

WHICH NONE CAN SHUT

REMARKABLE TRUE STORIES OF GOD'S
MIRACULOUS WORK IN THE MUSLIM WORLD



REEMA GOODE



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Which None Can Shut: Remarkable True Stories of God's Miraculous Work in the Muslim World

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To GOD

*Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!*

PSALM 107:8

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Foreword

We need to hear stories.

Jesus told stories.

I tell stories.

There is no substitute for stories because each one includes echoes from your story, or mine, or that of our children.

The nomad in the desert, the kite flyer in Kabul, the street kid in New York, the terrorist on the mountains in Pakistan, the stone thrower in Gaza or Bethlehem—every one of them has a story, and it needs to be told.

Why? Because Jesus died for and still loves every one of them. Their stories help us connect them to the redeeming power of Jesus so we can love and pray for them until each of them, too, is transformed into a positive force to make the world a better place.

Why is it that we see their stories as so different from ours?

They were all born as innocent babies, not as terrorists.

Many were born in countries where the message of God's love was not known. Does that mean they should not have a chance to hear it?

Why is it we have not yet spread the Good News among them?

Maybe we heard God's call but did not go . . . did not tell, did not share, did not care . . .

Maybe we thought it was too dangerous. But not caring and sharing is far more dangerous!

Yes, each person has a story; in fact, this book is full of them. What these stories from the Arabian Peninsula tell us is what happens when they meet the love of Jesus.

And that is why I look forward to a hundred more books like this one.

It's not just "their" story; it is "His" story.

—*Brother Andrew*

Acknowledgments

My husband, Mike, and I would like to acknowledge the many people who helped make this book, and even the stories in it, possible. Although we cannot mention names for reasons of privacy and safety, we want to publicly express our gratitude to the Body of Christ.

Thanks to our coworkers on the field. You all have stories like these, and we hope that this book well represents our mutual experience here in the Arabian Peninsula. Thanks to our dearly beloved teammates, who prayed and worked with us as these stories and events actually unfolded. Thanks to the quiet gentleman who first took an interest in bringing our stories to the public and planted the seed of faith that made me think I might actually write a book one day. Thanks to the dear couple who undergirded us with their prayerful support, inspiring us to believe God for great things.

Thanks to the servant leaders who saw the potential of the book. They connected us to others in the Body of Christ who are capable of doing what we aren't and have held our hand through the entire process. Thanks to our field leadership who, on more than one occasion, allowed us the freedom to do what we felt God was leading us to do, even when it went a bit against the normal grain. Thanks to the many, many believers around the world whose enduring prayers and financial sacrifices have provided the power for all our lights to shine in this darkness. The Lord's richest blessings upon each one of you. You know who you are, and so does He.

The Story behind the Storyteller

MEET REEMA GOODE

As a little girl, Reema remembers being very affected by Cecil B. DeMille's film *The Ten Commandments*. She believed in God and prayed to Him every night, even as a young adult. Still, she did not learn how to begin a personal relationship with God and find forgiveness for her sins until her early twenties, when she read a little Christian booklet someone had left lying around at work. It was the first explanation of the Gospel that Reema had ever understood. Immediately she gave her life to Christ and couldn't wait to tell others about Him.

Her first attempts to share the Good News probably confused people more than helped them. What were you supposed to say? How were you supposed to say it? Clearly not gifted to "preach," Reema decided to think through

what had happened to her and start by telling people that. As it turned out, many people could relate to her story and wanted to know more about a God who was so real and involved in ordinary people's lives.

In an effort to meet other Christians, Reema went to a different church every Sunday she had off from work for an entire year. But when she asked about their faith, people would talk about when they'd begun attending services or how they'd become church members, deacons, or Sunday school teachers. None of them seemed to know what she meant by "having a personal relationship with God" or "deciding to follow Christ." Reema realized that, like her, many people grew up believing they were Christians simply because they belonged to a denomination or went to meetings. But then, she wondered, where were all the Christians? Why were they so hard for her to find?

