

ARSHAD - THE TROUBLEMAKER?

Arshad and his tribe had lived in the middle of the desert for centuries, eking out a life in one the most difficult places on earth.

Although their lives were hard, Arshad belonged to a long line of godly men and women recognized for their sense of justice.

Before he was born, his mother had dedicated him to serve God all the days of his life. His mother's prayers were answered; from the time he was a young man he had had a tender heart for God. He had many dreams and visions; from these he learned that the Bible was more than a book just for Jews or Christians but that it was also binding upon Muslims as well.

As he researched the Qur'an for corroboration of his dreams he was amazed to discover that the Qur'an repeatedly mentions that it was given to confirm the previous scripture. In no place did it teach that the Bible had been corrupted or superseded by the Qur'an as traditionally thought by Muslims.

Although Arshad had no access to a Bible, he started teaching his people that the Qur'an was given to confirm the previous scripture and so, if given the opportunity, they should study the Bible as well. However, years passed before Arshad ever saw a Bible. An old priest had heard about their family and came in search of them. He did not come empty handed. He brought them a priceless treasure: a Bible in a country where it was prohibited. The old priest risked his own life to pass on the word of God to this family.

Arshad became consumed with the Bible. He started to dig deep into its recesses and search for its hidden truths. It became his joy and passion as he marveled at its comprehensive whole. It was much more than a book; it was a well of living water. In its pages were not just words, but the bread of life. He felt that as he immersed himself in the story he was no longer living in fear of judgment or reward from obedience to the law. A profound change came over him as the spirit of love took control of his life.

As he studied he realized that the Qur'an gave regulations and commands that took his people out of idolatry into the worship of the one true God. The Bible, on the other hand, revealed the true nature of God, His character, and purposes. He who had been wrapped in a veil of mystery was revealed in its holy pages. God was truly most merciful and compassionate. What Arshad had only heard before now made sense: the invisible God made Himself visible as He wrapped Himself in the robe of humanity and walked among men. He came to reveal to humanity how to live the will of Heaven on earth.

Soon there was quite a stir in the community and persecution broke out against Arshad and his family. The evil one was angry. Ugly rumors were abounding everywhere, and soon several children in his family were murdered. He was astonished at this unexpected response and completely distraught. He could deal with the verbal abuse and shunning but now that some of the children had been killed, he was heartbroken.

With a heavy heart, he and his family left their tribal homeland and moved to a large city. Soon he was sharing with his new neighbors, local sheiks, and his message was soon going all over the country.

One day three angry men came to his house and asked for Arshad. When he arrived at the door they shouted, “Are you Arshad the troublemaker?”

“I don’t know about being the troublemaker, but my name is Arshad,” he answered. “Are you the one that is teaching our people that it is acceptable to study the Bible?”

Arshad looked at the men and said, “Before we discuss anything, please let me invite you into my house and offer you some tea.” The men were taken aback, but accepted his offer. After sitting and drinking some tea together Arshad said, “I see that you are very devout and religious men. I love to study the Qur’an and all the holy books.”

One of the younger men blurted out, “It is true that you are spreading evil lies in our country! We have been tracking you for weeks and now we have found you!” Arshad smiled and leaned over and poured this young man more tea as he said, “I sense that you are very zealous for God.” Sending up a prayer to God Arshad felt compelled to challenge the men to study the Qur’an together with him for six weeks before they made a judgment regarding the Bible.

They agreed to meet every Thursday. Arshad and his family prayed all week that God would soften the hearts of these angry but apparently sincere men. They ended up studying for hours every week, not for six weeks but for eight weeks. After the eight

weeks, each of the men asked if Arshad could help them obtain a Bible for research purposes. He said he would search and see if he could find one for them. A couple of weeks later he called them and said that he had found them Bibles and they could come by and pick them up. It was the last time he saw them.

In 2014 one of those three men died, and his son found that old copy of the Bible given to him years before. He had seen his father read it many times, so out of curiosity he started reading. He couldn’t put it down. For one year he read the Bible. Then he asked his mother where his father had obtained the Bible. She told him about Arshad and how their father had gone to him to persecute him but that in the end he had been transformed by the study he had had with Arshad. He now asked his mother everything she could remember about Arshad and his family. He started a search for Arshad’s family, and finally, 26 years after the Bible had been given to his father, he found Arshad’s son. It was with great joy that both men met each other.

This story has been repeated over and over. While Arshad is no longer alive, he planted the seeds of change in his nation. Today in this very restricted country there are thousands of families that have embraced the Bible, and right now there is an urgent need to purchase more than 45,000 Bibles to continue the work that Arshad began.



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