fulani people of northern Nigeria. This group belongs to the larger Fulani people group that stretches the length of sub-Sahara Africa. The missionary's personal ministry journal contains at least 500 accounts of Fulanis who have been converted, personally discipled by the missionary and then

Fulanis!"

Saudi Arabia

The Saudi government is forcing local companies to fire and deport foreign Christians who are active in secret worship services within Saudi Arabia. Pastor Ed Lapiz made this charge on November 10 and stated that at least eight Filipino church leaders have been dismissed from their jobs and sent back to the Philippines since August. He said that he was tracking information on 10 additional Filipino Christians, all leaders in house fellowships who are apparently "listed" for similar treatment in the next few weeks. Under Saudi Arabia's strict interpretation of Islamic law, any religious worship other than observance of Islam is illegal, even among the more than 400,000 expatriates working in the country. Pastor Lapiz called the growing number of quiet deportations "a new approach" by Saudi authorities, whose rash of heavy-handed arrests last summer generated considerable media coverage. "The Ministry of Interior would like to avoid the blame for these latest deportations by forcing the employers to terminate them," he said.

—*Compass*

Kuwait

A prominent Islamic sheikh in Kuwait called for a prohibition on building churches in all countries surrounding the Persian Gulf. "I believe, and Allah knows, that the

arrival of non-Muslims to the Arabian Peninsula in general, and Kuwait in particular, is not permitted. Therefore, the construction of non-Islamic houses for prayer and churches is forbidden," said sheikh Kazim al-Misbah.

Al-Misbah's statements have caused new problems for religious tolerance and persecution in the moderate Arab states. More than 65 percent of Kuwait's 2.2 million inhabitants are foreigners; most are Catholic Filipinos who are working for Kuwaiti companies. According to the Vatican there are approximately 100,000 Catholic believers in the tiny country. There are also several thousand foreign troops in other Arab states in the region, including about 5,000 Americans in Kuwait and about the same number in Saudi Arabia.

—*IDB*

Sudan

The Sudan government has accused a Catholic church leader of masterminding a firebombing plot in Khartoum last June because he was "fed up with Islamic law." Fr. Hilary Boma, Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum, has been named as the leading defendant in an "organized criminal network" that, according to the prosecution, was linked to the Sudan People's Liberation Army. The controversial case, which has dominated the front pages of Khartoum newspapers for weeks, also includes parish priest Fr. Lino Sebit. Kept under incommunicado detention since their August arrest, sources indicate that the two suffered severe physical torture during the early weeks of their incarceration. The Sudan government has been accused of ongoing reprisals against the Catholic Church for its refusal to support the government's "peace initiative" to resolve a 15-year civil war between the Arab Muslim North and the predominantly Christian animist South.

—*Compass*

COPING WITH ADVERSITY

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or likely to become involved with the everyday events of life on earth.

The result of these assumptions is a spiritual vacuum—an intolerable sense of aloneness and helplessness in the face of life's pressures.

Folk Muslims have responded to this bleak situation by creating an alternative spiritual world. Borrowing from pre-Islamic ideas, they acknowledge a realm filled with forces and beings who exist in a close proximity to human life. They believe these forces are concerned with the here and now and can be brought to bear on life for good or ill.

In their belief system, impersonal powerful forces of all kinds exist—magic, astrology, fate, and the evil eye. These forces are joined by personal spirit beings—angels, *jinn*, ghosts, apostles, and saints. All of these beings and forces influence life. They can cause adversity to come upon people or provide them with a way of escape from it.

The awareness of such an array of powers and beings would be overwhelming, except that Folk Islam has developed a variety of experts who claim to be able to channel the powers and manipulate the beings for specific ends. Included among these “religious” practitioners are charm writers, diviners, sorcerers, witch doctors, saints, and others who are

knowledgeable about the unseen world. Often the *imam* (preacher/prayer leader) of the mosque also dabbles in the occultic realms.

The ordinary Folk Muslim frequents such people when in need of special favors, insights, and blessings from the world beyond. Impending evil is warded off by recourse to the same specialists. Healing can be

obtained from these individuals—as can a good wife, a male offspring, and success in some educational or business venture.