Tuning in to the radio one day, she heard a program that seemed to give her the answer. It was Moody Bible Institute's *Stories of Great Christians*, the dramatized testimonies of famous missionaries. Hearing how believers had left the comforts of home to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth made Reema wonder: Had all the Christians already gone to other countries where the message of the Bible was unknown, unavailable, or even banned? Her humorous naiveté served to draw her on to more serious thoughts.

The revelation that there were still places in the world where people could live their entire lives and die without ever having heard the Gospel caused Reema to ask herself a question. With what she now knew, how could she stay in America, where there were Bibles in every bookstore and complete freedom to choose Christ? And so, although she finally did find other followers of Christ and became an active part of a church fellowship, Reema was now committed to going to an unevangelized field someday. It turned out she wouldn't be going alone.

Reema met Mike in a cafeteria. She happened to get in line next to him, and then he followed her to her seat and wouldn't go away. She was actually a little miffed, assuming that this obviously older man, who was also tall and handsome, must be married. It soon became clear he was not. He was a single Christian man who had committed himself to serving God on an unevangelized field, and he was looking for a like-minded wife to go with him. They were married within the year.

While Mike finished his final two years of Bible college, Reema wrote to a number of agencies asking for information that might help them narrow their missionary direction to a specific place or people group. Where were the most people who were the least reached? Before beginning their search, Mike and Reema had barely heard anything about Islam.

Half anticipating that they would end up working with a remote jungle tribe, they were surprised when the Lord began to lay the Arab Muslim World on their hearts. But the more they learned about it, the more that burden grew.

After three years of establishing a church support base to stand behind them, Mike and Reema arrived on the Arabian Peninsula. They, along with their two children, Tim and Lydia, are still there.

Preface

God works in mysterious ways, and sometimes through seemingly unrelated events.

In 1990, Luis Bush coined the term “the 10/40 Window,” referring to an area of the globe that is home to the largest, most unreached people groups on the planet. Also in 1990, U.S. president George H. W. Bush initiated a military action in the Persian Gulf, known as Operation Desert Storm. These two unrelated events had a profound effect on the Body of Christ. How? God used both of them to draw the eyes of His Church onto the Muslim World—a world whose population, at that time, claimed one-fifth of humanity and had virtually no Gospel witness. Over the next two decades, a succession of world events sharpened the focus of attention even further—onto not only

the Muslim World at large, but the Arab Muslim World in particular.

Words that never touched our lives before became part of our everyday vocabulary: *Quran, Allah, burqa, jihad*. Awareness and concern for the one billion people living under Islamic rule skyrocketed. Books on Islam, Arab culture, and how to share your faith with a Muslim came out in droves. Multitudes of Christians around the world began to pray, give, and go.

Now after two decades of concerted and growing effort by the Church, the televised news from the Middle East seems to be just as depressing as ever. Is God answering our prayers? Is He actually doing anything in the lives of Muslims? If so, what? That's what this book is all about.

Our family has been living in the midst of a typical Muslim neighborhood, in Arabia, for more than a dozen



We want to let you see what we get to see as Christians living "on the ground" inside an Islamic country.



years. We want to let you see what we get to see as Christians living "on the ground" inside an Islamic country. We believe you will be greatly encouraged.

This is not a book about the religion of Islam itself or about Arab culture, nor is it a book about how to minister to Muslims, as there are many excellent volumes already written on those

subjects. We'd like to shift the vantage point, refocusing the reader's lens from a distant "aerial view" of the Muslim World at large to "zoom in" on how God has actually been working in the practical, everyday life of just one of many Islamic communities over the past several years. Instead of sharing statistics about how Muslims are coming to Christ, we want to walk you through the local scenery where we live through stories, and let you see for yourself the incredibly creative, diverse, unexpected, and thrilling ways in which God is reaching our neighbors with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His Word is spreading, and His Spirit is confirming the Truth to their hearts in very real ways.

