



RAMADAN: An Opportunity

Building gospel relationships with your Muslim neighbors

imb
connecting



Getting to know people from other cultural and faith backgrounds helps us understand not only how we are different, but also how we are the same, sharing life's common challenges, fears and joys.

By engaging with Muslims in genuine love and respect, we acknowledge to them and to ourselves that God does not play favorites. His grace is truly amazing, intended for us all.

Ramadan is an incredible opportunity to pray for and reach out to Muslims around the United States. A good place to begin any encounter with Muslims is developing an understanding of what they believe. They approach Islam with immense reverence, so showing respect for their religion and having even the most basic knowledge of Islam will go a long way in opening doors to relationships with Muslims.

With more than 1.5 billion Muslims in the world and nearly 6 million in the United States, you are likely to be around Muslims at work, at school or in your community. Your attitude toward them could be a determining factor in their openness to the gospel.

Will you take the opportunity of Ramadan to reach out to your Muslim neighbors?





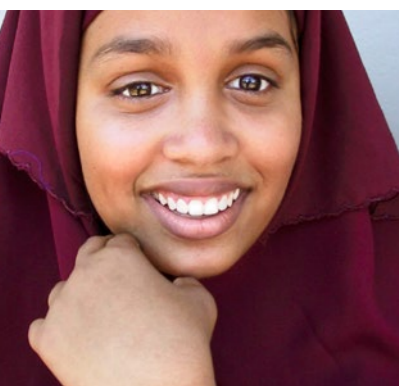
The Opportunity of Ramadan

Five times a day, a hauntingly melodic voice calls faithful Muslims to their ritual prayers. The song of the muezzin, a man trained in Arabic recitation, sounds across the world from the radios of American homes, the crackling speakers of African villages, the public announcement systems of Dubai shopping malls and the extravagant speakers of the “Sacred Mosque” in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

In the Muslim month of Ramadan, however, the muezzin’s sunset call is not only a call to prayer — it is a call to eat. As the rays of evening sun fade from each succeeding continent, waves of Muslim communities worldwide break their fast from food, water and other physical desires in an evening celebration with family and friends.

The 30-day Ramadan fast, observed from sunrise to sunset each day, represents not only cultural tradition, but also religious obligation. As one of Islam’s five “pillars,” the Ramadan fast tangibly displays the most foundational belief of Islam: Strict observance of Islam’s requirements creates righteousness and encourages Allah’s forgiveness of sins. The resoluteness of faith in such a tenet enables the Muslim faithful to endure long, sweltering summer days without even one drop of water touching their tongues.

As the muezzin’s last note of the evening call trails away, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts and adolescent children reach for their prepared glasses of water. They have succeeded in completing another day of fasting. They laugh, enjoying the meal together. It feels good to earn favor before Allah.



“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation! I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God’s righteousness” (Romans 10:1-3, HCSB).



About Islam

The majority of Muslims strive to live a life pleasing to Allah. Their approach to Islam is one of reverence and, at times, fear. They treat the Quran — their holy book — prayer and all aspects of their religion with the utmost respect, and often are appalled by the nonchalance with which westerners regard God.

Islam teaches that favor with Allah is based on a person's works. Many Muslims claim they can't know the outcome of their life until Judgment Day. They can only hope they did enough to please Allah and enter paradise.



The basic guidelines that help a Muslim live a life that pleases Allah are called the five pillars of Islam.

1. Professing belief in only one god — Allah — and his prophet Muhammad (*Shahada*). There are many prophets in Islam — including Jesus — but Muhammad is the final prophet through whom the Quran was delivered.
2. Praying five times a day (*Salat*). In many Muslim countries, when the call to prayer sounds from the minarets, all must stop what they are doing and pray facing the direction of Mecca. Laws often force businesses and shops to close during these times.
3. Fasting during the month of Ramadan (*Sawm*). Ramadan is the holiest month of Islam. Practices vary among Muslims as to how they observe it. Traditionally this involves fasting during the day and celebrating after sundown. Some Muslims will drink water during the day; however, others will spit so they do not even swallow their own saliva.
4. Giving alms or money to the poor (*Zakat*). Many teachings of the Quran are admirable, and some such as this are in line with Christian values.
5. Making a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca (*Hajj*). If a Muslim is crippled or too old to make the journey to Mecca, they may send another person to go in their place. Non-Muslims are forbidden from entering the city of Mecca.



