

30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World



Ramadan 1426

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8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30

October 5 - November 3, 2005

Interior cover



Table of contents

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Page 1 | Table of Contents - Introduction |
| Page 2 | How to Use the Booklet |
| Page 3 | Focus on Understanding Islam |
| Page 4 | Understanding Islam continued |
| Page 5 | The Islamic Calendar |
| Page 6 | Witnessing to Muslims |
| Page 7 | First Night of Ramadan |
| Page 8 | Focus on Islamic Beliefs |
| Page 12 | Focus on the Middle East |
| Page 19 | Focus on Africa |
| Page 28 | Focus on Indonesia |
| Page 32 | Focus on South Asia |
| Page 38 | Focus on Central Asia |
| Page 42 | Night of Power |
| Page 44 | Focus on Europe and North America |

Introduction

This call to prayer for Muslims originally came during a meeting of several Christian leaders in the Middle East in 1992. These men and women strongly sensed God's desire to call as many Christians as possible to pray for the Muslim world. The prayer movement was planned to coincide with the Islamic month of Ramadan. The dates for Ramadan are established according to the Islamic lunar calendar (see our special article about the Islamic calendar on page five). In 2005, Ramadan begins approximately on October 5 and ends on November 3, although this may vary slightly from country to country. The fasting period ends with the sighting of the crescent moon, which occurs at the end of 30 days.

Praying during the month of Ramadan does not mean that we conform ourselves to the Muslim practices of fasting and prayer. Rather it was originally intended that "30 Days" should be during the month of Ramadan for at least two reasons: (1) as a means for Christians to identify themselves with Muslims during a fixed period of the year, (2) to call upon God's sovereign intervention in the lives of Muslims during a time of the year when they are particularly religious.

While being opposed to Islam "30 Days" emphasizes God's love for Muslims. The movement has always tried to cultivate a spirit of humility, love, respect and service toward Muslims.

The goal of this prayer guide is to inspire and guide each reader as he or she intercedes for the Muslim world. It is far from being completely informative about the Muslim world. However, each article will give you some ideas about the needs of Muslims. We encourage you to seek further information and so gain a greater understanding of the Islamic world and God's activities among Muslims (our list of recommended web sites might be a good place to start).

The editors have been amazed by the number of testimonies of dreams and visions which we have received this year. God is certainly touching the Muslim world in a supernatural way. We have included a significant number of testimonies in this edition of "30 Days" to encourage your faith as you pray.

The Editors

New: A prayer calendar designed for children and families is also available this year. Contact our office.

Getting Started

Ideas and suggestions for individual and group prayer



Over the coming weeks, you may pray and fast in a variety of ways. You can use this booklet to pray by yourself in your own prayer times, and also to join with groups of others to pray together. We would encourage you to find creative ways to involve as many people as possible with you in this prayer focus. Jesus gave special promises of blessing for Christians who come together to pray and agree as a group.

You could organise some weekly or twice weekly meetings over the 30-day period with your church, your youth group, your committee or leaders' meetings, your women's meetings, home Bible studies, cell groups, children's groups — in fact, any occasion when your Christian friends and associates meet together.

Take a social occasion and turn it into a prayer event as well. Have others join with you in a special meal using the prayer topic for that day. Find out all you can about that particular culture — including food and dress, music, sports, etc. It is helpful if one person is chosen as the leader/facilitator of the group for that time of prayer. This person can give direction and cohesion to the prayer time, and assist the group in using the following guidelines. As you pray through the prayer points that are suggested

for each day, ask and expect the Holy Spirit to lead you in prayer, revealing certain areas of detail and specific focus for you to pay particular attention to (Rom 8:26).

It is helpful if the group focuses its prayers for one subject area at a time, rather than chopping and constantly changing focus. Each person should wait before moving on to a different topic, allowing each one to pray their prayers over the current subject area (1 Cor 14:40). Make sure that all have an opportunity to pray for an area or need if they want to.

“The Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save ...”

Look for ways to make your times of prayer varied and interesting. God is infinitely creative, and has made us in His image, so we can expect creative ideas and prayers as we seek Him. For example, using a map or reading out a short article on a particular country or need related to the day's prayer theme can add interest and spark new ideas of needs to pray for. Photographs and pictures, maps or even radio, television and video documentaries can do the same.

The Muslim “Night of Power” is a strategic night of prayer which commemorates the moment when Mohammed supposedly first received the revelation of the Qur'an (it starts on the 26th day in the evening). Consider setting aside this night for an extended prayer time with your church or mission group. Some Muslims spend many hours at the mosque making requests to God during this particular night. Let us believe God for an outpouring of His Spirit on our Muslim neighbours worldwide. Let us pray and believe for the fulfilment of Revelation 7:9, that every group, including the peoples of Islam, will be represented before the throne of God on that final day.

Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? (Isaiah 50:2)
Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. (Isaiah 59:1)

Worship is the true foundation of intercession!

Understanding Islam ...

Preparation for Prayer

The word "Islam" simply means submission to God, and a Muslim is one who follows the laws and practices of Islam. The revelation of Islam was given to Mohammed, who is revered by Muslims as the greatest prophet. "Mohammed" is not just a name, but a title which means "The Praised One".

The Life of Mohammed:

Mohammed was born AD570 in Mecca, a city in Saudi Arabia. He was a member of the Hashim clan of the powerful Quraysh tribe. His father died before he was born, and his mother, Amina, died when he was only six. Mohammed went to live with his grandfather, who was the guardian of the Ka'ba. Sadly, two years later his grandfather also died, so from the age of eight Mohammed was brought up by his uncle, Abu Talib, who was a merchant along the great camel trade routes.

Pagan worship abounded in Arabia: there were an estimated 360 gods and goddesses to appease, Mecca being the major

center of idolatry in the region. Muslim historians record that even as a boy Mohammed detested idol worship and lived a morally pure life.

Mohammed was later employed by Khadija, a wealthy widow, to manage her caravan trade. He became known as "Al-Amin", the trustworthy one. At the age of 25 he married Khadija: their marriage produced six children, although all except the youngest daughter (Fatima) died very young. Mohammed and Khadija were married for 25 years. Later, after Khadija died, Mohammed endorsed polygamy and married several wives.

At the age of 40, Mohammed became very concerned about the state of his fellow countrymen and spent much of his time in meditation on religious matters. During the month of Ramadan, Mohammed often retreated to a cave on the slopes of Mount Hira, several kilometres from Mecca. It was during one of these times in AD 610 that Mohammed began to receive revelation and instruction that he believed were from



*"Mohammed"
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which means
"The Praised One."*

*The Kabah in Mecca existed
at the time of Mohammed.*

the archangel Gabriel. These "revelations" form the basis of the Qur'an. At the beginning Mohammed had many questions about these revelations and even doubted that he was a prophet. In addition to the Qur'an Muslims rely on traditions called "Hadiths" about the life, teachings and practices of Mohammed. These traditions influence the daily life of most Muslims to one degree or another.

During his life, Mohammed met many people who called themselves Christians, though it is debatable how many of them were really in the faith. Mohammed learned many aspects of Jewish religious customs from the various Jewish clans which were living in the region. Eventually he became the political and religious leader of Medina, a city North of Mecca which had a significant Jewish popula-

tion. Mohammed's prophethood was not accepted by the Jews of Medina which led to serious conflict. Christian and Jewish ideas, concepts and history are very present in the Qur'an though they are often distorted.

Mohammed proclaimed that the Qur'an was the final and superior revelation from the One Supreme God. He banned the worship of idols, and taught that a Muslim's life must be wholly committed to Allah, with ritual washing before the five daily times of prayer facing Mecca. Friday became the appointed day for corporate worship at the mosque.

Mohammed died in AD632 in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

Understanding Islam continued

Muslims believe in Allah, who is unique, all powerful, gracious and merciful to all Muslims. The Islamic faith is lived out according to five “pillars” that must be adhered to if one is to hope for salvation.

The Five Pillars are:

1. *Reciting the Creed (shahada) “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet”.*
2. *Prayer (salat) - At five set times a day.*
3. *Almsgiving (zakat) - Both obligatory and voluntary giving to the poor.*
4. *Fasting (saum) - Especially during the “holy” month of Ramadan.*
5. *Pilgrimage (hajj) - At least once in a lifetime to Mecca, known as the Hajj.*

While a Muslim may observe each of these pillars, there is still no guarantee of salvation. Islam is based on a religion of self-righteousness. There is no atonement for sin in Islam and Muslims generally believe that their religious acts can purify them from sin. Muslims often think about the Day of Judgment, where they believe Allah (or an angel) will take a balance and weigh each person's deeds. Each person must hope that their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds, but even then Allah's judg-

ment is based uniquely on His sovereign will. Another interpretation is that man's deeds are written in a book and on the Day of Judgment Allah will open the book and the sum of a man's account will be placed in either His right or left hand. The only sure way to paradise is to die as a martyr during an Islamic Holy War (jihad). Muslims lack assurance of forgiveness.

Mohammed is Islam's highest prophet, but the Qur'an also speaks often of Jesus, who is also known as Isa. The Qur'an also refers to Jesus as Kalimat Allah, which means The Word of God. Muslims believe that Jesus was born by a miracle of God through the Virgin Mary. However, Muslims do not believe in Christ's death on the cross, His resurrection or His deity. Although Jesus is the second highest prophet in Islam, the Isa of the Qur'an is only one prophet among 124,000.

The belief in angels and evil spirits, also known as jinn, plays a prominent part in the lives of most Muslims. Islam generally teaches that “all good and evil comes from Allah” introducing a very fatalistic concept at the heart of Muslim faith and experience.

As with all religions, Islamic teaching and practice influences every aspect of life. Within the Qur'an and the Hadiths there is instruction for most every detail of a Muslim's daily life.



Above : The hand of Fatima (as jewelry). This occult symbol is found in most Muslim countries. Used everywhere against evil spirits and the “Evil Eye”, its real influence is probably very evil. The only real salvation is with the Lord of Hosts! In some Muslim countries this sort of “Folk Islamic” practice is even more important than orthodox Islam.

Muslims believe in:

*One God, the Creator of all things
Angels and evil spirits
Prophets
Holy books (Injil, Zabur, Qur'an)
The Day of Judgement
Destiny*

The Islamic Calendar

The astrolabe was highly developed in the Islamic world.



In this edition of "30 Days" we have included the moon in various phases near the titles in all the prayer articles. This is because our month of prayer is done at the same time as the Muslim month of fasting called Ramadan. This month of 30 days is determined by the Muslim lunar calendar (corresponding to the lunar cycle from one crescent moon to the next). The Muslim calendar is 354 days long and "retreats" each year by 11 days in respect to the Western "Gregorian" Calendar. Therefore the Muslim lunar months do actually "shift" annually over a complete 33 year cycle.

Western urban dwellers hardly dream of using the moon for the calendar yet for many peoples around the world the lunar cycle is still a major way of understanding time.

The Islamic lunar calendar is 354 days long.

In the Bible it is written that God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years" (Gen. 1:16). The Jewish calendar was specifically based on the lunar cycle. The names of the days the week in the Arab or Muslim calendar have obvious origins coming from Jewish and Christian influence in Arabia.

The first day of the week is Sunday called "youm" (day), "al-ahad," (the first). There is also a Sabbath day (the seventh day) which certainly has Jewish roots although its original significance as a day of rest has been lost. The present Muslim day of rest is the "youm al-jum`a" meaning the "day of assembly" which corresponds to the Muslim day of mosque centered worship (Friday). A Muslim "day" also starts at sunset on the evening before the next day. This follows the Biblical idea which is found in Genesis: "And there was evening and there was morning, one day." (Ramadan actually begins on the evening of October 4th).

The following is the list of the days of the week used especially by Arabs and in Islamic nations in general.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. <i>youm al-ahad</i> | <i>(first day)</i> | <i>Sunday</i> |
| 2. <i>youm al-ithnayna</i> | <i>(second day)</i> | <i>Monday</i> |
| 3. <i>youm ath-thalatha'</i> | <i>(third day)</i> | <i>Tuesday</i> |
| 4. <i>youm al-arba`a'</i> | <i>(fourth day)</i> | <i>Wednesday</i> |
| 5. <i>youm al-khamis</i> | <i>(fifth day)</i> | <i>Thursday</i> |
| 6. <i>youm al-jum`a</i> | <i>(gathering day)</i> | <i>Friday</i> |
| 7. <i>youm as-sabt</i> | <i>(sabbath day)</i> | <i>Saturday</i> |

It is particularly noteworthy that the Muslim names for the days of the week are remarkably less pagan than the Western names for the days of the week. For example: The word Thursday was originally "Thor's" day (the chief god of the Vikings) or in latin contexts it was Jove's day (Zeus' day) which gave rise to words like "jeudi" (Thursday) in French. All the other days of the week used in most European and Western countries have similar origins.

The Muslim numbering for years starts with Mohammed's leaving Mecca to live in Medina (hegira) which happened in 622 AD. This is the 1426th lunar year since the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

It was not until the rise of the Ottoman Empire that the crescent moon and sometimes a pointed star became symbols which were strongly associated with the Muslim world (These were not originally Islamic symbols and some Muslims want to remove them from Islam completely. (See our website for more details - see "About Islam" at: <http://www.30-days.net>

Please note: The moon has never been an object of worship for Muslims although it was an object of worship among the Arabs before the rise of Islam.

Witnessing to Muslims

Pray for your Muslim friends and acquaintances. One cannot emphasise enough our total dependence on the intervention of the Holy Spirit. When witnessing to Muslims our goal should be to make the message understandable and accessible to them.

Islam will eventually cease to exist (Habakkuk 2:14). We want Muslims to be able to participate in the new world which God is preparing (2 Peter 3:13). Muslim evangelism is about people and creating relationships. It is not about winning arguments.

We must love Muslims sincerely, manifesting our love through kindness and respect in our relationship with them. Our desire should be to establish a genuine friendship and share our faith in that context. Even if we only spend five minutes with someone may they remember the fragrance of heaven which was with us.

Be open to and strive for personal and human contact with Muslims. Find out who they are as persons. Share your life with them. As with all true friendships we need to take time to understand, appreciate and help our Muslim

friends. Ask for their help with your projects. Work toward a true exchange. Ask for their perspective on things. It can be an enriching experience. It is important to understand their culture, their way of thinking and their historic and religious background. Learning some of their language could be very useful as well.

Seek them out. Do not be afraid to visit them in their homes and invite them to your own home. If you invite them for a meal buy your meat in a Muslim butcher shop or serve fish. Do not serve alcoholic beverages to Muslims.

Few Muslims have been won to Christ by argumentation. Love your Muslim friends and avoid getting into discussions which push them to defend Islam. Most Muslims have been won to Christ by kindness, tolerance and patience (Romans 2:4).