Although the stories in this book are encouraging, uplifting, and sometimes even humorous, we do not deny that the Muslim World is often a dangerous place. Where we live, leading a local to Christ is a punishable crime. Muslims who convert know they will probably suffer persecution or even death. Nevertheless, every year more Christians come to live as witnesses for Christ in Arabia, and every year reports of stories like these are increasing in number and frequency.

The following accounts are all real-life events happening in real time to people we know personally. Of course some of the details, and all the names of people and places, have been changed in order to protect those involved.

It's our prayer that *Which None Can Shut* will glorify God,

inspire His people in their own walks of faith, and encourage believers everywhere that God's loving Light is penetrating the Dark Fortress. We also hope these stories will ignite more prayer for the Muslim World, and more compassion for those living under its rule, as they demonstrate how God is opening doors for the Gospel, confirming His Word, revealing His love, and winning hearts in Arabia.

Yes! God *is* answering prayer and He *is* building His Church! If the gates of Hell won't prevail against it, how can Islam?



*See, I have set before you an open door,
and no one can shut it.*

REVELATION 3:8

CHAPTER 1

The Open Door

It was a winter night in Little Town, Arabia. The crisp evening breeze was a welcome change from summer's daytime highs of 120-plus degrees. As I shuffled through the irregular and unpaved hardpan streets, the warmly spiced smells of *asha*, the evening meal, arose from every house to comfort the chilly air outside. It was after nine o'clock, and as the women washed up the dishes, children who normally came out to play for a couple of hours before bedtime had opted to snuggle up in sweaters and caps indoors, in front of their televisions where it was warmer. The empty stillness of the well-worn streets amplified the quiet padding of my sandals on the dirt. A lack of streetlamps made the glittering stars above all the more vivid against the black sky. And that moon! A huge crescent, the very symbol of Islam, seemed to be hanging directly above our

village like a signboard, a symbol of ownership. Joy bubbled up in my heart as I contemplated where I was and what I was doing. Here, beneath the dominating rule of the Crescent, I was on my way to a Bible and Quran discussion with neighborhood women.

“Come . . . and bring the books!” they had said. But even more amazing was that they had said it often. Within eighteen



Within eighteen months of arriving, our family had been able to share the Gospel at least once with virtually all of our neighborhood friends.



months of arriving, our family had been able to share the Gospel at least once with virtually all of our neighborhood friends, and God was confirming His Word to be true in their individual lives. It was incredible the way He opened doors, and it had all started in a quite unexpected way through a rather ordinary event.

We had just moved into the neighborhood and hadn't put much effort into meeting the neighbors yet, as we needed some time to adjust to simply “living” first. There was no city water, so the tank on the roof had to be refilled by water truck every five or six days. Every morning we filtered our drinking water and put it in the refrigerator to cool. The fridge wasn't coping well with the desert heat, so we purchased only a little food at a time to avoid its spoiling.

In those first weeks, it seemed like nothing worked the way it was supposed to, or at least not the way we were used to. The oven had no mechanism for telling temperature; it was simply “on” or “off,” which suddenly made cooking a new challenge. Our first load of laundry had been torn to shreds by the washer, limiting our limited wardrobe even further. We had not been able to flush the toilet for two days, and floor drains in the kitchen and bathrooms were plugged with trash, toys, and rags from previous tenants. Knowing that hospitality is such an important part of Arab culture, it seemed there was little point in meeting the neighbors until we had a decent place to invite them to. After initial greetings and small talk, it is polite to say “*Taali bayti*” [“Come to my house”], and we wanted to be ready for them to take us up on that offer. However, there was another reason we hadn’t met the neighbors yet, which we wouldn’t find out about until later.

Apparently, the *mutawwas* had warned the local people about us. Being religious teachers who provide guidance and spiritual assistance, they told their flocks that foreigners who come to work in Arabia are Christian missionaries sent to deceive their children, bring in immorality, destroy their families and country, and corrupt Islamic society as a whole. Of course, it’s true that we were (and are) Christian missionaries, but our motives could not have been more opposite

that description. This erroneous preconception was to become the first hurdle that God overcame for us.

