

# The Plight of the Muslim: the Great Cost of Following Christ

It's amazing to me how the Internet is heightening our awareness of what is going on in the world to a whole new level. Things all around the globe that have been cloaked in obscurity for hundreds of years are now coming to light, many of them taking center stage in mainstream media. Take for instance the case of Meriam Ibrahim, a Sudanese woman who had been sentenced to death for her Christian faith widely covered in media, like the May 16 CNN news report below. The struggle between Islam and Christianity has been going on for a very long time. Both faiths are "exclusive and expansionary", often causing them to clash.

Little do we, as Westerners, know that to be Muslim and choose Christianity in some nations and contexts means giving up everything. There is a vast difference of interpretation between how I read this verse and the meaning it holds for a born Muslim who has chosen to follow Christ and is counting the cost of that decision: *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24).

Meriam Ibrahim's case has just moved us one step forward in our understanding of the longstanding conflict between faith and religion and the toll it has been taking on people for centuries. My parents could tell you endless stories of MBBs (Muslim born believers) who participated in or came to faith in Christ during their missionary efforts back in the '60s and '70s, and after choosing to follow Christ were beaten, threatened, disowned by their family and ejected from their villages.

When I was growing up in Lebanon, I'll never forget the night we were evacuated because Israelis bombed an oil tanker nearby. Making our way toward the evacuation point, a 17-year-old Arab boy named Ali emerged from the shadows and safety of the bomb shelter to tell us "Shukran, shukran," *thank you* for bringing him the greatest joy he had ever known through Jesus. He was so thankful for his new life despite the consequences his decision brought: his Muslim family rejecting him, being thrown out of his home, and having to live in hiding from relatives because his own grandfather had issued a *fatwa* (death contract) against him for his faith decision (excerpted from *Hope Delivered*). Partners from around the world are constantly sharing with us that there are many young Muslims who have accepted Christ, but are keeping it a secret until they are old enough to go out on their own. They long for the day when they can be free of the shackles of the extremist Islamic community that they have been born into and the severe consequences they must suffer if they choose to turn their back on it and follow Christ.

Just this year, we received a testimony report from Africa of two Muslim children who attended a viewing of *The GodMan* film. At the end of the film, dozens of people stood and raised their hands to say they wanted to follow Jesus, and one of the boys felt like he should do it, too, but he had a very important question he needed answered before he could make his decision.

**'Do you think Jesus loves us, too? Did He also die for us Muslims?'**

The answer, of course, is yes! God's Word is for everyone. Hearing the story grips our hearts, even now, and sheds light on the other side of what it is like to be Muslim and try to understand Christ's love. For centuries, many born into a religion they didn't choose, and persecuted for choosing to follow Christ. *Their reality has not changed; we're just now more ubiquitously connected and keenly aware of it than ever*

*before.* Join with me in praying for the Muslim world, and for our own hearts to be touched by their plight as we pray for them to experience the freedom and joy found only in Christ.