Explain the gospel in a very simple manner. People from western countries often concentrate on concepts when proclaiming the Gospel. However, Muslims often do not have the most basic information about our view of God and why we actually need salvation. It is very helpful to tell as many stories as possible about God and his marvelous works. Tell the stories about the life of Jesus and other men and women mentioned in the Bible. Muslims need to hear about the experiences of people of faith. In this way they



can compare Islam and Christianity. Learn to use parables, stories and examples from daily life to share your message. In this way your Muslim friends will also retain your words much better. (In addition the important concepts become evident through biblical stories and examples).

Speak of God's interventions in your own life. Tell of His faithfulness, His love, His justice. Muslims do not understand God as one who gives and keeps promises. Your testimony of a real and active faith is very important.

Give your friend a New Testament or a Bible. Reading these books give Muslims new perspectives on Christianity. Encourage a regular reading of the Gospels in particular. The Jesus film has been used as well to help Muslims discover Jesus.

Answer objections with kindness. Do not let yourself be carried away into passionate discussions. Cultivate the relationship not arguments.

Do not be naive if our Muslim friends express a belief in Jesus Christ and the Bible. In one sense Muslims do believe

Muslim evangelism is not about winning arguments.

*Having a right attitude
about evangelism can
also help us pray correctly
and vice versa!*

in Jesus and the Bible; however, their faith is very different from what the Bible teaches us. They do not believe that it is possible to be in a real relationship with God as we believe. Jesus said that eternal life is to know God (John 17:3). It is not just knowing certain things about God, but to know Him personally.

Initially focus on areas of agreement. In your first contacts with Muslims and even later it is useful to be in agreement as much as possible with Muslims about our common beliefs. Muslims believe that there is one God, the God of Abraham. In Arabic the word used for God is "Allah" (Arab Christians also use this word for God). They believe that God made the world, that He knows all things, that He is all wise and very powerful. Muslims do not believe in the Trinity. They believe in angels and in prophets such as Abraham, Moses, David, Noah and Jesus. They believe in the last judgment. In a general sense we can agree on these points, without forgetting the differences. Muslims often feel rejected by Westerners. Affirming our common beliefs enables them listen to us with greater understanding and openness.

We strongly encourage you to download our complete printable document "When Witnessing to Muslims" at <http://www.30-days.net>. Some useful books for understanding Islam and Christian witness to Muslims are advertised through our website as well.



October 4, 2005

The first evening of Ramadan

In many places around the world Muslims will be looking to the heavens this evening. They will be interested in knowing if they will be able to see the crescent moon. If it is visible this will be the signal for the beginning of the month of Ramadan. (In most countries religious authorities will make a proclamation concerning the beginning of Ramadan). No fasting will take place till tomorrow morning. Muslims will rise up early to eat their breakfast before the day begins. Afterwards they will not have anything else to eat or drink till nightfall. This will be their daily experience during the next 30 days.

Of Prophets and Kings

In Islam the prophet Mohammed does not have a role as a worldwide king. According to Muslims, Mohammed was simply proclaiming God's message as a prophet and organising Muslim society. Mohammed was to be obeyed and imitated, but he is not a king though he had a role in political and religious leadership in Arabia.

For Muslims, Jesus is also seen as only being a prophet who was preaching a previous form of Islam; He is to be obeyed as God's messenger. Muslims typically believe that Jesus was a very good prophet — indeed, for them He was the most important one besides Mohammed! According to the Bible, it is true that Jesus was a prophet (though it also shows He is more than a prophet): "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you (Moses) from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him" (Deut 18:18; see also John 6:14 and 7:40).

The Arabic word "Rabb" or "Lord" referring to the God of Abraham is used over 1,000 times in the Qur'an. This shows that Muslims generally have a significant sense that God is the rightful ruler of the world. "Say O Allah! King of all kingdoms, You give sovereignty to whom You will, and You take away sovereignty from whom You will" (Surat 3:26). Yet while acknowledging the Creator as Lord, Muslims deny that God's Messiah died and was raised from the dead.

Muslims generally believe that God could not have allowed such a good prophet as Jesus to be killed in such an evil way. Some

support this belief with statements from the Qur'an that Jesus did not die but only appeared to die on the cross. Many believe that Judas the traitor was transformed into Jesus' likeness and actually was the one who died on the cross. Very few Muslims have learned much about the remarkable circumstances surrounding Jesus' death, which even caused the centurion to say "Certainly this man was innocent" (Matt 23:47 and 27:54). The Qur'an has nothing to say about Jesus' resurrection.

A key issue for Muslim salvation is centred around the confession of faith. When making their profession of faith Muslims name Mohammed as the prophet of the Allah. The English translation is "I bear witness that there is no deity [none truly to be worshipped] but Allah, and I bear witness that Mohammed is the messenger of Allah." This statement of faith is called the "Shahada", and is one of the "five pillars" of Islam. To say this phrase with faith makes one a Muslim.

Christians also have a confession of faith. We proclaim publicly that Jesus, who was raised from the dead, is Lord (Rom 10:9). Jesus is much more than just a prophet. He is the Messiah, a king from the royal family of David (Luke 23:2). The risen Jesus will and does reign over the whole world. Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse [David's father]; And He who shall rise to reign over the nations, In Him the nations shall hope (Rom 15:12)." He is Emmanuel, "God with us." Jesus is the chosen one who is to reign over the nations.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that Muslims would have opportunities to learn about the details of Jesus' death and resurrection. Christians need to have wisdom and real perseverance in telling the story.
- ▶ Pray for Muslims to be able to see clearly that Jesus is more than just a prophet. He is indeed Lord of all the earth. He is the Messiah, a king. Islam and Christianity are strikingly different on this point.
- ▶ Pray that former Muslims would know how to honour Mohammed as a great man while giving their full allegiance to Jesus the Lord of heaven and earth.



Prayer in Islam

Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day at specific times while facing the direction of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Muslim prayer is formal and ritualistic yet many Muslims do make every effort to be sincere and upright in performing their prayers. Muslim prayer is characterised by rules of respect and attitudes of politeness toward Allah (Please note that all Arab speakers use this word for God — whether Christian or Muslim, though their ideas of God are significantly different.).

“Praying correctly and at the appropriate time is one of the greatest indications of (Muslim) faith and a great sign of true religion”.¹ Prayer is to be done with heart and body cleanliness, with cleanliness of clothing and in a ceremonially clean place. The washing of the hands, nose, face, forearms, ears, and feet in preparation for Muslim prayer is extremely important.

Muslims place very strong emphasis on the exact postures and the words of their prayers (which are always in Arabic). Almost all Muslim prayer is concerned with reciting specific phrases from memory. In the course of the five regular prayer times a Muslim will prostrate himself before Allah a total of 34 times and he will repeat the following phrases:

“Allah is greater”

“Praised be my mighty Lord”

“Allah hears the one who praises him”

He will also recite the “Al-Fatiha” or another text from the Qur’an 17 times, the “Shadada” (Islamic creed), and the greeting of peace to all Muslims.

Muslims can make requests to God privately after they finish their ritual prayers. However, this is not done as often as Christians typically make requests. Muslims do not believe that God binds himself to his people through covenants. This is a key concept for understanding their attitudes toward answers to prayer and their lack assurance of God’s steadfast love towards them. In addition, because of the fatalism of Islam, Muslims generally have little faith that their requests will alter their circumstances. They generally believe that Allah’s desires (for good or ill) will always be done despite their activities or requests. Trusting in God for specific responses to prayer in the Christian sense is not commonly practised among Muslims. This is a huge difference between Muslim and Christian religious experience.

When Christians speak of prayer they usually mean direct two-way communication with God. Muslims never expect God to speak back to them directly at any moment and certainly not during prayer. The vast majority of Muslims will say that God only speaks through the Qur’an. Muslims do not develop habits of listening to God’s voice as Christians sometimes do. Even Mohammed is said only to have heard from God indirectly through an angel. Unfortunately, Christian prayer is often dominated by requests, although thanksgiving and praise is certainly highly encouraged. The Bible even says that we should “Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name” (Ps 100:4).

¹“Enseignement de la prière” by Mohammed Mahmoud Assaouaf
p.20 French Translation of Salaheddine Kechrid 1977



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Muslims need to come to understand Christian prayer. Pray that Muslims would come to believe that God Himself wants to communicate directly with them. Pray this specifically for any Muslims that you may know personally. Pray for the Muslims in your city, region and nation.
- ▶ Pray for newly-converted Muslims, that they may develop real confidence in God as one who keeps His covenants, makes promises and who hears and answers prayer.
- ▶ Christians need to share their prayer experience with Muslims in humility. Pray that God will give us wisdom when describing our Christian prayer experience so that God would be glorified and Muslims could understand Him better.



Muslims, Money and “Zakat”

Muslims actually have a lot to say about money in general. Historically, Muslims have been very successful as merchants. Many think that Islam has essentially grown as a world religion through holy wars, but in reality trade and business contacts have been a very significant means of spreading Islam. This continues to be true even today. During the past 150 years, many tribes in Africa have been converted to Islam through relationships developed as a result of commercial contacts.

Many Arabs in the Middle East consider their oil wealth to be God’s means of financing the furtherance of Islam around the world. They are making significant use of that wealth to promote Islam through the distribution



of the Qur’an and other literature, as well as through the construction of mosques and aid programmes in various countries.

An important principle of Islam is that all things belong to God, and that wealth is therefore held by humans in trust. Christians should be in general agreement with Muslims on this point. Another positive teaching of Islam about money is an emphasis against usury in lending. This principle is not always followed in reality, but it is positive that Muslims are encouraged to restrain the negative power of high interest rates.

Recently, Muslims have made significant contributions to economic development in many poorer nations through micro-enterprise loans, an idea that started in Bangladesh. The world-famous Grameen Bank and other initiatives of a similar nature have helped millions of people around world to become relatively prosperous through small business loans of often only US\$ 50–200. The Grameen Bank was founded by Muslims — not to further the cause of Islam but rather to help the poor. Many Christian organisations have copied this model in their efforts to encourage economic development. (www.grameen-info.org).

Muslims are not immune to the negative power of the love of money. Jealousy, hatred, strife, bitterness and even

murder concerning money and resources have plagued every Muslim nation and family. Islamic cultures tend to be family- and group-orientated, which can complicate financial matters. Sometimes the financial dependence and tangled debt and repayment situations lead to disastrous relationships. On a positive note, the Muslim sense of financial solidarity is often very strong.

To become disciples of Christ Muslims need to learn a real fear of God in their relationship with money. The “fear of God” means to hate evil: including pride, arrogance, and the evil way (Prov 8:13). The book of Proverbs tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is interesting to note that the Grameen Bank could be an example of God’s wisdom. The principles of acting to help the poor and refusing to seek profits first actually reflect some of God’s own values.

Grameen bank Concept:

“Groups of five individuals are loaned money creating economic incentives for the group to act responsibly.”



Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

1 Timothy 6:18-19

One of the five pillars of Islam is called “Zakat”, which concerns the giving of one’s money and or goods. The word “Zakat” means both “purification” and “growth”. Some Muslims have pointed out that pruning plants removes branches which do not produce fruit and encourages new growth. In a similar way Muslims often believe that giving through the Zakat will purify them of sin and that God uses it as a test of true Islamic belief. The Zakat consists of giving 2.5 per cent of one’s annual increase in goods or funds (or both). Muslims generally associate the Zakat with specifically giving to the poor. The Zakat can be distributed among eight categories of people, including those who do not have material possessions or a means of livelihood, those who convert to Islam, those who borrow, those who are fighting for the cause of Allah, or one who is stranded on a journey.

Christians coming from a Muslim background have to become accustomed to other ways of and viewpoints about giving. In Islam, Muslim “clergy” (the “imams”) are generally not paid (though there are many exceptions in larger mosques that have significant responsibilities). In Islam, there has never been a levitical priesthood that lives off tithes and offerings. While not all aspects of the levitical laws hold true today, the principle of giving is very much part of Christian teaching. Christians have historically been called to give much more money than Muslims (often 10 per cent or more of their earnings rather than 2.5 per cent). This may also be a challenge for some Muslims who are drawing near to Christ.



PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for Muslims to become disciples of the Lord concerning their finances and resources. Jealousy, coveting, pride and duty have often dominated Muslim and Christian attitudes towards money. May God help us as Christians to teach and model the values of the risen Jesus concerning finances to Muslims. Only God can show us His way.

Give praise to God for initiatives such as the Grameen Bank. Pray for its continued success and that it would not be diverted from its original purposes.

Focus on the Middle East

Days 4 - 8

Testimony from Yemen:

"The first thing my husband said to me after returning from the Emirates was 'My dear wife.' It amazed me, since he had been treating me badly — like a possession he owned — for a long time. For one week he stayed at home before leaving again to go to another Arab country. The week he was home was strange. His behaviour had changed so much, I couldn't believe it. It was like being on honeymoon again. He would only say nice things to me; in the morning he would go to the kitchen to make coffee and breakfast. He had never entered a kitchen before, because it's a 'shame' in our country for a man to enter the kitchen. He even served his relatives when they visited, and had me sit with them. When we told him that his life had changed he replied: 'Why shouldn't God change me?' His new behaviour even made me scared and worried: maybe he had taken a second wife, and now was being nice to me to cover his guilt."

"My husband left me a Bible and other Christian literature and cassettes when he left and he encouraged me to discover Jesus as revealed in the Scriptures. The drastic change in my husband's life created in me a deep desire to read the Bible. At the end of Ramadan I was still praying and fasting the Muslim way. Then I started to have dreams. In the last dream I had, I saw Jesus on the sea, standing on the water. He was calling me: 'Come to me!' I answered, 'I don't know how to swim.' He told me: 'Do not be afraid. Those I am calling to come will never drown.' Slowly I started walking towards Him. I was walking on the water, but not sinking. I continued to walk until I arrived where He was standing. My husband and I were excited about these dreams, and were comforted. Those who earnestly seek the Lord will find Him. 'Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you' (Matt 7:7). I surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus. Praise be to His name for showing me the path of Life."



Women in Yemen

“Do you really want to pray for me? Do you really want to ask the God of heaven to heal me? Do as you like, but I do not believe that God would ever look at a woman’s agony. It is His will for us to suffer.” This was Fatma’s first reaction when some Christians wanted to pray for her. Healing, according to her, was to expect too much from God.

Many Yemeni women have the same thoughts as Fatma. Not all their suffering comes from sickness — much comes from a wide variety of injustices. They suffer when they are denied education, and when they are married at a very early age and often against their will. Most work hard all day and endure abuses. Often they are divorced for the flimsiest reasons, and sometimes

they become a second or third wife. They grow up without expectations, believing that it is their destiny to serve and please others even while they suffer. They have been made to believe that this is the will of God.

