

Turning to Christ

What are the challenges for new believers?

As we follow Jesus, our identity and our sense of belonging are affected. Questions arise: Who am I? What are my values? New believers from Muslim backgrounds have similar questions. But in addition they also suffer intense psychological pressures that may include fear (of Allah, that He will punish them if they change, of family and relatives, of community, of death). They struggle emotionally dealing with difficult choices, especially when the laws are against them or when believers do not trust those coming to faith. Some experience rejection from their community or the Body of Christ or both, leading to shame.

Obstacles: A huge obstacle for new believers from a Muslim background is the Body of Christ itself. Someone has said, "If we want to see Muslims coming to Jesus and growing in Him we must change our attitudes. A physical church building may be very near to new believers, yet culturally Christians can be extremely far away."

New believers need examples of what it means to follow Christ and worship Him in a way that honours their cultural identity. For many, there are no models of how to walk by the Spirit. Others struggle to find a safe place to gather for worship, fellowship, and prayer.

Relationships are primary in Muslim communities so new believers ask questions like: How can we honor Christ in

daily life, marriage, and raising children in a predominately Muslim society? How can new believers find a partner and celebrate their marriage as followers of Christ in the local community? Where and how can one be buried? Because of their commitment to Christ some lose property, job, family inheritance, life partner, children, and/or participation in family or special events. Many have had the experience of being perceived as traitors to their family and culture as they seek to follow Christ. Others have died.

At the same time, there are theological questions that new believers face. Their questions about the Bible, God, attitudes and practices may not be addressed or even understood by the wider community of believers.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ *Pray for cultural sensitivity, awareness, and respect among believers as they interact with new believers from Muslim backgrounds.*
- ▶ *Pray for wisdom, creativity, and confidence for new believers and new communities of faith as they explore culturally appropriate ways to serve and worship Christ in the context of Muslim societies.*

Sept. 7, 2008

Day 7

TESTIMONY FROM FRANCE

I was raised in an open minded Muslim family and educated in a private Catholic school. My parents appreciated this well ordered school which encouraged morality and discipline. The cross was everywhere in the school but it remained a mystery to me. Even as a child I was interested by the existence of God. I made several efforts to change my heart through religious practices. Finally I heard the Gospel in a clear way from two families. Their friendship and kindness touched me greatly (Romans 2:4). Eventually I came to know the forgiveness of sins, and I discovered later that several people were praying for me, even someone in North America!