Before coming to Little Town, my husband, Mike, and I had had to fulfill some specific requirements of our mission board, in addition to regular Bible training, to prepare for work in the Muslim World. We read books on Islam and cross-cultural issues, and Mike got some very practical experience reaching out to a Muslim population within the United States. The history of missions to Muslims overall seemed pretty discouraging then. In the past, Christian workers had sacrificed so much; they had labored so long and



*We believe our
experience in
Arabia is a direct
result of the
dramatic increase
in intercessory
prayer for Muslims
and missionaries
to Muslims.*



so hard over years and even lifetimes, with seemingly little fruit. In those days, the evangelical Church in general had little knowledge of the Muslim World. There were very few workers and little prayer support.

However in the 1990s, through the emerging focus on the 10/40 Window and the headlines generated by Operation Desert Storm, all that changed. The face of the worldwide Church turned to look upon the unreached

masses of humanity living under Islamic rule. Multitudes of Christians around the world began to pray, and things

started to happen. Followers of Christ began to find ways to become residents in Muslim countries where missionary activity is banned by law and constitutes a punishable crime. God began to open doors that were previously shut tight. We believe that our experience in Arabia is a direct result of the dramatic increase in intercessory prayer being made for Muslims and missionaries to Muslims by the Church around the world. For us, the door to our neighborhood began to crack open in a very unexpected way, through the humble means of a car that wouldn't start.

One morning as I was getting our three-year-old son, Tim, ready for the day, my husband, Mike, and I noticed the sound of a car engine outside turning over and over without catching. Being a "motor head" from his youth, Mike naturally went out to see what was going on.

He stepped outside our concrete block house into the gravel yard and a warm, sunny winter's day. A few more steps and he was through the metal gate that permitted entrance to our yard through a seven-foot-high wall. All the concrete houses had concrete walls surrounding them, giving privacy to women who had to emerge from homes to hang wash or go to kitchens, which were usually not attached to the rest of the house.

Since cooking smells in the home were considered unpleasant, incense was burned in all the living quarters to

give a fragrant, welcoming smell. Mike could smell the after-breakfast incense in the air as he came out into the dirt road.

There were homes in all directions, with no apparent order or municipal plan. Some of the streets were barely wide enough to drive through; others could accommodate five cars parked side by side. In fact, when visitors came to any particular house, there often were several cars parked that way in the street at once, blocking it completely.

On a weekday morning like this, however, few vehicles were around, since the children had been taken to school and the men had left for work. One car remained, hood open, under a scraggly thorn tree. A small group of men had gathered in front of it. Wearing their freshly pressed robes and traditional head coverings, they surveyed the situation under the hood with their hands folded neatly behind them. It was obvious no one knew what to do, but they were supporting their neighbor by standing by him in his trouble.

As Mike approached, he shouted a cheery greeting, "*Salaam alaykum!*" The men looked up and responded tentatively, "*Alaykum assalaam.*" Then Mike stepped right into their midst to assess the situation. It was a simple matter of cleaning and setting the points. A few minutes later, he motioned for the gentleman to start his engine. It caught immediately. A look of amazed appreciation came over the men, and they lifted their hands in the air in that time-

honored thumbs-up gesture that any Westerner would be sure to understand. Someone who knew a bit of English patted him on the back and exclaimed, “Number one! Number one!” The next thing Mike knew, he had been invited to several houses for coffee to reciprocate the favor. Later we would learn that this was not an initial gesture of friendship, but a traditional means of erasing indebtedness. Nevertheless, our family now had the opportunity to meet the neighbors.

At each home, Mike was invited into the men’s *majlis*, a special room reserved for receiving visitors. Women and children were ushered into separate quarters, and all of us were lavished with fine Arab hospitality. First we were brought cold water and juices, then dates and coffee, then an assortment of delicious foods, all skillfully prepared by the women of the house. We felt welcome indeed! However, it soon became apparent to our hosts that something was wrong with us. We didn’t seem to know how to eat normally.