Most Yemeni women do not know God as a caring Father. They largely live in darkness away from the light of His great love. They cannot imagine Him sharing their pain and being aware of the injustices that they suffer. Yet there is hope: God is a God who longs to heal, comfort, and renew their lives. Fatma is now a Yemeni believer. And she is not the only one. Along with her there are a few other women who have received new life with God. (There are possibly as many as 200 Yemeni believers, although the majority are men.)

Yemen (population 20 million) is the poorest of the Arab nations, and is also considered the most “backward” country by her richer Arab neighbours. Yemenis are 95 per cent Arab living in 1,700 clans and tribes (62 per cent Sunni Muslim and 37 per cent Zaidi Shiite Muslim). Islam is the country’s official religion, and the legal system is based on Islamic sharia law. Has not God chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong? Doors to this nation are open. Many seeds have been sown, martyrs have given their lives. The harvest is getting riper. “All those from Sheba (Yemen) will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord” (Isa 60:6).



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ The Queen of Sheba (Yemen) came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Pray that the women of Yemen come to the One greater than Solomon, to hear His wisdom and receive life from Him (Matt 12:42).
- ▶ Pray that the converted Yemeni women grow in faith and maturity while building godly friendships (Eph 4:11–6:24). Often they have difficulties meeting together because of family responsibilities and safety issues.
- ▶ Pray for the converted Yemeni men as well. Pray for mature leaders to be raised up, leaders who can become fathers and shepherds for the rest of the flock.
- ▶ Pray for the Truth of Jesus to captivate the Yemeni people.



The Iranians



Population: 70 million

Iran, a large country (the size of France, Spain, Italy and Germany combined) formerly known as Persia, is not an Arab country — it is composed of Persians, Azeris and over 65 other ethnic groups. Iran's history goes back to the days of the Persian Empire. Iran has been a Muslim country since about AD650, but the majority of Iranians did not become Muslim until the ninth century. Most are Shiite Muslims. After centuries of monarchy the Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979. The state and religion are very closely linked, at least officially. The country's religious leaders exercise power through a variety of public regulations, from dress codes for women to alcohol prohibition. In private homes, however, different rules are often applied.

A typical young Iranian is intelligent, charming, interested in everything Western, but not very interested in Islam. Many Iranian young people long for freedom. Unfortunately, the term "freedom" is often defined by how Western media sees the term — which essentially means that almost anything is acceptable (this is not God's perspective). Today, more than half of Iran's population is under 25 years old. Several student movements have been repressed in recent decades, slowly pushing the young generation towards apathy. Some have largely lost hope in politics and religion; many have fled reality through drugs.

A decision for Jesus is of great consequence for Iranians, since missionary activities are strictly forbidden in Iran. The threat of death is real to an Iranian who converts to any other belief. Despite this, God is building His kingdom in Iran, especially through house churches. "Muslims in Iran are coming to faith in Christ by the thousands," according to reports of the organisation Open Doors. One Iranian pastor comments: "In the 1980s, we rejoiced over two or three new believers each month. In the 1990s, we were impressed when we heard about a group of new believers. Today, we are just somewhat surprised to discover an entire new underground church."

Remarkable things are also happening among the 4-5 million Iranians who live outside Iran. Many are refugees who were forced to leave Iran. Thousands have come to Christ, and Iranian fellowships have sprung up in many countries throughout Europe and North America, as well as in other countries such as Turkey and Australia. A new evangelistic Iranian film called *The Tune of Nostalgia* has been produced and is now being distributed among the Iranian diaspora. It describes the hardships of Iranian refugees in Europe.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that the politicians and religious leaders of Iran will respect basic human rights and act for the well-being of their people.
- ▶ Pray that disillusioned Muslims in Iran will find the Lord.
- ▶ Pray for the protection of believers from a Muslim background.
- ▶ Pray for the fruitfulness of satellite TV broadcasts and internet evangelism efforts.
- ▶ Pray for the growth and development of the many Iranian fellowships scattered throughout many countries.
- ▶ Pray for the distribution of Bibles, books and DVDs such as the film *The Tune of Nostalgia*.



Persecution and Encouragement

There are plenty of good things happening in the Middle East. Steps have been taken toward democratic reforms in some countries. Thousands of Iranians are turning to Christ despite persecution and danger. The light of God is still shining, even if there are efforts to extinguish it. Millions of Christians continue to live in the Middle East (Copts in Egypt, Lebanese and Palestinians, plus new Iranian converts and Asian guest workers in the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia). Yet tens of thousands of Christians have fled the Middle East because of persecution or discrimination during the past 20 years (especially Palestinians, Lebanese, Iranians and Iraqis). Recently, Iraq has seen significant violence against Christians (burning of church buildings, kidnappings, murder and other terrorist acts), forcing many of Iraq's Chaldo-Assyrians and other Christians to seek refuge in Jordan and Syria or elsewhere. (The Chaldo-Assyrian Christians speak Aramaic — the language spoken by Jesus). On a positive note, the Iraqi government and the Grand Ayatollah Sistani have denounced the attacks against Christians.

A major source of encouragement for Middle-Eastern Christians in recent years has been the satellite broadcasts of a television network called SAT-7 (www.sat7.org). This network provides the churches and Christians of the Middle East and North Africa with an opportunity to know Christ better through inspirational, informative, and educational television services, as well as a platform for a

sensitive witness to all those outside the Church. The non-political programming of SAT-7 seeks to reflect all Christian belief and practice and avoids criticism of other denominations as well as ethnic groups and religions. The broadcasts are not overtly seeking to convert Muslims to Christianity, but they do aim to dispel negative stereotypes that non-Christians have concerning Christians, the Church and Christ. In that sense, SAT-7 is bringing increased understanding between Muslims and Christians, and allowing Muslims to arrive at informed judgments about the Christian faith.

Here are a few quotes from SAT-7 viewers:

- "SAT-7 is a great channel that plays an important role in our spiritual life, especially because it links us, who live in areas where there are no churches, to the church activities. I commend you for the great and diversified programmes." (an Egyptian woman living in Saudi Arabia)
- "Words are not enough to describe the admiration, love, and joy we have from watching SAT-7 programmes." (three children from Palestine)
- "Thank you very much for these excellent programmes which fill us with joy, peace, and faith. My family, and I gather daily around the TV to watch these programmes and pray for you." (a man from Israel/Palestine)

Note: Please consider participating in the worldwide "Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church" on November 6th or 13th (the date depends on your country of residence). Check out the website www.persecutedchurch.org for more.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for love, courage and perseverance for the Middle-Eastern Christians (2 Tim 1:7-10; Acts 4:29-31; Matt 5:11-12, 44).
- ▶ Most Middle-Eastern Christians have suffered various injustices from their Muslim neighbours. Pray that they can fully place their confidence in God and his faithfulness. (Rom 12:21; Matt 5:16; Heb 6:10)
- ▶ Pray for the continued success of SAT-7 as a means of encouraging and edifying Christians in the Middle East and helping them in their life and witness for Christ. Pray that the staff and collaborators will continue to produce life-giving programmes. SAT-7 needs increased funding to offer additional programming (currently limited to about three hours per day of new output for its 24-hour broadcast service): please pray for increased funding.



Major Cities in the Gulf

Three cities in the United Arab Emirates

Abu Dhabi

Population: 541,000

The first inhabitants of Abu Dhabi were Bedouins (nomads) of the Bani Yas tribe whose customs remained unchanged for a thousand years. However, the new generation sees little need to retain the traditions. *As the young people put aside the culture of their fathers, pray that this void would not be filled with secular materialism, but by a hunger for God and His truth.*

As the modern city of Abu Dhabi continues to grow, new high-rise apartments and offices are replacing decaying 1960s compound homes built with the first oil revenues. As the city grows its inhabitants face all the issues of any large city. Many who are lonely, needy, and feeling trapped are ready to hear good news. *Pray that those Christians working in the city will have open eyes to see these needs and also have compassionate hearts.*

Before the advent of oil, Abu Dhabi was a small fishing village on an island. Now it is a large modern city with outstanding architecture; it is also the political and financial centre of the UAE. The pre-eminence of this city and its role in the UAE brings with it responsibilities both to the federation and to the entire Arabian Gulf region. *Pray that decision-makers in the capital will be wise and compassionate stewards of this influence and authority. Pray that the Christians whom they may meet prove to be faithful role models, influential work colleagues, and examples of Christ.*

Dubai

Population: (674,100 in city and 1,510,000 in the metropolitan area)

Shopping malls are the main place of recreation during the hot summers in Dubai. Materialism and the lust for money make Dubai a somewhat “cut-throat” business environment. *Pray that Muslims turn to Christ instead of secular materialism. Remember in prayer those Christians who seek to bear witness to Christ through their business activities in Dubai, since this is an especially stressful calling.*

The Burj Al Arab, a seven-star hotel, is an image recognised around the world and identified with Dubai. The Burj, or “tower”, symbolises more of Dubai than just an amazing feat of architecture. Decadent opulence, craving for the biggest and best, and a desire to be seen as a modern city in the eyes of the world underlie many of the local building projects. *Pray that people of the Emirates will see that their need for significance is best met in a personal relationship with Christ.*



Dubai:
Burj Al Arab Hotel

Many local families have grand palaces for homes. The ruling sheikhs look after their people well by providing homes, education, and financial assistance. Many are discovering that material comfort does not necessarily bring happiness. *Pray for the witness of the many Christian servants (mostly Filipinos and Indians) who live in these homes. May they have courage to serve their employers as they would the Lord, so that their employers may desire to serve the Lord Jesus.*

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16)

The projected 700 metre tower in Dubai



A Dubai shopping mall

Al Ain

Population: 318,000

Al Ain is the birthplace of the late UAE ruler, Sheikh Zayed al Nayhan. On the crossroads of a significant desert trade route, Al Ain is steeped in an influential past. The only large inland city in the country, and a border city with the Omani township of Buraimi, Al Ain is as much today a place of crossroads as it was in ancient times. *Pray that this city will also be a crossroads with the gospel message proclaimed enthusiastically by the many who visit there.*

Al Ain's green oasis feel is only possible through the presence of water. Irrigation systems are used like arteries to supply groves of trees with water from its source in the mountains.

The Arabic word for water ("mai") is used figuratively to describe something easy, sweet or pleasant. *Pray that the people from Al Ain would come to know the One who is the source of living waters. Pray that they will come to know Christ as their "living water".*

Mountain ranges dominate the Al Ain oasis. The rainfall on these mountains is trapped underground to supply the springs, which water the oasis. Evidence of civilisations 3,000 years old speaks of a time when this region was cooler and more fertile. Even within living memory there is talk of when it rained more and these plains supported wandering herds of goats and camels. *Pray that the searing spiritual dryness of this place will be replaced with "streams in the desert".*

Palm Trees in Al Ain



The information on these pages has been provided by the "Praying Through the Arabian Peninsula" intercession effort. We strongly recommend using their prayer material which is available at: <http://www.pray-ap.info/>



Gypsies in Egypt

Population: over one million

In the Middle East, using the word “Gypsy” to identify someone is considered an insult. In reality, this word speaks of an ancient people that originally emigrated from India to Europe and the Middle East centuries ago. Although there are at least one million Gypsies in Egypt, they are not counted in the national censuses or registered by the government. They have no identity cards or birth certificates and are not eligible to work. They live in clans and families in or near the cities of Alexandria, Fayoum, Cairo and Salaam City.

Their dark skin and brown hair gives them the appearance of East Indians. Their language is related to Sanskrit and the languages of north-west India. Some Gypsies settle in one city, while others move from one place to another looking for employment or refuge. Numbers of Gypsies gather in Cairo from different parts of Egypt on the birthday of the prophet Mohammed the “Mouloud El Nabi”.

Gypsies often use several names to hide their true identity, making them somewhat mysterious. “Ashoor” can be found playing his flute and accompanying dancers during festivals and parties. On another occasion he is “Abu Sereea”, serving coffee in different festivals from a mobile coffee shop in the Nile Delta. He may take the name of “Abu Doma” while doing iron-working in Cairo.

Gypsies have a wide range of low-paying jobs. Some sell fruit in the parking lots of cities such as Cairo, while others do iron-working. Young Gypsies who rebel against their parents often find themselves in jobs that require little skill or end up in drug trafficking. Some women work as dancers in the evening at religious festivals in the city of Tanta and later as prostitutes during the night. Gypsy women are highly valued because they work hard — whether in sales, factory work or prostitution. In many cases Gypsy men don’t work at all, but profit from their women’s efforts. “Pleasure seeking” is certainly a phrase that sums up most Gypsies. The ultimate aim of their work efforts is very often simply to create opportunities for pleasure, be that through laziness, smoking, drugs or sex. Christian moral values and finding a profound meaning of life are unfamiliar concepts to them. Their lifestyle usually leads to rampant poverty. Rejection and low self-image are written on their faces and deeply rooted in their hearts.

In Egypt, most Gypsies call themselves Sunni Muslims, but in reality they often have very little religion. Their strong beliefs in the supernatural and miracles are opening doors for the gospel. They enjoy listening to stories about Jesus and the Christian saints performing miracles. When they discover that they are loved and accepted they welcome people into their homes. The Jesus who brings joy and does miracles can reach them!



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that Egyptian Christians will reach the Gypsies of Egypt with the love of Christ.
- ▶ Pray that Jesus be revealed to the Gypsies of Egypt.
- ▶ Pray that they will be delivered from evil spirits.
- ▶ Pray that Gypsy women would be reached.
- ▶ Pray that converted Gypsies will take the gospel to their own people.

Focus on Africa

Days 9 - 14



Testimony:

Boubacar came to know The Messiah Jesus several years ago. His walk with God has been both difficult and typical for the Songhai of West Africa. Persecution came quickly from his family and neighbours. He was forced to move from his home, and many people in his village refused to give him work because he was a Christian. Many others who have faced the same situation have abandoned their faith and returned to Islam, but not Boubacar. He has stood firm for Jesus Christ. He recently baptized both his brother and his wife, and he soon hopes to see his children following Christ. He has become a bold witness and travels each week to several surrounding villages to proclaim the Gospel to others.



auto car they finally arrived exhausted in a large city in Kabylia.

The men asked a taxi driver for information about Christians in the city and he took them to a church. It was there that they had their first contact with the Gospel. The leaders of the church made contact with us to help the young men get to know Christ better. After the men came back to our town we met with them. Following several encounters we eventually saw that the Holy Spirit was definitely at work in their lives. They came to Christ and a third person, one of their friends, soon joined them. Praise God!

