

Papayas Anyone?

The new believer Amin lived in a remote village. His heart was filled with a recent joy and peace. What a change had occurred! He mulled over in his mind the amazing things that had happened during the last few months.

He had not planned to travel to the city. However, he had been able to sell all the papayas from his small grove. This gave him a little extra cash. He was not quite sure why, but after selling the papayas, suddenly he remembered his favorite cousin and had a desire to go visit him. He really needed those meager funds for family needs, but he could not shake the impression that he should go. He had always admired his cousin who had been able to leave their small village and make it in the big city. With a lot of excitement, a few days later he got on the bus that passed through their village only once a week. He would have to change buses several times during the day-long trip.

When Amin reached his cousin's house late that day, they seemed particularly delighted to see him and treated him with great love and kindness. He noticed a big difference in their attitudes. It seemed as though the peace of heaven filled their home. They got along so well with each other! What had happened? In the past, his cousin Ahmed and his wife fought all the time. Also, his cousin had always seemed to show off and brag about being the only one in the family that had been able to make it in the city. Now he seemed totally different. They were happy and quietly positive.

Finally, Amin got up the courage to ask Ahmed what had happened. His cousin just smiled with a twinkle in his eye said, "I believe God brought you here for a purpose. It's true that a change has come over us."

Ahmed added, "I need to explain to you that we're going to have a get-together here in our home this week. We have invited our entire worship group to come to our house to hear a famous preacher that belongs to our tribal order. I have invited him to share with us, and he has agreed. I believe you would love to hear his message. Please stay over to be present that evening."

This piqued Amin's curiosity and he decided to stay on. The message he heard indeed stirred his heart. The preacher shared how their own tribal people had been keeping the Sabbath for centuries. "It's more out ignorance than understanding that we have kept it," he explained. "It's God's holy day mentioned in the Qur'an

and explained in the Bible," the preacher affirmed.

"The Sabbath is indeed a sacred day," he went on. "We have always refrained from travel, from business, and from working on the Sabbath, but we've merely done it out of tradition without understanding why."

Amin had never seen a Muslim read or quote from the Bible as this man did. In fact, he had always been taught that the Bible had been corrupted and that he should never even touch it. But as this preacher read from it, its words were like honey to his soul. It was true that he had always kept the Sabbath as a holy day without understanding its significance. Now things were becoming clearer.

That night after going to bed he could not sleep. He wanted to hear more. What other beliefs were made clear in what the Qur'an calls the "previous book?" The next morning he had a million questions for his cousin about the Bible. His cousin admitted that there was indeed a lot to share but everything would be sorted out in its time. "First, let me ask you, Amin, what is real faith?"

Amin quickly answered, "It is a belief in the one true God and believing in and practicing our articles of faith."

Ahmed explained that faith is so much more. "At the very foundation of faith is an understanding of our human brokenness and our need to fully rely on God and to completely trust Him for everything in our lives including our salvation." This put Amin to thinking seriously about his own experience.

"Do you and your wife truly always trust God?" Ahmed questioned Amin.

The city cousin waited in silence for Amin's answer. Amin realized that maybe they didn't trust God fully.

Next, his cousin asked, "When your children get sick, what do you do?"

This question hit Amin like a ton of bricks! Instead of trusting God they were turning to folk beliefs like tying strings to their daughter's arm hoping that spirits would not harm her. They were actually putting trust in strings and spirits instead of God.

Amin was convicted of his sin and with his cousin, he prayed, asking God's forgiveness for not fully trusting Him.

After a quiet time for thought and reflection, Ahmed continued, "Faith is fully trusting that God is really good and all merciful as we say every day. It is not just about belief but about firmly trusting God with our lives and learning to hear His still small voice speaking to us and always obeying Him not just in external things but also in the little personal things that nobody knows about."

Finally, Amin blurted out, "I had it all wrong. I thought I was saved because I believed in God because I went to the mosque every week and faithfully practiced our beliefs, but now I see that real faith and salvation come from truly trusting in God and realizing that there is nothing I can do to be saved."

His cousin continued, "Faith is about giving our full loyalty to God and staying as firm with Him as a tent peg driven in deep even in the storms that come to our lives."

The next few nights Amin could hardly sleep as he kept thinking about all the important things he was learning. He could see that the real issue was over loyalty. He realized what had happened when Satan rebelled. He had brought into question God's goodness so that we would not be loyal to Him. The devil has induced us to believe his lies.

During those few days in his cousin's home, he also learned that Jesus was not just a prophet but that He was God's Word come to reveal to us what true faith is. He showed us how to be loyal to God in all situations. Amin liked how Ahmed called this the *sharia* of Jesus.

The thought that the Messiah was actually God's very spirit thrilled him. Just to think that God would pour out His very Shekinah spirit on us so that he could add faith to our weak faith so that we could live the life that He lived was truly amazing to Amin.

Before Amin left for home, his cousin asked him some other serious questions. "Do you want to have God's spirit in your life and to have his Shekinah add faith to your faith? Are you willing to ask Jesus to give His spirit to you so that you can walk in His ways? Are you willing to let Jesus become the master of your life?" Amin nodded "yes" to each question.

"Then let's pray and ask God to impart the spirit of Jesus into your life." The two bowed their heads as Amin received Jesus into his heart.

Amin returned home a changed person. Even though life was hard and food was meager, his heart was happy, and he began sharing with his family and friends what he had learned. He was eager to give his testimony about what had happened in his life.

He was also glad to be back to tend to his little papaya grove. Every day when he got up, he went to check his papayas. Every time just when he thought there should be a ripe papaya to pick, it was gone.

"Gone! How could it be?" Amin wondered, dismayed. "Oh well, others are coming on. We will be sure to pick the next one just as soon as it is barely ripe before someone beats us to it." But it happened again and again. It was clear that their neighbors were getting their fill of Amin's papayas. His family was robbed of every one! What was he to do?

He called his cousin Ahmed for advice. They prayed together, and his cousin gave him the phone number of the preacher that had stirred his soul over at his cousin's. Maybe he would know what was best to do. "Do I take it to court? Do I give up on papayas? What would Jesus do?" Amin questioned.

The preacher replied, "Jesus said to do to you neighbor as you would want him to do to you, not to do to him as he does to you. You must fight back wisely and with love."

"How do I do that?" Amin questioned?

"Did you say that there are about 60 families in your village?" the preacher asked. "It looks like they love papayas. Papayas have a lot of seeds, don't they? My suggestion is that you make a seedbed of many papaya seeds. When the seeds have really taken hold and are growing green and tall, give one to each neighbor."

"Good suggestion! I'll try that," said Amin.

The seeds grew very well. It seemed like everyone sprouted and grew. Amin proudly distributed young papaya plants, not one but *ten* strapping plants, to every one of the 60 families. His neighbors were surprised, even shocked at his kindness.

Now Amin's village is known for their deliciously sweet papayas. They have papayas to spare. Besides that, almost every home is open to learning about the gospel.

The village not only has a great harvest of papayas each year, but it will also have a mighty harvest of souls when Jesus comes.



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P.O. Box 54
Ooltewah, TN 37363
www.nPraxis.org