10

Ten Practical Ways to Reach Out

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).



1. Prepare a bag of dates and nuts to pass out to Muslim neighbors right before sunset. Include a card or short note to introduce yourself.



2. Visit a mosque in your city with a friend. Many mosques will open their doors to the community during Ramadan. Enjoy a meal with them if they break the fast at the mosque. Talk with someone about Ramadan, asking questions about why they fast. Exchange contact information with someone you've connected with and invite them to meet you for coffee or to visit your home. Be sure to connect with someone of the same gender — never invite someone of the opposite sex.

3. Fast and pray each Friday throughout the month of Ramadan.

4. Ask a Muslim neighbor or friend about Ramadan. Some Muslims assume Christians never fast or pray because they often don't have the opportunity to observe believers doing this. Respectfully listen to why they fast and pray, then explain Jesus' commands to Christians about these topics.



5. Invite some international Muslim students from a local college or university to your house to break the fast one night. Family is important to Muslims, and many international students do not have the opportunity to be in an American household. They will miss the time with family and friends from home. Make sure as you prepare the meal that you do not use pork or pork products. Do a little research on which foods not to use and how to prepare the ones you can. You may even invite the students over for the afternoon to help you prepare a few dishes. Use the time to talk and get to know them. Have the food ready right at sunset, as they will be hungry.

6. The 27th night of Ramadan is called the “Night of Power.” This year it falls on July 13. Muslims believe Allah revealed the first part of the Quran to Muhammed during this night. They often stay awake until morning and pray for blessings and forgiveness. Plan to stay awake through the night with other believers, praying for Muslims to experience dreams of Jesus that will lead them to seek out and be open to truth from a biblical witness or exposure to God’s Word.

7. Prayerwalk a neighborhood that has a significant Muslim population. Ask some of the Muslim neighbors if they would like prayer for anything specific during Ramadan.

Cultural Insights to Keep in Mind



8. Go to an evening meal at a Muslim family’s house. Use the time to get to know them, ask questions and possibly extend an invitation to your home at a later time. Remember, the meal includes a lot of food, but the relational part of the evening is more of a priority to them.

9. Visit and eat at a Muslim-owned restaurant that is offering an iftar meal — the evening meal that breaks the daily Ramadan fast. You can find halal restaurants that follow Islamic cooking laws zabihah.com. After Ramadan, visit the restaurant again. Find a dish you like on the menu and visit regularly. The owners will greatly appreciate that you come and try to get to know them.

10. Make plans for after Ramadan to connect with the Muslims you have met. Maintain the friendships in a genuine way, reaching out by showing interest in their culture and family. The friendships you will make will be a blessing to you and an opportunity for them to see Christians living lives devoted to Jesus.

Throughout Ramadan, don’t eat or drink in front of your Muslim friends during the times they cannot eat — after sunrise and before sunset.

Hospitality is an important part of Muslim culture. Make hospitality a priority with Muslim friends by inviting them into your home.

For Muslims, the cleanliness of their homes reflects the condition of their hearts. A clean kitchen goes a long way with impressing a Muslim guest.

Indoor pets are not common in most Muslim countries, so it is best to leave them outside when a Muslim guest is visiting.

Pork is forbidden in Islam. Out of respect, do not serve or eat bacon or any other pork products around your Muslim friends. Alcohol is also forbidden in many contexts of Islam, especially during Ramadan.

Serve tea or coffee before and after the meal, and make a point not to rush conversation; the dialogue should be the central focus of their visit, not the meal.

Day 1
Thursday, June 18

Many Muslims anticipate the beginning of Ramadan with great excitement. It is a time when greater emphasis is placed on spiritual matters. Ask the Father that those who truly desire to know Him will see their need for a Redeemer.



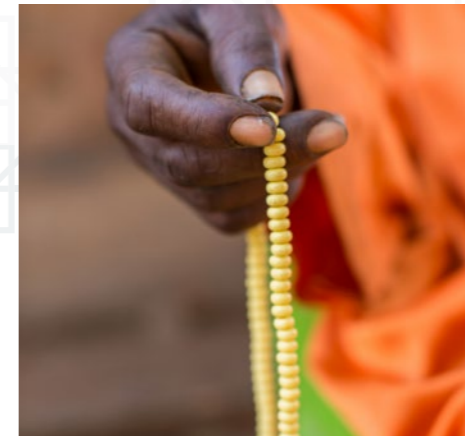
Day 2
Friday, June 19

The number of Muslim refugees in urban centers in the U.S. is increasing. Pray more fellowships will reach out to these refugees with compassion to meet their needs and tell the gospel story. Often it is the poorest Muslims, like these refugees, who actually fast. Pray that as they observe this religious ritual, God will draw them to Himself and reveal the truth of salvation.