Note: The discussion about the status of Christianity in Algeria has gone all the way to the National Assembly and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The later affirmed that freedom of worship is assured for all Algerians according to the constitution. Even so house groups and churches are under surveillance.

Testimony:

Algerian newspapers often have articles about the growth of Christianity in Algeria. Some take a neutral stance while others oppose Christianity very firmly. Here is an example of how some young men became Christians through a newspaper article. It is the testimony from a young couple in Eastern Algeria where there are many Christians:

Two young men from our city read about the new Algerian churches in Kabylia near the capital, Algiers. These young men decided to go to Kabylia in order to find out more about Christianity. After travelling all night by



The Lebou people of Senegal

Population: 150,000

Habitation: Coasts of Senegal, especially around Dakar

Activities: Mainly fishing

Religion: Folk Islam 99 per cent

Conversions to Christianity: Fewer than 10

Recently, some missionaries went to a Lebou village. They presented themselves to the Lebou saying, "We are followers of Jesus Christ." The people responded saying, "Oh, Jesus we know about him. Here is his portrait on the wall. He is buried in a neighbouring village."

How can this be? The Lebou people are dominated by the Muslim brotherhood Layenne, who believe that Mohammed and Jesus came among the Lebou slightly over 100 years ago, reincarnated in the persons of Seydina Laye (1843–1909) and Issa (Jesus) Rohou Laye (1909–1949). These two individuals have been followed by other religious leaders called caliphs. At the present time Cherif Abdoulahi is the caliph of the Mahdi (reincarnation of the prophet Mohammed, Seydina Laye). You can read more about this belief at the web site www.layene.sn.

The Lebou have been living on the Dakar peninsula since the 18th century. They built fortifications around their new realm and in 1795 created an independent republic. A well-organised government still exists among the Lebou. The majority of landholders in Dakar are Lebou; Dakar-based Lebou even think, "We

own Dakar." One possible meaning of the name "Lebou" is "a warrior who does not accept domination". Certainly the Lebou are strongly attached to their cultural identity and independence. Only those who live like the Lebou are considered to be Lebou.

There are strong occult practices among them. Through Islam the Lebou understand that there is a creator God. However, they believe that this God is not accessible to humans. The Lebou believe that there is a supernatural world which governs their destiny, and prefer to communicate with the spirits called "rab" who came from the sea. These beings seem to be closer to them physically and emotionally than the creator God. The Lebou perform various kinds of sacrifices to appease the spirits and bind themselves in covenants with them. Each Lebou is bound to a "rab" who accompanies him. The "rab" can be either good or bad, and can cause sickness, paralysis or folly. It can kill a person or give blessing and protection. If a person is troubled by his "rab" a ceremony exists to help the person to be reconciled with his accompanying spirit. During such ceremonies — which include dances and singing — some people enter into trances and sacrifice bulls or other animals. The ceremony is directed by a sorcerer.

There are some evangelical missions working among the Lebou. Several Lebou have indicated a genuine desire to know more about Jesus and the Bible. Some have had dreams and visions from the Lord.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for revelations of God among the Lebou.
- ▶ Pray that the Lebou will be delivered from the powers of darkness.
- ▶ Pray that resistance to the gospel among this people will be overcome by a true desire to follow God.
- ▶ Pray for God to give perseverance to the Christians who are seeking to bring the gospel to the Lebou.



The Mzab of Algeria

In the 11th century, in the valley of Ghardaia, the Mzab Berbers founded the towns of El-Atteuf (AD1011), Bou Noura (AD1046) and Ghardaia (AD1048), and, later still, Ben Isguen and Melika, 600 kilometres south of Algiers and 1,300 kilometres north of Tamanrasset. Ghardaia is the capital of the Mzab region at the edge of the Sahara, the largest desert on earth. Over 100,000 people live in the Mzab region, most of them in the 7km-long valley at Ghardaia.

The character and attitudes of the Mzab people have been formed by the harsh environment of the desert: they are tough, practical, tolerant, dialogue-orientated, modest, and rely on the support of the community. A Spaniard who is familiar with the region once wrote about its inhabitants: "The Mzab have developed a society which is very strict, but which at the same time is built on the solidarity of the community, pious but also integrating, in the midst of a landscape that is hostile to man." The valley of Ghardaia is not a place for individualists: those who go by themselves cannot survive there. The Mzab have only survived the harsh living conditions by sticking together. The Mzab look after the weak, the sick and the needy in their communities.



The Mzab are a Berber people and part of the so-called Ibadites, an Islamic sect, which was founded by Abdullah ibn Ibd and is a splinter group of the Kharijites. According to their teaching, anyone who commits a serious sin is an infidel. They suppose that such a sinner has to remain in the fires of condemnation forever. Most Muslims do not agree with this doctrine, so the Mzab preferred to go into exile in AD661. First, they went to an area called Ouargla, about 100km east of Ghardaia. In the 11th century they moved on and founded a new community at the edge of the desert. The Mzab are traders who are dispersed all over Algeria and also live in France.

The city of Ben Isguen was founded in the 14th century and is considered the holy city of the Mzab region: it is a most orthodox town — smoking, open clothing, and photography are not allowed. Islam is practised strictly according to the letter of the Qur'an. The people are very religious. From the age of 12 onwards, girls have to wear a veil, which covers everything except one eye. No stranger is allowed to spend the night in the city. Many governments have ruled Algeria over the centuries, but, in the words of one writer, "The powers come and go, the Mzab stay."



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for the Mzab to hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God and a longing for forgiveness and for the Prince of Peace (Matt 5:6).
- ▶ Pray for Jesus to be revealed to the Mzab through His Word in their own language.
- ▶ Pray that the Mzab living in France hear the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ.
- ▶ Pray for regular and committed intercessors for the Mzab.



Kenya

This East African nation, roughly the size of France, is among the poorest countries of the world. Three-quarters of the active population work in agriculture, the most important sector of the economy. The average life expectancy of Kenya's 32 million inhabitants is 52 years. The AIDS infection rate in Kenya is very high: in 2003, 1.2 million people were officially counted as infected with the HIV virus, and the number of undetected cases is probably much higher.

Over 98 per cent of the Kenyan population is of African origin (spread across 40 different ethnic groups). In addition, Kenya is home to approximately 90,000 Indians and Pakistanis, 40,000 Arabs and 35,000 Europeans. There are at least 30 different languages and over 100 dialects spoken. The national language is Swahili, but English is spoken as the trade and administration language. About 60 per cent of the population practises traditional African animist religions, about 33 per cent is Christian, and about 6 per cent is Muslim (mostly Sunni).

The first Muslims reached Kenya as early as the 10th century. An Islamic subculture developed mostly in the coastal areas as a result of intensive commerce with traders from the Arabian peninsula. This subculture gained importance through intermarriages with African women. However, it was only in the 19th century that Islam made inroads into the interior of the land. British colonialists were the main promoters of Islamic institutions. During the colonial period, Muslims enjoyed a

privileged position because they helped the British army put down local rebellions.

After Kenya achieved independence in 1963 more and more Africans who professed Christian faith attended the secular education institutions; English became increasingly necessary for a career in public service. It became easier for educated Christian Africans to gain access to leading positions than for Muslims, who remained in a more traditional, tribal way of thinking.

Facing these social changes, many Muslims felt the need to affirm their identity, leading to an aggressive Islamisation in several regions of the country. The north-eastern province of Kenya is largely Islamic today, and Islam is advancing rapidly in the east. Considerable financial support from Saudi Arabia is going to schools and hospitals, which are often used for religious propaganda.

The Kenyan constitution affirms freedom of religion as a fundamental right, and Muslims have the right to practise their own jurisdiction in the provinces dominated by Islam. Matters of civil law are therefore judged by sharia courts. The government even contributes financially to Islamic schools. Despite this, Muslims in Kenya are not totally satisfied. Some do not shrink from attacking Christian institutions to emphasise their demands. (During June 2004, Islamists burned down five Christian churches.).



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for God's wisdom and protection for all Christians occupying a decision-making position in Kenya, so that the government might be able to deal properly with Islamisation efforts.
- ▶ Pray for encouragement for persecuted Christians living in regions dominated by Islam, so that they may be able to continue to stand firm.
- ▶ Pray for the production and distribution of evangelistic literature in Swahili for Muslims in the Islamic provinces.



N'Djamena, Chad

The English translation of N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, is "The place of rest". Unfortunately, N'Djamena has been anything but a place of rest for the past few decades: the history of this city is marked by ethnic conflicts, political unrest and even war in the 1980s.

N'Djamena presents a multicoloured mixture of languages (there are around 120 spoken in Chad), ethnic groups, religions and cults. Today, N'Djamena has a population of about one million — and significant urban expansion is still continuing. The city infrastructure has not been able to keep up with the large population increases; the water and electricity supplies are completely inadequate or non-existing in most parts of the city, and an efficient garbage and sewage disposal system is also lacking.

Muslims in N'Djamena are politically, economically and religiously powerful, as well as imposing and sometimes even aggressive, making many of the Christians in the city feel inferior. Many Christians are fearful and only hesitantly proclaim the gospel to Muslims. While both Muslims and Christians have lived for years in the same city, geographically they are very clearly separated. The southern part of the city has over 150 evangelical churches, but in the larger northern districts there are only a few churches, which are surrounded by dozens, or

even hundreds, of mosques. Thousands of Muslims have moved to the southern part of the city in recent years, while only a few dozen Christians have moved to the northern part. Today, Christians and Muslims live as neighbours in the newer districts: this means there is great potential for religious and ethnic tension, but also for new, God-prepared opportunities for evangelism and church-planting. The Church in Chad is learning to be salt and light in its daily contact with its Muslim neighbours.

In recent years, the Church in Chad has begun to send out missionaries into the Muslim areas of the country. However, the northern part of the capital, with around 700,000 Muslims, remains largely unreached. There are a handful of foreign and Chadian missionaries who work among them, but only a few know enough of the language and the culture to communicate the gospel effectively. Nevertheless, they have started some home groups. The missionaries need a lot of patience and courage.

In 2003, following much prayer and many struggles with the administration, an evangelical denomination obtained authorisation to start a private Christian radio station. Since then, the gospel is proclaimed every day, even in Chadian Arabic, a local dialect of Arabic spoken by most of the Muslims.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Thank God for the official freedom of religion in Chad.
- ▶ Pray for more workers to reach the Muslims in N'Djamena.
- ▶ Pray that the Chadian churches may overcome the cultural and historical barriers which make it difficult for them to proclaim Christ to their Muslim neighbours.
- ▶ Pray for house churches to be established among former Muslims.
- ▶ Pray for a powerful proclamation of the gospel by radio and all other available means (personal testimony, audio cassettes, literature, videos, etc).
- ▶ Pray for N'Djamena to attain its destiny and become God's place of rest.



Testimonies

Testimony of Rachida and Fatimah - (Iranians in Australia) Their names have been changed for their protection

It was now almost three years since Fatimah's oldest daughter left her home in Iran to study in Australia. She found her mind often drifting towards her daughter on the other side of the world, wondering what kind of life she was living. One day Rachida called:

"Mum, why not come and visit me? There are plenty of people that can take care of my little siblings. It would be great if you could come".

Rachida had settled well into her new life in a foreign land and she was keen to share that experience with her Mum. Before long, Fatimah was on her way to Australia, completely unaware what she was about to discover. Several days had passed when Rachida decided to tell her mother something she had kept a secret for so long.

"Mum, I need to tell you something. I'm now a Christian. While I was in Iran, I found a Bible and started attending Church. I have discovered that God loves me and I have chosen to follow Christ." Fatimah was devastated by the news, especially since her husband recently passed away. Alone, it was her responsibility to see that the children were raised as good Muslims. The following weeks were occupied with

intense religious discussion between mother and daughter and it seemed there was no way around the impasse.

"Mum, listen. You have made judgements without ever meeting a Christian. Why not see for yourself what they actually believe"? Fatima objected, but grudgingly decided to attend a church service. Despite feeling uncomfortable in a church environment, Fatimah was impressed by the sincerity of the Christians she encountered. People sang songs of praise as if they actually meant it and the joy they seemed to possess during this time was in stark contrast to her feelings of obligation and guilt towards Islam. Returning alone to the church one evening for quiet reflection, she had a vision of Christ with His pierced hands and arms outstretched, displaying His eagerness to accept her.

The day before she was due to leave Australia, Fatimah asked Christ into her life. Now she faced a new problem. With the fear of capital punishment over her life, she sought refugee status in Australia with the help of her daughter and eventually returned with her two young children. "God has been so kind to me. I love Him and will follow Jesus forever!"



An estimated 10,000 to 12,000 Camels were imported into Australia between 1860 and 1907 and along with them came Afghan cameleers, known as "the Ghans".

Testimony from Fatima (Morocco - France)

I have Berber family origins and was I born in Morocco. Altogether my parents had 11 children and brought us up in the religion of Islam. From the age of 12 I fasted during Ramadan and I prayed each day with my father. Our family came to live in France in 1972.

My parents were often disputing and over time they became violent with each other. My little brothers were frightened and I became desperate for change. I prayed with all my heart for several years but eventually I said to God, 'If you do not make yourself known to me I am not going to believe in you anymore.' After this I had a dream. I saw a person who said to me 'Try to climb up this mountain.' After some effort I saw a man clothed in white shining with goodness. He showed me people who were happy and full of peace. I wanted to stay there forever. Yet one other person was still sad and unhappy. I said to the man, 'Is there not something which you can do for this person?' He replied, 'You cannot understand now but you will understand in the future.'

Some time afterwards a couple came to live nearby. They spoke to me of God's love and invited me to a Christian meeting. For the first time I heard ...

... the preaching of the gospel and I was touched by the presence of God among the Christians. I returned often in order to learn more about the gospel and be with the Christians who had shown me such kindness. At home in the evening I read the Bible in order to discover more about Jesus.

"I understood that Jesus was the only one who could save me perfectly and give me eternal life. I wanted to witness to my family concerning the Lord but I immediately met opposition from my mother. After many difficulties with my family I was eventually able to share my experience with all my brothers and sisters. Many years have passed and I am still happy to serve the Lord."



Testimony from Djamal (Algeria)

From my birth I was bathed in Islamic culture. In my adolescence I began to practice Islam which was the religion of my country and my family. My objective was to resemble and to imitate as much as possible Mohammed, the founder of Islam. I fasted frequently, I prayed at our local mosque and I read the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book. I practised Islam in a sincere manner praying five times per day facing in the direction of Mecca. My religious behaviour was very pronounced during the month of Ramadan. I dreamed of going on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the holiest place in the Islamic world and the supreme spiritual experience for any Muslim.

