

Pray for Chinese Muslims

30-Day Guide

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This prayer guide is a joint effort by individuals and churches passionate about reaching Chinese Muslims with the Gospel. We're excited that you are joining us for this month of prayer, and we encourage you to spread the word and recruit others to pray for Chinese Muslims. You are welcome to forward this guide to others, or print it and distribute it inside your church.

If you would like for someone to share with your church more specifically about how God is working among Chinese Muslims, please email info@pray4hui.com. Pray4Hui.com is also a great resource for stories and prayer requests. Check Twitter [@pray4hui](https://twitter.com/pray4hui) for regular prayer requests.

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Why the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an?

Today in China, 10 people groups share a common characteristic distinct from the rest of China: they are Muslim. Six of these 10 people groups are found predominantly in western China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region. However, four groups — Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an — settled in north central China. Today they are more assimilated into Chinese culture than their Muslim brothers and sisters in the west.

Most Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an reside within a four-hour drive of each other, and they live among and are surrounded by thousands of Hui. These four people groups share a common bond in seeking to remain Muslim in a society that is very atheistic and discourages everyone, especially children, from believing any religion. Because of their shared Muslim heritage, they gladly do business together and eat in each other's restaurants. However, they prefer not to intermarry, and their specific beliefs can vary.

These peoples share another trait: they have all but been forgotten by the rest of society.

They are not radical Muslims, and they are rarely in the news, even inside China. They may seem small in view of 1.3 billion Chinese, yet the vast majority of these 15 million people have never heard the Gospel. The Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an do not yet have Bibles in their respective languages. Out of the four groups combined, fewer

than 2,000 follow Jesus and only a few small house churches exist.

The Chinese church has experienced great growth, currently numbering about 100 million Christians. Many Chinese believers are dedicated to taking the Gospel throughout Central Asia and the Middle East back to Jerusalem.

Chinese believers are zealous to reach the rest of the world with the Gospel, but many have overlooked the Muslims inside their own country. Perhaps the racial barriers between the Han and Chinese Muslims are too great. But one thing is certain: God cares deeply for these unique people groups and longs for them to know about His love for them. He has not forgotten them.

We believe that passionate prayer is vitally important for the salvation of the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an. As we pray, God will call missionaries to plant their lives among Chinese Muslims. As we pray, God will come to Chinese Muslims in dreams and visions. As we pray, God will build His church among the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an.

Thank you for joining us in praying for Chinese Muslims. During the next 30 days, you will read stories about Chinese Muslims, Muslim-background believers and Han Chinese believers who have a heart to proclaim the Gospel to Chinese Muslims. We pray that these stories will guide your prayers and open your eyes to the great need to proclaim the Gospel among the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an.



For you, choosing to follow the Way seems simple. Just believe and confess that Jesus is Lord, right? But for others like me, it's not that easy. Do you know me?



My name is Wang Li* and I am 23 years old. I recently graduated from a university not far from my hometown.

It was at this university that I first heard about the Way. You see, my situation is a little

different. I didn't choose what I would believe as I grew up. Instead I was born into a culture and community that had already chosen for me. I was Hui, and therefore I was Muslim. There was no reason to question it, because there were no questions — this was my family.

During my fourth year of studies, I kept hearing whispers about the Way. I was intrigued by what I heard and one day I was invited to the home of someone who could tell me more. She gave me a book and said that the answers to all the questions I had could be found between its covers. For weeks I searched through the pages of this book. The stories were more exciting to me than any I had ever heard. Yet I knew there was a much deeper meaning than what I could grasp and I had to figure out what it was.

Several times I returned to the house of the friend who had given me the book. Each time she answered more of my questions and told me how I too could follow the Leader of the Way. I knew that I was hearing the truth — everything within me knew it and longed to follow, but I agonized over the consequences that were sure to come.

If I gave up my traditions and decided to follow the Way, I might never be able to be married. Finding a job would be nearly impossible. I quite possibly would even be arrested. But worst of all, if I chose to follow, my family would no longer call me their own. How could I bring such shame to my family?

*name changed



Day 1

Do you know me?



Prayer Requests

- As the consequences of following Jesus in Hui communities are understood by people like Wang Li, pray that they will realize that following Him is the only choice that brings true life and hope.
- Pray that those who have been disowned by their families and removed from their communities will find a new family and new community inside the church. Pray that communities of Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an believers will form all over East Asia.

Did You Know?

Islam is at the core of who Chinese Muslims are — it has been engrained in them from childhood, even if they don't fully understand it. Far more than a set of religious beliefs, Islam is a total way of life. For many Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an, rejecting Islam is as radical as rejecting their families and their ethnic identities.



Day 2

Once I was lost, but now I am found!



Prayer Requests

- Pray that Aaron will grow daily in his walk with Jesus and that he will boldly proclaim the Gospel to the Muslims around him.
- Pray that God will form a Muslim-background church around Aaron so that he and other Muslim-background believers like him will be able to worship together.

Did You Know?

Although there are more than 15 million Hui scattered throughout China, very few (including Chinese Christians) are intentionally planting their lives among the Hui to tell them about Christ. It is estimated that every five minutes one Hui person dies. Currently, more Hui people are dying daily than are hearing the Gospel. The Hui are in desperate need of more laborers to boldly proclaim the Gospel and reap the harvest God has prepared.

My name is Aaron* and I want share my life with you. I was born in northwest China in a Muslim city to a Muslim family. But I didn't know much about the Islamic culture until I left home. When I started college, I had two Muslim roommates in my dormitory. They asked me to be a real Muslim guy, so we went to the mosque on Fridays.

After college, I went back to my hometown. Sometimes when I felt down and sad, I went to the mosque to do the ritual prayers, but it didn't help. I still felt sad because it was just a rite, a ceremony.

I had a very good friend who suggested that I read the Bible. She said, "If you read it, you will know more about the Lord. You will know His words, which may help you." But I thought it was the Christians' book, so as a Muslim, I must not read it. However, she told me, "You can make your own choice. If it is the truth, it is not afraid to be put under the light. If it is not the truth, you can choose to give it up. Give yourself a chance to know God." And then I started to read it.

I felt like God was very kind to me, just as it is written in a song *Amazing Grace*, "Once I was lost, but now I am found, was blind, but now I see." I felt so inspired, and then I came to Him. Now I want to spend all my life serving Him.

*name changed



The family sat on the heated *kang*, a brick or concrete sleeping platform, in a simple village home, sipping hot tea and nibbling bread as they talked to their two visitors. They talked about the weather, their work raising livestock, and the problems of educating their children in the village without a school. The conversation turned when the Quranic verses, written in exquisite Arabic calligraphy on the walls, caught the visitors' attention.



“These verses protect us from evil spirits and demons,” the man told the visitors. “Only last week a woman in our village was possessed by an evil spirit. When she spoke, it was not her voice, but the voice of the demon speaking through her. Our imam came and recited the Quran in Arabic. He read into a cup of water, then gave the cup to her to drink. He also wrote some passages from the Quran onto a piece of paper, rolled it up into the shape of a cigarette, and told the woman to smoke it so that the words of Allah inhaled into her body would fight off the demon.”

The visitors listened attentively to the man's story, then asked, “Do you know about Jesus, the Messiah? He has authority and victory over all powers of evil.” Sharing their own stories from the Injil (Gospels), they talked about Jesus dispelling demons and setting people free.

Silence hung in the room as the listeners pondered the stories they had just heard.



Day 3

Fear of evil spirits



Prayer Requests

- Pray that as Chinese Muslims hear the Gospel, they will understand its power and turn and follow Jesus.
- Pray that God will display His power over evil among Chinese Muslims and open their eyes to the truth that Jesus is their Savior and Lord.

Did You Know?

The Hui are some of the most hospitable people you will ever meet. Some of this comes from just being Chinese, and the rest of it comes from just being Hui. Either way — you never want to visit the Hui on a full stomach! Many Hui own restaurants. You can find them in cities all over China, and they serve some of the best food imaginable. As you walk down the street, you can often recognize Hui men by their prayer caps and the women by their head scarves. Hui are like family with other Hui. Even if they are strangers, you will never know.



