

Why This Muslim Holiday Could Be a Good Thing for the Kingdom of God

Billions of Muslims are fasting right now to commemorate what they believe was the first revelation of the Quran to the prophet Muhammad. But what you don't know is it's also an open door for the kingdom of God.

"At Open Doors, we see Ramadan as an opportunity for God to reveal himself to Muslims," says David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA. "We pray that as they spend time searching out meaning and reflecting on spiritual ideas, that God would meet them where they are and bring them to Jesus."

He continues: "Sometimes, in other cultures that aren't as saturated with Christianity, God moves in ways that Americans would consider rare or extraordinary. As a result, we have heard from Muslims in regions around the world who claim to have come to Jesus through dreams and visions. Last year, we talked to Amir and Rasha—a couple from Lebanon—who both said that Jesus had appeared to them in dreams, independently of each other. In the husband's dream, he said Jesus called to him, 'I am your Savior. You will follow me.'"

While these miraculous visions are amazing, for some, this month of fasting brings nightmares.

Ramadan often comes with horrific violence against Christians or other Muslims, who are deemed "infidels."

Curry says that while the majority of Muslims celebrate Ramadan peacefully, in regions that are home to hostile Islamic elements, violence does increase during this time. This is because the Christians who do not fast or otherwise honor Ramadan stand out. When militants catch wind of

Christians who are not participating, they see these believers as infidels or traitors to Islam. As a result, some radicalized Muslims see Ramadan as a time of “moral cleansing” that separates the faithful from the unfaithful. They take it upon themselves to rebuke or eliminate those who do not adhere to the teachings of Islam.

“Last year, the Islamic State specifically called extremist Muslim brothers around the world to attack infidels in their homes and in public spaces. We saw similar calls to violence in the two years prior as well. These calls to violence are often followed by attacks on churches, Christian villages, or Christian travelers and other innocent civilians around the world,” Curry says.

Curry says the recent attacks on Indonesian churches in which more than a dozen were killed is likely linked to Ramadan. A radicalized family carried out the attacks. The next day, a similar family attacked police, and an 8-year-old child suicide bomber survived.

Rather than living in fear, though, Curry suggest Christians take the time to befriend their Muslim neighbors during this month, especially in areas not typically prone to violence. In some areas of Egypt, for instance, Egyptian Christians host breakfasts for their Muslim neighbors, to provide them with sustenance that will carry the fasting people throughout the day.

An estimated million Muslims living in the United States, and all of them are compelled to observe Ramadan as a part of their faith.

“In this way, they open dialogue and demonstrate the gospel of loving one’s neighbor in a powerful way,” Curry says. “While this example might not be a good fit for everyone, we can all think about it and look for opportunities to apply it to our own settings.”

Ramadan began May 17 and continues through June 15.

How you can participate:

- Pray for and with Christians living in countries celebrating Ramadan. Pray they won't encounter extra persecution during the month of Ramadan, and that they will be able to navigate tricky political, cultural, social and familial realities during this period.
- Pray they will be able to stand strong in their faith throughout the month and will be able to live out their faith, even within difficult contexts. Pray they will be able to love Muslim neighbors and show the love of Jesus to everyone they meet during Ramadan.
- Pray for Muslims during Ramadan. Pray their search for God will find its answer in the risen Jesus. Pray they will be kind to Christians in their midst.
- Download the free guide to pray for the Muslim world during Ramadan at .