Each year, faithful Muslims around the world spend 30 days fasting and praying during the month of Ramadan. In places where Islam is the dominant religion, this means the entire cultural rhythm changes during the month of Ramadan. Restaurants and food shops close, business slows down to enable prayers and fasting is expected and assumed.

In a few places, Ramadan means a ratcheting up of violent attacks against Christians. The 2017 bus attack that killed at least 28 Egyptian Christians was conducted by ISIS, which specializes in terrorist attacks during Ramadan. Such violence is rare, but does happen.

But for most Christians who live in Islamic regions, Ramadan simply brings increased cultural pressure—most Christians do not fast or pray during the specific times during Ramadan, and so they stick out. In some places, that means they are criticized or discriminated against. Their lack of participation in the surrounding cultural and religious customs means their differences are even more obvious than usual—and some believers are punished for it.

Over the next 30 days of Ramadan, you and your church have the opportunity to stand with our brothers and sisters around the world in prayer—asking God to protect and bless believers living and worshiping in places where their faith in Jesus makes them stand out this month. We also have the opportunity to pray for and share with Muslims; Ramadan is all about seeking after God, and so we ask that God will reveal His true self through Jesus to Muslims who are searching! And finally, we have the chance to remind fellow Christians they aren’t alone—that God has not left them and that He will give them the courage and boldness to stand for Him and His gospel.

This resources are designed to help you as you lead your church and help your community see how they can pray for Muslims this Ramadan, and stand with Christians around the world. We hope this information is helpful and invite you and your church into greater understanding and a sense of mission as we enter into a season that impacts billions of people each year.

**WHAT IS RAMADAN?**

Ramadan refers to the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims believe the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is a month of fasting and prayer for Muslims all over the world. Muslims are required to refrain from food or drink (including water) from dawn until dusk. Islam teaches that good deeds and prayers during Ramadan are especially effective, and that during the month, the gates of heaven are opened while hell is locked up. Muslims are expected to give to charity during the month of Ramadan, as well. The month ends with a day of feasting called Eid al-Fitr.

**WHY DOES IT MATTER TO CHRISTIANS?**

There are approximately 1.8 billion Muslims in the world. One of the primary characteristics of the month of Ramadan is fasting from dawn to dusk—fasting is one of the five primary pillars of Islam. The month is intended to be a time of intense prayer and devotion to God, along with a focus on charity and giving alms to the poor (in some countries, this charity is a mandatory tax from the state).

For many Muslims, the month represents a time of earnestly seeking after God. And yet, Christians know that this pursuit isn’t the whole story—without Jesus, any search for God is always incomplete. That means Ramadan is a chance to...
share with and pray for Muslims to discover the full truth of the gospel—to pray that, as they seek after God, He will meet them and show them the way of Jesus, and to share the gospel with them in word and deed.

Additionally, there are many Christians who live in Muslim-majority countries or areas. During Ramadan, the faith of these believers makes them “stick out” even more than they usually do. While the surrounding culture rotates around daily prayer and visible fasting, followers of Jesus may not participate in these customs, creating a pressure-filled environment in which their differences are more exposed than usually. Making the situation even more tense is the number of attacks by groups like ISIS in recent years that explicitly use Ramadan as a motivation.

**HOW SPECIFICALLY SHOULD WE PRAY DURING THIS PERIOD? HOW SHOULD WE TELL OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY TO RESPOND?**

You and your church community can pray in several ways:

1. **Pray for and with Christians living in countries celebrating Ramadan.** Pray they won’t encounter extra persecution during the month of Ramadan, and that they will be able to navigate tricky political, cultural, social and familial realities during this period. Pray they will be able to stand strong in their faith throughout the month and will be able to live out their faith in their context. Pray also they will be able to love their Muslim neighbors and show the love of Jesus to everyone they meet during Ramadan.

2. **Pray for Muslims during Ramadan.** Pray their search for God will find its answer in the risen Jesus. Pray that Jesus will reveal Himself in dreams, Christian TV shows, Christian neighbors, visions, Christian websites and any other way that God chooses to use. Pray they will be kind to Christian minorities in their midst.

3. **Pray for and serve Muslims living in Western cultures.** There are an estimated 3.45 million Muslims living in the United States, and all of them are compelled to observe Ramadan (whether or not they all will is another question). How can you and your community serve these people during the month of Ramadan? In some areas of Egypt, for instance, Egyptian Christians host breakfasts for their Muslim neighbors, to provide them with sustenance that will carry the fasting people throughout the day. In this way, they preach the Gospel in a powerful way in the middle of a culture that rarely allows public sharing of the Christian faith. How could you take that example and apply it to your own setting?

4. **Teach your church community about Ramadan and ask them to stand in solidarity with believers all over the world.** Many American Christians haven’t learned much about Ramadan, and might be unaware of how many of their brothers and sisters live in the context of Ramadan each year. Use tools like this prayer journal to raise awareness of how they might stand with Christians around the world during this time of seeking and increased pressure.

**HOW CAN I PREACH ABOUT RAMADAN?**

Here is a suggested outline, and a few stories to use as illustrations:

**Finding Jesus, the true Light of the World, during Ramadan**

1. **An introduction to Ramadan, with blog 1 from Samuel:**

   “When I walk down the streets of Cairo today, I can tell Ramadan is near. The general atmosphere looks and feels very festive. The famous, colorful Ramadan lamps are hanging from balconies, and street lights and colorful paper begin to appear, streaming across narrow streets and alleys. Most of the shops have put out special decorations and nice displays of lamps, sweets, dried fruits and nuts in preparation of the holy fasting month.