Day 4

The man of my dream



Prayer Requests

- Pray for God to bless many Chinese Muslims with dreams of Jesus and then with opportunities to hear the Gospel. Pray that as they hear the truth, they will believe!
- Pray for God to send thousands of harvesters (missionaries) who will search for those seeking Jesus and boldly proclaim the Gospel into His harvest among the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an.

Did You Know?

The Hui are descendants of Muslim traders, soldiers and officials who came to China between the seventh and 14th centuries. They settled and intermarried with Arab Muslims and Han Chinese.

As a child I had the most wonderful dreams—dreams of sweet-smelling flowers and grassy fields, of heaven and angels and the laughter of children. I knew that Allah sent these sweet dreams because he was pleased with me. After all, my mom and I prayed faithfully toward Mecca five times a day.

But when I went away to college, life was full of new experiences. Before long, I began to feel so guilty because of the things I had done. My heart grieved because Allah had not sent me one of his sweet dreams in a long time. I knew that he wasn't pleased with me anymore, and as each day passed, the shame of who I had become grew deeper and deeper.

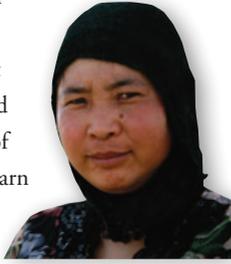
One night I had a new dream. I saw a man — a man I had never met before, but my heart knew His name, Jesus. I watched as He picked up a nail and hammered it into the middle of the wood floor. He glanced at me, but I couldn't figure out what He was doing. When I awoke, I was afraid and confused.

A few months later, my neighbor began to tell me a story about God and a man named Jesus. "Jesus?" I repeated, my heart beating faster. "Yes, Jesus," she replied. "He is the Son of God but He came to earth and died on a cross to forgive sin."

When she finished His story, I knew that this Jesus was the man of my dream. He wasn't angry with me — He loved me. He took my punishment for sin, and it's in Him that I can be free from my burden of shame.



Every day, Hui women come to this tiny shop to knit together. Soft murmurs break the hushed atmosphere. A backdrop of black trousers highlights yarn in every color. Vibrant scarves and black veils cover heads bent low



over intricate knitting patterns. Needles click together as Mrs. Ma shares her hope that her grandson will wear the tiny red sweater she is knitting. Another lady bursts with pride talking of her newborn — a boy, after three daughters. She and her husband no longer have to worry about their future, for they finally have a son who will care for them in their old age. Mrs. Zhang listens quietly, then laments about the son she has never been allowed to know. When her son was only a toddler, her husband spoke the words, “I divorce you,” and their marriage was over. As required by Muslim tradition, her son stayed with his father. Tears form in her eyes as she remembers.

Every day, women come to knit and talk about life. “How much did you pay for your new apartment?” Mrs. Han asks her friend. “How many extra classes do your children take? Do they take English lessons?” asks Mrs. Ma. Boasting comes from the lady in the corner, “My son takes English lessons from a native English speaker. He won a local contest.” Other ladies look away, embarrassed that their children have no language endeavors that exceed this one. Mrs. Ma tries again, “Will you be going on the Hajj this year?” Two or three launch into conversations about airline routes, the difficulty of acquiring passports and the importance of going on the Hajj. Round and round the questions go as each woman tries to best the others with accomplishments, riches and family.

The clock chimes 4:30, and almost in unison, women pack up their knitting, say their goodbyes and leave to get their children from school. They will be back tomorrow.



Day 5

Knitting today ... and again tomorrow



Prayer Requests

- Pray that Muslim women who gather to knit will be introduced to Jesus Christ, and that their conversations will turn from daily activities to the One who died to save them and their families.
- Pray that women who follow Jesus will join these groups in order to proclaim the Gospel and point their friends to Jesus.

Did You Know?

Most ethnic Muslims have their own languages and possess ancestral lands. The Hui do not — they speak Mandarin and live all across China.

族



Day 6

Anna — The daily struggles of a young Hui believer



Prayer Requests

- Pray that Anna will learn how to continue her friendships with Muslim Hui friends even though she is no longer Muslim. Ask God to teach her how to be a light that shines brightly for Jesus among her Hui friends.
- Pray that God will surround Anna (and other new Hui believers like her) with followers of Jesus who desire to help her pursue her calling. Ask God to lead her to a woman who will disciple her.

Animated chatter echoed in the dark hallway as Anna* and her students descended from their classrooms out into the street. She stood still for a moment, her heart torn in different directions as she tried to decide what to do next.

It was not even dark at 9 p.m. and the smell of barbecued lamb, wafting from little stalls that dotted the sidewalk, filled the air. Anna started toward one of these familiar places to meet with some of her childhood friends, but then she stopped, again pondering her choice. If she were to go, she would be tempted to pretend to be one of them again.

Since believing in Jesus a year ago, Anna had stopped wearing her head covering. When her friends asked why, she told them she now follows Jesus. Though they did not outright reject her, they had grown cool towards her. She could still spend time with them if she took the initiative, but she was rarely invited to social gatherings.

When she did hang out with these friends, it was heartbreaking not to share her new life with them. Anna boldly spoke at every opportunity of her relationship with Christ, but she knew she could not force it upon them. For tonight, Anna decided, she just needed to be alone with her thoughts and God. Invigorated by the cool night air and thankful for the dark to hide her face from people she knew, Anna took a walk down the hill.

Anna had some new friends now who were also followers of Jesus. They had been so good to her when she first believed, offering her a job as a teacher, giving her a generous salary and letting her choose her favorite classes to teach. But now it seemed that they expected her to do this for the rest of her life. Just tonight, the lead teacher offered to raise her salary in order to “keep her.” Anna wasn’t sure how to take that phrase.

She had been growing in her understanding of God and her identity in Him, and she was excited about new ideas of what she wanted to do with her life. She was only 27 after all, and though she seemed to do well teaching English, she was beginning to discover that it was not her passion. If money and relationships weren’t a concern,





Anna thought she might quit her teaching job at the end of this term and find something that really allowed the grace of God to flow through her. But when she mentioned this to the lead teacher, he kind of frowned, as if she was letting him down. He had even said that the staff and the students were counting on her. “Pressure,” she thought. “That doesn’t seem consistent with the grace of God. I had enough of that as a Muslim! If I am doing my best to follow Jesus, why are people in His body trying to push decisions on me? Lord, show me how to make sense of these stirrings in my heart!”

*name changed

Day 7

The Salar

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Chinese Christians to live among the Salar, serving sacrificially. Pray that the prejudice and mistrust that hinders this from happening will dissolve.
- Pray for this first group of Salar Christians — that they will grow into mature disciples who are bold in their faith and committed to building the church.

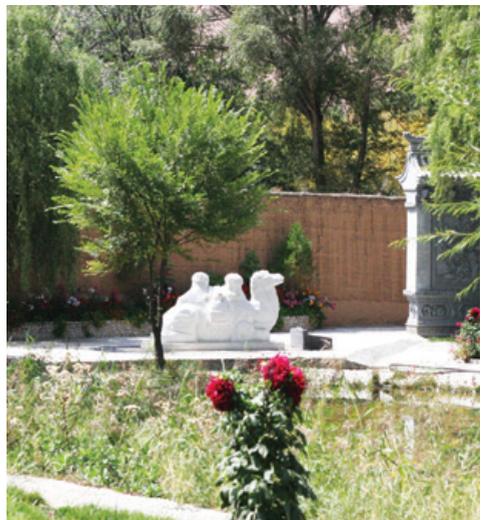
Did You Know?

The Salar people are overlooked, unreached and basically cut off from the hope of the Gospel. “How can they know if they don’t hear? And how will they hear without someone to share? And how will someone share if they don’t go?” (Romans 10:14-15a, paraphrased).

In 1933 a young American family had a home in Xunhua Autonomous Salar County of China where they ministered to the Salar people. They opened a small chapel in the main Salar town and preached the Gospel, but they saw no success among the Muslim peoples. In the decades since, little has changed in the spiritual condition of the Salar people.