At the age of 18 I moved to France in order to pursue my studies in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at the University of Caen. There for the first time I met a woman who distributed Christian literature from a Bible stand at the university restaurant. I thought to myself, "Finally I was going to have an opportunity to preach Islam to a Christian." Up until that time I did not know anything about the bible except that most Mus-

lims said it had been changed from the original was now falsified. Islam had taught me that the Christians had made Jesus the Son of God which for us was an unpardonable blasphemy. I would not even allow that idea to stay in my thinking for fear of eternal damnation.

One day in my bed I started to pray to Allah as I did regularly. Emptiness and silence surrounded me more than normal. I was not able to find the inner peace that I so desired at that time. Suddenly as if I had been pushed by an invisible power I cried out, "God whoever you are reveal yourself to me!" It was at that moment that the name of Jesus came continually into my thoughts and fill my whole being. The presence of Jesus was very strong in the room. I found myself saying, "Is it you Jesus?" while my whole body trembled. I continued by saying "If it is you, Jesus, I surrender to you." The feeling that invaded me was beyond description. I knew at that moment that Jesus was really from another world, God's world. But I even tried to resist and started to say "no, no, no!" I realized that my whole life was going to be changed. However, I was not able to flee the presence of Jesus. His presence was in the room!

"But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 16:15-17).



The Tuareg of West-Africa

The Tuareg are often regarded as a mysterious people, and regularly misunderstood by others. Once known as “The Lords of The Sahara”, they are still considered fierce and unapproachable by many other tribes. Various factors continue to enhance the mystery that surrounds this people: they have traditionally lived in remote areas surrounding the Sahara Desert, they have managed to survive where others could not, they dress in a way to hide their faces and they have maintained marriages within family lines. The Tuareg appreciate the freedom in the openness of the desert. It is this love of freedom and rejection of the governing authorities that has produced grief for this once proud and vibrant people. Drought and the continuous pressure of outside cultures have brought unwelcome changes to the lives of these nomadic shepherds.

Because many Tuareg are nomadic, it is impossible to know their exact population across the vastness of the Sahara — many different population estimates exist for the Tuareg. This is owing in part to their opposition to being counted as well as their desire to remain in remote areas. Estimates range from 1 to 3

million Tuareg spread throughout parts of Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Algeria, Libya and Nigeria.

The Tuareg speak a language derived from that of the North African Berbers and trace their ancestry back to a region of the Atlas Mountains. Their language is Tamasheq (Tamashek, Tamajaq or Tamahaq), of which there are a number of different dialects. Most Tuareg also speak another African language, depending on the region where they live. Many also know a written alphabet in an ancient Libyan script called Tifinagh or Shifnah.



A majority of researchers believe that the Tuareg were once Christian. Evidence for this includes the traditional names still common among them. Their jewellery and decorations retain symbols that resemble objects of Christian origin. It is unknown when the Tuareg took up Islam, but today it exerts a strong influence on them.

The pressure of change in the past few decades has taken away their perceived freedom. May they find the real freedom that is only available through the true Lord of the desert, Jesus.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ New Tuareg believers often face rejection from their family and community. It is assumed that someone who has rejected Islam brings shame on the family. This is especially difficult in an environment where family help and protection are indispensable (Mark 10:29–31). Pray for strength, courage and protection for new Tuareg believers.
- ▶ There are few Christians and fewer churches among this people group. New believers need discipleship and encouragement, which is difficult to achieve in a hostile environment. Pray that as Tuareg become believers, they will also be disciplined properly into a strong and vibrant faith.
- ▶ Although economic changes have brought some of the Tuareg closer to urban areas, their remoteness and dispersion is still a major obstacle to reaching them. Pray for God-inspired strategies to reach the dispersed Tuareg.
- ▶ Until there is a significant number of Tuareg believers to carry on the task, cross-cultural workers will need to be a living witness to this people. Many times the “beautiful feet” will be a little dirty in the hot and dusty Sahara (Rom 10:14–15). Pray for the workers among the Tuareg — and pray for more of them.



The Songhai of West-Africa

Population: over 3 million

Non-Africans often do not know that West Africa has had many great empires. The establishment of the Songhai Empire began in Gao, Mali, around AD680. Before finally being overwhelmed by Moroccan invaders using firearms in 1591, the Songhai's organisational skills, bravery, sorcery and growing Islamic faith led them to build one of the greatest West African empires (the size of France, Spain, Germany and Italy combined, or 20 per cent of the USA including Alaska).

Today, the majority of the over three million Songhai live along the Niger River from Niamey in Niger to Timbuktu, Mali, with a smaller group in Burkina Faso. During the dry season, many Songhai men migrate to the larger West African cities in search of work, returning home to the farm during the rainy season. They live as millet and sorghum farmers at the edge of the Sahara Desert, surviving in one of the harshest climates in the world. For those living along the banks of the Niger River, and therefore close to water, opportunities exist to cultivate rice, grow pumpkins and onions, cast nets for fish, raise small livestock and harvest mangos. Their gardens produce okra, tomatoes, sesame seeds, aubergines and garlic.

The Songhai live in extended families which are centred around the male heads of households, who have the responsibility to keep the family strong and united. One of their priorities is

to keep all family members grounded in the Islamic faith and practice. Being the descendants of kings, sorcerers, and great leaders, they are a proud people. Patience, hard work, hospitality, courage, honesty, and the ability to listen are character traits that are highly valued by the Songhai.

Though the majority of the Songhai profess an adherence to Islam, they also follow animistic beliefs and practices. They believe that their dead ancestors have an active role to play in their present lives. Religion, culture, and social customs have united to produce a strong barrier against Christianity. The Songhai people are one of over 2,000 people groups worldwide who have the least access to the gospel; there are few Christians among the Songhai (possibly 0.2 per cent or less).

Missionaries are focusing on church-planting and discipleship through the use of the *Jesus* film, story telling, literacy training, theological education, and aid and development projects. The missionaries respect the Songhai culture and want to bless this people.

One can sense a darkness and evil that holds the Songhai and their lands in its grasp. Famine and disease have been their constant companions. Sixty per cent of children die before their fifth birthday. The Songhai feel there is very little that they say or do which will change their life experience.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that the Songhai find their identity in serving Christ the King (Rev 7:9–10).
- ▶ Pray that the spiritual darkness which surrounds and enslaves the Songhai be broken (Acts 19:18–19, Heb 2:14–15, Rom 8:2).
- ▶ Pray for wisdom, perseverance and determination as missionaries and Songhai Christians proclaim the gospel through word and deed among the Songhai.

Focus on Indonesia

Days 15 - 17



Testimonies from Indonesia:

While in the house of her employer, a Muslim house cleaner was surprised in broad daylight by three burglars. They wanted to kill her with their knives so that they could rob the house. The girl had long feared that something like this might happen, and some time before she had gone to a witch who had given her a spell that should make her invulnerable to such attacks. When the attackers tried to stab her, she was not wounded, which made the robbers run away in fear of the display of this sinister supernatural power. Three days later, this same girl had a dream. She saw Jesus, who said to her: "Please renounce this special power; I am your God!" The housekeeper ran to the nearest church, and a prayer group prayed especially for her. She was set free from the spell and got baptised.

Second testimony:

Very early in the morning, a restaurant employee used to say her ritual Muslim prayers before going to work, according to the rules of her religion. One morning she saw "a person" in a vision during her prayer time who told her all of her sins. In the restaurant, she later told the chef, who was a Christian, about it. He said: "I would suppose that Jesus wanted to talk with you!" The next morning she prayed: "If the vision yesterday came from the devil, do not let it come again. But if it was from heaven, then let it be there again." Then she had the vision again. For one and a half hours all the sins of her life were shown to her. She wept bitterly over her life, which was not correct before God. She then went to a church, confessed her sins, and heard the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. She received forgiveness for her sins, was baptised and became a member of the church.



Jakarta, Indonesia



PRAYER REQUESTS

Jakarta: population about 12 million
Indonesia: population about 220 million

Jakarta is the capital of Indonesia. It is also the national political and economic centre, with 75 per cent of the national economy located in its vicinity. Almost every ethnic group in the country has a presence there, including the 127 largest unreached people groups.

The Betawi people (population 500,000) are considered the original inhabitants of Jakarta. They came from the mixture of peoples who arrived in Batavia (Jakarta's historical name) from the 15th century onwards from elsewhere in Indonesia and from other countries, including Portugal. Most Betawi have at least one Portuguese among their ancestors. The authentic Betawi people can be found in the outlying areas of Jakarta, such as Pasar Minggu in south Jakarta, Condet in east Jakarta, and Bekasi. The Betawi speak a Malay dialect. While most are Muslims, they are still deeply involved in the occult. They believe in the presence of spirits in places such as trees, bridges, and graves (this includes ancestor worship). About 100 Betawi have become Christians; a few are actively involved in spreading the gospel among their fellow Betawi.

Many Betawi order their daily personal and communal lives according to Islam. The Betawi have special cultural activities, including a folk theatre (lenong), a giant puppet parade (ondel-ondel), traditional brass music (tanjidor), masks (topeng) and

puppet theatre (wayang golek). They also have special clothing, which they wear at wedding celebrations and other special occasions. Two Betawi foundations are working hard to preserve the Betawi culture and identity among the amazing mixture of peoples and cultures in this large city.

Their dialect has no Bible translation, Jesus film or radio evangelisation, but they all know Bahasa Indonesian, the main language of Indonesia, at least to primary-school level. There are many resources in the Bahasa Indonesian language, such as Bibles, cassettes, CDs, films, and books.

Jakarta is the key city in the evangelisation of Indonesia. Jakarta has a Christian population of over 13 per cent, and there are over 1,000 registered churches. Some churches are very small, most are medium-sized, but others are very large, with tens of thousands of members along with thousands of cell groups. Most of Jakarta's Christians are Chinese or belong to the Batak, Minahasa, Moluccan and Timor peoples, who are mainly Christian and have moved from their region to the capital. There are often big evangelistic campaigns. The theological schools in Jakarta prepare their students for pastoral ministry in the churches. However, at least one of the schools is concentrating on preparing workers for ministry among the unreached peoples; perhaps others will join it in the future.

- ▶ Pray blessing on the city of Jakarta (Jer 29:1–7). It is facing huge challenges economically, socially, and politically. The city officials and inhabitants are struggling with problems linked to sewage, drinking water, trash disposal and pollution.
- ▶ Pray for the evangelisation and discipleship of the Betawi people.
- ▶ Pray that the resources of the churches will be especially used for church-planting among the unevangelised and unreached Muslim peoples.
- ▶ Pray that the Christians realise the potential for outreach in their own neighbourhoods and increase their evangelistic efforts.
- ▶ Pray for good Christian programmes on TV, so that non-Christians will also be reached with the gospel.



Aceh Nangroe Darussalem “veranda to Mecca”

This northernmost province on the Indonesian island of Sumatra attracted worldwide attention following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in December 2004. Throughout Aceh province, entire coastal towns and villages were wiped out, with more than 220,000 dead and thousands more left homeless and without employment. Certainly this terrible event will forever bring spiritual and social changes to Aceh province. One should not say the earthquake and tsunami were “judgments” from God (as do many Muslims). The natural geological forces involved in this type of event are well known.

Happily relief aid has poured into Aceh province from all over the world, but it will clearly take many years of hard work and social adjustment before things will return to normal. One positive result though has been that the prolonged armed conflict involving the Indonesian security forces and the Aceh rebel movement — a conflict which caused tens of thousands of deaths — has at least temporarily stopped. Numerous aid workers have flown in from many countries to areas formerly inaccessible because of the war.

The province has long been called the “Veranda to Mecca” because of its strict adherence to Islamic law, not unlike the Arabic city of Mecca itself. Before air travel, Indonesian seafaring pilgrims going to Saudi Arabia often stopped at Banda Aceh (Aceh harbour) before continuing their pilgrimage, making this province a “gateway” to the Muslim “Holy Land”.

A few years ago the province became the only region of Indonesia where Islamic sharia law was officially in effect. The Acehnese (current estimated population 3.5 million) have striven for independence for many centuries, including during the Dutch colonial era. Since the introduction of sharia law, many local churches have been closed down. Like in post-war Afghanistan, so much has to be done in this stronghold of Islam to win over the hearts of the people.

The province is rich in resources such as oil and wood products; there are other resources that have never been tapped. Let us pray that sustainable development will take place in Aceh. Respect needs to be given to the Acehnese desire that decadent Western moral values be kept from infiltrating and polluting their society. May the gospel of Jesus the Messiah (Isa Almasih) be proclaimed and demonstrated in a relevant, non-threatening and culturally sensitive manner. The Acehnese need such an approach so that they may eventually come to the Prince of Peace, who has long wanted to embrace them and grant them His divine protection.

Since the downfall of former Indonesian President Suharto, Aceh has been much more than just Indonesia’s most fundamentalist Muslim province. As the country’s only province under Islamic sharia law, it has been an inspiration to the extremist movements that are attacking Christian villages on the islands of Ambon and Sulawesi. It has equally been a safe haven for the Taliban-style training of Indonesia’s own insurgency.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that Aceh province benefits from long-term recovery efforts, including the rebuilding of lives, infrastructure and social organisation.
- ▶ Pray that Muslims see the love and concern of Christians through the relief efforts (Matt 5:16).
- ▶ Pray that the imperishable hope of Christ reaches Indonesia’s people even through the present crisis (1 Cor 13:13).
- ▶ Pray for God to open doors for the gospel to be communicated despite opposition (1 Cor 16:9).



The Sundanese of Indonesia

Population: 35 million

The Sundanese, with a population of 35 million, are the second largest ethnic group in Indonesia after the Javanese, from whom they are quite distinct. The Sundanese mainly live in the West Province of Java Island. The land is bordered to the east by the Javanese territory, and surrounded by the sea on the other three sides (Java Sea, Indian Ocean, Sunda Straits).

Around 1,000BC, there was a large wave of immigrants from South China: these immigrants were the forefathers of the Javanese, Madurese and Sundanese peoples. The first Sundanese kingdom (called “Taruma Negara”) was established about AD600. This kingdom was strongly influenced by Hinduism. In 1527, its main city, Sunda Kelapa, fell to Islamic soldiers from several coastal Islamic sultanates and was renamed “Jaya Karta” or “Djakarta”, meaning “Glorious Victory”. This stopped much of the influence of Hinduism in the area.

The Sundanese language, one of the more complex in Indonesia, has three levels — high (polite), middle and low. However, because the Indonesian national language is studied in school the younger, urban generation do not speak Sundanese. Traditional handmade cloth called “batik” is still manufactured in specific areas. One can still see the influence of Hinduism in the batik patterns. The “*angkelung*”, a Sunda

musical instrument made of bamboo, is highly sought after by foreign tourists.

