



# RESCUED



17 TRUE STORIES OF THE ~~UN~~REACHED

Rescued  
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## INTRODUCTION

What does it look like when people in unreached parts of the world hear about Jesus and choose to follow Him? What draws them to Him? What does it cost to follow Him in these places? How does life change after they know Jesus?

The answers to these questions are as different as the people He created, but the threads of truth run through each story. Because of the rescue and redemption of Christ, there is light in the darkness, hope for the future, and joy in the suffering. Each story reveals a God who sees us, knows us, loves us, and fights for us. And each story reveals a transformed life on mission for the Gospel!

Each of the following stories also represents those who pray, those who send, and those who go for the sake of the Good News. There are still more than 3 billion people who have not yet heard that God loves them enough that He sent His Son to rescue them. We'd love to talk with you about your role in reaching the world with the Gospel. Learn how to get involved at [teamexpansion.org](http://teamexpansion.org).

These are the true stories of real disciples. Names and faces have been changed for their protection.





Ahmad

My faith story unfolded in a busy camp of refugees, where the sound of daily life reverberated through the air. My family and I had strictly followed the Sunni faith of Islam for generations. Our lives were about to take a profound turn.

At a simple lunch gathering with friends, the conversation flowed naturally from everyday topics to matters of faith. A believer among the group saw an opportunity to share the love of the Lord with me and my family. I'm sure it was a daunting task for him to open the doors to the Gospel, but something extraordinary was about to happen.

We had been devout followers of Islam for years, and our journey toward Jesus was a process that spanned many months. The transformation was far from immediate, as we grappled with new beliefs and ideas.

Ultimately, we were convinced when a member of my family experienced a series of dreams. For three consecutive nights, she dreamt of a bright wall bathed in radiant light, with Jesus Himself speaking to the family, declaring His divinity, and urging us to follow Him without hesitation. At first, we were skeptical about her dreams, but as they persisted, we realized that this was a divine revelation.

With new faith and the guidance of our Christian friends, we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Our lives were forever changed, and we became a united Christian family, living in the light of the Lord.

This transformation came at a cost. We faced hostility from our neighbors, who vehemently opposed our conversion to Christianity. Complaints were lodged with their landlord, attempting to force us out of our apartment. We lost friends and faced discrimination, but our faith sustained us, and we continued to share our newfound joy with others.

Now, when I look at my family, I see joy. The worries of feeding our family and living as refugees have dissipated. We have found solace in our faith and revel in the love of the Lord.





## Chalita

One day, Prija, a local believer trained by Team Expansion, was prayer walking in my community when she felt led to stop at my house to pray for me. That day, Prija prayed for my back, my eyes, and that God would bless me.

More importantly, that day Prija planted a seed in my heart.

The next day, Prija visited again, and I told her my eyes and back felt better, but that wasn't really what amazed me. What amazed me was how well I had slept.

I said, "Prija, what did you do? I have not slept that well in over 30 years!"

Prija took the time to explain her own story and about the goodness of God. I was excited to hear more and so the next week, Prija started a Bible study group with me and my neighbor.

Ever since that day, Prija has been

meeting with us each week. My neighbor and I both chose to follow Jesus! I remember how hopeless I was before I became a believer.

I used to sit alone at home and think about how I could end my life.

I had been overcome with sadness; my husband had died more than 20 years before and we had no children to take care of me in my old age. Because I was poor, I had been shunned by my community and often did not have enough money to buy food. I believed I was worthless and had no desire to keep living.

The day Prija stopped by to pray for me, I was at my lowest point.

But now, look at my life! Now I have friends, I have enough food. I know God is real and I'm not afraid anymore! My life is valuable, and I don't want to die anymore!





Élodie

The first week that I (a Team Expansion missionary) preached at The Bridge International Church, just outside of Paris, I noticed a pair of eyes staring intently at me, hanging on every word.

I came to discover that the person tracking every syllable of the message was a professional dancer named Élodie. She grew up in a broken home with a mother who was a nominal Catholic, as most French people are. She had no exposure to the Gospel as a child, which is, again, typical for most French people.