The Salar people migrated from the Samarkand region of Central Asia many centuries ago. According to oral tradition, their forefathers bound a copy of the Quran to the head of a camel and followed it until it stopped at a waterfall and turned to stone. Two-thirds of the 120,000 Salar people still live in the same area of northwest China today. Historically the Salar have been labeled as troublemakers by the Chinese because of their involvement in Muslim uprisings. They are a proud people — proud of their history, proud of their culture and proud to be Muslims. For the first time in history many Salar are sending their children to college. And yet they also show a renewed dedication to their Islamic beliefs and practices, instilling them in the next generation.

While Chinese people are coming to Christ by the thousands, the Salar are still clinging to their Muslim heritage and beliefs. Praise God that in the past few years the first few Salar people have come to faith in Christ Jesus. And every month more workers are coming to work in the harvest!



As the sun sets behind the mountains, the crowded mini-bus bumps along through a gorge that allows no margin for error by the driver, who is more cavalier about this dangerous terrain than his passengers. Jason begins to feel sick, but if he can just hang on through this gorge, he is almost home.

Home. He tries to forget his anxiety about returning to Xunhua after seven years in the city. He pushes back the humiliation of being rejected by his fiancée's family just before his arranged marriage because of his minor disability. He cringes at the thought that, undoubtedly, his parents will try once again to marry him off.

"My people seem blinded," Jason thinks to himself. "But to what, I don't know."

Now that he has lived in a developing city, the legend he heard his entire life about why his people settled in their village seems ridiculous. Really, who could believe that people from Uzbekistan strapped a Quran to the head of a camel and settled where the camel stopped for water and turned to stone? Perhaps more accurate are the stories of Ghengis Khan taking the Salar people captive and dragging them to the remote foothills of the Himalayas. But who really knows?

As the bus jolts here and there, brushing the edge of the gorge too many times, Jason can't help but ponder life and death and the possibility that in these things, too, his people have not seen the whole truth. Just recently he met a new friend, Josh, who had lived in Xunhua and understood his people's unique culture and beliefs, yet also believed they were blinded. He told Jason that Jesus, whom the Salar Muslims behold as a prophet, is actually the Son of God who lived, died and was raised from the dead so that all people everywhere might be forgiven and have eternal life in Him.

Jason couldn't forget how Josh described God as a loving Father who cared for him, who delighted in him — even with his disability — and who offered him a relationship and forgiveness once and for all. This was so different from all of the rules that Jason's family and friends kept as they tried to earn



Day 8

Blinded by tradition



God's favor with their "holy" deeds. Could God really become a man and, in His perfection, take the place of all humanity on a cross to be the once-for-all sacrifice for sin?

Something rang true in Jason's heart as he looked at the beautiful scenery and pondered the holes in the traditional religion and values of his people. Yes, he really wanted to be accepted and known by this personal Father who offered him love and forgiveness.

Prayer Requests

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will use the Gospel to turn Jason's heart to follow Him, and pray that Jason will become a bold proclaimer of the Gospel.
- Pray that God will open the eyes of Chinese Muslims to the lies of Islam and the truth about Jesus — that He is the way, the truth and the life.





Day 9

Sophia — Seeking hope and meaning



Prayer Requests

- Pray that Sophia and others like her will have the courage to ask Christians what they believe and whom they trust, and that when they hear about Jesus they will turn and follow Him alone.
- Pray for God to provide Christian teachers opportunities to share the Gospel with Chinese Muslim students.

Did You Know?

The Salar people are quite warm, friendly and hospitable, often offering a stranger tea or perhaps even a complete meal. They are quite approachable and are usually smiling.

Sophia* awoke and smiled as she looked around, thankful to be back home with her family for summer break. She did a double take as she walked by a mirror and saw her hair down for the first time in six months. While she was in Pakistan she had hardly ever taken off her head covering for fear of drawing attention to herself. Her dad had heard that people often became targets for the militant Pakistani Muslims if they don't follow the pillars of Islam, so he made her promise to keep her head covered at all times for her own safety. Sophia was so happy to be home where she could feel carefree.

Sitting down with a cup of tea, Sophia watched the stillness outside. Shops were not yet open, the sun was rising over the mountains in the east, and a few older men who had been to mosque sat chatting with one another and waiting to have breakfast. Missing was the chaos, the frenetic activity, the sound of gunshots or car bombs. Just before she had left for university studies, her father had told her, "You don't want anyone to notice you, so just move about quietly. Don't do anything, ANYTHING to draw attention to yourself." She soon learned what that meant and stuck close to her few university friends from home, spending most of their time in the solace of their dorm room. They learned to go to the market during the times that men were in mosque, which somehow felt safer. Though the women selling vibrant silk clothing and unique knick-knacks were friendly, they simply didn't know who to trust.

In fact only two people outside their group struck Sophia as "safe." On the outside, these white English teachers should seem to be a threat because their skin, dress, speech and beliefs would make them a target for the militants. And surely they must be aware of this fact! Yet they walked and spoke with a peace and a hope unlike everyone around them. Sophia assumed they were Christians, since other Christians she knew in China had acted the same, but she had yet to ask them. With this kind of peace, she wondered, would they have answers for her big life questions? Like why did she not get into university in China? Did the fact that she was slightly disabled mean

she would never marry? Was she beautiful despite the disability? How was she going to make it in Pakistan for five years of school with this kind of pressure? Was there any hope for her going to

America to study? Sophia wondered if she would ever have the courage to ask her teachers what they believe, whom they trust and whether she could know the same peace.

*name changed



Day 10

Salar living conditions

Prayer Requests

- The importance of family and community to Salar people is shown through the layout of their homes and villages. Pray that Salar family members who believe in the Gospel will boldly share with their family and neighbors.
- Pray that Salar families will welcome followers of Jesus into their homes and villages to proclaim the Gospel.

Did You Know?

Living in the mountainous regions of north-central China, the 120,000 Salar people descended from Uzbekistan still retain some of their Central Asian appearance and proudly cling to their cultural roots. Most of these Muslim people live in mud-baked homes and center their lives around agriculture, family and the local mosque, just as their Central Asian cousins still do.

Salar villages are traditionally comprised of a group of square, clay houses, each enclosed within a clay wall approximately 10 to 12 feet high. Intricately carved eaves, pillars and door frames, as well as flat roofs characterize these homes. In addition, fruit trees, flowers and vegetables are often planted inside the clay-walled courtyard. The plain, dusty outside walls are not indicative of the clean, well-kept and beautiful courtyard found within. This tradition stems from their Central Asian roots.

Since most Salar live with their extended families, a home usually contains separate rooms for the parents, grandparents and children, as well as a sitting room and a kitchen. Most of the bedrooms contain a *kang*, a stone bed that uses heated bricks placed underneath for warmth in the winter. In addition there are usually coffee tables and chairs for any guests who happen to drop by for a visit.

The ancient outward style of the Salar homes also does not reflect some of the modern conveniences found within. Almost every Salar home has a television set and DVD player. Even out in more remote villages, many homes have a computer with Internet access. Almost everyone, even the poor farmers, has a cell phone. The kitchen facilities are not much different from what you would find decades ago, but more and more homes now have refrigerators.

Sanitation standards in most Salar areas are quite good, as is typical in most Islamic cultures. Salar homes are clean, food has its proper place and the outhouse is distinctly separate from the rest of the home. In addition, transportation is quite modern in and around Xunhua. Buses, cars, motorcycles and tractors are all integral forms of transit within the town. Getting to Xunhua is easier than it has ever been. With a new highway, the trip to Xining, the provincial capital and gateway to Xunhua, takes about four hours.





Day 11

Typical Salar jobs



Prayer Requests

- Pray that God will open doors for followers of Jesus to do business with Salar people and have many opportunities to share the Gospel.
- Pray that God will reveal to Salar people that their hope should not be in money or a successful business, but in God alone, who is the source of life.

Did You Know?

The unwritten Salar language is closely related to Uighur and Uzbek and is typically spoken only in homes and businesses. But while Salar is the official language, it is slowly dying, and even now only a fraction of the people still speak it. In families where there has been intermarriage between ethnic groups, the Salar language is not used.