“Whether rich or poor, the most important thing is to live together” is a saying among the Sundanese. They love to congregate during the cool evenings to relax and chat together. They also prefer living together as extended families. Most of the villages are composed of a specific extended family which has a common ancestor, either male or female.

Most Sundanese villagers are farmers or fishermen, but there are many government workers, traders and businessmen in the cities. High unemployment and low education cause many social problems. Divorce is frequent, so there are many broken and dysfunctional homes as well as unprotected children in the cities.

The Sundanese are 98 per cent Muslim. Many are “*Santri*”, who adhere strongly to Islam. However, there are numerous nominal Muslims called “*abangan*” who still hold to pre-Islamic practices such as visiting their ancestors’ tombs to pray, seeking out witchdoctors for good fortune, and reciting the Qur’an as a charm. In addition, there is a subgroup of Sundanese in a certain area which believes in its own religion (a mixture of Hinduism and animistic beliefs).



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for Christian workers (local and foreign) to have cultural sensitivity and wisdom in serving and reaching the Sundanese, especially in the villages (Rom 13:7–10).
- ▶ Pray for good, continuing cooperation among the Christian workers among the Sundanese.
- ▶ Pray that local non-Sundanese churches will have courage to pray for and witness to their Sundanese neighbours.
- ▶ Supernatural power is needed to counter demonic power and confirm and demonstrate the gospel (Luke 7:19–22). Pray for the Holy Spirit to move in such power.
- ▶ Pray for protection from Islamic fanatics in the area.
- ▶ There is some discussion about the government placing restrictions on Christians. Please pray that this will not be passed at national level.

Focus on South Asia

Days 18 - 22



Testimony of J. A. Subhan: An Indian Sufi Muslim converted to Christ in the last century.

The result of my first reading (of the Injil - the Gospel) was startling. In the first place I did not find a single sentence or a clause which in any sense could be interpreted as blasphemous or Satanic, and I had read it with a mind vigilant to detect any expression which implied any such notion directly or indirectly. Secondly, my common sense told me that if certain followers of a religion were to corrupt their sacred books or introduce interpolations into it, they must have an adequate reason or sufficient motive behind it. An enterprise as such, which is not only highly impious but also extremely presumptuous, would not and could not be undertaken by any class of people unless they were to derive some great advantage or benefit from it. In the light of this principle I closely examined every passage of the gospel, and found none which would supply an adequate ground for such an act on the part of the Christians.

The second reading of the gospel produced in me the deep conviction that it was THE true "Injil." It was God's word and His Revelation. The inner urge to know God was to find satisfaction through it. The effect produced on the mind by its reading was so very different from that of the recitation of the Quran. The latter in its original language was something sublime, its recitation was charming, its eloquence fascinating, and sometimes its passages had thrown me into ecstasy, but in the "Injil" I found something which spoke to my soul. The gospel spoke to me in my own mother tongue, whispering to me the secrets of God. Its reading was comforting to my soul, every sentence touched it to its very depths, and it roused the slumbering faculties of my soul to a new state of consciousness.

Quotes taken from: <http://www.answering-islam.org/Books/Subhan/Bio/index.htm>



Muslims in Bhopal, India

Bhopal is the capital of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The city is named after its famous founder Raja Bhoj, who dedicated the city to the Hindu god Shiva. It is believed that a dam (Pal) was built in the 11th century, resulting in the formation of the three lakes found at Bhopal today. For over a hundred years, a succession of Begams (female Muslim rulers) ruled in Bhopal.

The modern city was developed by Dost Mohammed Khan, an Afghan chief who was the Governor of Bhopal. He took advantage of the confusion following the death of the Aurangzeb (the last of the great Mughal emperors) in 1707 to carve out a small kingdom for himself. The fact that Bhopal remained under Muslim dominance for a long period is evident from its large number of mosques and large Muslim population. Hindi and Urdu are the main languages spoken there.

In the early hours of 3 December 1984, Bhopal experienced one of the world's worst industrial accidents, when a terrifying cloud of toxic gas escaped from a pesticide factory. This happened in the old city area, which is populated predominantly by Muslims. About 20,000 people died, while

thousands of others were maimed or injured. The grim after-effects of the accident continue to affect at least 100,000 people, who suffer health problems linked to the disaster.

About 25 per cent of Bhopal's 1.8 million people are Muslim, including perhaps 300,000 Sunni Muslims living in the old city. The majority are semi-literate, and many are unemployed. The city itself is ringed by approximately 300 slum areas. Owing to poor literacy and religious discrimination (Hindus against Muslims), it is difficult for Muslims to get government jobs. Muslims often work as mechanics, artisans and small shopkeepers. Their women have even more difficulty finding employment, and the future for their children is generally bleak. Serious riots between Hindus and Muslims have broken out in the past. The present local government is committed to providing security for the Muslim minority.

There is no long-established or focused ministry among Muslims in Bhopal. Recently, at least one Christian couple has decided to work specifically among Bhopal's Muslims to make the gospel known to them. Both the husband and the wife (from a Muslim background) need special prayer. Three people have been water-baptised recently.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that the Christians in Bhopal will seek the peace of the city (Jer 29:7).
- ▶ Pray that Christians will be unafraid to show the love of the Lord Jesus to their Muslim neighbours and to proclaim God's truth to them (Acts 28:30–31).
- ▶ Thank God for Indian Bible schools and pray that many well-equipped Indian workers will be prepared for ministry among Muslims.
- ▶ Pray for the transformation of the city. Pray against injustice, exploitation, corruption, crime and communal violence, which dominate some aspects life in Bhopal.
- ▶ Pray for the health and well-being of those Muslim people still suffering the effects of the 1984 industrial accident.
- ▶ Pray for God to open the hearts of Muslims in Bhopal so they realise who He really is (Acts 16:14).



Bangalore, the capital of the Indian state of Karnataka, is a fast-growing, ethnically diverse, cosmopolitan city with a population of about 6.5 million (making it the fourth largest city in India). Muslim inhabitants number 889,000. In the city, various Muslim communities intermingle with each other and intermarry. Most Muslims there speak Urdu as their mother tongue, though not all can read and write Urdu.

There are multinational companies and numerous universities and colleges in Bangalore. The city is a major centre for Indian Information Technology (IT) companies. Muslims working for these companies and studying in the educational institutions mix with people of other religions and communities, exposing them to new ways of thinking. Many Muslims also send their children to Christian schools that teach the Bible. Some Christian teachers even give Bibles to their Muslim students and discuss the book with them.

The economic status of Bangalore's Muslims ranges from very wealthy to very poor. Some Muslims are chairmen and directors of multinational companies, while others are beggars trying to scrape together a meagre living. Many Muslims are involved in commerce; whole districts are dominated by Muslim-run businesses.

Recently, a survey was conducted in a Muslim-dominated area. Most of the Muslims who were interviewed had never heard the gospel. One question the survey asked was "What do you

The Muslims of Bangalore

know about Jesus (Isa)?" The majority said that they knew nothing about Him; others gave the following views of Jesus:

"He is a prophet. His mother is Mary."

"Jesus is a good person. His teaching is helpful and right."

"They are all one. Jesus is related to Allah."

"He is the same as Allah to the Muslims."

"Only Christians can understand that Jesus died for them."

"No idea about Christ. Only seen Christ on TV."

"Holy man."

"Jesus is not the Son of God."

Another survey indicated that less than 10 per cent of Bangalore's Muslims have a significant knowledge of the Qur'an and practise religious activities regularly. Almost half considered themselves to be "liberal thinkers" and were not strict about prayer or fasting.

Bangalore is home to many churches and to the headquarters of more than 200 missionary organisations. Nevertheless, the Muslims in the city remain unreached with the gospel. Some initiatives to reach Bangalore's Muslims exist, but not nearly enough to impact the whole Muslim community. Christians in the city often hesitate to reach out to their Muslim neighbours because of fear. Indian law allows freedom of religion, making it possible to proclaim the gospel openly and sensitively to the Muslim community.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that Bangalore's cosmopolitan atmosphere will create opportunities for proclaiming the gospel.
- ▶ Pray that God will reveal Himself to Muslims in ways that they will not be able to deny that Jesus is their King and Saviour (John 20:26–29).
- ▶ Pray for God to give Christians clear, loving, and compassionate strategies that will have an impact on the whole Muslim community.
- ▶ Pray for Bangalore's Christians to know God's attitudes toward Muslims as they reach out to neighbours, colleagues and fellow students.
- ▶ Pray that God will raise up visionary leaders to lead the way in reaching the Muslims of Bangalore.



Lahore, Pakistan

Beautiful, historic Lahore is situated on the banks of the Ravi River in the middle of the Punjab province of Pakistan, in one of the most fertile regions on earth. It is the second largest city in Pakistan, with a population of around six million. Lahore is a banking and commercial city that provides markets for the agricultural products of the surrounding area. It is also home to 20 per cent of Pakistan's industrial production.

For Pakistanis, however, it is Lahore's romance and rich cultural heritage that causes them to refer to the city as "The Heart of Pakistan". Lahoris are known for their poetry, their hospitality and their fantastic food. The tragic tale of the slave girl Anarkali, who was entombed alive because of her forbidden love for a prince, is remembered today in Lahore's famous Anarkali Bazaar. It was in Lahore that Rudyard Kipling set his classic tale *Kim*. It was also in the streets of Lahore that Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims butchered one another during the horror of partition of India and Pakistan in 1947.

In the very heart of Lahore is the Old City, which is an ancient walled citadel built before the 16th century. Today it is populated by the real Lahoris, a culturally distinct subgroup who speak their own dialect of Punjabi. Many of these families can trace their an-

cestry back beyond Mughal days when the emperor Aurangzeb ruled (Emperor 1658–1707). They are a closed community and totally unreached with the gospel.

Lahore's Christian roots go back over 100 years. In the early 20th century John "Praying" Hyde spent years in Lahore and surrounding towns interceding for revival. An incredible move of God among low-caste Hindus resulted, and today's Pakistani Church is largely the fruit of that revival. However, the Church remains small and segregated from the majority Muslim population.

Lahore is also the capital city of the largest province of Pakistan, the Punjab. The Punjabis dominate much of the political and military life of Pakistan. As the capital of the Punjab Lahore plays an important role, influencing the life and development of the entire nation. It is also the gateway to the Punjab of India. Road, rail and air routes through Lahore link the two nations together. Pray that the city will play a significant role in a process of reconciliation between two nations who for decades have been sworn enemies. Historically, economically, politically and religiously Lahore is important for the future of Pakistan.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that the kingdom of God will penetrate every aspect of society in Lahore (Matt 13:31–33).
- ▶ There are still very few people from the majority Muslim community who have come to faith. Pray for a spiritual awakening to come not just among low-caste Hindus but to the Muslim majority as well (2 Pet 3:9).
- ▶ Pray that the Christians in Lahore will be strengthened in faith and in love despite the many pressures and persecutions that threaten them (2 Thess 1:4).
- ▶ Ask God to raise up many labourers with the ability and perseverance to be salt and light to the Muslims of Lahore.



Muslims in Orissa State, India

The Indian state of Orissa was known in ancient times as the kingdom of Kalinga, a fiercely independent nation that was difficult to defeat in battle. Kalinga had trading relations with countries as far away as Indonesia. Several Muslim armies were not able to conquer Orissa, until the Afghan general Sulaiman Karrani succeeded in 1568. The state came under the rule of the Moguls, and later under British rule in the mid-18th century.

Despite nearly 200 years of Muslim rule in one form or another, Islam never spread rapidly in Orissa, and today Muslims make up only about three per cent of the population (about one million of Orissa's estimated population of 40 million). The first Muslims came from Bengal in the 1400s, and while there are still some Bengali-speaking Muslims in the state, the majority of the Muslim population is Urdu-speaking.

Muslims in Orissa largely work as impoverished labourers and farmers, and are considerably less advanced educationally and developmentally than many other segments of society. Orissa state has also seen some persecution of Muslims by Hindu fanatics — something that has happened to Christians too. Dara Singh, who was convicted of the murder of Christian missionary Graham Staines and his sons, was also accused of involvement in the murder of a Muslim in the same area.

External threats have made the Muslims more susceptible to influence from extremist elements. For example, recently in the town of Bhadrak, a Muslim man who had been drinking (contrary to what is normally allowed in Muslim society) pronounced a declaration of divorce (“talak”) on his wife, but later when he was sober he regretted having done so. However, the local Muslim leadership said that the divorce declaration was irrevocable. A large number of Muslims even demonstrated in Bhadrak in support of their leaders' decision.

At the other extreme, folk Islamic practices strongly influence many of the Muslims of Orissa (as is the case throughout most of South Asia). Cuttack town is one of a number of places in Eastern India and Bangladesh that has a Qadam-i-Rasul shrine, containing what is alleged to be a footprint of the Prophet Mohammed; both Muslims and Hindus venerate this shrine. In some places, Muslims even participate in Hindu rituals related to the Rath Yatra “Festival” dedicated to the Orissan deity Jaganath.

Missionary teams are needed to go to Orissa to proclaim the Messiah to the Muslims of the cities and rural areas. Practical demonstrations of God's love, through community development programmes, literacy and education, and even small business loans, are crucial as well.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that God will reveal Himself to Muslims in Orissa through dreams, visions and miracles (Acts 10:1–44).
- ▶ Pray that the believers in Orissa will proclaim the gospel to Muslims in a meaningful and culturally relevant way.
- ▶ Pray for other workers to come from outside Orissa and ask God to grant them favour among the Muslims (Acts 11:20–21).
- ▶ Pray for God's protection on all those seeking to proclaim the gospel in Orissa — even in the midst of difficulty (2 Thess 3:1–2).



Saharanpur, India

Sameer darts skilfully through the crowded streets, stealthily dodging ox carts, motorcycles and rickshaws laden with fresh milk and hand-carved wooden objects. He abruptly veers onto a narrow lane no wider than three men standing abreast. Only those who have run these narrow “streets” since birth could avoid falling into the open sewers on either side of the alley. Sameer advances, narrowly missing two ladies dressed in black from head to toe in the compulsory Burka. Arriving at home, Sameer quickly collects his things and goes to the Madrasa (Koranic school). There he will meet a teacher, to whom he will recite large portions of the Qur’an he has memorised in Arabic, a language he does not understand.

Saharanpur (140km north of Delhi) is a city of almost one million people in the overcrowded Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The city is famous for its large Muslim community (approximately 45 per cent of the population) and its hand-carved wooden handicrafts. It is divided into Muslim districts and Hindu neighbourhoods. Because Saharanpur is a regional commercial centre, communal religious tensions are kept in check through the unspoken understanding that violence is not good for business.