As she pursued a dancing career, she met a young Christian man who was interested in her. He talked to her for years about the Gospel as they pursued a relationship, as did other dancers in a Bible study that met regularly.

When I met Élodie, she was on the

culsp of giving her life to Jesus and affirming that commitment through baptism. When she first approached me in 2022, I told her that I could not baptize someone who was living with her boyfriend outside of marriage. She understood and quickly asked her boyfriend to move out until their wedding date the following year.

God honored that decision in many ways. Soon after, I baptized Élodie and then a couple months later, I performed her wedding. She promptly took over our set-up/tear-down team and has done a fabulous job of organizing and motivating those volunteers. She also organized a dozen dancers to help us with an outreach at our local homeless shelter. She has since volunteered to offer two hip-hop dance workshops at our church's community center, where we hope many people will come and hear of Jesus.



She has maintained an intense hunger for Jesus and continues to grow quickly as she applies all that she learns. Her wedding was a wonderful testimony to new life in Christ, and nearly 100 people from Paris' professional dancing community were in attendance.

Élodie is typical of many in the country of France. They hear little of the Gospel as they grow up, but they know that they need something other than atheism to answer the questions of life. Even though our church is English-speaking, we have attracted several French/francophone people who are seeking the Lord and coming to faith in Him.

Élodie is an inspiration to us all. It's life giving to our church to see a new believer who is so excited about her faith. And, she still stares intently at me when I preach.







Emir

I was born in a Muslim family and was brought up in this culture. At the age of 29, everything went wrong. I broke up with my fiancé and was getting worse at my job, which I loved so much. While trying to forget the negative things in my life, I was meeting new people and changing environments frequently.

Nothing made me happy.

Because of my boredom, I wasn't taking care of myself. I was drinking alcohol and using drugs. I continued with these addictions for a while. I was angry and constantly asking WHY? One day I wanted to kill myself. Just as I was about to commit suicide, my thoughts flashed toward the Creator. I thought about the afterlife.

As I was about to kill myself, I called out to the Creator:  
*Are you God or aren't You God? Someone save me. I didn't think that life could be this hard or that people could be so cruel and insensitive. I hit myself with alcohol and substance abuse. I know these are bad, but You know that I only use*

*them to get away from troubles, pain, and sadness. Please help me if You can hear me. I don't want to use them. If I'm going to deserve hell, like what I've been taught, by killing myself, stop me right now. I want to be happy without being dependent on anything. If this is the case because I have lived far from You and offended You, show me where I made a mistake and teach me how to make a fresh start. I'm about to die, God. Help me.*

## DREAMS

After I said this prayer, I fell asleep, and I heard a voice in my dream. While I was in the dark, someone said to me, "You will find a break, knock on the door and it will be opened to you. Because every caller finds Me, my door will be opened to the one who knocks."

Then I had another dream. In the darkness, there was something far away that looked like a door and was shining. I was running toward the light, and someone standing by the door in the light called out to me and said:





"I am the door. You cannot go to the Father without Me." He also said, "I am the light of this world; follow Me. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. He will have the light of life."

After these dreams, I woke up with a peace inside me, but I still didn't know what to do. I was constantly praying to the Creator to show Himself to me and asking Him to explain to me what these dreams I had had meant. I spent months thinking about what dreams mean.

#### KNOWING GOD

One day, while drinking coffee, I met a Christian. While talking, I suddenly felt very close to him. He understood me and listened to me sincerely. I warmed up to him and started to tell my story, then talked about my dreams. After talking about my dreams, he took a small book out of his bag for me. This book was the Bible.

To my amazement, he showed me verses from the Bible, and they were

exactly the same as what I heard in my dream. These were the words of Jesus Christ himself! I realized that it was Jesus Christ who called me in my dreams.

After that, I started reading the Bible. As I read, I found peace and Jesus gave me hope. I realized that Jesus is Lord and Savior. Through the Bible, God showed me that what had happened to me was not God's fault, but rather because I lived on my own accord.

In a very short time, Jesus gave me healing, hope, and blessings. I got rid of all my addictions and bad habits without any medical support. Jesus saved me, and thanks to the Bible, I now know God very well and know that He is a loving Father.