The majority of the Salar people earn their living through agriculture with horticulture as a sideline. Xunhua County is widely known as “the land of fruit” and each Salar family owns a limited amount of land that affords them an opportunity to grow apples, walnuts and hot peppers. The apples in Xunhua are very well known throughout northwest China, but because this area is somewhat isolated, they are often undervalued. One Salar man claimed that apples in Xining, the provincial capital, sell for about 10 times the amount that one can get for them in Xunhua! The red hot peppers and resulting spice from Xunhua are very famous. Wheat and barley are also commonly grown, especially in areas farther away from the Yellow River. *The People’s Daily* reports that an increasing number of people in Xunhua County are beginning to grow out-of-season vegetables and fruits to be sold in other parts of China for even higher profits.

Another popular means to derive income is restaurant ownership. Muslim meals are quite popular in China and have become a common way for Salar families to make a living. Most restaurants are small family-owned businesses that serve spicy noodles, beef noodles, steamed dumplings, eight treasures tea (a blend of eight colorful ingredients) and a host of other Muslim dishes.

Other means of income among the Salar people include sheepherding for mutton and wool, lumberjacking and bus and taxi driving. In fact, the transportation industry provides many jobs throughout the region, and the Salar are very territorial about their shipping routes. Traditionally, the Salar used sheepskin rafts to ferry goods and people across the Yellow River and to transport timber downstream.

The major industrial employer in Xunhua County previously was a textile manufacturer that produced blankets, sweaters and other clothes. This company is still one of the largest companies in Qinghai, but it has moved most of its operations to Xining. Other industrial employers in Xunhua are a concentrated juice factory, a chili pepper factory and another textile company that produces the white Muslim skull caps most Muslim men wear.

Day 12

Wedding celebration

Prayer Requests

- Pray that as Chinese Muslims come to believe in Jesus, God will provide them with believing spouses who are also Hui, Salar, Dongxiang or Bao'an. Pray that they will be able to have traditional ethnic weddings, though with minor changes.

Did You Know?

Beginning in 1368 in the Ming dynasty, the word Hui (pronounced Hway) meant Muslim, so every Muslim in China was Hui. For example, the Salar were called Sala Hui. Many Salar or Dongxiang may say they are Hui, assuming a foreigner would never have heard of their people group.

Old men with grey beards and white hats hurry to find seats around tables filled with nuts, dried fruits and candy. The groom enters the room with his father and best man. The men rise to “dress the groom” by wrapping pieces of cloth around him until his arms are tightly bound. Then the groom enters a small room with his father, the bride’s father, his best man, the matchmaker and the imam. Chanting from the Quran, the imam leads the groom in reciting his wedding vows.

Sitting quietly in another small room off to the side, the bride waits, dressed, veiled and adorned. Her wedding ceremony is taking place without her.

Hours later, the groom returns to his family’s house and the bride is escorted back to her family’s house. The first day of the wedding is over.

As the sun rises, the groom’s female relatives scurry back and forth in the kitchen getting fish, mutton, breads, vegetables and soup ready to be cooked and devoured. Around 9 a.m., friends, neighbors and relatives of the groom arrive, their hands piled high with gifts for the new couple. Tables are set in the rooms and courtyard and the guests sit down to eat six courses, each overflowing the table. The groom’s father makes his rounds encouraging the guests to “eat, eat!”

Crying and wailing, the bride walks backward from her home into the waiting car that will take her to the house of the groom’s family. Her oldest brother carries her into the wedding chamber where she stands and waits. All day, the bride faces the corner of the room as the family comes in to admire her. As evening falls, the bride is allowed to turn around, eat and greet close female friends and family. Then they trickle back to their own houses and the bride waits for the groom to come.

The groom’s brothers and friends escort him with loud laughter and bright firecrackers. The bride and groom are left alone. The wedding celebration is over.



Growing up under intense Islamic influence, Maria* heard the call to prayer five times a day. She recited the Quran with neighborhood friends in one of the many mosques dominating her hometown. “No matter how difficult and painstaking it is to learn Arabic, it is the most beautiful language given by Allah!” she was told. After graduating from high school, Maria left home to attend university in the provincial capital. Her father wished her goodbye with these stern words: “Never forget that you are a Muslim!”

While at the university, Maria met some followers of Jesus, who invited her to watch the *JESUS film*. “Why are you trying to get me to change my religion?” Maria asked angrily. Yet Maria continued to visit them each week for the next 18 months. Slowly she let down her guard, attracted by their love and care, and borrowed a Bible to study with her new friends.

One day, she suddenly burst out, “I was born to be a Muslim and believe in Islam. That cannot be changed. In the past years, I was at peace, but since you started telling me about Jesus, I have become confused and perplexed. I feel under pressure. I do not want to offend Allah. Therefore, I will not come to your home and listen to stories about Jesus or sing those songs anymore.”

*name changed



Day 13

Fear of losing her Hui identity

Prayer Requests

- Pray that Maria will realize that her identity is not in being Muslim and that the Gospel offers her a new identity much greater than any earthly one.
- Pray that when Hui Muslims hear the Gospel, their understanding of Jesus' love and sacrifice will overcome their fears.

Did You Know?

The Hui, made up of at least 15 million people, are the largest and most widespread of China's Muslim nationalities. They also comprise the third largest minority group in China. Remarkably, Hui live in about 2,310 of China's 2,369 counties and municipalities. Small pockets also live in Taiwan, Myanmar, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. Only .006 percent of them know Christ!



Day 14

Hunger for God



Prayer Requests

- Pray that Dongxiang will hunger for the true God who provides the bread of life.
- Pray that the Dongxiang will find their identity in Christ, not in any religion.
- Pray for the breaking of false religiosity. May Dongxiang people turn to seek God with all their hearts.

Did You Know?

The Dongxiang people, with a population of 621,500, are the fourth largest of China's 10 Muslim people groups. Their origin dates back to the 13th century when China was subdued by the Mongols, and Genghis Khan moved some of his garrisons into northwest China to control the land he had taken. Soldiers intermarried with local women and gradually developed their own distinct ethnic group, now known as the Dongxiang people. The largest concentration of the Dongxiang people is in the rugged, dry mountains of Gansu province.

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13, ESV).

“It may be that some Muslims are following your Jesus, but it will never happen amongst the Dongxiang. We are traditional and will never relinquish Islam and Muhammad.” This was one of the most fervent declarations of Ayinsha,* a young entrepreneur. When Ayinsha was younger, she dreamed of traveling to a big city to attend university. However, her parents would not allow her to leave for fear that her Islamic beliefs would be challenged. Now she has a shop and two kids and is striving to make money for a better life. She dresses very fashionably, unlike most Dongxiang women. She does not understand much of the core of her people’s beliefs, nor does she often observe the Muslim rituals and traditions. Despite this fact, she still holds to her identity as a Muslim, while rejecting anything that challenges her cultural heritage.

A dialogue with Khadijah* is another example of the Dongxiang Muslim identity: “Mary,* are you going to fast next month?” Mary answered, “To tell you the truth, no.” Her Dongxiang friend smiled and whispered to her, “My neighbors and I don’t fast either.”

Outward appearance is often stronger than the intention of the heart. Religiosity is one of the most significant expressions of the Dongxiang’s identity as a people, perhaps a way to compensate for low self-esteem caused by poverty. Even today, as modern conveniences begin to enter the Dongxiang townships, many older people in the community continue to fear China’s majority Han. This fear pushes them to isolate their children from Chinese society instead of providing opportunities for a good education and a better life. It leads them to remain isolated in poor villages in the mountains while clinging to Islam. For many, like Ayinsha and Khadijah, Islam is simply their culture. They do not really believe it, but they cling to it because it is at the core of their identity as Dongxiang people.

*name changed

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5, ESV).

Many Muslim traditions are woven into the Dongxiang understanding of Islam.

Yunus* once told Abram* that whenever his daughter was sick, they would take her to an imam, who would dissolve portions of the Quran into a cup of water and let her drink the water as a medicine to heal her. Then Joseph* said to him, “I am a follower of the prophet Jesus, and He has power to heal all of our sicknesses! We can directly ask God in Jesus’ name; we don’t need any mediator. Next time your daughter gets sick, call me and I will show you how to pray.”

Maryan* says, “I feel that God is very far away and doesn’t listen to me. That’s why I prefer to have a relationship with the saint that founded our denomination. If I have something to ask for, I ask him,” Islam has been heavily influenced by local traditions; one of the most obvious is saint worship. The saints were very devoted to Islam and founded a denomination or sect. On the saint’s birthday, thousands of pilgrims go to the tombs to offer sacrifices and ask for blessing.

