

MARCH 2024

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

PRAYERPOINTS

NORTHERN AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN PEOPLES

While most Northern African and Middle Eastern peoples are Muslim and will be observing their fasting month of Ramadan, roughly March 10-April 9, everyone in this area is affected by the schedule changes Ramadan brings. Believers in Jesus from different countries and ethnicities have covenanted to pray in unity for their Muslim friends during Ramadan. Will you commit to join them in prayer?

SPARROW PEOPLE, TRAPPED IN FEAR AND DESPERATE FOR GOD

The Sparrow People of the Horn of Africa consider themselves descendants of Mohammed. Their identity as Sparrows is inseparable from their identity as Muslims. However, most Sparrows who live in rural areas do not read the Quran regularly or know what it says. They follow folk Islam, a form of Islam that incorporates native folk beliefs and practices. For example, when Allah's "will" does not match what they desire, the Sparrow people seek out the local witchdoctor for their wellbeing or success in life. When they have a problem with another person, they may go to the witchdoctor and pay him to curse that person. In Sparrow land, it is not uncommon to see people with mental illness on the streets. Some of them are believed to be ill due to a curse cast on them by the witchdoctors. It is not surprising that many Sparrows live in fear of evil spirits and the power of the witchdoctors. Sparrow Muslims also believe they can be near Allah if they pray while chewing khat leaves. Khat produces effects like amphetamines and is highly addictive. During the Ramadan fast,



A Khat Market in the Horn of Africa. IMB Photo.

khat consumption is even greater because it suppresses hunger. Pray that during Ramadan, instead of the narcotic effect they are seeking, the Lord will give Sparrow Muslims a true concept of who Christ is. As they fast and pray, ask that many Sparrows' hearts will hunger for truth and seek the one true God. Pray that these words of Jesus will be spoken to those who are seeking truth: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 ESV).

ANSWER TO YOUR PRAYER

During Ramadan 2023, we prayed for devout Muslims in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) to hear of Jesus' love for them. Also during that time, a group of believing women visited their friends who were very knowledgeable and committed Muslim women.

After several conversations, the Muslims accepted a portion of the Bible from the believers.

Thank you for praying for Muslims in U.A.E.!

1 When breaking the fast at sunset, Muslims gather with friends and family to enjoy a meal. Pray that believers will receive invitations to break the daily fast this Ramadan and for many people not only to hear the good news of hope in Christ, but also to receive it.

2 The Bible is being translated into the heart language of a Muslim people group. Pray that they will learn about this translation through radio and social media. During Ramadan, as Muslims work hard to please God, pray that they will encounter the truth from Scripture.

3 After years of prayer for her, Samira has agreed to listen to Bible stories. She is searching but is not yet open to any faith but Islam. This Ramadan, ask God to shatter lies. Pray for Samira's heart to hear God speak through His Word so she will accept Jesus.

4 A few Muslims have heard and accepted the gospel. They cherish it now. They are joining other believers this Ramadan in prayer that some of their family and friends will understand the great freedom they have found in Jesus. Pray for the deliverance of their loved ones.

5 Devout Muslims begin fasting a couple of days a week, several weeks before Ramadan begins, to ensure they have made up all past fasting days and prepare for this year's fast. Pray for Muslims to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd who prepares a feast for His sheep.

6 Sayeed and his family are believers in Jesus. During Ramadan they are ostracized by their neighbors. It is a lonely time for them in their village. Pray that

Sayeed and his wife will serve their neighbors this month and show Jesus' love to those who seek to harm them.

7 Some Muslims have invited a group of believing friends to break the fast with them. They know these believers are always happy to share a meal, a prayer for peace, and their faith. Pray for deep spiritual understanding for the Muslims and wisdom for the believers.

8 In her town, the mosque has electricity when no other place does. Noona and her children go there to cool off and stay the night with other women from the community. Pray for dreams and visions to come to all these women, confirming that Jesus is Lord to God's glory.

9 Followers of Jesus, Moussa and his wife, fled their hometown years ago due to harsh persecution. Now they have moved back. Ramadan will be especially difficult as the entire community will be watching. Will they fast? Pray for wisdom as they live out their faith.

10 Ramadan is a time of spiritual intensity. Outward rituals, which are not usually given much thought, are religiously followed. Inward contemplation of God is more valued. As fasting begins each sunrise, pray for Muslims to hunger for a deep personal relationship with God.

11 Families eat soups before sunrise and break the fast after sunset. These meals are often extravagant to compensate for lack of food while fasting during the day. Pray that, as Muslims feel emptiness in their stomachs, they will search for satisfaction in Christ.

12 Prices are higher than normal. Expensive dates need to be purchased to break the fast, and Kadiga's guests will also expect meat. She frets. "How will we make it through the month?" Pray for the poor to learn about and accept God's free gift of salvation.

13 Some believers count the cost as they meet to study the Word in a restrictive country. The risk is huge. If caught, they could spend years in prison. Pray for opportunities to encourage these believers. During Ramadan, pray that they will be a light to those around them.

14 During Ramadan, when many are religious, some young adults continue to seek only after the things of the world. Ask God to open their eyes to truth in Christ. Pray that they will find that He is the only door through which they can enter heaven.

15 Mursal and Amina, a believing couple from a Muslim background, are living in a Muslim town. They have a small group that meets in their home. Pray that during Ramadan many will be drawn to them to hear about the hope of a Savior. May their home be a source of light.