Before following God's way, I used to not like people. Now I love them very much. I am no longer under the control of sin. I have become a new person and I am full of hope.







*Hassan*

As a young man in his early thirties, Hassan was becoming increasingly disillusioned with Islam and hungered for an intimacy with God that seemed like a distant dream. With a large, prominent family in what he describes as the most conservative city in Iraq, he knew that even the simple act of expressing his discontent could bring serious consequences. Nevertheless, a seeker now and acutely aware of the risk he was taking, he sought and found a Bible and began devouring it.

A few years passed and Hassan emigrated, along with his wife and children, to a neighborhood in a sensitive field in the US where more extended family members lived and where he was able to land a job as an engineer with the Ford Motor Company. A believer now, convicted by the Holy Spirit through the power of

God's Word, Hassan's faith became the faith of his wife and children. Seeking fellowship, he wandered from church to church – even giving Jehovah's Witnesses a look until their apostasy became evident – and finally landed on a church that my wife and I attended. Several years into his walk with Christ, he had still not been discipled, but that would soon change.



I learned about Hassan through the pastor of that church. For several months the three of us attempted to meet, but circumstances always got in the way. I eventually set up a meeting with Hassan myself at a local coffee shop. His story was compelling, as was his childlike eagerness to learn how to make disciples. The following week, I began taking Hassan through



a training in how to obey God's Great Commission and make disciples who multiply. During that first session he exclaimed, "This is exactly what I need!" and that's been his mantra ever since.

Hassan has chosen to remain secretive about his identity as a Christ-follower among both his ultra conservative family in Iraq and the uncles living in his neighborhood. "If they found out,"

explained that he loves his father so much that it would be unconscionable for him to not tell him of the hope he can have in Christ.

The deep love of a son for his father, a new friendship with a missionary in the US, newly acquired tools from discipleship training, and the Spirit of God who lives within us all seem to have worked together to enable



he told me, "they would kill me."

But after several discipleship sessions, Hassan dropped a bombshell that brought tears of joy to my eyes. He had begun making plans to return to his birth city in Iraq to share his faith with his father, despite the reality that it could potentially cost him his life. He

Hassan to conquer fear and compel him to do a thing that was once unthinkable. We are all privileged to be able to join in his journey by





Jean

My name is Jean. I was born into animism. Our family are hunters. It is my grandfather who is the leader of the hunters. Everyone comes to my grandfather to find powers for hunting. After my grandfather died, my father took this. We have some idols that we worship before going to the bush for hunting. My father killed a lion with those powers.

My father would go to the bush for one week and people would carry the animals back to the house. They sold the animals and got money, but the money always seemed to disappear, and we don't even have a good place to sleep. Even getting something to eat was very difficult. There wasn't enough for food. We took the animals and did sacrifices for hunting.

Life was very difficult for me. I was still young when my father died. And I was to take his place as chief of hunters. I couldn't. My grandfather died in this way. My father died in this way. I was afraid. I thought it would be the same for me—difficult life, early death.

One day, I heard a man talking about Jesus as savior. He told me about Christ, who can save me. I decided I will follow Jesus. I believed Jesus would save me.

The day I accepted Christ, all my fear passed. In everything I pursued, like business or farming, I could see the fruit in it — the good things coming from it. It's not by my power, but by the power of God. Everything started changing my life.

Everyone said harm would come to me. One day, I called people to come and help me. We took all my idols and burned them. People told me I would go be punished, but I told them, "No, Jesus is on my side."

I see people like me who are doing that life of sacrifice. My vision is to tell them about Jesus. I want to accomplish the task in my country. Through disciple-making movement training, it is very easy to touch the nation. Anywhere I'm going, doors are opening to train people to train others.

This is my story of what God has done for me. I will never forget.



In my country, it's permissible to be a Christian if you were born into a Christian family. It's illegal if you weren't. In this country, our names identify our religion. Christian families have one set of names; Muslim families another. I was born into a Muslim family.