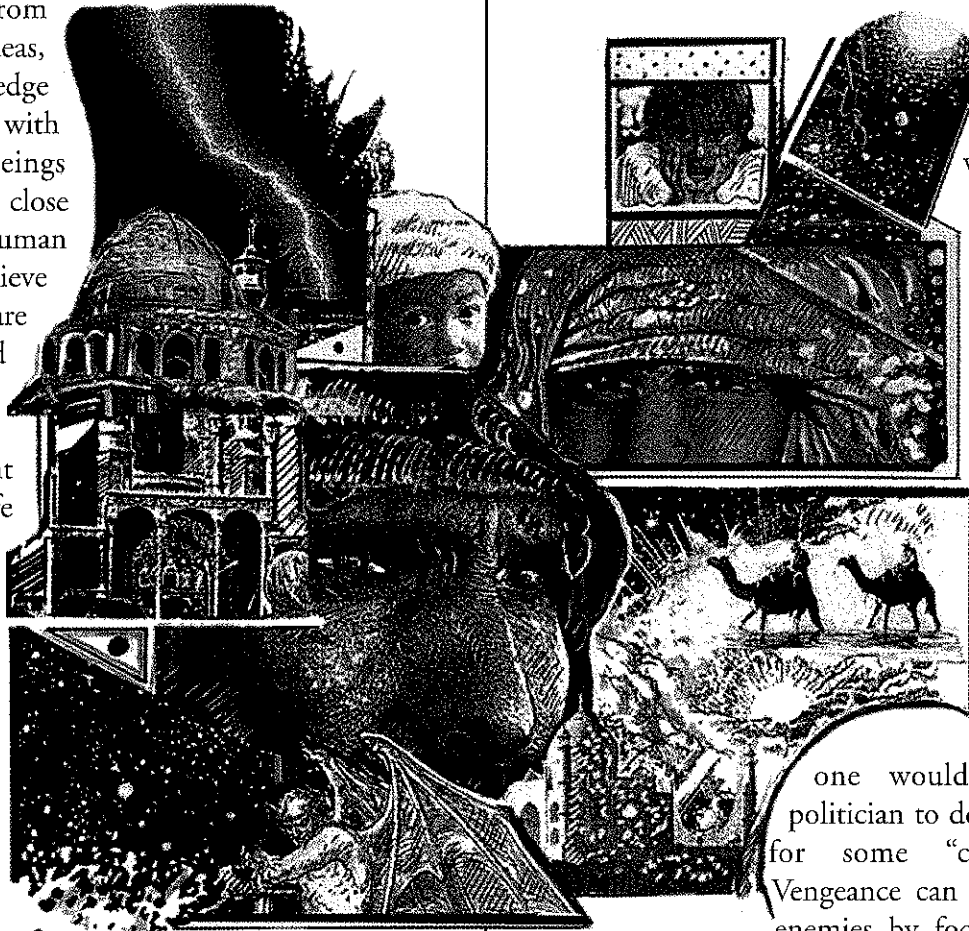
The whole process is one of manipulation (magic) which is inevitably self-serving. Personal spirit beings are

“bribed” as one would persuade a politician to do special favors for some “consideration.” Vengeance can be exacted on enemies by focusing destructive

power on select targets. Protection from evil spirits and angry deceased relatives is to be had for a price.

The Folk Muslim feels no contradiction between this kind of behavior and the insistence of classical Islam on loyalty to one God and to one God alone. In fact, to the Folk Muslim, Folk Islam *is* Islam. No difference is evident to them.

The very nature of the system insures that people will return again and again to the sources of power. The benefit derived from such rituals is always limited in scope and duration. That is, any prescribed solution addresses only one problem and only for



REFLECTIONS OF A RELEASED PRISONER

now. Tomorrow will bring the possibility of a new set of adversities, requiring new tailor-made responses. There is thus no end to the process.

The “five pillars” of Islam—confession of the creed, prayer, alms, fasting, and the pilgrimage—are part of the religious life of the Folk Muslim. However, the casual observer has no idea what the Folk Muslim is doing when he confesses “There is no god but God” or gives alms in response to a beggar’s plea.

The observer’s uncertainty is the result of the inclination of the Folk Muslim to use the pillars with traditional classical meanings one moment and to turn them into magical vehicles of power the next. At times both may even be going on simultaneously!

