

Testimonies

Across the world, people are experiencing the grace and love of the Lord Jesus and committing their lives to Him. They encounter Him in many and varied ways, through national evangelists, the love and witness of church members, radio, television, the internet, Bible and literature distribution and through the miraculous.

But faith can also bring persecution for many converts because of the choice they have made. Although some converts from a Western background may experience a degree of pressure and ridicule, it is a particular problem for converts from Islam, who may suffer misunderstanding, harassment, abuse, violence and even murder.

Here we share the testimonies of "Joshua" and "Ruth", who converted to Christianity from Muslim backgrounds.

Thrown on the streets for following Jesus

"Joshua" studied Islam in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria and, following in the footsteps of his father, who was the highest-ranking Islamic Imam in the country, he became one of the leading Islamic clerics in his country. One day, Joshua visited a friend who showed him an unusual text called "The Book for Men with White Hair" – so-called, according to the friend, because only old and mature men should read it. His curiosity sparked, Joshua took the book and read all about Issa (Jesus). In his confusion, he turned to the Quran and, as he read more about Issa, he became convinced that Jesus was God.

Joshua had been actively involved in persecuting churches, so when he crept in to the back of a church to hear Christ's message, he was chased away for being a spy. He eventually found a church which let him in, and there he gave his life to the Lord. Later that day, he returned to his mosque and in front of

everyone, including his father, he declared that Jesus was God and that he was a Christian. This sparked outrage and he was dragged away by members of the mosque. Stripping him of his clothes, his father declared "Because you are my son, I will give you 20 minutes to flee. After 20 minutes you are no longer my son and I will send men to kill you. Leave everything Islam has ever given you!" Leaving behind his family, property and clothes, Joshua fled naked into the night.

Joshua was found by his sister, who gave him food and clothes. He lived on the streets in constant fear and was often beaten by Muslims if he tried to tell them about Jesus. Local churches would not shelter him for fear of attack. After 18 months of living like this, a church finally took Joshua in and gave him food and somewhere to sleep, but many Christians still suspected that he was a spy.



Joshua and his wife at their wedding

One Christmas Eve, Joshua was sleeping in the church when the pastor approached him and asked him where he would be spending Christmas. Joshua replied, "I have nowhere to go." The pastor said that he would pray for Joshua, but he did not invite Joshua to spend Christmas with him. Feeling alone and desperate, Joshua made a vow to the Lord that if God ever got him out of his state of homelessness, he would commit his life to helping take care of converts. Soon after this, he moved to a different church, where he met an American woman who gave him some money and put him in touch with Barnabas Fund.

Through Joshua, Barnabas Fund supports more than 300 converts by providing assistance with medical costs, rent, food, transport and the setting up of a pig breeding project to provide a source of income generation for the converts. In addition, financial backing is provided for outreach training, discipleship and vocational training.

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Joshua baptises a new Christian



Pigs from the breeding programme that is funded by Barnabas

A blackboard with “Jesus” on it

“Ruth” was raised in a staunch Muslim family in East Africa. As a young girl, she liked to follow her brothers, even getting involved in a violent assault on the local Anglican minister. While her father and brothers beat the minister severely, Ruth struck him over the head with a piece of wood.

As she grew up, Ruth married and moved from her family home to live with her husband. One night as she slept, Ruth had a dream about a blackboard with the word “Jesus” written on it three times. The next day, she asked her mother who Jesus was. Her mother instructed her to pray a certain formula of words in order to get rid of the evil *jinn* (spirit) whom the mother believed had caused the dream.

A few days later, Ruth had another dream in which she saw a picture of her local church and heard a voice saying, “This is Jesus.” When she woke, she ran straight to the church, where she was led to give her life to the Lord Jesus. She was dramatically changed, bursting with joy and love.

But this decision has not been well-received by Ruth’s family. Her father and brothers, who live next door to the church building, shout and threaten to kill her every time she goes to church, throwing sticks and stones at her.

Now a widow, Ruth has had three of her four children taken away from her. On the very evening that she told her story in the open air by the church in June 2009, her house, which is next to a mosque, was



Ruth, a Christian convert from Islam, is baptised

burned down. Despite losing everything she owned in the fire, Ruth continues to trust in the Lord; her story is a testament to the power of Christ to change people’s hearts and minds.

Not only converts themselves, but also anyone who is thought to be seeking to win converts from Islam, is liable for persecution. Many such are martyred. Our story below is from Mauritania, North Africa, a region often called the Maghreb.



A typical scene from an old town in Mauritania, where American Christian Chris Leggett was murdered for “Christianizing”

Christian aid worker murdered in Mauritania

On 23 June 2009, Chris Leggett, an American Christian living in Mauritania, was killed. Two attackers appeared to try and kidnap him, and when he resisted they shot him several times in the head. Al-Jazeera television later played a recording reportedly from Al-Qaeda, which stated, “Two knights of the Islamic Maghreb succeeded Tuesday morning at 8 a.m. to kill the infidel American Christopher Leggett for his Christianizing activities.” Despite this taunt his family issued the following statement:

In a spirit of love, we express our forgiveness for those who took away the life of our remarkable son. Chris had a deep love for Mauritania and its people, a love that we share. Despite this terrible event, we harbour no ill will for the Mauritanian people. On a spiritual level, we forgive those responsible, asking only that justice be applied against those who killed our son.

Mauritania’s Interior Ministry responded, saying that it was investigating the death

and security forces were doing all they could to catch the criminals.

Leggett, his wife and four children lived for seven years in the impoverished El-Kasr neighbourhood of Nouakchott, where he directed an aid agency that provided training in computer skills, sewing and literacy, and he also ran a micro-finance program. His good works as a Christian undertaking humanitarian work could not protect him from this brutal attack, which was, interestingly, justified by his attackers on the basis of the Islamic apostasy law.