Joanna

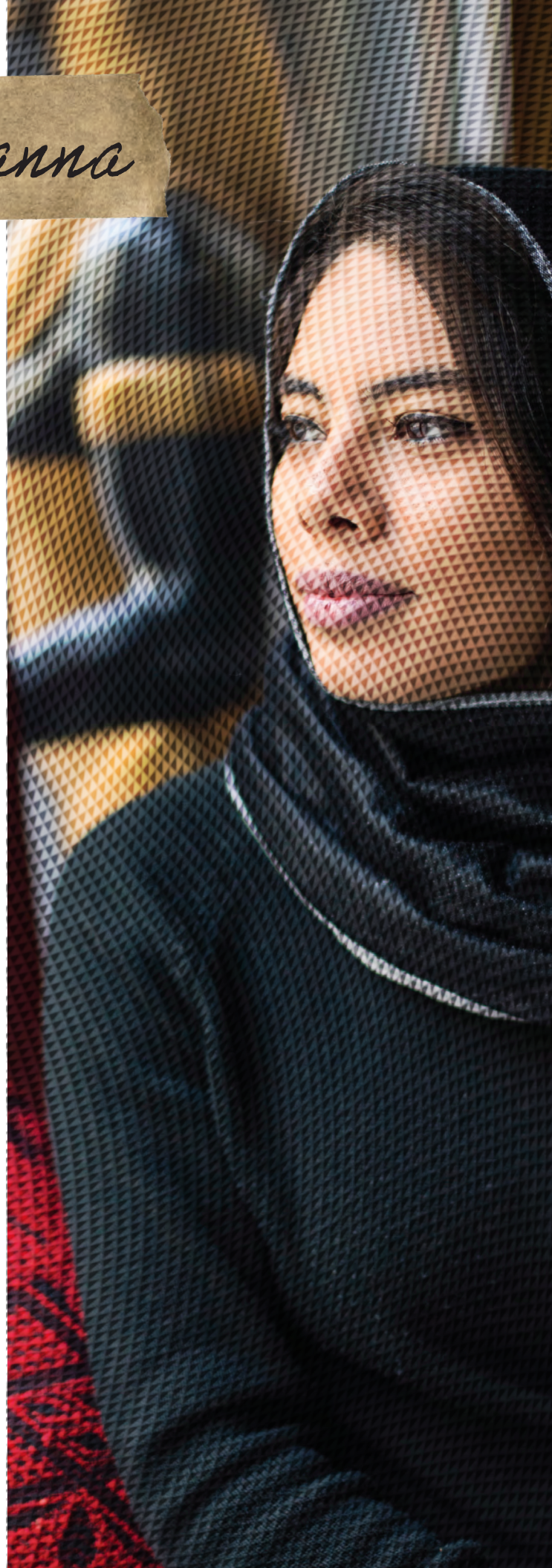
As I became an adult, there was a season where my heart was longing for truth. I was resolutely searching for something real. One night, Jesus appeared to me in a dream. He told me that He was the Truth. I had no doubts. I believed Him immediately, tracked down a Bible, and surrendered my life to Him.

When I tried to share my new faith with my family, it did not go well. I was disowned and disinherited. I secretly changed my name so no one would know I had been born Muslim. My decision to follow Jesus cost me my family, my possessions, my heritage, and my community. It even cost me my name. But it secured my future.

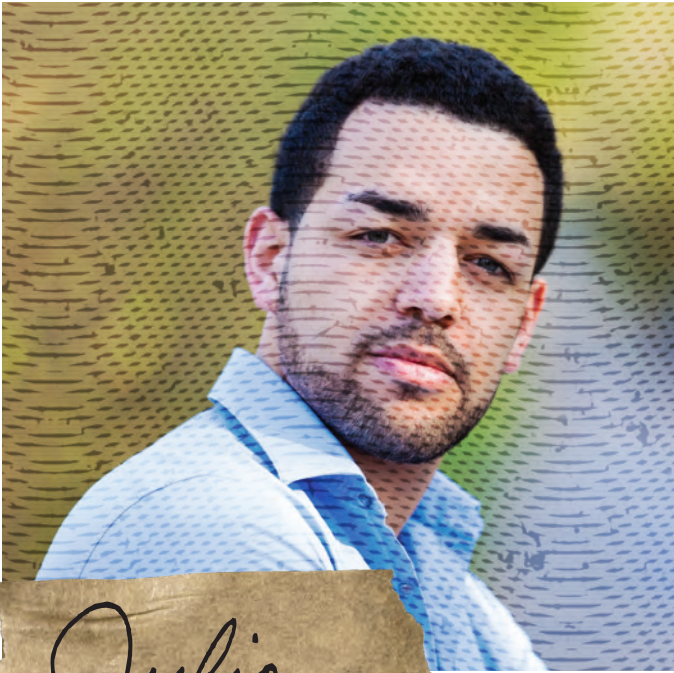
I lost everything, but I have Jesus.