In the Muslim areas, the wooden handicraft industry is present everywhere. In the labyrinth of alleyways, every third open door reveals wooden handicrafts in various stages of

production. Each year millions of US dollars worth of wooden handicrafts are produced and exported to the outside world from dimly-lit rooms in Saharanpur.

The city is named after a Sufi saint, Saharun Chisti, a Muslim holy man who dedicated himself to simple living and spreading the message of Allah. These Muslim roots are deeply entrenched and Saharanpur now boasts of having about 500 mosques. The Islamic community is primarily composed of Sunni Muslims who practise folk Islam in various forms. It is not uncommon to consult Peers (Pirs) or Muslim “holy men” who are thought to have Allah’s wisdom. They are active in dealing with sickness, sterility, and financial problems. They fiercely guard the religion and culture of the Muslim community.

There are no known churches on the Muslim side of the city. Though some churches do exist on the Hindu side, few Christians have the ability to reach their Muslim neighbours. The same cultural practices and language that have made the gospel understandable and attractive to Hindus are often repulsive to Muslims. In recent years, Saharanpur has seen some Christian workers beginning to focus on the Muslim side of the city. Using unique methods to gain access into the community, they are beginning to see the unfolding of God’s plan to bring salvation to this people.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for the few missionary workers in Saharanpur who are working to proclaim Christ in this culturally closed Muslim community.
- ▶ Pray for the churches of the Hindu side of the city, that they may have courage and determination to reach their Muslim neighbours (Isa 6:8).
- ▶ Pray that those who seek the advice of Muslim “holy men” would be led to call on Jesus instead (Acts 19:18–20).

Focus on Central Asia

Days 23 - 25



Testimonies from missionaries in a Central Asia:

We can always be thankful that life here is never dull! Just two days before Christmas we received word that 45 foreign workers were to be expelled from the country by January 1st! The government accused them of conducting “illegal” religious activity. Although the constitution assures freedom of religion, in practice the government doesn’t allow local people to gather together for worship, to share their faith with others, etc. In this case, the “worst” charge the Christian workers were accused of was helping the poor and needy financially! (2003)

Ali (not his real name) was a man with a very hard heart. In the past he would ride trains and befriend people. When they fell asleep, he would steal their belongings, jump off the train and sell the things. He tried Islam but it did not change him. When his sister-in-law became a Christian he persecuted her. Later, however, he acknowledged Jesus as Lord and he is now one of the main leaders of the church! The transformation in his life has been nothing less than incredible! He is one of the most humble and loving men we know. This is especially seen in how he cares for his wife and daughters, just like God said to in Ephesians 5:25-33 which is something unheard of here! (2004)

Helen is a cleaning lady at a factory. She comes from a very poor village where she lives with her husband and two children in a small mud-walled house. Prior to knowing God’s love, Helen never smiled. Now she radiates with His joy! She understands that God sent us to tell her about His love so she in turn now tells everyone about Him. Recently we started a church in her village. As we sat around looking at the 20+ people in the room, we marvelled that most had come to the Lord through this uneducated, barely literate woman. Truly “God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the strong...” (2004)



Kyrgyzstan



Kyrgyzstan is geographically somewhat smaller than the United Kingdom, but it is very mountainous (1,500-2,500 metres), leaving only 7 per cent of its area for agricultural use. About 65 per cent of its five million inhabitants are native Kyrgyz. Other Kyrgyz also live in China (300,000), as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan (150,000). More than 40 per cent of the Kyrgyz are less than 14 years old and nearly all of them are literate. The capital Bishkek is the preferred living place in the country.

Following the Mongol rule in the 13th century, Kyrgyzstan came under Russian rule in the 1800s and after 1937 was called the Kyrgyz Soviet Republic. Agriculture was increasingly collectivised under Stalin, despite strong resistance from the nomadic Kyrgyz. In the resulting tensions hundreds of thousands of Kyrgyz were forcibly settled, driven into China or killed. In 1991 Kyrgyzstan declared itself independent from the Soviet Union, resulting in democratic reforms and change to a market economy. Economic crisis and the decline of state agriculture followed in the years after independence, so many Kyrgyz adopted a traditional lifestyle again. Nomadic families herd their sheep and horses and live in tents called “yurts”.

Kyrgyz love to tell stories and drink tea. Weddings and funerals are significant events for them — but also unfortunately result in financial ruin for many. Few people have regular jobs, and even teachers, medical employees and others are forced to take

other jobs owing to low wages.

Islam came to Kyrgyzstan in the 17th century, being strongly influenced by animistic beliefs. Since independence Islam has become a source of cultural identity, even though few practise their faith: being Kyrgyz means being a Muslim. The Islamic influence is steadily growing and most villages have a mosque or prayer room. More and more children go to Quranic schools and Islam is being taught in state schools. Unfortunately, the Kyrgyz usually think of “Christians” in terms of the Orthodox Christianity of the Russians who have also been their oppressors.

God continues to build His kingdom in Kyrgyzstan. In Bishkek and the larger cities the gospel can be proclaimed relatively openly, and many churches have started. It is estimated that there are 5,000-6,000 Kyrgyz believers. In rural areas, families and the authorities exercise strong pressure on new believers, and many areas are still completely unreached. Unemployment is high among Christians, but some Kyrgyz believers want to reach out to their own people and the neighbouring peoples as well. Small Bible schools and training programmes have been started to prepare the Christians for ministry. A new translation of the Bible into the Kyrgyz language has been completed, and there is a Christian bookshop in Bishkek. Foreign workers are still needed, especially to teach, counsel and advise Kyrgyz Christians.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Christians need jobs so that they can have a good testimony in general and so that the churches can become financially independent (1 Thess 4:10-12). Pray for God’s hand in these areas.
- ▶ Discipleship, leadership training and the production and distribution of the appropriate biblical material are key issues. Pray for these things in the context of the growth of the Church in Kyrgyzstan.
- ▶ Pray especially for those Christians who are isolated in their villages (Heb 10:24-25).

The Dungan People of Central Asia

Population: 110,000 (1999 census)

The Dungans are a people group of about 110,000 people in the three Central Asian countries Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. They call themselves Huizu because they are descendants of the Hui, the largest Muslim group in China. Between 1867 and 1881 several thousand Hui fled China over the Tian Shan mountains to Central Asia after the failure of Muslim uprisings.

“Azdine” (not his real name) became one of the first Dungan believers in the mid-1990s. He discovered Christ through a Russian school friend. For a whole year, Azdine could not return home because of his conversion. His parents also suffered because their community considered their son a traitor to the Muslim faith. Years afterwards, his mother said, “My hair turned grey during that year!” However, Azdine remained steadfast and the opposition eventually died down.

Several years later Azdine moved to a city to continue his studies. He grew in faith, served the Lord and met his future wife. Azdine’s sister became a believer as well; however, she did not reveal her faith to her parents. She joined Azdine in the city to pursue her studies and attended church together with her brother and his family.

Azdine’s young wife died of an infection a few weeks after she gave birth to their first child. Azdine’s mother arrived to take care of the child and raised her in a Muslim way (including the use

of magical amulets). Azdine’s sister continued to hide her faith and eventually stopped attending church. In 2002 she married a Muslim. Afterwards Azdine went to Europe to find work. He is now married again, yet hardly earns enough money to provide for his wife and new daughter. It appears that he has at least temporarily lost his faith, but there is still hope for him. God is full of compassion.

About 50 Dungan believers are known in Central Asia. It seems that there is now a group of believers meeting in Azdine’s home village despite problems and difficulties. No other Dungan church or home fellowship group is known. The Dungans do not yet have the habit of praying or worshipping in their native tongue, and the Gospel of Mark is the only portion of the Bible currently available in their language. Dungan believers and the foreign Christians living in the area have suffered many hardships, including beatings, arthritis, brain tumours, and marriage problems. Several Dungan believers have even turned away from the faith. The fear of relatives seems to be hugely important.

May there be an exceedingly large harvest among the Dungans. “Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold” (Mark 4:8). Nothing is too difficult for our God.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for unity, strong friendships and mutual encouragement among the Dungan believers.
- ▶ Pray that the Dungan believers boldly proclaim their faith in Jesus (2 Tim 1:7 and Acts 4:29).
- ▶ Pray for Bible translations in the Dungan language (Psalm 67:3).
- ▶ Pray for additional workers who are willing to learn the language and to identify and suffer with the people.



The Uyghurs of China



Population: 10 million

Initially, the Uyghurs came from Mongolia, but for the last 1,300 years they have been living in a region previously visited by caravans travelling the “Silk Road”. Today, approximately 10 million Uyghurs live in Xinjiang, the most north-western province of China, together with Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Mongols, Uzbeks, Hui and Han Chinese. The very sparsely populated Chinese province of Xinjiang covers 1.65 million km². Since 1940, there has been a massive influx of Han Chinese immigrants, who now make up over 33 per cent of the population. About half a million Uyghurs live in the neighbouring countries of central Asia, in Pakistan and in Turkey.

The mixing and intermarriage of many peoples living in this region during the past few millennia can be seen in many of the Uyghurs. Some look like Indians, others like Uzbeks, Tajiks or Pashtuns. The Uyghurs originally practised animism and then Buddhism, which spread from India along the Silk Road in the 2nd century BC. Islam arrived in the 7th century, through commercial ties, followed by Islamic teachers. The 8th century saw intensive Islamisation.

Three different types of Uyghurs can be identified: The first group comprises intellectuals, public servants and political leaders. They are indoctrinated by atheistic teachings, yet many of them follow Islamic cultural traditions. The second group follows

orthodox Islam strictly; some are influenced by Islamic reformation movements, such as Wahhabism. They desire to introduce Islamic sharia law. The third and largest group is composed of farmers, craftsmen and merchants who are involved in “folk Islam”. They use occult practices based on animism and Buddhism for healing, prosperity, successful pregnancies and protection from evil spirits.

At the beginning of the 7th century, the Nestorians brought Christianity to the Tarim Basin, though no evidence of their efforts remains. It was only in the 19th century that Russians and Jesuits brought the Orthodox and the Catholic faith to this region, without making many converts. In the 1930s, most Christians were killed. In the middle of the 20th century, the China Inland Mission in Urumqi and a Swedish mission in Kashgar started working among the Uyghurs, supporting orphanages and doing medical work. Today, there are about 50 Christians among the Uyghurs in China. In neighbouring Kazakhstan, there are possibly 400.

A complete Bible translation in Uyghur became available in 1939. The New Testament has been translated once again, this time into a modern-language version, and a new translation of the Old Testament is under way. The Jesus movie is also available. There are indications for an increasing number of Uyghurs turning to Jesus.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for the Jesus film and the newly-translated Uyghur New Testament (Rom 10:17).
- ▶ Pray for the Han Chinese churches to proclaim Christ to the Uyghurs living in their areas.
- ▶ Pray for the Lord to protect the Uyghur believers in Xinjiang, and empower them for witness among their people (2 Thess 2:17; 3:3).
- ▶ Pray that young believers may find Christian marriage partners (Gen 24:12–28).



**The Night of Power (Al-Qadr)
Surat 97 of the Qur'an**

(This chapter has only 5 verses).

"In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

- 1. We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power:**
- 2. And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is?**
- 3. The Night of Power is better than a thousand Months.**
- 4. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:**
- 5. Peace! ... This until the rise of Morn!"**

The Night of Power, or "Laylat ul-Qadr" as it is known in Arabic, is one of the most significant moments of the Islamic year. Muslims believe that groups of angels are sent out on the Night of Power to perform special purposes. Some come down to earth to worship Allah, others come to bring about the requests of believing Muslims. Special angels are also said to descend to earth to make proclamations about the coming year. This night is also called the "Night of the Decree or Destiny" by some.

This night of "blessing" is supposedly the same night of the month of Ramadan as when Mohammed first received the revelation of the Qur'an, but may actually be one of several nights. Bukhari, a companion of Mohammed, reported that the prophet of Islam said, "Seek it on the odd numbered nights of the last ten days

of Ramadan." According to the Hadith by Ubayy bin Ka'ab, Mohammed also said, "By Allah, I know which night it is. It is the night the Messenger commanded us to observe, the 27th night." Even so, according to many the exact moment during Ramadan remains a mystery to test the sincerity of Muslims concerning their faith. The seriously interested person will seek God's blessings all night until he or she attains this moment of blessing, regardless of the hardship.

Muslims are often encouraged to stay awake during the entire night, and pray for blessings and forgiveness. This is one moment of the year when Muslims have a bit more confidence that God will hear and act on their behalf. According to tradition, Mohammed is supposed to have said: "Whoever prays during the Night of Power with



The Night of Power (starts this evening)

Ramadan actually began on the evening of October 4th. Although this is the 26th day, this evening that is the Night of Power will be the 27th night (think of the "evening and then morning as one day" as in Jewish tradition — see the Calendar article on page 5).

faith and hoping for its reward will have all his previous sins forgiven."

Muslims often also recite the Qur'an on this night while making special requests to God. Others may evaluate their own lives and make plans for the next year. Sometimes Muslims will take time off work to be able to stay up all night, spending the time at the local mosque.

Muslims come to this night with several attitudes. Some want to prove their devotion to God through their prayers, even being proud of their religious accomplishments. Others, knowing in their hearts that they are incapable of really pleasing God by their own religious activity, will feel disappointed with themselves. Finally, significant numbers will be praying in desperation and are genuinely seeking help from God.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Be specific in your praying. Ask God to inspire you. Often women who are sterile will look to God to conceive as a result of their praying during this night. Others who are unemployed will pray. Some who are having family problems or who are sick will also be calling on God during this night.

You might pray something like the following:

▶ Lord, may Your compassion flow in our hearts for Muslims during this night. Lord, You are a father to the fatherless. You are near to those who are lowly and contrite in heart (Isa 51:17, 57:17 and 66:2).

▶ Lord, may You break down all thoughts of self-righteousness through religious activity among Muslims who participate in the Night of Power. May You move them toward true humility before You (Dan 4:37).

▶ May all glory be Yours because of Your loving character and for all You have done. Lord, may You be acting during the Night of Power so that people may have a revelation of Jesus, the Messiah.

▶ Lord, remember those who are genuinely seeking Your help this night. May You give them the help they need in such a way that they will understand that it comes to them through the Messiah, Jesus (Ps 34:18, Zech 9:9).



The geographic centre of Islam is at Mecca in Saudi Arabia

Notes on the Qur'an

Please note: The text of Surat 97 (facing) is the only place in the “30 Days” booklet where we have cited an entire Surat (chapter) of the Qur'an. Reading the Qur'an is not forbidden for Christians but it should be done with care. Islam is animated by evil spirits speaking lies.

