

ALWAYS

A Ready Answer



But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1Peter 3:15).

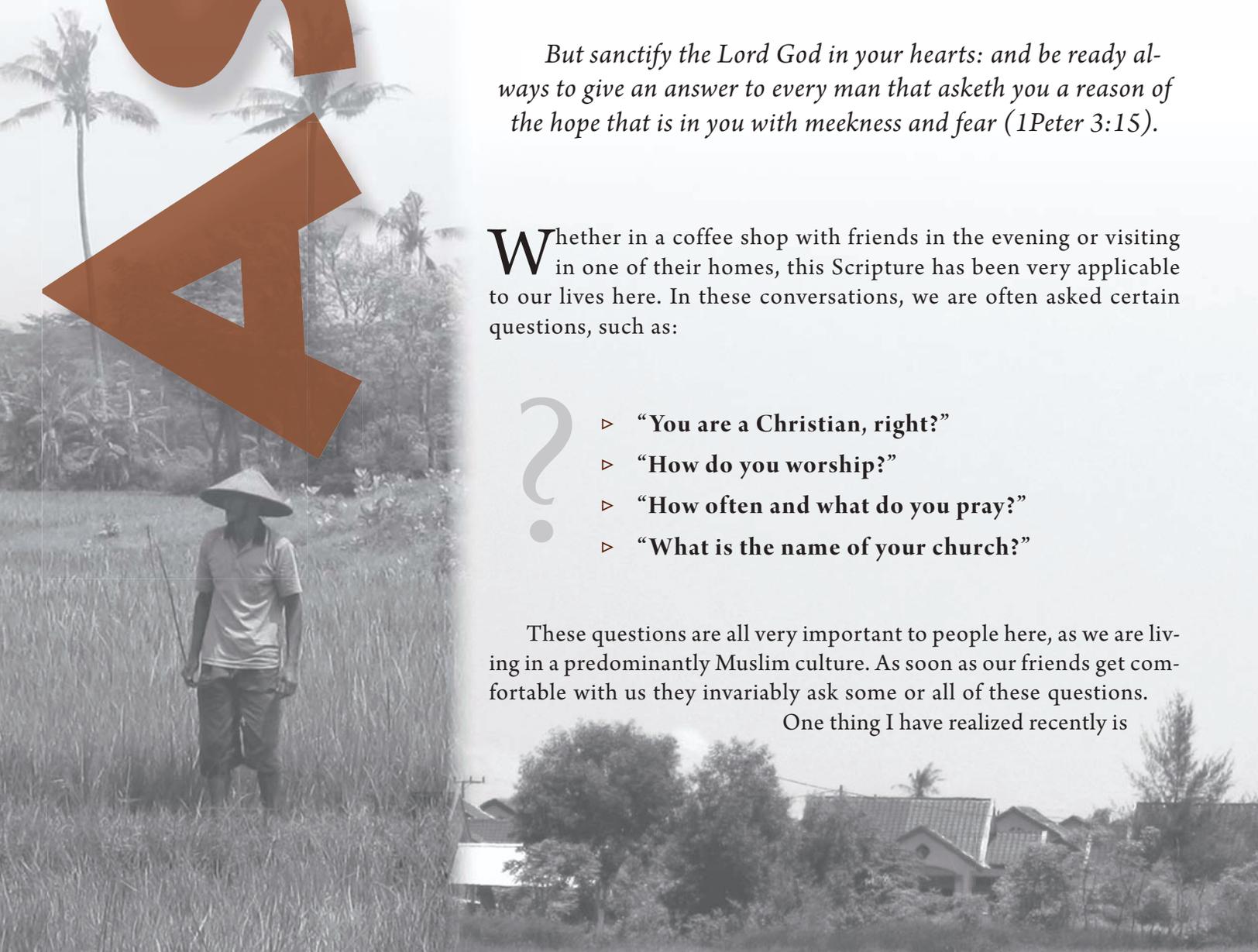
Whether in a coffee shop with friends in the evening or visiting in one of their homes, this Scripture has been very applicable to our lives here. In these conversations, we are often asked certain questions, such as:



- ▷ “You are a Christian, right?”
- ▷ “How do you worship?”
- ▷ “How often and what do you pray?”
- ▷ “What is the name of your church?”