Now, I live on mission in the secular marketplace. For years, many have tried to tell me that the best way for me to serve was in full-time ministry, but God has not released me from this role. I am praying every day that He'll use me to make an impact for the Gospel among my peers. He's given me influence and a strategic role to serve my co-workers.

Even though there's great personal risk, I follow Jesus. I lost everything as a Muslim daughter but gained eternal life as the daughter of the King.







Julio

I was raised in a traditionally Catholic home. My family would go to mass when they were invited to celebrate a first communion, a wedding, or a baptism, but I went because I had to, not because I had faith. It was pure tradition. My view of God was skewed. I'd never felt Him, I'd never seen Him. He could exist, and probably did, but I didn't really know.

Then troubles came and I hit rock bottom. My marriage was on the verge of divorce. The tension in my home led to constant fighting with my sons. I worked two jobs and still barely made ends meet. My business was headed toward bankruptcy.

One morning, at 5:30, I was alone in the kitchen of my restaurant, preparing the food for the day. Suddenly, I felt the weight of it all crashing down on me. I began to feel an immense pressure and pain in my chest. I couldn't breathe. I feared I was about

to have a heart attack. Not knowing what to do, I cried out, "God, help me!" I ran to the bathroom and knelt before the toilet, feeling like I was going to throw up. As I knelt, I suddenly felt a hand on my forehead and a voice in my ear that said, "Don't worry."

In an instant, the pain was gone, the pressure was gone. I took a deep breath – I could breathe. I looked around to see who had touched me, who had spoken to me, but I was alone. As the day went on, my wife, who noticed a tremendous change in my demeanor, asked me, "What happened?" I couldn't respond, all I could do was point with my finger upward and whisper, "He spoke to me."

That day everything changed, but I needed to know who had spoken to me, so I did the only thing I knew to do. I and my wife went to mass, but I didn't hear anything. My questions remained. I needed to find who had spoken to me, so my wife did a Google search and found an evangelical church nearby. We visited the very next Sunday, and that preacher was speaking directly to me. My church knew the God who had spoken to me.

I and my wife became connected with the church and were later baptized. My marriage was restored, my relationship with my children was healed, and the Lord provided a much better job within months. It doesn't mean that my problems went away. They continued to be there, but my problems don't control me.

Since that moment in my life, I know who I am, I know why I am here, and I know where I am going.





*Laila*

As a woman in Afghanistan, my options for the future were limited. When I learned about Abdul-Ali's training center, where I'd be qualified for a stable and reliable job after a two-year course of classes, I was thrilled. I'd have a secure future.

The training was for both young men and women, and I knew the opportunity to participate was a rare gift. I began my studies, started learning, and even made new friends.

One day, I heard a short-term team talking about Jesus. As a devout Muslim, I was furious. I couldn't believe that people in my country were talking about something so forbidden. I was ready to leave the center when Abdul-Ali and his team convinced me to continue learning.

For three months, I listened, argued, considered, and questioned. I learned the history of the Bible and the history of the Quran, as the relationship and trust continued to grow. God was drawing my heart to the truth, and His invitation to know and follow Him was irresistible. I was baptized as a new believer.

I came to the center looking for a

future. Through Christ, I found a purpose I never could have imagined.

#### SERVING MY PEOPLE

I was transformed by the Gospel. I loved the people around me and found purpose in guiding others to true hope. Soon, I was leading discipleship groups, meeting with others quietly in my home, and even working for the center where I'd found my future.

