

STORIES FROM THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Did Jesus Really Go to the North Pole?

On Christmas morning two young men from Saudi Arabia, one a believing brother, Su and the other, Su's unbelieving cousin, Sa, rang up from their city. "We want to come to your country to see Christmas. We don't have Christmas here. Can we come to see you?" The answer was a quick yes and the two men joined their Christian friends, one his first celebration of the birth of his Savior with fellow believers. After a huge meal everyone sat around talking, and it was a great time of sharing.

The next day two Christian families gathered for a barbeque and bonfire in the desert. Su & Sa joined the group. The fire was built and the group ate as the sun was going down. Then the bonfire was built. We had a truck load of wood!

The two fathers sat with Su and Sa and discussed many spiritual topics. Sa, with great sincerity looked at one of the believers and asked, "Is it true Jesus went to the North Pole?" Almost immediately both the dads smiled as they knew the confusion. The West puts so much attention on Santa Claus or Father Christmas, that Sa, like many of his fellow countrymen assumed Father Christmas and Jesus must be one in the same. Very quickly the two Christian brothers articulated clearly that Jesus never physically left Palestine except when he was a baby for a few years. He was born in Bethlehem, lived all His adult years in Palestine, and then died outside Jerusalem where He was buried too. Then the strangest thing happened, Jesus came back from the dead and was seen around Jerusalem for some time before He ascended to be with his Father. Then a brief explanation was given for who Father Christmas was in history.

Sa has no idea that Su is a follower of Jesus. Su was quite happy as he knew that his cousin, whom he cared for quite a lot, had heard the Truth for the first time. The Truth always squashes the myth! As the fire died down the group packed up and headed back to the lights of the city. Su and Sa, quite happy to have 'seen Christmas' travelled back to their homeland.

Baby Mohammed - Born in a Time of Hopelessness

The first words Baby Mohammed heard were from his father, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is his prophet." Baby Mohammed has 5 older siblings, but all died in the womb or just after birth. His mother is devastated and spends much of her time tearfully mourning. He is the only living child, after so many pregnancies. Again, she has failed to produce a single healthy child, a curse.

The baby's mother and father are first cousins, something quite normal in Saudi Arabia. Serious defects are normal in this environment. Some of the defects are treatable and some are not. Baby Mohammed's heart is so messed up from congenital defect that there is nothing the medical community can do for him. He will die. Today, he is little more than a month old. People around Om Mohammed, the mother of Mohammed, just tell her that next time, God willing, she will have a healthy son. The reality is her and her husband, due to genetic incompatibility, may never have a normal child.

Baby Mohammed is fortunate to have Nurse Joan at his side. Nurse Joan is a highly specialized nurse in dealing with special need newborns. She knows the first words the baby boy has heard, nonetheless she tells that little person about the Truth. She sings "Jesus Loves Me" quietly for Baby Mohammed. She lovingly prays for him as she ministers to his slowly failing heart. Joan says, "Baby Mohammed is now smiling at me when I talk to him. His eyes are very sad. It breaks my heart to see him like this every day." Knowing he will pass soon Joan whispers to him about his future with Jesus. She bears this testimony, "Every time I mention the name of Jesus to this little guy, he opens his eyes and looks right at me." What a miracle! Failing body, mourning mother, hopeless circumstances, even a baby recognizes the tender name of the Savior.

Pray for the many Joans that work in Saudi Arabia. Joan knows if Baby Mohammed's parents find out how she ministers to their son, she is likely to lose her job. Nevertheless, she sings, prays, and touches this tiny person with the grace of Christ. Pray for this hopeless generation to Know the Truth!