When Camila* was small, she tried to commit suicide one night after listening to a demon in her room. Her sister Cassia* saved her when she suddenly awoke and started screaming at seeing Camila begin to cut herself. Their father quickly arrived to stop Camila. He believes demons only fear men, while girls have no power over them. He performed some rituals, and Camila and Cassia say they no longer fear demons.

*name changed



Day 15

Folk Islam

Prayer Requests

- Pray that the Father will bring freedom from the evil and useless traditions and all the enemy’s lies, and that Yunus’ family and others like them will find, in Christ, true physical and spiritual healing.
- Pray that the Father will open the eyes of Yunus, Maryan, Camila and Cassia to the truth of the Gospel. May they see and believe that traditions and rituals cannot save them — only Jesus can.

Did You Know?

Islam is the dominant religion of the Dongxiang, with one mosque for every 30 homes and one paid Muslim worker for every 18 families.

Day 16

Diaspora and prejudice

Prayer Requests

- Pray that “Little Dongxiang” in cities across Gansu will be transformed by the power of the Spirit. May these communities humble themselves and seek the Lord.
- Pray for children who have to work long hours every day. May they find rest in Jesus, who waits with open arms to embrace them.
- Ask God to change the social structure in the Dongxiang society so that future generations will have opportunities to attend school, find good jobs and meet believers who will share the Gospel.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14, ESV).

Cities in Gansu Province contain neighborhoods with high populations of Dongxiang people, often referred to as “Little Dongxiang.”



When Han people or even other Chinese Muslims look for apartments, they avoid these Dongxiang areas, which are often dirtier and in older sections of the cities. Police officers tend to say that the crime rate is higher. Even a Muslim woman from another people group was overheard saying, “Why would someone want to live in that area? That place is no good; there are too many Dongxiang living there. They are a bunch of barbarians, the dregs of society, so it is a dangerous place to live.”

There is a large Dongxiang population in the provincial capital of Gansu, but they are commonly relegated to lower status jobs and are considered violent or drug dealers. Even other Chinese Muslims, such as the Hui, look down on them as a lesser people. However, even with all the hardships they face in the city, life is still better than in the remote countryside where they often leave their children with grandparents when they pursue jobs in the cities.

Separated families have become normal and accepted. It is assumed that husbands must travel to find work. Some women move to the city to work as prostitutes or to find “boyfriends.” They are desperate and just seeking to put food on the table. As boys get older, some are allowed to join their parents in the city to study in a mosque. Girls often begin working in the family business as teenagers or pursue jobs as waitresses. This kind of life robs Dongxiang kids of their childhood and their dreams. For the Dongxiang in villages and in the cities, life is about survival.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28, ESV).

Jibril* told Joseph* that he cried a lot when he ended his relationship with his girlfriend. He said that men are not supposed to show a lot of emotion, but he knows they can cry, because when he left home to go to university, he saw his father crying.

Jibril has been away from home for one year. He's an average college kid who likes to play video games, do puzzles and solve math problems. He's a basketball fan. He has dreamed of being a model. He often goes to car fairs, always wondering which one he would buy if he had the money. He's terrified of horror movies. He believes that the true God has control of everything, even the friendships he makes. He says that he, like everyone else, needs to find the meaning of life. Jibril is one of the few Dongxiang blessed with the opportunity to attend college. It is estimated that the number of Dongxiang college students is only around 600.

Hassan* is another Dongxiang student who has been blessed with a special talent to teach. He recently graduated, and his friends blessed him with a surprise farewell party. Though he smiled through the party, Hassan's heart was really full of sorrow. Everyone's expectations weigh him down, and he worries about what is to come. During this time of transition, Hassan is beginning to open up to Jesus' teachings.

*name changed



Day 17

Searching for the meaning of life

Prayer Requests

- Pray that Jibril and Hassan can enter into the family of God. May these young men, like many others, finally find the meaning of life in Jesus.
- Pray that Dongxiang young people can find in Jesus the only bread that can truly satisfy them forever. May they continue living their lives — playing, running and crying — newly reflecting the grace and love of Jesus.

Did You Know?

During their seclusion in northwest China, the Dongxiang people formed their own language, which is related to Mongolian. Originally, it was only a spoken language. A writing system has been developed, but most are still not aware of it. They have an oral tradition of legends, stories, folk songs, riddles and proverbs. Some Dongxiang understand spoken Mandarin, but many have only had one year of schooling and find it difficult to learn Chinese. The Dongxiang people are considered among the poorest and least literate of China's minorities.

Day 18

Communities of followers of Jesus

Prayer Requests

- Please cry out with us that God will raise hundreds and hundreds of communities to faith in Jesus, using natural relationship networks.
- Pray for more divine appointments, that God will attract more Chinese Muslims to followers of Jesus.
- Pray that followers of Jesus will boldly and clearly proclaim the Gospel when God presents the opportunity.

The Situation

No official study groups or churches exist among the Dongxiang, though there are a few Christians. Foreigners are restricted from the area, and Han Chinese believers have been harassed and even imprisoned for sharing the Gospel. The Dongxiang have no Bible, radio broadcast or evangelistic material in the Dongxiang language.

And I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, "You are my people"; and he shall say, "You are my God" (Hosea 2:23, ESV).

When a Christian couple, Joseph* and Mary*, took their kids to visit a tea market, the shopkeepers were excited to talk to them. In the first visit, God allowed them to have very interesting conversations about the Quran, Muslims around the world, prayer and Jesus. Now they go visit these Dongxiang friends every week, and every time they leave, a dozen new friends line up, waving and saying, "Come back and talk more!"

In a 5-by-5 room at 5:30 a.m., two Muslim brothers are already hard at work making bread. They live and work there. From dawn to dusk they are busy, both body and mind. During one of his interactions with the two men, Joseph learned that they think a lot about how to follow God. "Most people can't read," says Joseph. "They depend on third parties to know God's Word. But the most important thing is to know the Word ourselves." And then God opened the door, "Joseph, you like to study the Word of God, too. Come visit us more often, and we can discuss and grow together."

Rachel*, a Christian believer, was prayerfully planning her week and put on her to-do list, "Call 'Aunt' Tina*." The week flew by without this activity being checked off, and then she got a call, "Hey, Rachel, come and pick us up. We came to see you!" God had brought her relatives to her.

James*, also a believer, was in a halal fast-food restaurant, and two guys approached him: "Hi, we saw you the other day. Can you come and talk to us? We are sitting over there."

We have a vision to see God use believers like these to bring people to listen to the Gospel together, come to follow Jesus together and naturally become a fellowship of Dongxiang followers of Jesus.



*name changed

“Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:38, ESV).

The mountains are home to many Dongxiang. Most live as farmers, working the soil with their own hands rather than using large equipment. Many are born, live and die without ever leaving the mountains. One older man said that he had never seen an airplane and did not really know what China is. Of the 25 townships in Dongxiang County, 19 do not have any Han Chinese people. Because of their isolation, many do not speak Chinese, making it difficult to find work outside of the county. The mountainside has become their prison as fears and poverty prohibit them from leaving.

For city dwellers, confined to the cement jungle most of the time, a walk through green fields and fresh air is relaxing and refreshing. But for those who work the land day after day, it’s a hard life. Families normally produce just enough to survive, and if there is a drought, which is common, they lose everything. Most children do not receive an education because their family needs them to work, and the family chooses to give what little income they have to the mosque rather than investing in their children’s education. Though the people of the mountains are often disregarded and devalued by much of society, our Father loves them!



Day 19

Hardships in the mountains



Prayer Requests

- Pray that our God will claim the people of the mountains for Himself and will turn them into harvesters of men.
- Pray that the Dongxiang will welcome outsiders into their communities to proclaim the Gospel.
- May the Lord bless the Dongxiang farmland with rain so that they will be blessed by an abundant harvest. May God open their eyes to the truth that He is the one blessing them.

Did You Know?

Most Dongxiang are farmers whose main crops are potatoes, barley, millet, wheat and corn. Many also raise livestock, particularly sheep. The Dongxiang are known for making elaborate rugs and growing their “three treasures” — apricots, melons and other fruits.