When Afghanistan fell to the Taliban in August of 2021, I found myself in a new role. As powerful leaders fled and foreign aid workers were forced out, I and the other believers with me stayed. Someone was going to need to care for the displaced people of Afghanistan.

Even now, the people around me are hungry, traumatized, worried about surviving, and craving hope like never before. We are working with Team Expansion's partners in Afghanistan to meet physical needs, provide training and encouragement, and offer light in the darkness.

The needs in Afghanistan and the nearby nations are enormous, but we are seeing unprecedented spiritual opportunities.

For the first time, the whole nation is looking for a secure future.





## Manu

I did not want the missionaries in my village. I was the local sorcerer, and the people in my village trusted me. So, when I saw the two men praying through my village, I was furious. Each week when they'd return to pray, I'd chase them out and insist they never return.

One week, instead of going through the village like usual, they came to me directly. They told me that God loved me.

I was so frustrated. Ever since they'd begun praying in my village, my magic wouldn't work anymore. I had tried everything I could think of, but nothing changed. I had even started to feel sick, turning people away when they came to me for help because I knew I didn't have any power.

"I believe you are coming from a power bigger than I have," I admitted, defeated.

That day changed everything for me. As they taught me about Jesus, I soaked in everything they said. I began inviting others from the village to come in and learn with me in my active pursuit of following God.

Now I don't need to chase away the men of God. I introduce them to other villages and try to open doors for them to share the Good News in more places. And I don't need my own powers to serve my village; I have the power of the Holy Spirit living in me!





Sanyal

I was born into a Brahmin family, the most revered caste in Hinduism. Beyond that, my family are priests to the Brahmins. But as a teenager, I discovered Jesus and dedicated my life to Him.

I struggled for years as my family and friends rejected me, and even my own church leadership beat me because I would share about Jesus without being ordained or “qualified” to share. Eventually, I met a foreigner who invested time with me, showing me how to share in a way that starts house churches that can multiply.

15 years later, I was married to a Christian woman whose family had followed Jesus for generations, and we had a miracle daughter, even though the doctors had told us it would be impossible. And God had launched more than 3,000 house churches through my ministry.

Then an interesting thing happened. The Westerners built a training center for us to use to train the leaders of this growing ministry. This brought the attention of the government, who slowed the construction into a 5-year project with the driveway to be paved only 3 years later. It also turned me into an administrator, which is not something I’m good at. At the time when I met Team Expansion’s workers, everyone believed I had become “unfruitful.” I was considering giving up ministry, especially as support began to dwindle.

The workers met with me and encouraged me to continue ministry. They found support for me and my faithful leaders to do training.

In the last couple years, God has launched hundreds more house churches. He has also given me a vision to organize other Brahmins to reach Brahmins. This hasn’t been attempted before, but I believe God can turn all of my country toward Himself through this group of people!





## Suzanne

My name is Suzanne from Benin. One side of my family was Christian and the other side Muslim. My mother was a Catholic. She would go to church, and I followed her when I was young. My father didn't know Christ.

A time came when I didn't go to church again with my mother and I followed this world, the things that are no good in my life.

My husband's name is Yakugu, and he was a Muslim. I didn't know Christ very well. I couldn't share it with him. My life was very difficult. We were facing problems and didn't have any peace. I was fighting with other people. I knew that it wasn't good to live this way, but I didn't know how to do anything differently.

We had been married 17 years when I met someone who shared Christ with me. I learned Jesus is the true way. I started sharing with my husband and prayed for him for a long time. One day, the DMM

group leaders prayed for me.

My husband called me into the room. "We have followed Islam for nothing. Nothing changes. We have been going to the mallam to get powers, but our lives don't change. But from the time you took Jesus as your savior, I see things changing. You are a hairdresser, and the work was falling down for a long time, but today I see the greatest things coming through you. I know this is the true way. I am a Muslim, but things aren't going well for me. From this evening going, I accept Jesus as my personal savior and serve Him."

