



Disciples of the Way Ministries

*A Ministry of People of All Nations
reaching out to People from All Nations*

Ramadan: What does it mean?



Yesterday, 1.8 billion Muslims are celebrating *Eid Al-Iftar* to mark the end of fasting for the month of Ramadan. By now, most of you are familiar with this term used for the designated month each year that Muslims around the world commit to fasting from food and water, and other prescribed activities from sunrise to sunset. ***But what does the term "Ramadan" mean?***



This article was written by DOW Volunteer Missionary, Grant Goodrich.

To begin his "khutbah" **خطبة** or "sermon", this was the very question that Pastor Karim presented to all in attendance at our first Wednesday evening Arabic Church gathering in the DOW Center. DOW Arabic Church of All

Nations has just celebrated its first Easter Worship on April 4th and Ramadan 2021 had just begun on April 13th. This meant a hectic schedule of food preparation and hyper religious activity for our Muslim friends. Many Christian missionaries serving among Muslims have come to expect a lull in ministry opportunities during these 30 days, due to their Muslim friends being too busy to meet together or too exhausted from all the labor for the daily feast.

Yet here in Dallas, our Muslim neighbors were at DOW on a Ramadan Wednesday, April 13th, at 7pm (*an hour and half before they're allowed to relieve their growing hunger pangs!*) listening attentively to Pastor Karim as he stood to preach the Word of God. When no one replied, he repeated again in Arabic, ***"What does the name Ramadan mean? Where did the name Ramadan come from?" When did the practice of fasting actually start?***



To our surprise, this typically chatty group of Arab friends looked at each other and muffled a few suggestions under their breaths with little conviction that they were correct. Then Pastor Karim zeroed in on the Arabic term, **"ramad"**, meaning **"ash, dust"**. He then directed us all to flip our Bibles open to **Isaiah 58**, the very text in which the Lord directed Baha (a former Muslim who is now a disciple maker and a missionary to Muslims). One year ago the Word of God convicted Baha to observe the true fast before the Lord as a blessing to his unbelieving wife who observes Ramadan to Allah according to the "Shar'ia" or "letter of law", rather than the Spirit of the Law. Baha was convinced that in Christ, believers are granted the freedom and joy in fasting and communing with our God.

Upon hearing the Word of God in Isaiah 58 for the first time, all the Muslim friends in the room read along intently with Pastor Karim as he read aloud in Arabic these words concerning the fast that God rejects (**See Isaiah 58:3-5**). In fact, a quick Bible keyword search reveals, that references to fasting in the Old Testament are accompanied with praying and weeping in sackcloth and ashes (*i.e. Neh. 9:1; Esth. 4:3; Dan. 9:3*). There it is again, **"sackcloth and ash"**, **"ramad-رماد."**

Our Muslim neighbors immediately recognized this Arabic term as a reference particularly to the difficulty of the prescribed fast in the early days of Islam amid the intense heat of their desert homeland. But Pastor Karim was taking them back much further in history than that, back

to the Leviticus account of the institution of Yom Kippur, “the Day of Atonement” for God’s chosen people, Israel.

The modern Jewish calendar has 28 days of fasting, but in the Old Testament, God commanded only one annual fast. In **Leviticus 16:29-31** Moses gives God’s dictum to **afflict {deny} yourselves** on *the Day of Atonement*. Yahweh makes it clear by repeating Himself twice that this was to be an annually reserved time of denying themselves. ***“Is this not what fasting is all about, self-denial?”*** Pastor Karim asked (Theology of the Cross). They agreed and insisted that one benefit from observing Ramadan is that it allows them to “consider the plight of the needy” among them. Okay, that’s really nice (Theology of Glory). But is this merely God’s intended purpose for afflicting oneself in Leviticus 16? Pastor Karim then directed us all to verses 29-31. **(See Leviticus 16:29-31)**



This is where, my friends, we want the Muslim to camp out and consider the Holy Word of the Lord and the way of the Cross about true Fasting. During the Sermon on the Mount, **Jesus spoke against fasting as a means of Salvation**. Instead, he commended fasting as a private, voluntary act of humility before God (**Matthew 6:16-18**). Our human fasting does not add nor subtract anything to the righteousness that was credited to us by faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. Muslims are expecting their fasting to produce results which add to their standing, tip the scales in their favor, and contribute to their case to receive Paradise on the Day of Judgment based on their merit. On the contrary, the biblical fast involves responding to the Lord’s call to repent; to afflict ourselves like Christ did for our Salvation to draw us near to God and join in the sufferings of Christ (**John 12:32**).

As a missionary volunteer with DOW Ministries, I believe that it is DOW's conviction that people will hear the Gospel and realize that even repentance is

not a person's act of righteousness, but is by God's Kindness in Christ alone as we read in **Romans 2:4**: *"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"*



"And they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and the Fellowship, to the Breaking of Bread and prayers...Praising God and having favor with all the People. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being Saved." Acts 2:42-47

DOW ESL Crosses the Atlantic into the Desert



This article written by ESL Volunteer Teacher, Chuck

In January 2020 a young man from Saudi Arabia came to Dallas on a tourist visa to visit his sister, a student at a local Dallas college. During his time in Dallas the young man met and became friends with a number of student friends of his sister. However, his English was limited. The young man used the web to find a place where he could learn English.

DOW turned out to be the closest location to where his sister lived. He contacted DOW, made an appointment to come in person to apply and for testing and he joined DOW's ESL program as a student in Level 2 of the 5 levels of classes. However, his tourist visa expired at the end of February 2020, just prior to the Covid-19 "shutdown and travel restrictions", and the young man returned to his family home in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

When DOW moved their ESL classes online via Zoom due to the Covid-19 crisis, the young man asked permission to rejoin the classes from Riyadh, as his interest in learning English never wavered. He was still talking with his US friends by phone. Also, it turned out that speaking English would be helpful in finding a job in Riyadh. But there was a problem - Riyadh was eight hours ahead of Dallas time. This meant that his ESL class took place in the wee hours of the morning in Riyadh. His teacher, a three-year volunteer teacher in DOW's ESL program, agreed to meet with him at 10am via Zoom for a private ESL class every Friday morning. Continuing to meet and attend class for the next year enabled the young man to complete his Level 2 ESL studies, receive his Level 2 certificate in April 2021, and to move up to Level 3 ESL classes when the next semester begins in June.

DOW is blessed and thankful to have dedicated teachers in its ESL program that work hard to coordinate schedules and reach, teach, love, and work with the needs of our students of all nations.

Your support & prayers help DOW continue to bring the Gospel of Peace & Comfort of the Crucified and Risen Christ to our Muslim Neighbors in Dallas, Texas!

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