Day 3
Saturday, June 20

The number of Saudi university students in the United States is growing. Pray for American believers to reach out in love to Muslims by befriending them and inviting them to a meal, to a small group Bible study or into their homes. Pray international Muslim students will experience Christian hospitality and love.



Day 5
Monday, June 22

Pray many Muslims will recognize the emptiness of striving for Allah's approval through works and instead cry out for full forgiveness of sins through Jesus.

Day 6
Tuesday, June 23

Ask that believers will be bold and take every opportunity to share Christ. The season provides wonderful occasions for believers to visit the homes of Muslim friends and break the fast with them.

Day 7
Wednesday, June 24

Muslims often associate Christianity with Western culture. For many, the word "Christian" signifies materialism and a lack of spirituality. Ask that God will provide true followers of Jesus with whom Muslims can develop deep relationships.

Day 8
Thursday, June 25

Some Muslim families in the U.S. struggle with trying to protect their young people from immorality and materialism — which Western society introduces to youth. Pray these families will meet true believers who struggle with similar concerns and will use this as a bridge to share the truth of salvation.



Day 9
Friday, June 26

Some Muslim women move to the U.S., following their husbands who have jobs here. Their children attend local schools and soon become part of the culture, but the women stay at home, don't learn English and suffer from loneliness or fear. Pray that women who love Jesus will reach out to these ladies, offering friendship, community and the chance to hear the gospel.



Day 10
Saturday, June 27

Arab children who grow up in the United States look Arab, but often adopt many characteristics of U.S. cultures. At home, their parents are concerned and want them to stay close to their heritage. Pray for families who are caught in this tension. Pray they will learn that in Christ, all cultures and peoples are welcome to salvation, and He can bring peace to families in turmoil.



Day 11
Sunday, June 28

Pray the Father will work within His church around the nations and a community of Muslim-background believers will be built up as many are removed from their own families and communities due to renouncing Islam. Pray for those who can remain in their families to have boldness to share in their cultures. For those who cannot, pray for faithfulness and community.



Day 12
Monday, June 29

Pray for believers in Africa who may not be participating in all aspects of Ramadan. Many are openly excluded from their families and communities because of this. Pray these Christians will have boldness and kindness in sharing their faith and stand as an example of Christ's love.

Day 13
Tuesday, June 30

Pray for communities in Africa as Ramadan opens a time of more spirit-driven awareness. Pray believers will testify to the power of Jesus alone.

Day 14
Wednesday, July 1

Ramadan is a time of searching for truth. In many cases, Muslims who are looking for God seek conversations about spirituality. Pray for open conversations between Muslims and Christians.

Day 15
Thursday, July 2

For Muslims living in the United States, pray God will bring into their lives a Christian family or friend who loves them dearly, will walk with them in a potentially lifelong relationship, and will disciple them to understand what it means to have abundant life in Christ.



Day 16
Friday, July 3

To be Hui is to be Muslim; to be Turk is to be Muslim; to be Kazakh is to be Muslim; to be Saudi is to be Muslim. The list goes on. Please pray people around the world will know God welcomes all ethnicities; salvation is for everyone who believes. Pray cultural identities will not keep people from seeing the truth about salvation.



Day 17
Saturday, July 4

Pray for Muslim immigrants as they face prejudices and isolation in many cities throughout Europe. Muslims are not effectively integrating into European society, causing fear and ill will on both sides.



Day 18
Sunday, July 5

Pray God will give believers in Europe and the United States from Muslim-background cultures courage and faith to take the Good News of Jesus back to their places of origin.



Day 19
Monday, July 6

Women must wake up early each day to prepare a meal their families will eat before the sun rises. Pray that as women tire because of this schedule, they will encounter true rest in I AM.