All in a Taxi Ride

Ahmed used his car as an 'illegal' taxi to take people from the airport to the city. The worker knew this would provide him 20-30 minutes of time to share with Ahmed. After conversation about the 23 year-old's lot in life, only finished high school, grades not good enough to go to university, from a much less influential family, on the verge of being one of the 'disenfranchised' the worker began to sense Ahmed's futility in life. Such a young age and Ahmed really has no hope for the future or for life in general. He was a very kind and engaging young man, but just the wrong side of the tracks. You see, Ahmed was not from the big city. He was from the area of the Big Country where a number of the 9/11 hijackers came from. Ahmed, like his father, was just trying to eek out an existence.

Quickly the conversation turned over to 'religion' where for the first time in his brief years, Ahmed heard of the Truth! The field worker told him how God loves him, has a future for him, but that future is in 'ilmasseeh' the Christ. After some brief explanation of what 'ilmasseeh' had done for him, the worker told Ahmed how to accept God's Gift. Ahmed, very seriously, said he could not do this now. The worker carries a New Testament in Ahmed's mother language. The worker asked Ahmed, "Would it be a problem for someone if they were to give you an 'injeel', New Testament? Would it be a problem for you to receive a gift like this?" Ahmed quickly told the worker, "No problem whatsoever!" The worker kissed this small Book, put to his forehead, then over his heart, and gave Ahmed this portion of the Word of God. While he drove, Ahmed thumbed through the pages.

After Ahmed arrived at the worker's destination, he allowed the worker to pray God's blessing of the Word over him. After the prayer Ahmed seemed so grateful. They parted ways and the worker entered his destination. About 5 minutes later, Ahmed re-appeared. The worker, red-faced, embarrassed, begged Ahmed's forgiveness as he remembered he had NOT paid Ahmed for his taxi ride to the city! Ahmed was quite forgiving as he received the fare from the work. Again, the worker passed the words to Ahmed in his mother language. "God bless you!"

When the Pain Comes Screaming At You!

The worker needed an eye exam. He lives in a small Muslim country in the Middle East. Good eye care is available so he made his appointment at the local military hospital. He got to the eye clinic a bit early to insure he could find the place. Upon his arrival he was greeted by a woman in a white, military uniform. Majda, had her head covered in a traditional Muslim head covering, except since she is a nurse her covering was a very clean white. Unlike some women in her culture, Majda was very gregarious.

After welcoming the patient, Majda began to ask the normal first time patient questions. After 2 or 3 questions she asked, "What is your age." The worker smiled and asked "Isn't that kind of personal!" After answering he said, "May I ask you a question?" Majda retorted a quick "Yes!" The worker asked, "Are you a Sunni or Shi'ite?" This is often a good question to start a spiritual conversation in the area where the worker lives. She replied quickly, "I am Sunni. My family is originally from Iran, but we have been here for 4 generations." Majda resumed her rigorous line of questions for the new patient.

The time of information gathering was about half over. After being asked "Married or Single", the worker quickly pointed to gold band on the ring finger of his left hand. He quipped back, "May I ask you another personal question". Majda happily said "Of Course!" The worker had noticed Majda, not exactly a young woman did not have a wedding ring on. It is quite common for women in the culture to wear a wedding band while their husbands often don't wear one. The worker queried, "Are you married? You have no ring", pointing to his gold band again. Majda, quickly but with great sincerity declared, "I don't need a ring to help me remember my commitment to my husband." After a two to three second pause, just about enough time to draw a deep, painful, breath, Majda continued, "unlike my husband who wears his ring but is unfaithful to me. I know he has girlfriends. God will be his judge."

The worker reeled with the pain of Majda's answer. He knew he had touched a VERY tender nerve. Majda, almost with a sense of triumph recounted a conversation her and her husband had. "I told him God will judge him and maybe even cause him to have a heart attack when he is with the adulteress!" Majda said her husband freaked out fearing she would put a curse on him and cause him to die. He begged her to not put the curse on him. Through it all, the bitterness and poison leaked from Majda as a noxious gas. The worker knew Majda had never observed an Ephesians 5 marriage. He knew she was completely devoid of hope and was, with regard to her marriage, in despair.