The Folk Muslim is really a very tragic individual. He/she is caught in a prison of fear—a world of constant vulnerability to spiritual, emotional, and physical attack. They live in a realm where people are the playthings of the powers—where danger lurks in every place, at every moment—where a word casually spoken or a look carelessly given can boomerang to one’s harm.


As followers of the resurrected victorious Lord, we ought to be quick to sense the precarious situation of the Folk Muslim, as it stands in such stark contrast to our confidence in Christ.

The New Testament readily acknowledges the general conclusions of the Folk Muslim regarding the world. Principalities and powers are definitely real, though they are not as extensively present as the Muslim assumes. We have every reason to want to help the Folk Muslim see the deliverance which is available in Christ.

Truly the message of Jesus *is* good news. Christ has led captivity captive and bound the strong man.

Through His resurrection, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, and the operation of God’s gifts, we are victors by His grace.

What a blessing and peace is ours, even in the midst of adversity!

What a contrast with Folk Islam. 

This article is condensed from a chapter in a book by CMM called “*Through Muslim Eyes*.” You can receive a copy of this book, by sending \$3 to CMM, 2032 E. Kearney, #205, Springfield, MO 65803.

Editor’s Note: This article is condensed from Compass Direct. A prisoner, who was released from prison last year, reflects on God’s faithfulness and presence during his 15-month detention.

When they arrested me, I faced charges of political and subversive activities against the government. At a certain moment, my interrogators asked me, whether I was a Christian. I was not born in a Christian family, but the Lord Jesus revealed His love to me in 1990 and told me to follow Him. So, I answered them: ‘Yes, I am, and as a Christian it is my commission to tell others about the Lord Jesus. That is what He has commanded us.’


The interrogation lasted 18 days. I had to remain standing; they did not allow me to get any sleep. Sometimes in the middle of the night they’d throw cold water all over me to keep me awake. They’d beat me up with plastic pipes, kick me, and torture me. They’d spit in my face and threaten to throw me in a fire and kill me. My interrogators were amazed that I was still standing after everything I had gone through, but I know it was the Lord Jesus who sustained me.

They said to me: “Most people collapse after a few days; some even die. But here you are, still standing. How come such a skinny guy like you is still standing? You must be a very tough one. You say you are a Christian, so why don’t you ask this Jesus of yours to deliver you and get you out of here? Can’t he do that for you?”

I answered and said that everything would happen in God’s time and that I believed I would be set free one day. But the interrogators would not believe my words. One said that he seriously doubted whether that would ever happen! So, I challenged him: ‘Well, when I am released, will you then believe in Him?’ He said he would. You should have seen him in the courtroom when the judge said I was released! Totally amazed!

After those 18 days of interrogation and torture, they took me to the security section of the prison and wanted me to sign a confession that I was a traitor. I refused to sign, so they beat me up again and again. Then they’d take me to court, sometimes two or even three times a week, with people who *were* involved in political activities. I’d never seen those people and denied any involvement with them.

You are my refuge and shield, I have put my hope in your word (Psalm 119:114). At first I didn’t have a Bible in prison so I had to “survive” on the verses I knew by heart. I was grateful to God that before I was detained, He had encouraged me to memorize Bible verses. I prayed often and after about one month I happened to be in another cell (sometimes I would do some electrical repairs for other prisoners) and I noticed a Bible there. I asked whose Bible that was; it seemed to be nobody’s and they said I could have it. I read through the Holy Book at least two and a half times and learned many more verses by heart.

I want to give all glory to God. All honor goes to Him only. He is my strength and gave me comfort through His Word. 

Perhaps A Clearer Understanding...



Adversity comes to Muslims in many forms. These stories, based upon a fictional Middle Eastern character called Nasruddin, suggest two types of adversity Muslims may face.

Even though both are humorous folk tales, they portray real situations in the daily lives of Muslims.

Adversities are brought into their lives by people who have power over them and by powerful spiritual forces—both of which are very real to Muslims.

What You Hadn't Thought Of...

"If someone doesn't say something to entertain me," shouted a tyrannical king, "I'll cut off the heads of everyone at court."

Mulla Nasruddin immediately stepped forward.

"Your Majesty, don't cut off my head. I'll do something."

"And what can you do?"

"I..I can—teach a donkey to read and write!"