Day 20

The Bao'an



Prayer Requests

- Pray for God to send workers to live among the Bao'an and proclaim the Gospel.
- Pray that resources will be created in the Bao'an language that clearly proclaim the Gospel.
- Pray that God will open the eyes of many Bao'an to know and follow Jesus.

The Bao'an, numbering less than 20,000 people, are one of the smallest of China's Muslim ethnic minorities and of China's ethnic minorities in general. Most of them still make their home in the valleys of the rugged mountainous region of Jishishan County in Gansu Province. These rugged mountains have served both to protect them in the past and isolate them in the present.

They are famous for making 30 distinct kinds of knives, a skill that has a history of more than 130 years. According to legend, long ago there lived a famous Bao'an knife maker who only made knives for honorable men. One day a governor approached him and demanded he make 100 knives as gifts for the governor's superiors. The governor threatened to cut off his hand if he refused. A month later, the skilled craftsman had not made one knife. The governor immediately had his hand cut off. To this day, Bao'an craftsmen carve a hand into many of the knives they make to commemorate this honorable man who stuck to his principles.

Making knives, along with farming and logging, are the Bao'an's main sources of income. Like the Dongxiang, they descend from the Mongols and continue to speak a Mongolian language. Today the Hui, Dongxiang, Salar and even Tibetans surround their villages. Their traditions are a mixture of the customs of these surrounding people groups.

Bao'an villages all contain at least one mosque, as Islam is a strong part of their life and traditions. Few among the Bao'an have heard the Gospel proclaimed. Very few have ever chosen to live among the Bao'an in order to proclaim the Gospel. As a result, today there are possibly a handful of believers and no known churches among them.

When I was in college, I heard about a girl who had decided to follow the Way. I knew that her family was Hui, and it must have been hard for them to accept her choice. I couldn't help but wonder, what must her family have thought when they heard? Were the consequences as serious as other people said? But I was so excited for her! She was so brave! To follow what she believed to be true no matter what the consequences — that was truly courageous!

Wait ... she hasn't told them? How could that be? I thought she was so confident. How, after all this time, has she never told her family?

Before you begin to judge, let me confess that I'm the girl. I am so ashamed to admit that after being a follower of Jesus for almost three years, I still have never told my family. Despite my faith in Christ, the fear of what could happen paralyzes me. If they don't accept it, they might disown me forever!

And yet ... if they do understand, might they believe as well? Could it be that we might all follow Him together?

I know what I need to do. Now that I know the truth, it's my responsibility to make Him known. I just don't know how to do that yet ... and I really don't want to mess it up.

Now I want to spend all my life serving Him.



Day 21

What am I really afraid of?



Prayer Requests

- Pray for Muslim-background believers in China — that God will give them boldness to proclaim the Gospel to their families and their communities. Pray that as they share, God will turn the hearts of their family members to trust and follow Jesus.
- Pray that Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an believers will hold one another accountable to share the Gospel with their families.

Did You Know?

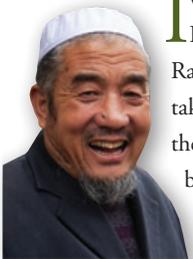
To be Hui is to be Muslim — it is the core of who they are. Even if they don't fully understand it, or even follow it the same as Muslims in some other countries, it has been hidden deep inside of them from the time they were very young. For the Hui, Islam is more than just a set of religious beliefs — it is a total way of life.

Day 22

Abraham's Story: Part 1 — Life before Christ

Abraham is a Muslim-background believer from an average Muslim family in China. He allowed us to interview him recently and share his story. He desires for people to understand more about Chinese Muslims and to pray intentionally and passionately for them. His real name and location are removed to protect his identity. This is part 1 of seven.

Share with us about your life before hearing of and following Jesus.



I was in second grade when I began to fast during Ramadan. My father used to take my brother and me to the mosque to worship. In the beginning, we did not know what to say, read or recite — we would just copy everyone else. My whole village would go to the mosque together and worship. If you did not do as everyone else, people noticed and it was a problem.

In third grade, we learned to recite “the belief” (Iman). “I believe in God ... I believe devils exist ... In the doomsday which questions will be asked ...” It was very long. This was mixed between our local language and Arabic.

In this area (memorizing and learning the rituals), people teach their kids that if they don't do this

good thing, they will go to hell. If they do a bad thing, something bad will happen to them. For example, we are taught not to waste the food that we eat. Food that falls on the floor, we have to eat or give to the animals. If you waste food, you will become blind. If you do not do your prayers and the other rituals you will face hell, fire, death, etc.

I was very afraid. If a disaster happened to someone, everyone thought that he must have done something bad. So I feared God. I didn't really fear God, but I feared how He was going to punish me. This way of teaching forces you to focus on what will happen to you. You try to fix it rather than to know who God is. You don't focus on any good things about God.

Until I went to college, I never heard “Jesus” in the way that I should hear Jesus' name. Isa (Jesus in Arabic) we know because he is one of the major prophets. He has no father. We hear how his mother raised him in a poor area. We are told that Jesus will return on the doomsday to judge the evil and rescue the righteous. So we know Jesus as Isa, but I never heard that Jesus is the Son of God.

Many Chinese Muslims like Abraham are taught as a child to fear God's punishment. They are taught how to do the prayer rituals, but most do not understand the meanings. They are told that if they do bad things, they will go to hell, but if they do good things, they can go to heaven.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray that Muslim men, women and children will all question what they are taught about God. Pray that God will confront them with the truth that He is also a loving God who desires a relationship with them through Jesus.
- Please pray that God will show “good” Muslims that actions cannot save them. Pray that God will show them how desperately they need Jesus' sacrifice to cover their sins.

Share with us how Chinese Muslims view repentance and punishment.

Most people know that they are not perfect and that they will face bad consequences and punishment. One day one of my friends who is Muslim told me, “We are not going to heaven.” I asked, “Why?” He said, “Because I have done so many bad things.” So I asked, “What is your hope? Why do you still believe?” He said, “We will go to hell, but after a certain period of suffering, God will release us. Everyone who is Muslim in the final days will come out of the punishment and will be with God.” That is another hope for Muslims. Many people say, “I am not going to heaven because I did not do this or that.” They do not say, “I did not know God or love God very much.” Their desire to go to heaven and meet God is based on good deeds and practice.

Repentant in Arabic is called “tawbah.” People often use this word when they know they are going to die. Then they invite the imam to their house and many people ask the imam to pray for this person and do religious practice for the dying person. The family prepares food and gives money to people. They give gifts. The whole event is focused on the meaning of repentance. Sick people do nothing but listen. The focus is on what is done through the religious practice. The repentance we know as Christians is so different.

One guy can do as much evil as he possibly can, but then when he is old if he goes on the Hajj and he leaves his past behind when he returns, everything is washed away. The guy is considered as pure as an infant.

We still believe that what you have done in the past is recorded. We believe there are two angels, one on your right shoulder and one on your left. The one on your right shoulder is white and he is the good angel. The one on your left shoulder is black and is the bad angel. These two angels record everything you say and are thinking. The right angel writes your good deeds and the black angel writes your bad deeds. At the end there is a test. If your right shoulder is heavier, then you pass because you did more good deeds than bad, but if



Day 23

Abraham's Story: Part 2 — Understanding Islam's view of repentance



your left shoulder is heavier you fail because your bad deeds outweigh your good ones.

This whole practice is really based on fear. We are taught to be scared and fear punishment.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray that Muslim men, women and children will all question what they are taught about God. Pray that God will confront them with the truth that He is also a loving God who desires a relationship with them through Jesus.
- Please pray that God will show “good” Muslims that actions cannot save them. Pray that God will show them how desperately they need Jesus’ sacrifice to cover their sins.



Day 24

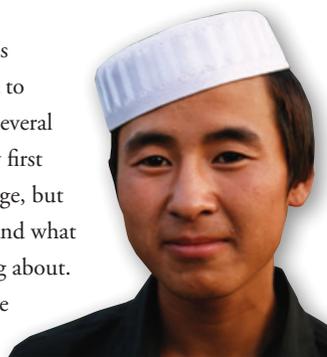
Abraham's Story: Part 3 — Journey to Christ

Prayer Requests

- Praise God that university students and others are boldly proclaiming the Gospel to Chinese Muslim students like Abraham. Pray that more and more followers of Jesus will boldly proclaim the Gospel to Chinese Muslims on college campuses across China.
- For many Muslims, coming to Jesus is a process or journey that takes time and study. Pray that followers of Jesus will faithfully and patiently proclaim the Gospel to their Muslim friends and live out the Gospel as well.