To start with, we had some trouble just getting our bodies down onto the floor where the meal was being served. This being our first visit to each neighbor’s home, we exerted every effort to follow all of the cultural rules we had been taught. *Don’t let your backside point at anyone when you bend over.* Hard to do, when getting onto the floor in a room full of people. *Never ask someone to serve you by passing food, and*

eat only with your right hand. Okay, I'd have to get my right side within an arm's length of that tray, without bumping or shoving any of the other eight people who were drawing tightly together around the *fou'alla* to eat. *Don't show anyone the sole of your foot.* Shoeless and surrounded on the floor, there didn't seem to be any possible physical position left to sit in without breaking some kind of rule. Or some part of my body. I began to wonder why yoga wasn't included in our missionary training. Our contorted efforts were, shall we say, less than graceful.

Once in position, and trying to ignore the pain of our legs falling asleep under us, we turned our minds to the task of actually eating. Our hosts sat on the floor and ate everything, including grains of rice and slippery noodles, very neatly and effortlessly without the aid of plates, forks, or spoons. Even women wearing face coverings managed to enjoy their meal without getting a drop on themselves. We, on the other hand, appeared to have never eaten before. How pathetic we must have looked with food all down our fronts and in our laps. I think I may have gotten some on the lady sitting next to me. How would our Muslim neighbors ever listen to a message shared by grown adults who couldn't even feed themselves with their own hands?

My family is living testimony to the fact that God can use anybody. As embarrassing as it was to be counted "clueless"

in our new community, it disarmed the fear they had of us. Our very ineptitude was what gently opened the door to their hearts. We became the neighborhood project. Someone had to help this helpless American family.

As far as the *mutawwas*' warnings were concerned, if this was the best that the Christians could send to destroy Islamic society as they knew it, there was certainly nothing to fear.

Our neighbors took us under their wings and began to instruct us for our betterment, not only in dining technique but in other areas as well. They taught me how to make proper coffee and how to cook traditional dishes. (I think that was partly to help me and partly so they could enjoy "decent food" when they came to our house, which they did often.) The men explained to Mike how haggling works so he could avoid overpaying too much in the markets. (As a white Westerner, he'd still be overcharged—but not so much as an ignorant white Westerner.) The women showed me how to wrap my veil so it would stop falling off. They let us know how we should handle various social situations, answered our many questions, and gave us advice.

For our part, we offered what we had to them. Mike



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helped men with car and household repair questions (and was saved from becoming the neighborhood mechanic by the fact that all his tools were in America). He trimmed the trees so everyone could park their cars under them, out of the blistering sun. We helped kids who came to us with questions about their English homework. Our son, Tim, was more than happy to have a few dozen playmates sharing his swing and his toys. Being the only woman in our neighborhood with a driver's license, I could take the ladies to the *souq* (market) or the hospital, or to visit a friend who lived beyond walking distance. In short, we became *friends*.

Being friends with an Arab means visiting. They visit you. You visit them. If you can't go visit, you call and visit on the



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phone. There are even specific times of day for visiting various people. In Little Town, the ladies would visit each other in the morning at an appointed time between doing the chores and cooking the main midday meal. Men would visit men and families would visit families in the evening between the last two prayer calls of the day. To visit others was to honor them because you had made the trip to come and see them. They, in turn, honored you with hospitality. For us, visiting became the core of our ministry.

I mean, what do you actually do on a visit? (Besides eat.) You sit and listen. You get to know people. You talk! Talking with our neighbors was exactly what we wanted to do, and now we were expected to do it regularly. God had built a wide-open door of opportunity right into the culture, and we simply walked through it.