These questions are all very important to people here, as we are living in a predominantly Muslim culture. As soon as our friends get comfortable with us they invariably ask some or all of these questions.

One thing I have realized recently is



that our response to these questions could make the difference of a lifetime, and may determine that soul's eternal destiny.

These questions cause me to stop and think about who I really am and what I represent to people here. For many of the people here, I may be the only follower of Christ that they will ever have significant contact with. As I have pondered this, the Lord is teaching me how to give an answer for the hope that lies within me, and I want to share with you what the Lord has shown me.

side Him. The oneness of God is confirmed by the words of Jesus, "I and my Father are one" (John 10: 30).

2. **I hate peace and love war.** From a Muslim's perspective, the "Cross Wars" (Crusades) are express proof of this concept. The United States' involvement in the Middle East conflict and the thousands of troops deployed on Middle Eastern soil in the last few years is further confirmation of this mentality.

Many of us would be horrified if we knew what being a Christian means to a typical Muslim person.

"You are a Christian, right?"

At first glance this question seems innocent enough, but as you realize what people here "know" about Christians you have second thoughts. Many of us would be horrified if we knew what being a Christian means to a typical Muslim person. If I were to respond to this question with an eager "yes," I would unwittingly confirm in their minds that:

1. **I worship three gods**, namely the Creator God, Mary (mother of Jesus), and her son Jesus. According to Muslims, Christians believe that God became flesh and had a physical relationship with Mary, who then gave birth to Jesus.

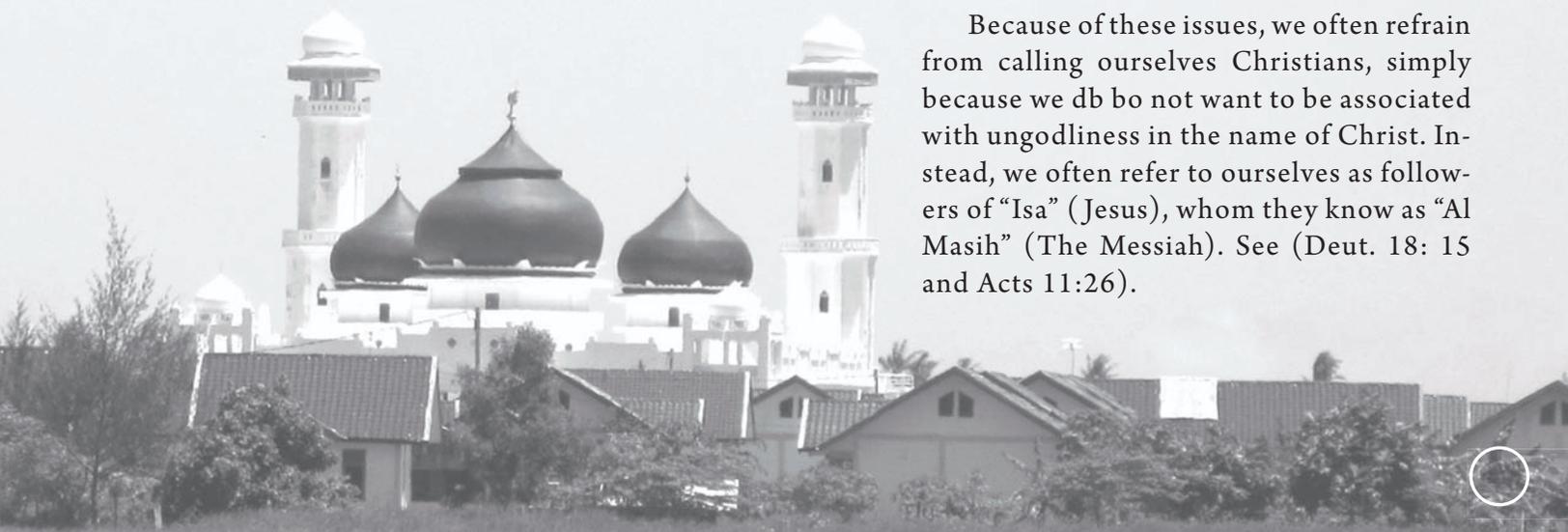
In reality, I do not worship three gods and I believe that God is one and there is none be-

I want my friends to know that my ancestors were imprisoned for refusing to take up arms and fight in these wars. Furthermore, I believe that it is sin to commit murder, whether in the name of religion or our country.

