

How to Reach Muslim Women

On the other end of the phone, a tentative young woman was inquiring about the townhouse my husband and I had for rent. "But before we talk further," she said, "I need to tell you about my situation. Your previous tenant told me you're ministers. You may not want to rent your property to me."

I listened with interest as the timid young lady continued. "I'm a single mother, trying to escape a physically abusive husband and support my two preschool children. I really hate having to do this kind of work, but I have no education. So I'm employed as an exotic dancer."

"Sounds to me as if you're on a spiritual journey," I replied.

"Yes," she said, "I believe I am."

"Perhaps God has sent us to help you complete your journey," I added.

This was the beginning of our loving Delia (not her real name) into the kingdom of God. Nine months after leasing our townhouse to Delia, who is Iraqi and was reared as a Muslim, she accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior.

It was a blessing to play a role in Delia's conversion. "I have always wanted to be a Christian," she happily told us that day, "because the Christian God is so gentle, merciful and forgiving. Every Christian I have ever met has proven that to me. Not so with Allah. Every day of my life my dad told me I would never make it to heaven."

Her voice then cracked with emotion: "No matter how hard I tried to be good, I always disappointed my daddy. Girls are rarely offered a place in paradise with men and Allah."

Muslims by Circumstance, Not Conviction

Delia's pain and disappointment with Islam is not uncommon. It

is estimated that less than 1 percent of Muslim women around the world have even read the Quran or are aware of its teachings, except for what is forced on them. These women are victims more than adherents. They are Muslims more by circumstance than by conviction.

The demeaning practices and customs many Islamic women are often subjected to include:

- Arranged marriages within one year of puberty. Many times young girls are given to men who are wealthy and much older. In the case of Muhammad, the founder of Islam, he was married 11 times. His favorite bride was Ayesha, a 6-year-old. Even today, in some Islamic cultures, girls as young as 9 are given in marriage. This would be considered pedophilia by our Western standards.
- Social barriers that restrict or prohibit education or work. Afghanistan has been the most extreme example of these barriers, which are also found in much of the Muslim world. Saudi Arabian women can't get a license or drive a car. They can work only as teachers or nurses.
- Loss of many human rights. For example, a Muslim man can marry up to four women, but a woman faces divorce or death if she even talks to a man without her husband's permission. Also, women are not allowed to vote in any of the Persian Gulf states.
- Sexual, emotional or physical abuse by men without the right to protect themselves. The Quran teaches, "Men are superior to women; beat them if necessary" (Surah 4:34).
- Mutilation of female sex organs. Although this happens among millions of Muslims, mostly in African nations, this practice tends to be more cultural than religious.
- Forced to wear the "burqa" to cover their entire bodies. Wearing the burqa, especially the veil, hinders Muslim women from experiencing life and nature in all its beauty. According to my Iranian pastor friend, who

converted from Shiite Islam to Christianity 14 years ago, "It is cruel for women to never enjoy life apart from the veil."

Unfortunately, the abuse of women is common in many parts of the Muslim world. More often than we can imagine, they are beaten, humiliated and intimidated for no reason.

Perhaps you've watched, as I have, news reports documenting the plight of Afghan women under the Taliban regime. They are not allowed to walk the streets or shop alone.

Many have been publicly executed for even the smallest infringement of religious law, such as an exposed ankle or wrist. Their own fathers, brothers and husbands report them to Islamic authorities, assuring their deaths.

In Saudi Arabia, a female member of the royal family, Princess Misha'il, lost her life. She was married in an arranged union to an abusive man three times her age. Determined to break the pattern among women of her generation, she staged her drowning death. But her shrewd grandfather, Prince Muhammad, combed the airport and found her about to board a plane with a young Lebanese man.

The enraged prince declared his granddaughter an adulteress who should submit to Islamic law. In July 1977, Misha'il was blindfolded and forced to kneel before a pile of dirt. She was shot by a firing squad as her lover was forced to watch. He was then beheaded with a sword.

The Great Liberator of Women

God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for all mankind. Jesus is not only our Savior from sin but also the Great Liberator of women. Throughout the Bible are wonderful illustrations of how Jesus esteemed women. Here are a few:

- Women admired and loved Jesus (see Matt. 27:55-56; John

12:3).

- Jesus didn't execute Mary Magdalene the adulteress. He delivered her from the demons tormenting her (see Luke 8:2).
- Jesus loved and freely associated with women (see John 11:5). They were His treasures then, and behind the veil of each Islamic burqa today is a woman who is a precious treasure for which Christ died.
- It was women who provided the financial support for Jesus' ministry (see Luke 8:1-3).
- Women stood by Jesus as He died on the cross (see John 19:25-27).
- It was a woman Jesus first revealed Himself to after His resurrection (see Matt. 28:6-8).

What an amazing contrast! Can you not see, even feel, the heart of Christ for Muslim women? Surely He grieves for them. Not only does He love them so much that He died for them, but He also deeply longs for their freedom and fellowship.

We must not ignore this vital Great Commission issue. We will give account to God for our generation.

Muslim women of the world need Christ's liberation from religious bondage and salvation from their also have kingdom potential only they can reach.

God has a plan for each woman in His kingdom that will go unfulfilled unless they come into a relationship through His Son, Jesus. The bottom line is this: They need Jesus Christ, and we need their help to save the nations!

Modern-day Daughters of Hagar

Many years ago a man with a hammer and chisel was working at the site of a new building. "Just what are you making out of that stone?" a visitor asked him.

"I don't know," the workman replied. "I haven't seen the plans. I'm just chiseling."

It's time for us to stop "just chiseling" and take a look at God's plans for the beautiful women of Islam. God the Father loves all His daughters. He offered up His own Son for these precious women that they might be forgiven from sin and freed from the oppression of abusive men.

He wrote the days of their lives in His book before they were ever born (see Ps. 139:16). God's kingdom purpose for them must be met. Their tragic dilemma reminds me of the story of Hagar. Let's take a look in Genesis 21:15-19 at God's purpose for these modern-day "daughters of Hagar."

After Abraham sent away his maidservant Hagar and her son, Ishmael, as Sarah his wife had insisted, we read: "And the water in the skin [bottle] was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, 'Let me not see the death of the boy.'

"So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, 'What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.'

"Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink" (NKJV).

Before, she could not see the well with her natural eyes. But God opened her eyes in order that she might see. Perhaps this foreshadows God's opening the spiritual eyes of today's Islamic women in order that they too may see "the well" of Christ's living water!

The issue here is more than the level of abuse under which these women live. The real issue is their eternal destiny and purpose in Christ. How powerful it would be if Christian women

would make a commitment to become spiritual advocates for the millions of Muslim women around the world by praying and interceding on their behalf.

- Pray God's protection and anointing for those who will carry the gospel to Islamic women.
- Pray that God will remove the spiritual blindness from their eyes.
- Pray that the gospel of Christ and His incomparable love will be revealed to them and that they will boldly tell others.
- Pray that Jehovah God will emancipate them from the darkness of Islam and the false god, Allah.

"Father God, we come to you today on behalf of Muslim women. Lord, we ask You to send laborers into the harvest fields on their behalf. Protect and anoint those who will share the gospel with them. You told the Samaritan woman that those who believed in You would receive living water.

"Let this be true for Islamic women worldwide. Open their blind eyes to see the eternal living water You offer. Father, reveal Your incomparable love for them. Emancipate them, we pray, from the darkness of Islam and the false god, Allah. We ask this in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ! Amen."

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