Amidst all the discussions about schools, inflation, weddings, cooking, politics, health care, and the rest, we had numberless conversations about spiritual things. It was our privilege to be the first Christians most of our Arab Muslim neighbors had ever met, and we wanted to make the absolute most of it. During that first term, we learned all we could about what our friends believed and why. They, in turn, wanted to know about us. We shared the Gospel at every opportunity, and there were many opportunities. Muslims even shared the Gospel with each other. One woman took a copy of the *JESUS* film from us and invited a bunch of friends over to watch it with her in her *majlis*. Another took an audiocassette series of the dramatized Bible and listened to it with her morning visit group. Who would have dreamed it would be like this?



Once, a fellow Christian worker gave us an Arabic paper that was circulating on the Internet titled “What the Quran Says about the Bible and Jesus.” It was intended to stir

Muslims' interest in the Bible. Being novices in the language, we gave it to our friend Habiiba and asked her to let us know if it said anything interesting—and if what it said was true. Apparently the answer to both questions was yes, because she took it to the local religious teacher for an explanation.

In her very own Quran, she'd confirmed that Sura 6:114-115 says the Bible is God's Word, which "was sent down from the Lord in truth"; that it should not be doubted; and that no one can change it. Yet every Muslim is taught to believe that the Bible has been changed and corrupted. Why? Well, from our viewpoint it's because Muhammad himself thought that his teachings were in agreement with the Bible. At least, with what he had heard of it, since he was illiterate himself. And how many of his followers back in the sixth century had Bibles to compare doctrine with? It wasn't until enough people could acquire books and read them for themselves that the conflicting natures of the Holy Scriptures and the Quran needed to be explained. Hence, the eruption of the teaching among Muslims that the Bible had been falsified somewhere in history—even though such a statement denies the very teaching of the Quran itself.

Such falsehoods persist largely because of ignorance. Indeed, if we had looked up these verses ourselves, we probably would have missed the issue altogether, because most

English translations of the Quran have since been “modified” to eliminate the dilemma such verses pose. But Habiiba was an Arab reading the Arabic text, and she knew there was no mistaking what it said. In all the times she had read the Quran, how could she have missed this? There were other problems brought up by the paper as well, and she decided to take them to the local mosque and ask for guidance. There had to be an explanation.

A devout Muslim, Habiiba was a credit to her well-respected family and proud of her heritage. She had no doubt that the religious teacher had a simple answer for all of this. But instead he became angry at her. He tore up the pages in front of her, and then told her to go home and forget everything she’d read. “Good Muslims don’t read such trash,” he’d said. She was appalled at his reaction and his treatment of her. She was a good Muslim. It was her wholehearted faith in Islam that had brought her to him for help. She was also intelligent and realized his overreaction meant he had no solution to the problem. This had a profound affect on Habiiba.

In recounting the experience, she determinedly told us, “I will never forget what was written in those papers!” Rather than squelching her interest, her zeal to validate her Islamic faith increased. Habiiba and two of her sisters became my best friends in the neighborhood. It was they who started

the practice of calling me late at night to “bring the books.” Although their motive was to explain and confirm the truth of Islam rather than to investigate Christianity, they were as eager to listen as they were to speak.

In their efforts to vindicate their religion, my friends were inadvertently exploring the basis for their own personal faith. What do Muslims believe? Exactly why do they believe it? Were they simply following the natural course of conformity to family and societal belief systems, or was there compelling evidence for Islam? As for me, whenever I shared a verse, I had them read it out loud to each other directly from the Arabic Bible. This not only saved time and prevented me from butchering the text, but it allowed them to see God’s Word for themselves. I peppered the teaching with personal illustrations of how God and His Word were working in my own life and the lives of our family and friends. The freedom to share was amazing. We found virtually all of our neighbors were open to some depth of spiritual conversation.



This openness God had created wasn’t limited to our neighborhood either. One morning I was looking for kitchen gadgets at a little shop run by an Iranian Muslim. He quickly helped me with my order and nervously asked, “Are you a

Christian?” I’d barely answered before he blurted out the rest of his question. “Can you get me a Bible?”