The king said, "You'd better do it, or I'll flay you alive!"

"I'll do it," said Nasruddin, "but it will take me ten years to teach the donkey!"

"Very well," said the king, "you can have ten years."

When the court was over for the day, the great ones crowded around Nasruddin.

"*Mulla*," they said, "can you really teach a donkey to read and write?"

"No," said Nasruddin.

"Then," said the wisest among them, "you have only brought a decade of tension and anxiety upon yourself, for you will surely be killed. Oh, what folly to prefer ten years of suffering and contemplation of death to a quick flash of the headsman's ax."

"You have overlooked just one thing," said the *Mulla*. "The king is 75 years old, and I am 80. Long before the time is up, other elements will have entered into the story and there will be no problem."

A feeling of powerlessness envelopes Muslims even more than those of us who live in the West for most of their countries are controlled by "Rulers for Life." Nasruddin tells his hearers that time has a way of changing circumstances. In this case ten years would change the outlook of the whole situation.

Khoja and His Lost Donkey

Once upon a time Nasruddin Khoja was on a journey with his donkey. He arrived in a strange city and

left his animal at the door of a shop while he went in

to purchase supplies and drink some tea. When

he came out, his donkey was gone.

In a loud voice he said, "Return the

donkey to this spot in one hour,

or I will do to this town what I did to the last one that

tried to steal my donkey."

Then he went back into the shop. Within the hour the people of the town found the thief and returned the animal to its place in front of the store.

When Nasruddin came out at the end of the hour and saw his animal, he untied it and started out of town. As he did, an old man came up to him and asked, "What were you going to do to the town if the animal was not returned?"

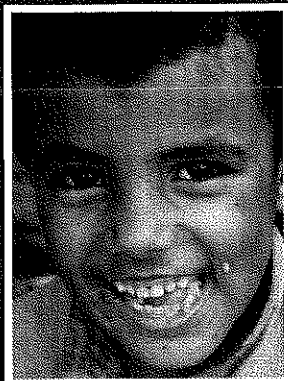
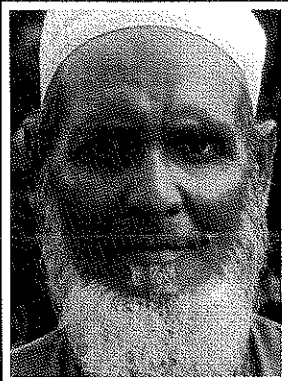
He answered, "I was going to do what I did in the last town; I was going to leave."

This story illustrates belief in the supernatural. This is common among many Muslims because of the influence of folk Islam. They fear the supernatural and any unknown person who can use these powers against them. The villagers believed that Nasruddin had power over evil spirits and could use those spirits to bring evil on the people. They believed he *could* and *would* place a curse on their whole village if they treated him poorly. They were bound by fear!



Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!



Friday, March 5, 1999. Please pray

...for the CMM team member teaching a Muslim Awareness Seminar in Malta next week. Pray that national workers may be challenged to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.
...for Brother Rashid, serving a 2-year sentence at hard labor in Uzbekistan. Pray he will be able to maintain good health and be encouraged to reach out to others there.
...for Christians in Iraq who are suffering severely from the economic blockade. Pray that God will intervene in the situation with Saddam Hussein.
...for Maldivian believers who have been released from prison but are still undergoing severe persecution by the staunchly Islamic government.

Friday, March 12, 1999. Please pray

...for the participants in a 3-week bloc session being taught by a CMM team member at a Bible school in Kiev, Ukraine. Pray that the students may apply the teaching they receive for effective ministry.
...for safety and fruitful ministry for the participants of a prayer pilgrimage trip into a sensitive country. Pray they will have opportunities to share the gospel with local people as they prayerwalk.
...for the house churches in Saudi Arabia. Pray for the protection of the many expatriate workers who are under constant surveillance and continually risk being deported.
...for N, an Asian university student, who committed her life to Christ in the States but has had to return to her home country. Pray she will remain strong in her new faith and that Christians will be there to encourage her against the pressures of her Muslim family.