3. **I believe it is OK to live an immoral lifestyle**, and for our women to dress immodestly in public. Hollywood, as they see it on TV, is Christian in their eyes. This belief is reinforced by the way that many Christians here dress immodestly.

When people here first notice that our dress is different from other Americans they know, they talk about it and respect us for it. These discussions often lead to deeper, more meaningful sharing about matters of the heart and true righteousness.

Because of these issues, we often refrain from calling ourselves Christians, simply because we do not want to be associated with ungodliness in the name of Christ. Instead, we often refer to ourselves as followers of "Isa" (Jesus), whom they know as "Al Masih" (The Messiah). See (Deut. 18: 15 and Acts 11:26).



“How do you worship?”

Muslims believe that ritual prayers are the truest form of worship. I often tell Muslims that Isa did not command us to pray in a certain manner, i.e. facing Jerusalem, or using certain positions. I teach them that according to Scriptures we especially need to pay attention to three things when we pray:

1. When we speak to God we need to admit our failures and sins and to take responsibility for them (1 John 1:8-9). We need to be truthful with who we are before Him (Luke 18:13-14).
2. In order for our prayers to be heard, we must first be reconciled with anyone who has anything against us (Matthew 5:23-24).
3. We need to speak to Him with the confidence that He is there, that He knows our hearts, and that He can hear what we are saying. He is ever present. We need to speak to Him with the language of our hearts (Heb. 11:6 and Jn. 4:23).



Sometimes my friends ask me, “Can you pray like we pray?” I tell them, “If my heart has been transformed and made clean from sin, my posture in prayer is immaterial. If I pray from my heart then God hears my prayers” (James 5:16). I often follow up with some testimonies of answered prayer, healings, etc.

“I think that your people are the true “people of the book” whom we read about in the Quran.”

“How often, and what do you pray?”

Muslims pray ritual prayers five times a day. Often this is a sincere question that is asked in response to conversation about the real purpose of prayer. Here are some thoughts I share with my friends:

1. We are commanded in our scriptures to pray without ceasing. In simple language, I tell my friends that we can pray about anything and everything. For example, I call a friend on the phone if I have a request or message or if I simply want to chat. In the same way we can call upon God and He will converse with us.
2. Isa taught His followers to refrain from repetitious prayers, as these prayers are not heard by God (Matthew 6:7). God hears original prayers that come from our heart and is not interested in recitation when it comes to prayers.

“What is the name of your church?”

1. Whenever friends ask this question, I let them know that I am neither Catholic nor Protestant, but a follower of Isa, and then we launch into a discussion on the true meaning of church.
2. Church is not a building, as most people believe, but rather is an assembly of believers. I point out the words of Isa, “Where two or three

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are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Having said this, I am not afraid to invite them to my house if they want to see for themselves how we conduct our prayers, worship God, and “have church.” Meeting in a home for Bible study and prayer is probably much more culturally acceptable for them than going to a formal church service on Sunday morning.

I have been surprised more than once at the responses that I have gotten as I have discussed some of these issues at length. Among them are:

“I think that your people are the true “people of the book” whom we read about in the Quran.”

“I think if you had been born into my culture, you would be some great Muslim teacher.”

“Please pray for me so that I could have this heart change you are talking about.”

“I think if you would become a Muslim, you would actually be better than I am, because I have not had this heart change.”

These are wonderful confirmations to our hearts here. We see these as indications that the Life of Christ is shining through us and that we are able to make a difference.

Luke 11:33 says, *“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.”*

Before we came here I thought that we might have a hard time talking to people about things that really matter. After getting to know some people and making friends I realize that the opposite is true. Because of the vacuum of truth here people are often quick to ask deep questions, and start conversations about matters of the heart.

Blessings:

- ▷ We are blessed that God has given us many friends in this community.

Prayer Requests:

- ▷ We need prayer for continued advancement in our language learning.
- ▷ We will need several new visas soon and getting visas has been getting more difficult all the time.