The history gathering only lasted about 8-10 minutes. At the end, Majda escorted the new patient to the exam room to see the doctor. On the way the worker, with lowered voice told Majda, "I am sorry for your pain. You do not deserve what your husband

gives you. God has something greater for you." The sad conversation came to an end with the introduction to the doctor.

Majda is not unusual. Most Arab Muslim women live in fear that they can become one of two, three, or even four wives. As easily as he married her, he can replace her, and she can do little about it. She has no where to turn to. Her faith fully supports the man in his right to multiple marriage and even contractual marriage. Contractual marriage is for a limited time, hours or days, then the divorce is decreed by the man and money is given to the woman. In the West this is called prostitution. In the Arab Muslim world it is called not out of the ordinary. Pray for Muslim women to find the Bride Groom, the Prince of Everlasting Peace.

Stories of Light

Anna took the elevator up into the new building where her family was going to live in KSA. At the same time a younger local woman, Miriam, got on the elevator. As the elevator lifted off so did the conversation begin between the two women. A relationship began and as the elevator stopped Miriam asked, "Why don't you come over sometime?". Anna gave the usual response "inshallah" - if God wills.

Anna was very friendly and began meeting other neighbors in the building. One of these neighbors began telling scary stories about Miriam.

A few days went by and there was a knock on Anna's door. Miriam stood at the door and boldly said, "When are you coming?"

Not long after the knock on the door, a Ladies Welcome party was planned. Anna was invited to Miriam's apartment. She was most generous and hospitable. The neighbors were very nice to Anna.

As Anna and Miriam began to know each other and became close friends the two women would visit each others kitchens. Miriam usually visited Anna at the most busy times. Miriam wanted to know what Anna cooked and how she did it. Each time Anna made a new recipe she praised God for it saying "Bismilla" (by the name of God). The saying surprised Miriam. She said "How strange you are saying God's name." Anna said, "What do you want me to say - by the monkey's name. Of course I know God. I knew Him even before you." (meaning she was the older of the two women) Miriam never thought that Anna would know anything about God. It was her first time to hear anyone speak about God who was not a Muslim. Anna explained that God noticed everything that she was doing. They talked about family issues and how Christians think about many things including marriage, treating people, helping the sick and the poor.

Miriam said "Stop and listen to me, they don't allow us to know about other ways." She continued, "You know more about my religion than I do." "If I knew about your religion first I would be a Christian."

After one of the conversations Miriam said to Anna, "We know God by talking, but you know God by doing".

Anna says, "I thank God that He introduced me to this local lady, Miriam, someday I want to introduce her to my God."

The Restaurant

Two western women friends went to a local town restaurant to have breakfast. Being women alone, they entered the family section intending to share and pray with each other. As they picked a table away from others in the restaurant, two college girls at a nearby table waved at the women and insisted that the two expat friends sit with them. The girls had already ordered and so the two women ordered and after some small talk, the food arrived. One of the expat women said to the girls it is our tradition to pray for the food and thank God would you like to join us? One of the girls said yes, so the women held hands with the girls and prayed for the meal. The conversation continued through out the breakfast about classes, grades, hopes and dreams for their future and family.

As the meal ended one of the expat women asked the girls. "What can we pray for you about?" The girls mentioned several things, so the expat women explained that they pray in Jesus name because He answers prayers. They asked if that was okay and after an affirmative by one of the girls, they held the girls hands and prayed for the things that they mentioned and for their intimate knowledge of God's plans for their lives in Jesus name.

Even though the two women didn't get their time alone to share with each other, they both felt like this was God's appointment for this day. Unfortunately the phone numbers that were shared that day have been misplaced. However God knows these girls names and the expat women pray that their paths would cross with other believers some time.

