

Ministering to Muslim Women Means Building Relationships

Sharing the **love of Jesus** with Muslims takes time, patience and diligence. It means building friendships without conditions and expectations, praying for glimpses of hope but trusting that God is working behind the scenes, even when it seems nothing is happening.

Hayley works with OM Lifehope and ministers in an area of Birmingham, Ala., that is 95 percent Muslim. Along with other ladies, Hayley gets the chance to reach out to Muslim girls and women in friendship, building relationships over coffee, sewing, cooking and conversation. Recently in one of their weekly girls' clubs, Hayley had the chance to converse with a couple of young ladies about Jesus.

"We made Pakistani food with the girls," she says. During the meal, both girls shared how they had traveled to Mecca, but it was not a real pilgrimage. They explained to Hayley that a real pilgrimage takes longer, and after it, your life should change in some way because Allah has forgiven all your wrongdoings.

"After telling us this," says Hayley, "the girls asked what we have to do for God to **forgive** our sins when we are Christians." This question created the chance for Hayley and the other ladies to share about their faith in Jesus.

"We had a great opportunity to share why we celebrate Easter and tell the **gospel** openly," she says. "We were excited, but even more questions were coming!"

The girls asked about Jesus' return, they asked about the **Holy Spirit** and they asked how a person goes to heaven. "After these questions," Hayley says, "one of our team members had the opportunity to share her testimony. Her family is not

Christian, and the girls were amazed at how she became a Christian.”

The club normally finishes at 4:30 in the afternoon, but because everyone was so engrossed in conversation, the girls did not leave until 6 p.m. “Afterwards,” says Hayley, “we just gave praise to God. Before this day, we had never talked with the girls about religion or life after death, so it was a total work of the **Holy Spirit**.”

Stories like this are a lifeline, a sliver of hope in the midst of weekly ministries that sometimes seem to have little impact. “We saw that all our work with these young ladies is not worthless,” says Hayley.

Anna, a fellow team member, shares a bit about the long-term nature of ministry amongst Muslim ladies: “Building relationships and trust takes time,” she says. “For many of these women, to be Pakistani is to be Muslim, so converting to Christianity wouldn’t just be about changing religions; it would be leaving all they know behind to embrace something totally different.”

Such a dramatic change can be an overwhelming thought, but in the midst of weekly exercise classes, girls clubs, sewing circles, conversing, eating and visiting together, Anna **prays** for God to break through.

“My prayer for these women is that they will see themselves as God sees them: valued and dearly loved,” she says. “I want them to know what true freedom is through Christ. I pray that as we interact with them, we could have these deep and important conversations, which would help transform not only the way they see themselves, but the way they see God.”