Friday, March 19, 1999. Please pray

...that more Christians in Syria will be burdened for the Muslim majority in the country. Years of control by the government have successfully diminished their missionary vision.
...for Mohammed, a market gardener, who received a New Testament this summer from an outreach team. Pray he will gain understanding of the gospel by reading the Scriptures.
...for peace in volatile northern Iran. At least 14 million Azeris reside there and sentiment is growing for unification with newly independent Azerbaijan.
...that the government of Guinea Bissau will continue to maintain religious freedom in this country which has a 44 percent Muslim population. The war for independence brought much privation and suffering to the Church.

Friday, March 26, 1999. Please pray

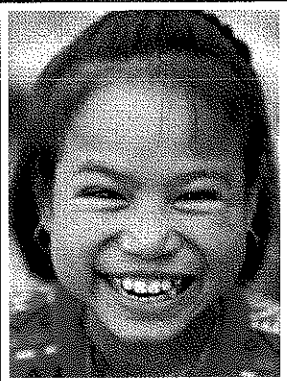
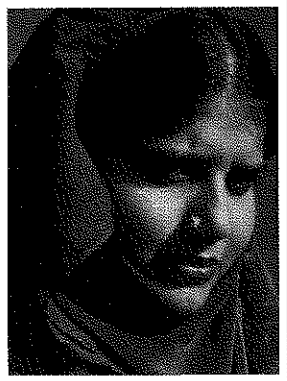
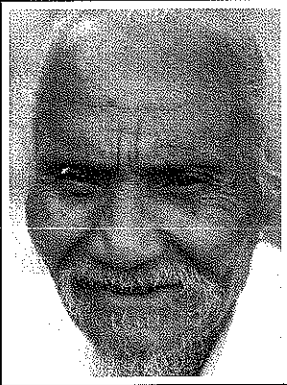
...for the Christians in Upper Egypt. Often they are discriminated against, abused, or even killed with little concern on the part of the police or government.
...that freedom to preach the gospel in Kazakhstan will continue. According to reports, there are now more than 3,000 Kazak believers in Kazakhstan.
...for the 3 million Parsée people in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India who have not yet been targeted for evangelism. Pray for an effective outreach among them.
...for Christians who are enduring the situation in Kosovo. Pray for a church there.

I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims Around the World!



*I urge, then, first of all
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—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)

Friday, April 2, 1999. Please pray

...for the Christian minority of Armenians in Iran who lack Scriptures in their own language. Pray that the government will allow the official import of Armenian Scriptures. ...that Uzbekistan authorities will grant registration to the churches and groups who have filed applications.

...for a CMM team member who is teaching a 5-week bloc session at the Bible school in Moscow. Pray that a vision will be imparted to reach out to Muslims in their areas.

...for a Kurdish woman who became a believer in a Turkish fellowship in London. She is under severe pressure to return to Islam.

Friday, April 9, 1999. Please pray

...for the 8-week Institute of Islamic Studies which begins next week at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines. Pray for safety in travel for all the participants, both students and faculty, and that this will be a great learning experience.

...for Hasan, a believer in Germany, who has a zeal to witness for the Lord, even in mosques. Pray that the Lord will give him wisdom, protection and encouragement.

...for Kuwaiti people who are still fearful and traumatized as a result of the Gulf War. Pray that they will experience true comfort and peace.

Friday, April 16, 1999. Please pray

...that God will protect those engaged in Christian activities in Algeria. God has recently given the fledgling Church there a vision to build His kingdom in this nation of terror.

...for Turkish believers who are seeking to rent a place for their growing fellowship. Because of the local police, potential landlords have been unwilling to rent their premises for Christian worship.

...for Christians in Indonesia. The country's economic crisis is very severe.

Friday, April 23, 1999. Please pray

...about the political change that may be eminent in Libya. Pray that the change will move toward greater freedom of religion.

...for 6 Iraqis who have seen the Jesus film in Australia and want to know more about Christ.

...for those in prison in Saudi Arabia for their faith. Saudi authorities know they can beat up Filipinos without any thought of repercussions.

Friday, April 30, 1999. Please pray

...that more Christian men will be willing to minister to African-American men in U.S. prisons. Prisoners are very susceptible to Islamic teaching.

...that a worker on a literacy team in a Muslim context will make the decision to serve the Lord. He is not aware that his fellow team members have come to faith in Christ.

...for 200 adults who turned to the Lord in the past 6 months in the C.I.S. Pray that the new laws will not prevent them from meeting together.