

Why Muslim Women Turn to Christ Despite Danger to Life

Sadiqah* has heard many stories of what sometimes happens to people in her country who turn from Islam to Christ.

She heard of some whose family tortured them with electricity and told them that's what it will feel like when they burn in hell.

One young couple was burned to death, while a young woman was fatally poisoned by her family and another was forced into a marriage with a Muslim. One young man was put in a mental institution.

This is what the climate was like when 26-year-old Sadiqah approached Christian worker Lisa Langworthy* in a McDonald's and asked how to know Jesus.

"I went to a university where there were Christians, and when I heard the girls going to pray and read, I wanted to know what they were doing, but no one would tell me," Sadiqah said. "They're very afraid that someone might be from government security."

When she saw Langworthy eating in the McDonald's where she worked, she had been waiting four years for someone to tell her who Jesus really is.

"I felt something that made me know I wanted to talk to her, and when I did, I finally met the Messiah," Sadiqah said. "I see things differently now; I can tell you how it was before and what's changed. I want to tell many more people. If I tell my friends, it [faith in Christ] can grow like a tree."

She has a small group of friends who have also accepted Jesus since she shared what she believes with them. In the country

where they live, it's not easy. Renouncing Islam comes at a cost, she said.

"Many Christians are afraid, so they leave. But we can't do that. We can't leave everyone here behind. We can change the darkness here," she said.

Sadiqah still wears the head covering required of Muslim women because she feels it would draw too much attention if she stopped. When another young woman she'd heard about chose to follow Jesus, her mother cut the girl's hair short and scratched her arms so she would be forced to cover her head and wear sleeves.

For most women in her country, the number one goal in life is to find a good man to marry, Sadiqah said.

"But the ideas in men's head are really difficult, and I don't think that will change unless someone makes it right," she said. "There are so many examples. A small one is that if a man is riding by on a motorcycle, it's OK for him to slap a girl on the rear."

But for the woman who makes the wrong move, it could mean death, Sadiqah said. "All eyes are on the woman here."

Sometimes women do think differently than cultural traditions dictate, she said. "But when you see a girl with forward thoughts, it's always because of outside reasons; she's studied or traveled."

Many young women like Sadiqah hoped things would change after the Arab Spring swept through their country last year, but that hasn't happened so far.

"Most women don't have the ability or education to change things, or people are worried about looking shamed," she said.

So, despite her passion for the plight of the women in her country, her greatest desire is that they and the men they

marry come to know freedom in Christ.

And she's starting with her own family.

When the man who became Sadiqah's husband started pursuing her, she didn't tell him right away that she was a follower of Christ. She sent him anonymous emails for a while sharing the Gospel, then sent one of her Christian friends to talk with him.

"When she spoke with him, he told her he wanted to believe and he asked if she could also tell me about it so that I would believe," Sadiqah said. "I knew then I could marry him."

They've been married three years and are happy, she said. "But things are hard, too. He's afraid to tell people he's a Christian. I pray often that one day things will be different here."

*Names changed. Ava Thomas is a writer/editor for the International Mission Board. A free prayer guide focusing on Muslim women is available from the International Mission Board.