   The advertisements of TV productions, usually saved for the special month, are everywhere. Most Egyptians want to sit back and relax after eating their sunset breakfast, following numerous series and talk shows especially produced for the very special religious season.

   As much excitement as the Islamic holy month brings to Muslims, it carries a great number of burdens and
concerns to the Christian community in Egypt. It is a very long 30 days, during which Christians in schools, work or public spaces will receive harsh looks and verbal harassments from more extremist Muslims. They are ridiculed for not fasting like Muslims. Even in some cases, Christians may face physical violence due to the fact that they were caught eating their lunch by their fasting Muslim coworkers or neighbors!

It's not uncommon for Christians to hide somewhere to eat their lunches away from the eyes of the Muslims. I remember as a young boy having to eat and drink in the school toilet to avoid trouble with Muslim classmates and teachers. It's almost protocol during the month of Ramadan for radical Muslims, wherever they are, to turn to the Christians around them and bombard them with intimidating questions about their faith. They aim to distract themselves from the long fasting hours and, if they're lucky enough, to plant doubt in the hearts of the Christians.

We, the Christians of Egypt, feel many different emotions regarding Ramadan. Our hearts are crying out loudly to the Lord that He may show Himself clearly to the millions of Muslims who seek genuinely to find Him. We also pray that the Lord will use every one of us to act as a light to show our Muslim friends the true way to the loving God. Please pray with us that many Muslims around the globe will have an encounter with the true God:”

a. What is Ramadan? Use information on page 1, or do some research online to find more

b. When is Ramadan celebrated? Who celebrates it? What do they do?
Use information above, or research Ramadan customs online

c. One symbol of Ramadan is a lantern. A lantern is something that shines a light on the right way. This year, during Ramadan, let’s ask God that the true Light of the World becomes the person Muslims will find.

II. Why should Christians care about Ramadan?

a. Christians are living in Muslim-dominated countries and ask for our prayers.
b. Muslims are seeking after God—and God wants them to find the truth of Jesus.
   i. 1 Timothy 2:3-6: “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.”
   ii. A second excerpt from Samuel’s Ramadan blog: “The call for sunset prayer announces permission for fasting Muslims to eat and drink after a long fasting day. The first hour after the sunset prayer call is always a very quiet hour throughout the country. Streets are nearly empty, there is no public transportation, all shops are closed and every public activity is put on hold until everyone has had their long-awaited meal.

I sometimes use this time to go out to our small balcony to enjoy the rare quiet moments of the overpopulated, busy capital. This is when I enjoy the evening calm and pray for all the millions of Muslims. I pray that God will hear those who are truly keen to know and serve the true God. I pray that those who have a true desire to reach out to God will find Him reaching out to them through the love of Jesus reflected in the lives of shining Christians throughout the country of Egypt.”
c. There are Muslims in our own communities who need Jesus—and God might be asking us to be His voice in our community. (Use demographic statistics about Muslims in the United States and in your local context. Here’s one place to start)
i. How can we share the gospel, through word and deed, with our Muslim neighbors?

1. “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:15-16

2. Are there any practical ways we can share the love of God with our Muslim community?

a. Consider this story from our brothers and sisters in Egypt: “Over the last few years, some churches in Egypt have been hosting street breakfast tables to show Christian love and kindness to fasting Muslims in their neighborhoods. These tables demonstrated the loving message of the church in a country with an 85 percent Muslim majority population. But in recent years, security has been an issue. Due to the 2017 attack on the bus of Christians visiting St. Samuel’s Monastery in Minya, many churches have not been permitted to host breakfast tables. The security situation is too unstable.

The security situation could make us passive and scared, but it can also light the fire of Christ’s love within us. During a recent Ramadan, a group of Christians in a southern Egyptian city decided not to take heed of the warnings and chose instead to take risks! They thought, if people can’t come to their breakfast tables, they would go to them. They collected some money from church members and put together 100 boxes; each included some basic food items and a couple of toys for young children. They loaded the boxes on a truck and headed to a small, remote village and visited the homes of the Muslim villagers one by one, offering them the gift box. They had friendly conversations with them and played with their children when they were allowed. They prayed for the families, asking for healing from sicknesses, a job for a father or son and for many other requests.

Maged*, a Christian young man, was one of those who participated in the distribution of the boxes. “In one of the homes, the husband said to us: ‘You are good people. I don’t understand how you come to help us when we are different than you. You show us a love and respect that we don’t see from anybody else,’” Maged shares. “People are even open for prolonged talks. They feel safe with us when we visit their homes. When we visit these people and show them God’s love, we feel the heart of Jesus.”

III. How can we pray during Ramadan?

a. See suggestions on page 2

b. Final blog post from Samuel, our Egyptian brother: “My heart beat quickens during Ramadan, not out of fear but out of deep sadness. When I think about how many people around the world are desperately seeking to satisfy God in their own way, my heart is broken.

I therefore ask you, my brothers and sisters worldwide, to unite with me in prayer for our dear Muslim friends who are truly seeking to please the Almighty God.

- Let’s pray they will meet with Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.
- Let’s pray they might know how much God loves each and every one of them.
- Let’s pray that when they truly seek the true God, He will make Himself known to them through dreams, visions and revelations or simply through the life testimony of a committed Christian friend or neighbor.
- Let’s pray that the shining light of Jesus will shine on their lives so they can see light from the midst of darkness.
- Let’s pray their eyes will be opened, their minds will be enlightened and their hearts will be softened toward the love of God.
- Let’s pray. Let’s genuinely pray for them.”