

# Welcoming Muslim Neighbors Into God's Kingdom In East Africa

## BEN NAJA

Ben Naja (pen name) has served among unreached Muslim people groups in different countries in northern, western and eastern Africa for the last 20 years. In partnership with local ministries, he has trained, facilitated and coached numerous church planting tentmakers for cross-cultural pioneer ministry in several African and Asian countries. He is currently also involved in training disciples and developing leaders in two emerging movements from a Muslim background. Together with his spouse and children, he currently lives and ministers in eastern Africa. He is not a native English speaker.

In certain Eastern African contexts, significant numbers of Muslims entered the kingdom of God over the last decade or so despite very little initial contact with the Bible or Christians. Together, with various local partners, it has been our privilege to offer discipleship training and leadership development to two such movements.

Toward the end of 2011 we interviewed 390 Muslim-background believers from these two movements. We wanted to know why these Muslims decided to follow Jesus as their Savior and how they share the gospel with other members of their Muslim communities.

Our research shows significant correlations between the factors which brought them to Christ and the ways in which they now share the gospel. It is encouraging that a remarkably high number (more than 90%) of those surveyed do share Christ with others.

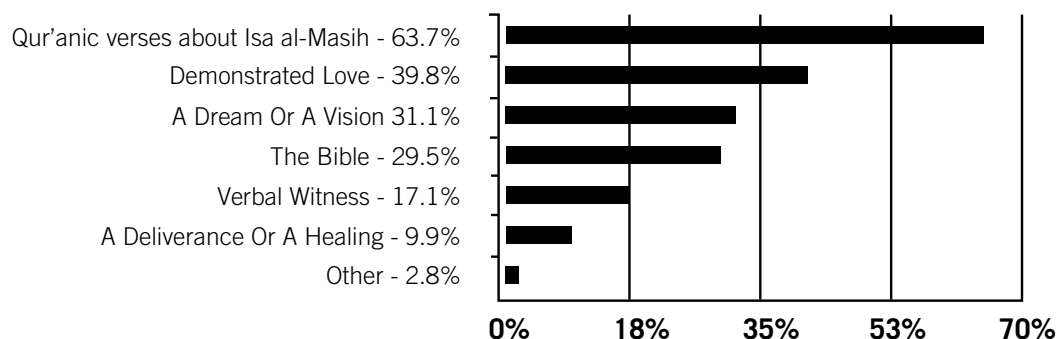
## METHODOLOGY

I first did a pilot survey with a limited number of interviewees using the two, open-ended questions below. Based on their responses I transformed the questions from open ended to multiple-choice with the option "Other". Some of those surveyed were literate, others illiterate. Some were interviewed by myself, others by other interviewers under my supervision.

## QUESTION 1: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO FOLLOW JESUS THE MESSIAH? — BECAUSE OF...

By clustering some of the above mentioned factors, we identified four-main areas that led to their conversion: Jesus verses found in the Qur'an (64%); the witness and love of other followers of Isa al-Masih (57%); supernatural experiences such as dreams, visions, healings or deliverances (41%); and the Bible (30%).

Figure 1



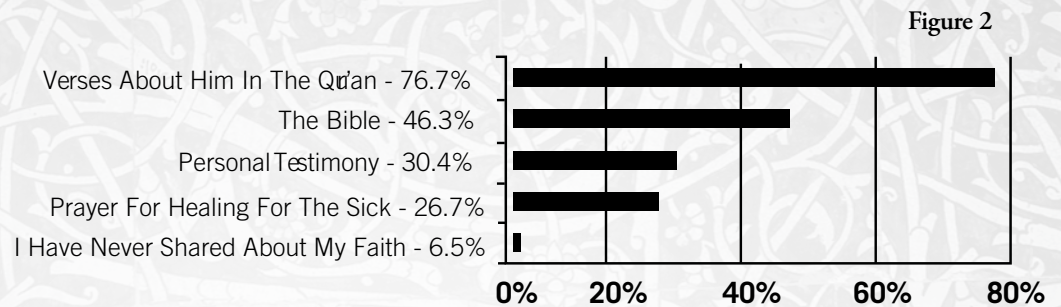
Our research also indicates that most disciples decided to follow Jesus as a result of multiple factors (an average 1.9 factors). It would therefore be inaccurate to say, for example, that “one third of all believers from a Muslim background came to saving faith in Christ through a dream or vision.” It would be more accurate to say that “as a part of their spiritual journey towards salvation in Christ, one third of those surveyed experienced a dream or a vision.”

## QUESTION 2: I HAVE TOLD OTHER MUSLIMS ABOUT JESUS THE MESSIAH THROUGH...(FIGURE 2)

The correlations between these two questions show that these believers also used the same four factors in leading others to Christ that were influential in their own decision to follow Him: Jesus verses in the Qur'an, prayer for God's supernatural intervention, the Bible, and demonstrated love and verbal witness. And just as a combination of several factors were used by God to

bring them to Christ, so they also used similar multiple approaches when sharing the gospel.

The data in figure 3 suggests five ways that Christian neighbors of Muslims can work with God to welcome an ever increasing number of Muslims into the Kingdom.



## CONCLUSION


God is drawing Muslims to Himself. You can participate by learning and sharing what the Qur'an and Bible say about Jesus, praying for and with your Muslim neighbors, showing them love in your daily life, and sharing the Good News whenever and wherever you find an open door; trusting that God will do his part! 

Figure 3

FACTORS LEADING MUSLIMS INTO THE KINGDOM	APPLICATION
Jesus verses in the Quran	Become familiar with the Jesus verses in the Quran and discuss them with your Muslim neighbors. (One excellent resource is <i>Stepping Stones to Eternity: Jesus from the Quran to the Bible</i> , by Don McCurry: Ministries to Muslims, 2012)
Demonstrated love & verbal witness	Be hospitable to your Muslim neighbours and accept their hospitality, show them practical love whenever you can, and witness to them.
Supernatural experience	Pray daily for God to visit your Muslim neighbors in dreams and visions. Ask whether they have ever had a vision of Jesus. Encourage them to pray for God to reveal himself to them. Bring God's blessing into their lives by praying for them and with them whenever they face a particular challenge.
The Bible	Learn and share Bible stories which are compelling to Muslims: narratives about Old Testament prophets, stories which highlight the power, glory and love of Jesus, and passages that show Jesus' ability to save, protect and forgive.
Multiple factors	Be intentional about using multiple approaches.