All chapters of the Qur'an begin with the words “In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.” While this sounds like a Biblical idea of God it is actually the exact opposite concept. In popular Islamic thinking grace is definitely something to be “earned.” One receives grace and pardon by performing certain religious acts. Allah is gracious only to those who practice Islam. He is no lover of sinners.

Meritorious religious activity receives grace in Islam. For example: Some Muslims believe that they will receive the merit of 100,000 daily prayers by praying at the Mosque Haram in Mecca. This amounts to about 55 years of prayer five times per day. This merit will weigh heavily in the balance on the Day of Judgement. However to receive such merit Muslims need to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. They receive merit and forgiveness as a result of their religious activity (if it is God's will).

Focus on Europe and North America

Days 27 - 30



The Grand Mosque of Cleveland, Ohio (USA)

NORTH AMERICA

Muslims in Michigan p. 48

Muslims in the Bay Area p. 48

RUSSIA

Dutch Youth p. 45

EUROPEAN UNION

Turks in Bulgaria p. 46

Albania p. 47

Testimony from the USA

Having grown up in a Muslim family in Africa I accepted, believed and participated in the Muslim faith. In my youth several of my family members died in a short period of time. One day I remember crying out to God, "I want to know you before it is my turn to die." I did not know at that time that my prayer would be answered in a very unexpected way.

I was eventually awarded a scholarship to go to university in the USA. While completing my bachelors and masters degrees I was active in a fellowship of Muslim students at the university. I am sorry to say, that in all my time in the States as a student, no one ever talked to me about Christ. But, I know people were praying.

I took a job and settled into a new life in the States. One day, I returned to my apartment and sat down on the sofa. Suddenly, the room filled with light and I looked up to see a man in white, glowing like the sun, standing in front of me. He said, "You wanted to see and know your Creator,

here I am." The room was filled with His light and love. As I looked at Him, I began to sense my own unworthiness and was filled with guilt. The man was holding something in His hand then I opened my mouth and he fed me. I felt light and love going down into my being. I knew I was in the room with Jesus Christ, my Lord and Creator.

As soon as He left the room, I was compelled to go to a grocery store in my neighborhood. I had no idea why, I just knew I was to go. Arriving there I stood in the fruit section. Soon, a large man walked up to me and said "Hello, I am a pastor of a church and I want to get to know you. Here is my card and I would like for you to join my family and I for a meal." This was all part of God's plan for me to meet Christians.

I have since returned to my country and my people. The vast majority of them do not know Christ. But, many are praying for their salvation. Many are witnessing to them on a daily basis and I know that Christ loves them just as He loves me.

Muslim Youth in the Netherlands

The Dutch cinematographer Theo van Gogh's short film "Submission" about Muslim women was shocking to many Muslims and it eventually provoked his murder in November 2004. This event brought the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Netherlands to a head and incited much conversation about crushing Muslim fundamentalism. However the real turn in the relationship between the nearly one million Muslims and the other Dutchmen took place about five years ago. The liberal elite in the Netherlands was - until that time - proud of its multicultural and multi religious society. When it was discovered that an important part of the second and third generation Muslim migrants criticised the liberal convictions, the sentiments changed. As a result many Muslim youth feel that they are held accountable for what a few do in the name of Islam. Many youth have been loyal to Dutch society for years, particularly among the Turkish youth which is the the largest immigrant group. Some are even returning to Turkey in disillusionment but all do not have that opportunity.

The large gap between Muslim youth and the church has not lessened in recent years. While there is certainly a growing awareness of Islam in the Dutch Church most Dutch Christians are



still not sure how to deal with Muslims. But there is a ray of hope. Muslim youth are forced to think about the values of "their" Islam far more than their parents. The parents of Turkish and Moroccan immigrant youth were mainly villagers who followed the traditional Islam of their village imam. In the Netherlands their children are faced with many movements: preachers who want to recruit them for the violent jihad, as well as the mystic and humanistic movements from within the Islam. Pressure from society forces them to make their own choices. Many young people create their "own Islam" through Internet and meetings outside the mosque.

The challenge for the church is to show second and third generation youth that there is another way to find their identity: through following Jesus as Saviour and Lord. In a few places churches have found a way to reach Muslim young people. They discovered that only through much prayer and perseverance the gap of distrust and prejudices can be bridged to get to the heart of the young people. Many Christians in the Netherlands are shocked to discover only recently that Muslims have lived among them for the last 40 years. For many it is still a big step to overcome this shock and be a witness of Jesus Christ with boldness, compassion and wisdom.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray that Muslim youth won't be recruited by political inspired preachers for violence in the name of Islam
- ▶ Pray that the Holy Spirit will make seeking Muslim youth restless until their hearts find rest in Christ. This is what happened to Augustine and he came - as well as a large group of Dutch Muslim youth - from North Africa (Algeria and Morocco).
- ▶ Pray that Muslim youth discover that Christians view them differently because they see them as people created by God who cares for them as a Father.
- ▶ Pray that Dutch churches will have creativity and perseverance as they do youth work among Muslims.

The Millet and Rumelian Turks of Bulgaria

Population: *Millet* — 300,000
Rumelian Turks — 700,000

One day, a Muslim woman named Nora insisted that a Christian worker come to her home with the following words: “I am completely disappointed by you. You visit a number of villagers, but never me! You often stopped right underneath our house to talk with different people. Look, I live in that white house over there.”

The next day the Christian visited Nora and was amazed by her genuine interest in knowing more about the life of the “prophet” Jesus (as Muslims know Him). Nora received a Turkish New Testament and began to read it regularly. Soon Nora started reading to her family from the New Testament and prayed in the name of Jesus “the prophet”. After several months she sensed that there were strange powers coming from the amulet she wore to protect her from illness, and these powers frightened her. A few weeks later she surprisingly lost this amulet. Since then it has become clearer and clearer to her that Jesus is not only a prophet, but the Son of God, the Messiah, whom she can trust in all of her needs and anxieties.

Nora and her family belong to the Millet ethnic group (300,000 Turkish-speaking Gypsies). They are part of about one million mainly Muslim Turkish-speaking people living

in Bulgaria (which has a total population of 8.2 million). The non-Millet Turkish speakers are called Osmanlis or Rumelian Turks. Islam is the second largest religion in Bulgaria (12 per cent), after the state religion Eastern Orthodox Christianity (71 per cent).

In the 1990s about 10,000 Millet came to believe in Jesus, but among the Rumelian Turks there are not even 100 Christians and no church. There are tensions between Bulgarians, the Millet and other Turks which are fed every year by various holidays which remind of past power struggles. Therefore it is difficult for evangelical Bulgarians and the Millet to reach Rumelian Turks with the gospel.

Efforts are under way in Bulgaria to proclaim the gospel to the Rumelian Turks and to train the Millet for ministry with the hope of creating Millet and Rumelian churches. However, the majority of those interested in the gospel are Millet. The Rumelian Turks are more integrated into the Islamic society and find it difficult to break away from it.

After 45 years of communism Bulgaria became a democratic republic in 1989. The country has profound economic and social struggles. Half of the population lives in the grip of significant poverty.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for economic and social improvement, including safer jobs, in Bulgaria.
- ▶ Pray for mutual forgiveness and acceptance between the different people groups.
- ▶ Pray that the Millet who believe in Jesus grow spiritually, are trained and create house churches (Acts 2:42–47).
- ▶ Pray that the Rumelian Turks come to understand that Jesus is more than a prophet; may they give their lives to Him and have courage to be different.
- ▶ Pray for the Muslims to be liberated from their superstitious traditions and occult bondages, and become secure in God’s mercy and freedom.
- ▶ Pray that the word of God will be effectively proclaimed through conversations, literature, music, radio and TV (Acts 4:31).

Albania: a nation on the verge of change

Population: 3,545,000 (July 2004 estimate)

As Beni knelt in the mud in the national stadium in 1991 and confessed his faith in Jesus Christ, it didn't occur to him that he was among the firstborn of a new generation of Christians in his country. Since 1967, when Albania proudly declared itself atheist, it had been known as the "most closed country in the world" to the gospel. For decades, Albania had endured a winter of religious oppression under the brutal dictatorship of Enver Hoxha. (It is estimated that as many as 700,000 people were imprisoned and or put to death during his dictatorship.) As communism fell across Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, Albania was finally opened to the gospel again.

An evangelistic campaign was held at the national stadium in the capital, Tirana, for the first time in history. It was there that Beni met Jesus. No active evangelical churches had existed anywhere in the country, but miraculously within a few years new churches were planted in most towns and cities in Albania. Lasting seeds of biblical truth have now been sown across the nation.

The Albanian population is 70 per cent Muslim (a high percentage of Muslims are not practising Islam in an organ-

ised way). In addition there are several hundred thousand Catholics and Orthodox Christians with varying levels of faith and practice. In 1990 the number of evangelical Christians could be counted on one hand, but now they make up about 0.25 per cent of the population (about 20,000). As in many Muslim countries the real religion in Albania is materialism, which appears in the people as a pervasive preoccupation with improving their standard of living. Religion is generally seen as a means to obtain "fat" (good luck in life). Often Albanians will say how "God is one", meaning that He is the same reliable source for all religions. Yet the idea of a personal relationship with our heavenly Father remains largely unknown to them.

In spite of these barriers, many Albanian believers are trusting in God to transform their country into a Christian nation, even one that sends out missionaries. A high level of unity is reflected in cooperation and healthy communication among many of the churches and missions. This is an excellent beginning.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for there to be more openings for the gospel among the Muslim population. May a wave of salvation wash across Albania!
- ▶ Pray for strength and wisdom for first-generation Christian families who are learning to apply biblical truths in their relationships, attitudes and habits.
- ▶ Pray that the kingdom of God will be manifest in multiple areas of society, from the work place to the home. Pray for effective ministry concerning social ills such as rampant corruption, abortion, drugs, crime, materialism and violence in the home.
- ▶ Albania is in the Balkans, which has been known for centuries as a region of ethnic strife and division. Pray for the Church, that it would be delivered from this negative inheritance and become a source of lasting healing in the region.

Muslims in the USA

Amazingly, there is no definitive estimate for the number of Muslims in the United States of America. There are many estimates, ranging from about two million to possibly seven million (1 or 2 per cent of the US population), but there is little reliable data. Undoubtedly, however, there are large numbers of Muslims in some parts of the US! In 2001 there were more than 1,200 mosques in the US; that figure is now possibly 1,500 or more. According to a Hartford Institute study, Muslims in the US come from many backgrounds. Only about 25 per cent are Arab, 30 per cent are Afro-American and 33 per cent are South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi). The remaining 12 per cent are from various other backgrounds.¹

The largest numbers of mosques are found in California, New York, New Jersey and Michigan. It is not surprising these days to find mosques in medium-sized towns (populations of 25,000) in rural America — something that did not exist 25 years ago. In 2004, Dearborn (population 100,000 and near Detroit) in Michigan state became the home of North America's largest Islamic centre (at a cost of US\$12,000,000 and comprising 11,000m² or 120,000 square feet of space). There are over 30 mosques in the Detroit area.

A few years ago the restaurant chain McDonalds made national headlines in the US by serving a halal form of their famous chicken McNuggets in Dearborn. Halal meat products are killed and prepared according to traditional Muslim ceremony ("In the

name of Allah"). McDonalds even extended its practice of selling halal McNuggets into some other restaurants in the area. While this has not become an absolute national trend, it is a testimony to the Muslim presence in the USA.

According to an article in the San Francisco Chronicle (10 September 2004), in the San Francisco area there are at least 200,000 Muslims. This includes about 12,000 Afghans, 32,000 Iranians and 6,000 Pakistanis. The number of Muslims in the area has "boomed" in the past 20 years. "This boom has transformed areas in the South Bay and East Bay, where restaurants, bookstores and other establishments have sprung up. So many Muslim-oriented restaurants and food establishments have opened that, in 1999, a Bay Area Muslim engineer and entrepreneur began a website, zabihah.com, as a guide."²

The tragedy on 11 September 2001 and the following Afghan and Iraq wars have certainly shaped American attitudes towards Muslims in general. However, at the same time Muslims have started to live in small-town America, which is opening doors for close contact and relationships.

References

- 1 "Faith Communities Today", coordinated by Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religious Research
- 2 Jonathan Curiel, "Muslims find Bay Area leans toward tolerance", San Francisco Chronicle (10 September 2004). Website: www.sfgate.com



PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ Pray for Christians in the USA to have increased understanding of Muslims and Islam. Christians must be the first to fight stereotypes and Islamophobia. Attitudes need to be in line with scriptural values concerning "our neighbours".
- ▶ Christians in the US need to be prepared to share their faith with Muslims in a patient and non-aggressive manner. Pray for training programmes. Cultural and personal sensitivity is very important.
- ▶ Pray that God will raise up church-planters who can create ethnically-oriented church communities in regions where Muslims form a high percentage of the population. Some denominations have already taken up the challenge.
- ▶ Pray that churches and church leaders will seek the wisdom needed to help converted Muslims become integrated into typical American churches: the cultural differences are strong.

Interior cover

Web sites to better understand Muslims and Islam:*

Christian Sites:

Muslim - Christian Dialogue:

<http://www.answering-islam.org/>

(see the links on the 'Answering Islam' site to access a long list of sites)

Sites for Muslims:

<http://www.injil.org>

<http://members.aol.com/alnour/index2.html>

<http://www.aboutisa.com>

<http://www.isaalmasih.net>

Muslim Sites:

Islamic religion:

<http://www.islamic.org.uk/>

<http://www.submission.org>

<http://www.answering-christianity.com/ac.htm>

<http://www.aol40.com/>

<http://islamicity.com/>

<http://www.al-islam.org>

Other Sites:

<http://www.secularislam.org/>

<http://www.apostatesofislam.com/>

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/muslimlife/homepage.htm>

Islamic History: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html>

30 Days Online: <http://www.30-days.net>

Please note: Several new resources are available on the "30 Days" site.



Photos of Cairo, Egypt



"30 Days International" maintains a positive attitude toward Muslims. We are not interested in denigrating or criticising them. Islam is not merely a religion or a philosophy. Islam concerns people. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

* Note: 30 Days International does not necessarily endorse or agree with all the arguments, ideas or attitudes presented by the web sites listed on this page. These sites contain at least some valuable material. It is possible that they are not the best sites available but the editors are simply familiar with them.

This prayer booklet is not designed to be given to Muslims. It is also not recommended to show it to Muslims for evangelistic purposes. They generally will not understand your motivations to intercede for them.

New: A prayer calendar designed for children and families is also available this year. Contact our office.

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