That day, joy came into our family. Our children were very happy their father accepted Christ. I started teaching my husband. Today my husband is a leader in our country, always telling people about Jesus. We want to go into all the nations, preaching Christ. Today my husband doesn't get any rest without sharing Christ with Muslims; it is Jesus that is true. Because of this, the movement is going quickly in Benin. We know that this is what God has called us to go and do.



When I was 12 years old, an explosion blinded me in both eyes and I received a burn on my face. After the rehabilitative period, I began to search for the meaning of life and for consolation.

I started drinking, smoking, and looking for hope in the wrong things.

Soon, I fell into the criminal community and life went downhill. Many times, I heard about Christ, but rejected Him because I considered myself a Muslim.

When I was 18 years old, I met a man who told me about Jesus. Once again, I refused to listen, but I took the man's phone number.

After some time, I stabbed a man with a knife and then realized my own helplessness. That day, I asked God to let the man survive and God heard me.

Two days later, I called the man who had told me about Jesus and met with him. I repented and committed himself to Christ. The very next day, God delivered me from everything I had been doing to numb my pain. I stopped drinking, smoking, and using drugs. My whole life from that point was for Jesus.

I began attending a local church, met a woman, married her, had two children, and now I even have a grandson and a granddaughter, all thanks to God. I am a minister of a Central Asian

church. We have groups inside and outside of our city, with a total of about 20 people. We also work with other churches and people who help



meet needs, travel, and serve the community. Most of the people we serve are poor, but because of Jesus, I can give them eternal riches!





Umar

I was a shepherd for some men from one of the local ethnic groups who owned all the animals, and I was responsible to look after the flock and take care of the animals. Because of this work, I would travel long distances, especially with camels. Often this work took me to another country and back, by foot or on the camels.

One day, while I was going to the market in a distant town, I met a man who shared the Gospel with me and gave me an audio Bible. This was my first contact with the Good News, and the believer continued to follow-up with me. The believer visited often and started to build a relationship with me and his family. After several visits, my wife and I accepted Christ and were baptized.

As a result, the men that I worked for chased me away and fired me. They refused to pay me for the past work I had already done, and they called me “Kaafr,” which means, “someone without God.”

When my family and I accepted Christ, my half-brother also came to Christ — he and his whole family. Our two

families continue to face persecution from those around us, but we are committed and can see the light of Christ shining brightly. We have prayed to have an impact on our communities and have started several house churches in surrounding villages as well.

The other people did not like this. They began refusing to share water from their well with any families who were following Jesus. Then Team Expansion’s team came and dug a well. Water is available now for anyone who comes, no matter what ethnic group, no matter what gender, no matter what age.

The small house church is located right next to this well. The well is a point of meeting, a point of contact for so many in the surrounding villages, as well as people passing through. This gives us great opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Many from our village and the surrounding villages have seen the transformation in our lives and have started to ask many questions. We tell the people, “This water is for everyone — and the greater news is that the love of Jesus Christ, who is the Living Water, is for everyone too!”



Gounas



& Zubiya

Our family has been a part of a home church for many months in a resettlement camp for Afghan refugees. We and our teenage daughters are finding hope and purpose using our home to engage in multiplying disciples. Our journey had been nothing short of extraordinary.

We hold home church gatherings and trauma healing classes at our house. We welcome fellow Afghans — sharing daily prayers, and spreading the love of Jesus. God has worked miracles — saving many families and bringing them into the faith of our Lord.

At one point, we received specialized training in Disciple-Making Movements. Empowered and inspired, God used us to launch multiple home churches, each

aimed at multiplying disciples among Afghan refugees. God's grace was evident, and the ministry was flourishing.

#### MEDIA OUTREACH

Our daughters, who are 15 and 16, wanted to join in the ministry, too. They harnessed the power of social media to spread the Gospel. They launched a TikTok and Facebook page named "Fresh Life." The page is dedicated to sharing the teachings of Jesus and spreading His love to the refugee community in our area.

God divinely intervened in this social media platform. *Fresh Life* attracts attention, and people from all walks of life are discovering the message of hope and salvation. Within just a few days, the page had gained a significant following and the account received messages and inquiries from 25 different families, all eager to learn more about Jesus and His teachings. God is working through our daughters — using their online presence to bring people into His love and truth.

