



# Muslim Visions of Jesus

Story by Carmel Palmer

Hidden behind a couch, Sabah beat her head against the wall. She was experiencing constant pain because of dangerous fertility drugs. But she did not want her weakness to be seen by her mother's family. They were culturally Christians, but Sabah was a Muslim. They mistreated Sabah's mother because she had married a Muslim, although he was nominal in his faith. Sabah's father would violently beat her mother, and once, he had doused Sabah and her brothers in gasoline, waving a lit match and threatening to set them on fire. Sabah hated her father, but she hated her mother's Christian family more.

The conflict and fighting in Baghdad forced Sabah's family to move into her maternal grandmother's house outside the city. Whenever possible, Sabah flaunted her Islamic faith and argued with them about Jesus. Still hidden behind the couch, though, Sabah thought about some of Jesus' words they had told her:

***“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”***

MATTHEW 5:44

She thought, *Can anybody do that? Is that real?* Looking up, she asked, “Jesus, Who are You?” Then Sabah had a vision. She remembers, “Immediately, I saw I was in a crowd of people, with Christ at the center. He lifted His hand and the crowd parted. ‘Sabah,’ Jesus said, ‘Come.’ Walking toward Him, I spotted an imam I’d admired. Muslims surrounded him, crying, ‘Please save us!’ Terrified, he pleaded, ‘I cannot save you! Christ is the Savior!’ Shocked, I thought, *All my Islamic fasting and prayer was wasted—this must be doomsday; now there’s no chance for me.* But still, Jesus’ arms were wide open! He said, ‘Sabah, put your hands in Mine—I want to show you something.’ He showed me a man kneeling on the floor, calling, ‘Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ Christ said, ‘Do you see this

man? I want people like him who worship Me in spirit and truth.”

In the vision, Sabah looked into Jesus’ eyes and He said, “Daughter, your sins are forgiven.” She recalls, “Power like electricity ran through me; I shook, cried, and laughed. My pain left. Then He said, ‘Go tell them, “My coming is near.”’ He repeated this until I awoke.” Sabah reported that she was in the same room but with a completely different heart. “Jesus turned my hate for my father into unbelievable love. I immediately called him and told him I loved him. Before, his smell nauseated me. But when I next saw him and hugged and kissed him, his scent seemed like sweet perfume to me. ‘How did you become like this?’ he asked joyfully. I told him, ‘Jesus.’” Amazed by her change, Sabah’s mother accepted Christ and other family members became open to Him as well.

### Faith not Fear

Returning to Baghdad, she continued sharing Jesus at great risk until 2008, when a radical Muslim militia came to kill her. Newly married and pregnant, Sabah fled with her husband and brothers. She remembered, “We traveled 72 hours in the worst conditions. Each checkpoint was terrifying: our identity cards said ‘Muslim,’ but my husband’s said ‘Christian.’ Just that alone should have gotten us killed. At every checkpoint we prayed. Miraculously, not a single guard inspected that part.” They escaped and were relocated to California with the help of Hope for the Persecuted (HFTP).

“Sabah’s story is incredible—but not unusual,” said Wes Denham, pastor of CC Troy, MO, and HFTP’s chairman. “Thousands of Muslims are turning to Jesus in the Middle East through visions.” HFTP helps persecuted Christians in Muslim-majority nations by providing safe houses, food, and clothing. Working through an expansive network of indigenous pastors enables them to funnel

resources quickly to pinpointed needs. Their radio programs and newspaper *Al Tareek Wa Al Haque* (The Way and The Truth), are spreading the Gospel among Muslims. In the U.S., HFTP raises awareness of the plight of persecuted Christians, especially among churches. Wes reported, “Islam is spreading, but the Gospel is spreading faster in Islamic regimes. You can’t stop the Holy Spirit from drawing people. Christians must respond to Muslims in faith, not fear, reaching out with God’s love to those under Islam’s iron fist.”

### Radical Obedience

Shortly after 9/11, Tom Doyle, a speaker at the 2015 CC East Coast Pastors’ Conference, visited Gaza City, which Voice of the Martyrs referenced as the world’s most dangerous city for Christians. A woman in a hijab locked eyes and made a beeline for him. Grabbing his forearm, she asked, “You’re American? Did you see on TV when the buildings collapsed and people here were cheering? I wasn’t cheering. I was crying. That was wrong—I’m very sorry.” Tom remembered, “She tapped her heart, turned, and left. Approaching me was dangerous—her husband could kill her for that. God used her to break my wife’s and my heart for Muslims. Before that, we got our worldview from the news. The coverage of terrorism has frightened some believers, causing some to hate Muslims. It appears that they don’t realize how few Muslims have even read the Quran.” In Tom’s experience, “maybe 10 percent think jihad is viable but most seem consumed with goals like feeding their children.”

Tom is the Middle East director and vice president of e3, a global church-planting ministry. He leads mission trips, which assist indigenous Middle Eastern church planters. He continued, “My field experience shows that in the last decade, more Muslims have accepted Christ than ever before. I began cataloging stories as I met people; I have over 250 now.” Before conversion, Tom’s friend Daniel drove a tank for Saddam Hussein’s army. After coming to Christ, he began evangelizing everyone,

including his childhood friend Hisham. Hoping to stop Daniel’s constant talk about Jesus, Hisham agreed to read the New Testament. A week later, he called Daniel at midnight. “I have a problem,” Hisham said morosely. “I think I’m falling in love with Jesus. But give me the Old Testament. The Jews are tricky—I’ll be able to tell if it’s false.” Another week passed; Hisham called again. “I have a bigger problem,” he grieved. “God must’ve helped the Jews write the Old Testament—otherwise they would’ve made themselves look better. Now I must pray and fast 30 days. If I become a Christian, I could die.” A month later, Daniel received another call. “I don’t have a problem anymore,” Hisham said peacefully. “I had a dream—I know that Jesus is the truth.” He now pastors an underground Iraqi church. Though recently shot in the head, Hisham miraculously survived and continues proclaiming Christ.

“Muslims aren’t abandoning Islam over one dream,” Tom stated. “It’s the power of God’s Word combined with these visions. When they do accept Christ, we’ve seen immediate, radical, costly obedience. Our church planters ask, ‘Before you accept Jesus, are you ready for persecution, to die for Christ?’”

Another contact, Farid, leads church planters in Damascus, Syria. When the war escalated, he gathered his 10 men at their secret location. “If we’re going to leave, we must leave now,” he said. “We have wives and children to consider. Let’s fast and pray for a week; whoever stays, return next week.” On the appointed day, Farid approached with head bowed. Expecting an empty room, he found 25 men—his team had been recruiting. After vowing to care for each other’s families, should anyone be martyred, they pooled scant resources to buy a graveyard so they could be buried together. “A year later,” Tom rejoiced, “the graveyard is still empty.”

***“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant ... who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*** MATTHEW 13:45a–46

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