Jesus is Risen

A group of expat women were praying for the local ladies. During the prayers, God laid on one woman's heart to call a specific local friend. When she reached the local woman, the expat found out that the local lady had cancer and the doctor told her that she had 10 days to live. The local lady was destroyed emotionally. On the phone the expat lady began to talk about Jesus and that He could help and He was the healer. The expat lady asked the local lady if she believed that Jesus could help and could heal. She said yes I believe and accepted Jesus on the phone as Savior. The local lady told the expat woman that "You make me feel like I am still alive , like I am flying." The expat lady shared verses about God's love, peace, healing and others. The local woman said "I never heard words like you say." The expat woman said "These are not my words but God's words to you."

They decide to get together later to talk again. The next day the expat lady received a message on her cell phone which said? It's true, Jesus is risen? It is several months later and the local woman is still alive.

Flying Faith

An expat woman was flying from Jordan to Bahrain. After being seated on the airplane, before take-off she noticed the woman across the aisle shaking and hugging her Koran. The expat woman initiated a conversation with the young woman. She proceeded to tell the expat that on a previous flight the airplane had had a fall and the airbags came out. She was very afraid of flying.

The plane was taking off and the conversation stopped. During the flight, the expat woman began praying and singing Arabic praise songs quietly. The young woman across the aisle noticed, tapped the arm of the expat and said, "Sister, Sister, are you a singer?" The expat smiled and said, "No, I'm just praying and praising God. Do you believe in God?" The answer was yes. Then the expat said "My God is filling me with His peace. Do you want peace?? The answer was yes again. Then she said, "You pray in Jesus name and he will give you peace."

The two women held hands across the aisle. The expat prayed and the local woman repeated the prayer, and ended with, In Jesus name. Then the local woman put her Koran down beside her on the seat. She said that she felt so happy. The expat noticed that the local woman never picked up her Koran again during the flight.

Alicia - Chocolate Love

Two expat women walk into an office for some paperwork to be done. Because they are women they must go into a woman's only room. The local woman behind the desk has a friend behind the closed door who leaves the room. It is evident that the local woman has been crying very hard. Her nose and eyes are puffy and red. One expat asks "Are you okay?" "Oh yes I just have a bad headache." was the reply. The expat thinks "yes you have a bad headache from crying hard about something but not just a headache.

The women do the necessary paperwork and before they stand up to leave the one expat woman puts her hand on the arm of the local lady and says can we pray for you before we go. After the three women held hands and prayed the local lady just repeated over and over "Thank you, thank you".

Unfortunately the contact info was lost and the women did not see each other again until one year later. Again the paperwork needed doing and the two expat women walked into the same women's only room. The local lady recognized the two and was so glad to see them again. As the women talked another local lady came into the office. The two spoke Arabic but one English word stuck out in the conversation "chocolate". As they finished their conversation the expat women said, "I don't know a lot of Arabic but I heard the word chocolate. I really like chocolate. Do you like chocolate?"

"Oh yes, I like chocolate very much, but not the Arabic chocolate only the good chocolate like in America. My friend brought me a chocolate bar? From under the sleeve of the abaya came a large chocolate candy bar. She handed it to the expat lady. "Oh no, I can't take your candy bar snack." Then the drawer opened and the whole drawer was filled with candy bars. She pulled another candy bar out for the other expat woman. The women parted with God bless you responses.

A couple of weeks later the one expat lady came back to the office with a box of fine dark chocolate. Tea, flowers, and prayers behind the closed office doors were shared. As the women talked the local lady opened her broken heart. She is 43, separated from her husband, has a 9 year old daughter with epilepsy, and doctors have brushed her off about her daughters worsening situation.

She has been to Europe and visited a church where she loved the people and the people seemed to love her. She enjoys being around Christians. Her thoughts included being born a Muslim she will always be an Muslim. She trusts Christians and knows that they care about her. The expat woman has been very bold about Jesus and praying with her. Through friends she will be traveling to a USA specialist hospital for her daughter's evaluation and second opinion. She has connected with believers in the city where she is visiting the hospital. She will be involved with this new family for about a month before returning to KSA.