Every day, we witness the power of God to use ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. He has given us a commitment to our faith, dedication to spreading the word of Jesus, and the innovative use of social media. All around us, He is transforming lives, giving solace to families, and lighting hope in the hearts of many.

Our family's journey is a testament to the remarkable ways in which God can work through the most unlikely individuals. We are certainly not perfect, but in His grace, our good God is allowing us to witness the expansion of His kingdom, one soul at a time.





Josef

I remember when I was in elementary school, I had questions about who God was, where He lived, and even if He used the bathroom. None of the answers I received satisfied me, and I felt like God was an old man with a stick, angry and ready to punish. These thoughts, which seemed wrong to me even as a child, turned me away from God as I got older.

I thought, If there is a God and He chooses to punish us, if He is constantly testing us in this world and looking forward to our near failure, I cannot believe in such a God.

I also struggled believing in a God whose last representative in this world was fighting and collecting loot, building and occupying an army, and commanding to kill those who were not his own, as is true of Mohammad.

But I still had questions. How was I created and how does the entire

universe take place if there was no God?

#### LOOKING TO SCIENCE

For a while I thought science was the only thing that could best answer that question. I read every book I could get my hands on, starting with Darwin and the theory of evolution. I read a lot about how the world works, the behavior of living things, and the development of communities and cultures. As an engineering student, it would have been absurd for me to believe anything else anyway. My life had to be science-based, of course, and my existence had to have a science-based explanation.

For a time, I was a staunch atheist. However, over time, I realized that these scientific explanations were also blocked somewhere. Yes, mankind was able to explain what was going on in this world thanks to science that progressed over time. We were slowly understanding and reasoning about the secrets of this universe, the mechanics of the world we live on. But



we couldn't quite understand how it all started in the first place.

It was like playing with sand in a sandbox in a playground. It was possible to experiment with sands and make some inferences. For example, I could examine and understand the structure of the sands. I could try and find out how it behaves when it gets wet. I could measure their size and see if there were different kinds of sand. However, all these experiments and observations did not give me an idea of how the sand got into that box in the first place.

But most importantly, there was an unfilled void inside of me and I had no idea how to fill this void.

#### KNOWING GOD

Later, when I graduated from college, a friend asked me a very strange question: "Do you believe in God? I think He has a plan for you. Do you want to get to know Him and find out what His plan is?"

"If there is a God, I would really like to know Him." I said.

My friend and I began to read the Bible regularly. As I read, my curiosity

increased because there was an ongoing story starting from the creation of the world and mankind. I realized that the Bible, which I used to read only as a story, was getting deeper and deeper. The answers to my questions about life and God were here. But what really impressed me was God's compassion and love.


As I read and saw God's love, I realized that something inside me had changed. If there is a God, this is how He should be: caring, loving, well-planned, and self-sacrificing for His children. A God who gives justice to His power, uses it not for Himself, but for His children, sacrificing His only beloved Son!

I asked myself what I was waiting for and decided to be baptized that day.

Not only did I find answers to all my questions about God, but I also found hope. No matter what happens now, I know God has a plan for my life and I can trust Him.







## Zenaibel

For two years in Venezuela, I heard the Word of God, but because of the people I knew who were supposedly religious, I thought I needed a thorough knowledge of the Bible and that I had to live without sin to be baptized. Because of these burdens, I moved away from God, and I no longer attended church. I did not want anything to do with Christians.

Eventually, I moved to Ecuador with my young son. The believers in Ecuador met me through my sister-in-law when I agreed to come to her church service. After the service, I asked several questions about how to have a relationship with Jesus. I noticed that the church wasn't judging or critical, and I felt so welcomed.

The believers offered to do a series of discovery lessons with me, and I agreed. After completing the third lesson, I decided to get baptized. I wanted to change my life and know God through Christ Jesus. I learned that a relationship with Jesus is not the same as a demanding religion.

I was so excited to be baptized and begin a new life in Christ Jesus! I am now connected in a ministry that encourages me to love my neighbors like in the parable of the Good Samaritan. I went from being wary of church people to being one of them!