Day 20
Tuesday, July 7

Pray Deaf people who adhere to Islam will learn about Jesus through friends or dreams that open their hearts to the Word. Pray for God to send out more Deaf to share the hope of Christ with their Muslim friends.

Day 21
Wednesday, July 8

Pray American Christians will choose kindness and friendship over prejudice.

Day 22
Thursday, July 9

Pray there will be a supernatural movement of the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus, the Messiah, to over 400 million South Asian Muslims who are seeking God during Ramadan.



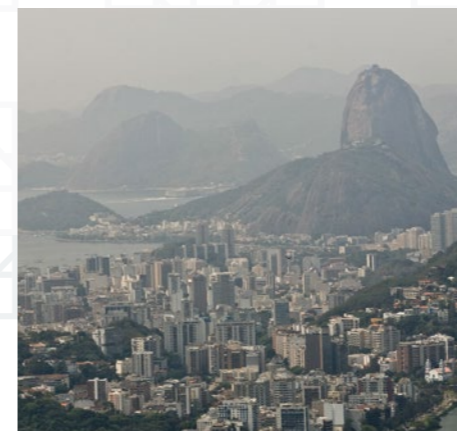
Day 23
Friday, July 10

The task of reaching so many South Asian Muslims can seem daunting and almost impossible. Pray specifically during Ramadan that the Father will send national partners who have a burden for the lost to share Christ with them. Ask the Father to give them strong faith and courageous hearts.



Day 24
Saturday, July 11

An ethnic tension exists between the Hui (Chinese Muslims) and Han (ethnic non-Muslim Chinese majority). Pray believers who are Han will share with the Hui, showing Christ's unconditional love and forgiveness. Pray for wisdom in how to share the truth of salvation with their ethnic neighbors.



Day 25
Sunday, July 12

Pray that international students who encounter Christ in the United States will believe and take the message of salvation back to their families when they return home.



Day 26
Monday, July 13

It is believed that on the "Night of Power" (typically the 27th night of Ramadan) angels and spirits descend and carry out the commands of Allah. Muslims often stay awake until morning and pray for blessings and forgiveness. Because many expect visions, dreams, wonders and proper interpretations during this season — and particularly during this night — ask that people will experience they will experience dreams of Jesus that will lead them to seek out and be open to truth from a biblical witness or exposure to God's Word.

Day 27
Tuesday, July 14

Many Brazilian Christian churches and workers are waking up to the growing number of Brazilian Muslims. These conversions are due to aggressive evangelism efforts organized in local mosques. Pray national churches will be mobilized, and more Brazilian mission workers will be trained and equipped to share Jesus with their fellow countrymen and bring them to true faith in Jesus Christ.

Day 28
Wednesday, July 15

As Ramadan comes to an end, it is tradition for children to return home and ask forgiveness for wrongs they have committed. Pray that as they seek to honor their earthly fathers, they will see the living God as Father.

Day 29
Thursday, July 16

It is also tradition to ask forgiveness from friends, co-workers and neighbors for wrongs committed against them in thought and deed. Jesus alone can offer complete forgiveness. Ask that this truth be planted in the hearts of Muslims.



Day 30
Friday, July 17

As the month of fasting comes to a close, celebrations are continued with family during *Eid al-Fitr* (the Festival of Fast-Breaking), an important aspect of many Muslim cultures. Ask the Father to reveal true salvation to entire family units through Jesus Christ. Ask that Christian families will come alongside them for discipleship, encouragement and friendship.



Paul's teaching to the Corinthians is a poignant reminder of the importance of love. Without love, the knowledge of Christian and Islamic doctrines, a clear gospel presentation and stellar arguments are no better than clanging cymbals.

Christ taught that loving God and our neighbors are the greatest commandments — all others hang on these two. When it comes to sharing with Muslim friends, relationships filled with God's love are the foundation on which all other work is built.

Further Engagement

Host a Henna Party

Henna, a dye used to create temporary artwork drawn on hands and other parts of the body, is a popular beauty technique in parts of Central Asia, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It can be found in many ethnic shops in the United States. Buy henna and host a fun event by painting cultural designs on the hands and arms of your guests. Download henna patterns at: hennastories.org

For a simpler version of this event, use washable markers to draw on hands.

Host a Prayer Tea

Host a Sunday School class, small group or gathering of friends to drink tea and pray for Muslim women. Make the event as cross-cultural as possible.