Share with us your journey of coming to know Jesus.

Several friends came to talk to me about Jesus several times during my first semester in college, but I didn't understand what they were talking about. Later, I had some other friends and they



taught me little by little, but I rejected so much. I still believed there was no relationship between Jesus and Isa, but to show respect I had to listen to them. I did what they told me. I studied with them for the sake of friendship, but I had no desire to believe in Jesus. But through two years, their lives and their attitudes and the love that came out of their hearts told me much more strongly what they believed than what they said verbally. I wanted to learn what was going on in their hearts. I wanted to know what made them different.

Everything was really totally different. In some situations you are desperate but you can still have hope. They gave me this encouragement. They wanted to understand and help me with my needs. Few people really go into your heart and look at what is inside.

I read quite a few testimonies from Muslim-background believers in the Arabic-speaking world and Indonesia and Africa. These stories were from all over the world. I believed the stories. God was using dreams and visions to show who He was to Muslims. One thing that is true is that God will appear to you in a way that is closest to you.

In our world we emphasize dreams. If you have a special dream, we will interpret it. One famous story from the Quran is Joseph's story. It is similar to the Bible but different. We are taught that when you have a special dream God is speaking to you.

One event happened in my life that pushed me to believe and listen more. My body used to suffer

terribly. From the moment that I can remember, I remember suffering at least once a year. We saw many doctors and tried many traditional methods to try and heal it, but nothing ever worked.

About seven to eight years ago when I was in college, my friends asked me if they could pray for my body in the name of Jesus so that I could be healed. I thought why not? I have tried so many methods so why not let them? The next day, I didn't think anything of it. Later that year nothing happened. It never came to my mind that they had prayed for me. When a whole year had passed and I still did not have pain, I knew that something was wrong because nothing had happened. One day I shared my feelings with my friend who prayed for me. I said something is wrong with my body. My friend said, "Do you remember last year we prayed for you about this time?" I still couldn't give my heart to Jesus even though this happened.

Later on something happened, and I thought I was going to die. My friends prayed for me, and one family invited me to stay with them during this difficult time. During that month I thought about a lot of things.

Then, a friend shared a Bible with a classmate and myself. I told my classmate that the Bible was cursed. After two days she returned it to me. It was all in Chinese. I didn't return it to my friend. I took it to the dorm, and I asked my friend how to read it. She said read Genesis first, then Psalm, then the Gospels. As I read I saw that it was not a cursed book. When I read the beginning of Genesis, I realized it was very similar to the Quran. I read Genesis, Psalm, Matthew, part of Mark and John. I felt like the authors were copying each other. Copying homework is so common in China, and I felt they were copying each other. I returned it. By the way, when I would read, I was very careful because I did not want anyone to know. So I read by flashlight or on the weekend when no one was around.

A few months later, I wanted to learn more. So when a friend came to talk, I was not rejecting it as much as before. I knew that if I read the Bible and talked about Jesus that God would punish

me and send me to hell. But there was a desire in my heart to learn more. I was afraid others would find out and call me an infidel. I heard people say, "betrayer."

One day I was lying in bed at night, and I was praying, "God, I am tired. If I had never listened to your name in another form or never read the Bible I would not be struggling. Now I am tired. Are you Allah or God? Are you Jesus or Isa? God, will you teach me and show me? I don't care what name people call you. I want to know the truth."

Nothing magical happened afterwards. I decided from that moment that I would read the Bible very objectively. I would not criticize it a lot. But I did not have a Bible for myself. I asked some friends if they could give me a Bible. These friends were very faithful servants of God. Through their lives they told me their feelings. Through their behavior and actions they taught me. They never asked me to read the Bible and through friendship I wanted to read by myself. They were very glad to hear that. After I received the Bible, I read the book every day, and I had a peace of mind.

It was my first time after so many religious practices to focus on God's character and who God is. I never felt that way in my old days before that. When there was an impressive saying about God about how He loves us and cares for us and how faithful He is and how holy He is, I wanted to memorize those Bible verses.





Day 24

Abraham's Story: Part 4 — Persecution and calling



What persecution did you face after you began to follow Jesus?

Later on other friends came to find me and ask me to come to their Bible study and study with them. Before that I read by myself. After seven days of training, they told me I could join the group to study with others. I spent two years in that group. At the beginning the group itself didn't impress me too much. Most were new believers. There were a few who were teaching. I think I liked the feeling of worshiping together and reading the Bible together. Every time I went there I had new knowledge gained through the Bible study. After two years I became a leader of the group. We learned how to share the Gospel with others, and I began to share as we were taught. They really challenged me to share with my friends. I was afraid, but I did share. I didn't realize how dangerous it was. I had problems and troubles. The group was all Han and they didn't understand my troubles.

I found out the differences between Han believers and myself. Some of my friends threatened to kill me if I ever talked like that again. Others said they would tell my parents in the village and tell all of my friends not to talk to me. Many decided to never talk to me again. Some agreed to talk with me but never talk about God. They didn't want to listen. I was afraid that a bad thing would happen to me like an attack, or they would go tell everyone in my village.

I decided before this happened that I wanted to work for God, but at that point I realized I could not share with Muslims the way I learned. No one would listen, and maybe they might kill me. I thought about going far away where no one knew me. I never wanted to go home to my village or county. I could live somewhere else where there are Muslims.

I wanted to work for God, but in a safer place. So I looked at moving to another place, but then

I didn't have peace. I decided not to move. I asked God to not allow me to stay here but take me somewhere else. I had strange dreams. Through these dreams, I realized God was speaking to me. I decided to stay in my province and around my hometown.

Through my own experience, I realized that my hometown would not have a chance to hear because no one was going there to proclaim the Gospel. One day I was reading a testimony of a lady in Iran. I saw that God had a special plan for her. I wanted to know what my special plan was. I realized that I needed to go back and share with my people. I was the best qualified and understood their culture best. I needed to share in my hometown's dialect.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray for Muslim-background believers like Abraham who desire to share the Gospel in their hometowns. Many have been threatened and removed from the community. Pray for God to open doors for them to clearly proclaim the Gospel to their families and hometowns.
- Pray that God will give Han churches discernment to understand how to wisely help Muslim-background believers learn to proclaim the Gospel. Shared contextually, the Gospel is more clearly understood and Muslim-background believers are less likely to experience severe persecution.
- Pray that God will strengthen the faith of Muslim-background believers as they face hardships and struggle with how and when to proclaim the Gospel to their families and friends.

Day 26

Abraham's Story: Part 5 — Sharing the Gospel

Prayer Requests

- Please pray that God will give wisdom to Muslim-background believers and other followers of Christ about how to best proclaim the Gospel clearly to Chinese Muslims.
- Please pray that God will provide mentors for new Muslim-background believers. May Muslim-background believers be intentional about making disciples.

There are many mixed views among those who live among Chinese Muslims about the best approaches for sharing the Gospel. The reality is that regardless of the method, Chinese Muslims need to hear the Gospel proclaimed and hear it often. Muslim-background believers and foreign and national workers all need wisdom about how best to proclaim the Gospel biblically and contextually to Chinese Muslims.

Share how you learned the Gospel needed to be shared differently with Muslims than with others.

Now when I share with a friend, I really don't confront him with the Gospel. We spend time together as friends and I try to find out what he really needs. If he has a problem, I try to help him understand it. I ask if I can pray for him. I pray, and he does not stop me. I still pray as a Muslim in the same position. If I had a similar experience as this guy in the past, I share with him how God had helped me or provided for me.

One of my friends had really difficult family relationships. His family treated him horribly. His father or grandfather had a really big transgression in their history and it was on his head. He thought God was punishing him. I told him I understood what he was saying. Then, I told him a similar story of what happened to me and a story of what I heard happened in the mosque. I also shared a story from the Bible. I wanted to show him what God's Word said. He didn't agree with everything that I said, but he did respond. I am helping him and others to think more about who God is.

