

5 Ways to Pray for the Muslim World

After I heard the news that Islamic terrorists had killed more than 72 people in a public park in Lahore, Pakistan, last Sunday, I called my friend "Faisal" (not his real name) to grieve with him. Faisal is a Pakistani Christian who has lived in the United States for several years. He has friends who live near the Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, a normally cheerful place where an unidentified killer detonated a bomb with the specific goal of slaughtering Christians during the Easter holiday.

The March 27 attack was the work of Jamaat-e-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban. Some of the people killed were buying tickets to fair rides or playing with their children.

"Everybody is in shock. A woman lost both of her daughters," said Faisal, who has a wife and a daughter of his own. "I was crying while I was watching the news footage. It is so sad."

The attack did not grab as much media attention as the March 22 Brussels airport bombing, which has claimed 35 lives so far. The death toll continues to rise in the Pakistan massacre because more than 340 people were wounded, many severely. After the Sunday blast, the park was soaked in blood and strewn with body parts and shreds of clothing.

Many of the victims were Christians who had come to the park after church services to enjoy the holiday. Survivors are now planning funerals for their relatives. The attack came just days after Pakistan's National Assembly recognized Easter and two Hindu festivals as public holidays.

Apparently Muslim extremists don't want religious freedom for anyone but Muslims.

After I comforted Faisal, who has family near the bombing site, we prayed together for Pakistan. I prayed in English but I asked Faisal to pray in his native Pakistani language, Urdu. I love to hear people pray to Jesus Christ in the same language used by Taliban militants.

How can we pray in the aftermath of such a horrific tragedy? Here are five ways I am praying for the Muslim world these days:

1. Pray that cowardly acts of violence will backfire. The history of the church is written in the blood of its martyrs. But whenever Christians have been killed for their faith, their blood becomes a seed for the advancement of the gospel.

Many nominal or liberal Muslims are deeply troubled by the actions of Islamic militants who belong to groups like ISIS or the Taliban. In Pakistan, my friend Faisal says liberal Muslims are distancing themselves from extremists, and they are condemning these acts of terror. "They are even donating blood to help the Christians. They are embarrassed and they are getting tired of Islam," he says. Pray that millions of Muslims will see the brutality operating in these terrorists groups. Pray that they will reject Islamic jihad and the doctrines behind it.

2. Pray that Muslim governments will pursue justice. In a televised message last Sunday, Pakistan's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, condemned the Taliban massacre and pledged to fight terrorism in Pakistan "until it is rooted out from our society." But the United States and other Western governments must continue to pressure Muslim nations to oppose extremist groups. Pray that God will plant Christians in strategic positions in these governments so they can work to protect believers from the inside.

3. Pray that terrorist groups will be exposed and stopped. We tend to be fearful of militant groups like ISIS because their

tactics are so cruel and intimidating. (An ISIS faction in Yemen allegedly planned to crucify Catholic priest Thomas Uzhunnalil on Good Friday, but some reports say he is still alive.) But if we could see this situation through God's eyes, we would realize that these terrorist factions are fighting a losing battle. They are the ones who are afraid. Soon they will be defeated.

Psalm 37:35-36 says: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a luxuriant tree. Yet he passed away, and he was not; I sought him, but he could not be found." Pray that God will dry up their funds, confuse their communication, create disloyalty in their ranks and lay a trap for them.

4. Pray for a continued release of miracles in Islamic nations. Reports out of Iran, Pakistan and other Muslim nations indicate that God is displaying His power like never before in this dark region. Muslims are coming to Jesus secretly, often because they have dreams about the Son of God. Muslim women are attending underground meetings and hiding Bibles under their black burkas. "Many Muslims are coming to Jesus secretly in Pakistan," says my friend Faisal. "I have seen many Muslims come to Christ because they saw miracles or because He answered their prayers."

5. Pray that Christians will not be intimidated by persecution. It isn't easy for my friend Faisal to live in the United States while his family struggles in Pakistan. Two days before Easter, some Muslim thugs broke into his family's home—one hour from Lahore—and stole furniture after demanding that they stop spreading the gospel. Those who follow Christ in Muslim countries suffer job discrimination, social harassment and a lack of government protection. Pray that Christians in these countries will be empowered with supernatural boldness to defend their faith—even in the face of terror. {eoa}