One day, Mike got into a taxi and the driver asked him, “Are you a Christian?” (This is not the way most conversations start off in the Muslim World!) It turned out that the cabdriver was an Arab who had been born in Jerusalem. As a young man, he had become a Jew. After some time, he concluded that Judaism wasn’t “it” and joined the Orthodox Christian Church. Later he rejected “Christianity” and became a Muslim. Finally, being disillusioned with them all, he had decided to bypass religion altogether and “go direct” to God. But how? After arriving at his destination, Mike stayed in the cab another forty-five minutes to explain exactly how to “go direct.” Afterwards the driver said, “If that’s the way it is, I like it! Thank you for opening my eyes to this!”

A more recent story also dramatizes what God is doing in Muslim hearts today. I was Christmas shopping at one of the many bargain centers in Big Town, another city some distance from our home. While I was going through the checkout, the young Muslim cashier made a mistake and undercharged me. Although he hadn’t noticed, I pointed it out to him for the sake of my own integrity. At first he smiled as if to say, “How dumb can you get?” But then his face softened and grew thoughtful, and he thanked me.

“No problem,” I cheerily responded, not even attempting to witness or share a verse with him in front of all the other Muslim employees. My white, foreign face told them that I was probably a “Christian”—not to mention that I had just bought several rolls of cheap Chinese Christmas wrapping paper. As I was loading the bags into the car a minute later, I realized I was thirsty and made a mental note to buy water at BigMart, my next stop. But the Holy Spirit seemed to interrupt my thinking: *Go back in and buy it here*. My first thought was, *Why? You don't like BigMart?* Still, I locked up the car and obediently went back in to get the water.

As I approached the register with my bottle in hand, two Muslim men wearing prayer caps to signify their piety stepped in front of me and dropped their armloads of goods down on the checkout counter. I had only a single item! The American part of me wanted to shout, “I was born in freedom! You can't cut in front of me!” The Christian part of me was thinking, *How can I turn this into an opportunity to show God's love?* Reasoning that no one can take anything away from me that I freely give them, I forfeited my “rights” with a cheery “*Tfaddalu*”—politely offering to let them go ahead of me. (*Love is not proud . . . love is patient . . . love seeks not its own*, I reminded myself.) The men responded with a derisive look that seemed to say, “Honey, we're going ahead of you whether you say *tfaddalu* or not.”

Although they had been completely unaffected by my attempt at grace, God did have a reason for all this. Waiting for them to check out meant it took longer for me to leave the store, and that is what gave the young Muslim cashier, whom I'd checked out with before, time to ask for his break, go outside, and walk down the street. By the time I finally paid for the water, got in the car, and began to drive away, that young man was waiting for me. Safely out of view from fellow Muslims, he waved me down. I pulled over and rolled down the window. "Can I help you?"

His words caught me completely off guard. "Yes, miss. I am a Muslim, but I want to become a Christian. Can you tell me how?"

When I introduced him to Mike later, young Ahmad explained what was in his heart. "I am a Muslim, and I know that we Muslims are not straight. We're crooked. But all of the Christians I know, they are like your wife. They are all straight. I want to be a Christian."

These stories, like hundreds of others, testify that this harvest field is no longer the barren granite of yesteryear. God has broken up the fallow ground and prepared the soil. The prayers of His worldwide Church have plowed



*Safely out of view
from fellow Muslims,
he waved me down.
"I am a Muslim, but
I want to become a
Christian. Can you
tell me how?"*



it. The sweat and tears of generations of faithful witnesses have watered it. The cooperative efforts of the Body of Christ across centuries and around the globe have sown it. The prayer warriors, missionaries, tentmakers, translators, producers of outreach materials and media, broadcasters of Christian programming, as well as those who spread the light through their businesses, Web sites, chat rooms, sports outreaches, and a host of other means are all being used toward the burgeoning harvest. All are part of a picture that is too big to see from any single vantage point. And so it should be, that the glory for the harvest will be no one's but His.



*Finally, brethren, pray for us,
that the word of the Lord may run
swiftly and be glorified . . . and that we
may be delivered from unreasonable and
wicked men; for not all have faith.*

2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-2