When I was still in college and I was sharing with my friend, I told her that if you do bad things, you are going to go to hell. Then after that day we never talked with each other, and she said many bad things about me. She calls me a devil. So I changed my approach. I am not so confrontational now.

I wish I had a Muslim-background believer who was older than me who could teach me. That hasn't happened in my life. I don't want this same thing to happen to others and to my family. I want to be able to mentor new Muslim-background believers.



Share how you desire to worship with other Muslim-background believers.

If I go to a Han Bible study or church, I do not feel at home. One time I went to a big church. There was a big picture of Jesus. I thought they were worshipping an idol because when we (Muslims) were taught to pray, we were told to never worship when there is an image around. It stopped me from going to the church.

Not until three years ago did I stop having those feelings. I met a group of Muslim-background believers. They worshiped in their own language and had their own Scripture to read. When I went inside the big room, it was just like a mosque — no chairs, no desks. They sat around on the floor and worshiped by kneeling down and praying. They sang songs and had their own musical instruments. It was just like their culture. No animal pictures or pictures of people. I didn't understand all of what they were saying, but when they read their Scripture I thought, "When can we do this? When can believers in my people group sit together, young and old, and worship together in our language and follow our cultural customs?" It was one of the best feelings I have ever had when worshipping with others.

As we were standing and praying together, my whole body collapsed and I fell down on the ground in front of all those people and yelled like a crazy man. Tears streamed down my face. I cried too much to speak any words. It is very hard to describe that feeling. You feel like you left your parents for many years. You dream of coming home but never make it. But, one day you come home, and they are waiting at the door. I hope that can happen again!

*name changed



Day 27

Abraham's Story: Part 6 — Yearning to worship with other Muslim-background believers



Prayer Requests

- Please pray that more and more Chinese Muslims will come to faith and that they will quickly form contextual Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an churches.
- Pray that God will use Abraham to lead other Muslims to faith. Pray that he will be able to start a Muslim-background believer church soon.
- Pray that Han churches will help and encourage Muslim-background believers to form contextual churches.

Most Chinese Muslim-background believers are isolated. They live in villages or cities in which they are the only known Muslim-background believer or the only known Muslim-background believer from their specific people group. They yearn for the day when they will be able to gather with others from their people group and worship Jesus in a way that is culturally appropriate for them. Most who go to church attend a Han church. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is not home for them. They are not able to express themselves in worship in the same way they could in a Hui, Salar, Dongxiang or Bao'an church.

Day 28

Abraham's Story:
Part 7 — Prayer
requests

Prayer Requests

- Pray that God will give Muslim-background believers wisdom about how to identify themselves in their hometowns and to other Muslims.
- Pray that God will show them what parts of Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an cultures they can keep as they follow Jesus and what parts must be discarded.
- Pray that God will provide Muslim-background believers with community. They long to not be the only believer.



How can people pray for you and your family?

Pray especially for my parents that they will one day say, “I want to become like you.” I have tried to tell my father, but he always stops me. If I tell

him, he will find a story that contradicts the story I share. For example, “Jesus didn’t die on the cross. Judas did.” Pray that God will prepare my parent’s hearts to listen and believe.

Pray for my security as I talk to other people and work. Pray that there will not be any big difficulties in the work I am doing. Also pray that people will join us in the work. Pray that others from my people group will believe and join me in the work.

How do you encourage people to pray for Muslim-background believers?

Pray that they will have understanding in these areas: How do I identify myself? How can I be a believer but still be Hui? What can I still do that is part of my culture that doesn’t contradict Jesus’ teaching? It is very hard to not be Muslim and stay in my community. I feel very lonely.



“For my whole life I’ve heard the government treats Muslims better than us so that they won’t revolt,” said one man at a meeting of church leaders.

“It’s not fair that they are allowed to have two children simply because they are a minority group, when we have to abide by the one child policy,” said another.

A third simply asked, “Why should we take the Gospel to people who hate us?”

The issues forcing racial tension between the Han majority and the Muslim minorities are real. And they are building real walls of hatred and bitterness in the hearts of the Han Chinese — including believers. In this meeting, it’s not fear that hinders the spread of the Gospel, but animosity.

But as the meeting continued, the men began to study Scripture, remembering Christ’s sacrifice in the midst of their sin and His love for those who hate Him.

“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, ESV).

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us. . . .” (1 John 4:10, ESV).

As they read, the Word slowly started to tear down their walls of racism and burden their hearts for those who, as they once were, are desperate for the forgiveness of the Savior.

Because of what the men learned that day, more than 500 Chinese believers have begun to pray for their Muslim neighbors, and some have even dared to share Christ with them, all because of the Gospel that transcends barriers and transforms lives.



Day 29

Catching the vision

Prayer Requests

- Pray for believers in China to catch a vision for reaching Muslims, both in their communities and around the world.
- Pray that Chinese believers will tear down the walls of racism that hinder them from developing relationships and sharing the Gospel with the Hui.

The Situation: The Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an are the forgotten faces of the Silk Road. Their ancestors traveled into China centuries ago for trade, business, war or to find a new home. Today Han Chinese Christians travel the Silk Road taking the Gospel back to Jerusalem, but they often forget their Muslim neighbors who have never heard the Gospel. Very few — Chinese or foreigners — are committed to living intentionally among Chinese Muslims for the sake of the Gospel. The barriers are immense. But the reward is worth risking it all.

Day 30

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us...

Heavenly Father, we pray today for Chinese Muslim-background believers and missionaries from the Chinese church and from around the world who are proclaiming the Gospel among the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an. Father, may your Word speed ahead and be honored among Chinese Muslims. May many hear the Gospel this year and may many believe! Father, please deliver Chinese Muslim-background believers as well as missionaries from wicked and evil men. We know, Father, that you are faithful! You are always faithful. Strengthen our faith this year and lead us all to faithfully proclaim your Gospel daily wherever we live. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3a, ESV).

We are thankful and humbled that you have taken time to pray for Chinese Muslims. We believe God is working among them, and we ask you to continue to believe and pray with us. Due to security concerns, we are not able to share specifically on the Web site about how God is answering prayers, but we will continue to post stories and people profiles to guide you as you pray for the Hui, Salar, Dongxiang and Bao'an. If you desire for someone to share with your church more specifically about how God is working among Chinese Muslims, please email info@pray4hui.com.

Today, please pray that the Gospel will speed ahead among Chinese Muslims and be honored, as it was when you heard the Gospel and believed. May thousands of Chinese Muslims hear the Gospel clearly proclaimed this year, and may thousands believe!

When Chinese Muslims turn to follow Jesus, Satan rises to attack as they rejoice! They encounter wicked and evil men and women within their own communities and families who do not believe the Gospel. Pray that Chinese Muslims who believe this year will persevere through the persecution they face. Pray that God will deliver them. May they turn to Christ and their faith be strengthened during trials and tribulations.

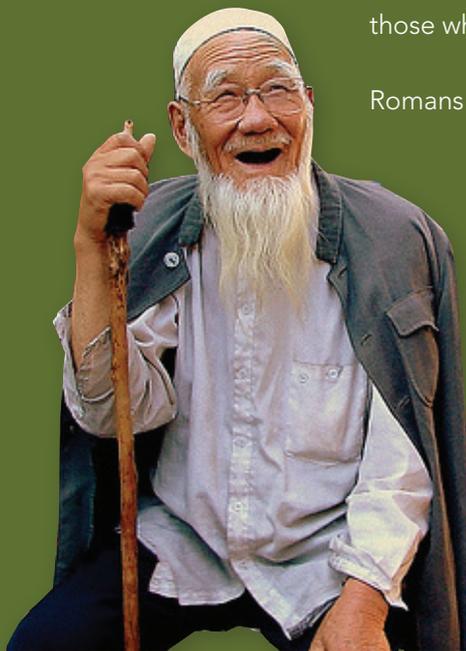
The Lord is always faithful! May we all be faithful to Him! May we faithfully pray for His Spirit to move among Chinese Muslims and all unreached people groups. May we faithfully worship Him wherever He has called us to live. May we faithfully proclaim the Gospel and make His marvelous works known to all the people we encounter daily!

穆斯林

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans 10:13-15, ESV





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