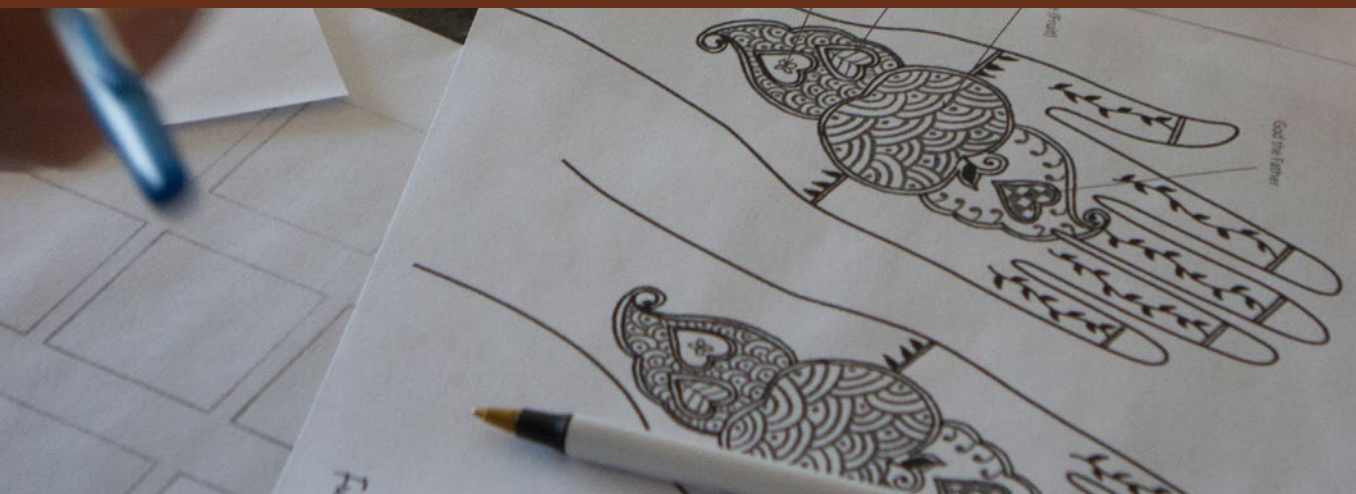
Some ideas:

- Ask women to remove their shoes as they enter the home.
- Spread tablecloths directly on the floor and seat guests around them on cushions. Serve traditional snacks like nuts and dried fruits on the cloths. Provide spoons (not forks). Serve green tea or spiced black tea with milk and sugar. Offer fruit as the dessert, and provide knives for people to slice their own fruit. Before and after you eat, bring a pitcher of water with a bowl, soap and a towel for women to wash their hands.
- Use the [Share Tea, Share Life](http://tinyurl.com/nlcm63n) booklet and prayer tea guide to facilitate the prayer time. (<http://tinyurl.com/nlcm63n>)
- [View complete instructions for hosting the event.](http://tinyurl.com/qzzvlee) (<http://tinyurl.com/qzzvlee>)

Host a Soccer or Cricket Match

Soccer and cricket are two popular games in some Muslim countries. Host a game of “football” — known in the United States as soccer — or learn the rules to cricket and try playing a game. Invite Muslim neighbors to participate or teach you how to play. After the game, light firecrackers and cheer loudly to celebrate the winning team.

Take it to the next level: Create a henna design that can be a tool to share the gospel, such as a visual portrayal of your salvation story, God’s love or creation. Find a Pakistani or Indian salon and pay to have your design done professionally. Practice explaining the meaning of the design to the person applying your henna.



Further Resources

A Wind in the House of Islam
David Garrison

Encountering the World of Islam: A Ministry of the Caleb Project
ed. Keith E. Swartley

Breaking the Islam Code
J.D. Greear

Any 3
Mike Shipman

Muslims Next Door: Uncovering Myths and Creating Friendships
Shirin Taber

The Unseen Face of Islam
Bill Musk

The Gospel for Muslims
Thabiti Anyabwile

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus
Nabeel Qureshi

God's Beloved Booklet
(in English and Arabic)
Available here: imbresources.org

Connecting with Muslims: A Guide to Communicating Effectively
Fouad Masri

Muslims, Christians, and Jesus
Carl Medearis

lovingmuslims.com

engagingislam.org

crescentproject.org

encounteringislam.org

imb
connecting