16 Some Muslims living outside their homelands sense emptiness during Ramadan. Disillusionment with their religion's rules and rituals has led to a secular lifestyle, except during this one month. Pray they will seek saving grace and truth in Jesus to fill their emptiness.

17 Bread, a staple in many cultures, has become expensive. Eaten at every meal and with every pot of tea, each kind

of bread has its unique purpose. Bakers are experts in their craft. Pray for Muslims to hunger for the Bread of Life and be filled by Him this fasting month.

18 A Muslim family has been prayed over for many years by a husband-and-wife believing couple. Please pray in agreement with the believers for this beloved family that has not yet received eternal life that only Jesus can give. Pray this will be the year they receive it.

19 Believers living with unbelieving family find Ramadan difficult. They can only exercise their freedom in Christ by eating when alone in the house. Pray for believers to draw near to God and be sustained. Pray that they will love unbelievers around them well.

20 During Ramadan, people become more religious, reading their Qurans, joining in on the ritual prayers. Pray that they will search the internet for spiritual things, finding movies and articles about Jesus. Pray that they will join online conversations where truth is discussed.

21 Ebrahim is a strong believer and well respected. He is gifted in directing inquirers to God's Word. Pray for Ebrahim and his wife as they minister through hospitality, breaking the fast with family and friends. Pray for deep, spiritual, life-changing conversations.

22 Men park their cars haphazardly, rushing into the neighborhood mosque at dusk during Ramadan. They break the fast by eating a date and joining in prayers with the crowd. Pray that

they will hear of a Savior who saves by grace, not good works such as ritualistic prayers.

23 A growing number of Muslims fast during Ramadan, not because of religious conviction, but out of obligation to family. Pray that they and their loved ones will hear the good news of the gospel where they are offered freedom through a personal relationship with Christ.

24 During his teenage years, Dahir rejected Islam. While he has embraced a secular worldview, he is willing to consider Christ. Many like Dahir are wrestling with their faith during Ramadan. Pray that this month they will find Jesus, count the cost, and follow Him.

25 Hot dry days, water problems, and rising food prices make fasting challenging and tiring. People feel the heavy burden of the law instead of closeness with God. Fasting is just something they must do. Pray for open hearts to accept the message of hope found in Jesus.

26 Muslims seek God through fasting, group prayer, and reading the Quran during Ramadan. Pray that the one true God will send dreams and visions of Jesus to those who earnestly seek Him. As they read the Quran, pray that they will want to know more about Jesus.

27 In the past year, almost two dozen people have completed an online Scripture resource in one region. As they fast during Ramadan, claim the promise that God's Word will not return void but will accomplish its purpose in each of their hearts. Pray for their salvation.

28 Weeks of self-denial during Ramadan creates physical and emotional strain for manual laborers that may lead to mood changes, angry outbursts, and even fighting among friends. Pray for the Prince of Peace to reveal His power and completely transform these laborers.

29 Muslim men do not eat or drink at work during daylight hours in Ramadan, but some break their fast and chat with friends at cafes late into the night. Pray that believing friends will be invited to join these chats and boldly tell of Jesus' sacrificial life and love.

30 On the Night of Power, one of the last 10 nights of Ramadan, Muslims pray all night at the mosque. Followers of Jesus gather in deep worship all night, asking the Lord to send dreams and visions to help Muslims see the way. Ask God to remove the veil from their eyes.

31 In Ramadan, Muslims not only fast but also increase devotion. They go to the mosque, pray, and give more to receive favor and forgiveness of sins. Christians celebrate forgiveness in Jesus. Pray that Muslims will turn to His righteousness and away from their works.



PRAYING FOR SPIRITUAL HUNGER DURING MUSLIM FASTING MONTH

It's spring in the desert. The weather is beginning to warm during the day, but the nights are still very cool. A Tuareg family is out herding their camels and hasn't seen another family for many weeks. They all expectantly sit around the mat for sunset to arrive so they can quench their thirst and hunger. The mother of this household has been laboring over the meal for several hours, smelling its goodness but unable even to taste. The time is near when they can break their fast and finally eat. As the sun begins to set over the desert and the sand changes colors from white, to tan, to a deep red, pray that this family, and others like them, will recognize the beauty of creation and truly desire to know the Creator of the vast land they call home.

BREAKING THE FAST WITH BELIEVERS AT THE TABLE

Rising from her prayer mat, Ferah hums as she prepares the last touches of the evening meal. Like others in her city, they will break the fast with dates imported from Arabia, spicy meat pies, and a bowl of rich broth. Then she will serve roasted chicken, turmeric-laced rice, and an array of salads, followed by glasses of tea spiced with cloves, cinnamon, and cardamon, and gooey Ramadan sweets, dripping in honey. Ferah's husband has invited guests who do not follow the pillars of Islam but pray and fast according to the words of Jesus. "What does that mean?" she wonders. Pray for Ferah and other dedicated Muslims to hear the good news of the gospel. Pray for them to see a vision of Jesus, calling them to Himself. Pray for them to follow.



Facts about Northern Africa and the Middle East



Northern Africa and the Middle East is a place of extravagant wealth and extreme poverty.



More refugees come from this region than any other place in the world, resulting in a large diaspora population.



The world's major religions — Islam, Judaism, and Christianity — all have significant populations in Northern Africa and the Middle East

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Some names may have been changed for security reasons. BI 14.5M 1/24 P7701-3

**REACHING
THE NATIONS,
TOGETHER.**