

Omar's story

Omar grew up in a Muslim family in a Muslim area of Kenya and went to Madrasa, the Muslim school, where children, mainly boys, learn from an early age the laws of Mohamed, Allah and how to behave as a "good Muslim". There the scientific topics are not so much in focus. As Omar grew up, he had so many questions concerning the Koran. But he was not allowed to ask them, because his job was to believe everything he was taught and not to question anything (otherwise he would not be a "good Muslim"). Over time his questions grew and he felt very uncomfortable. Some of his concerns were:

He used to read the whole Sura-tul Mariam about Isa's (Jesus) death, resurrection and how he spoke as an infant from the cradle and thought that was very strange. (Quran 19:28-33).

The fact that Mohamed did not know what will happen to him really disturbed Omar like in Quran 46: Say, "I am not something original among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I only follow that which is revealed to me, and I am not but a clear warner."

Other teachings in the local Mosque like:

- stealing from Christians is justified and using their wealth is not a sin.
- At the same time stealing from fellow Muslims attracted very harsh punishment.
- This was quite contrary to what they used to observe and discuss as teenagers: that, if you steal from a Christian home there's a high possibility that the owner can forgive you, but not so for a Muslim home.

These teachings and questions really disturbed Omar and he was set free later to find out Jesus as the way, the truth and the life:

In the year 2003, he met a group of health workers, who were working with an NGO in his area. One of them listened to him and Omar finally found someone to ask all his questions. His name was Ezekiel. Omar knew Ezekiel since teenage as he had once worked at their local dispensary and at one point cared for Omar's late mum who was suffering from TB. Ezekiel could explain so much until Omar understood that Jesus is the Son of God and he "became a convinced believer and follower of Christ". Over time Ezekiel became his mentor. But Omar was still afraid of sharing his decision of letting go of his Muslim faith and becoming a Christian. He was hiding even from his wife. About one and a half years after his conversion, and after a three-day prayer and fasting with Ezekiel, he took

courage and shared with his wife. Aisha* his wife also became a believer in salvation through Jesus a year later after several bible studies with the missionaries. When other family members found out, they excluded them from their clan and family. He went through a series of persecution, but God was faithful by preserving his life and lives of his family. His brother in law and cousins tried to kill him, even his own father tried to poison him. They were alienated from the community and although it still happens in a subtle way, he has been largely accepted by the community now. One of his brothers in law, who once wanted to burn his house, later miraculously invited Christ into his life and is still sorry about his former bad intentions. Today Omar's job and passion is to translate the New Testament into his mother tongue. Because of the nature of their bible translation work, its sensitivity and threats, Omar and his family decided to move away from that region to a different county where they can do the work peacefully. Because he still loves his people so much and wants them to understand and follow his decision, he became part of the bible translating team hoping that scriptures in his mother tongue will help his own community to get transformed by God's word.

After more than 20 years Ezekiel and Omar are still friends, even working together. Omar has grown so much in faith that he now considers going back to his home village in order to start a holistic community work program (spiritually, physically and socially).

In preparation for the holistic community work, Omar has been going through a series of trainings at Community Health Evangelism center (CHE-Kenya) that is Trainer of Trainers (TOT1), TOT2 and Internship. He still does farming at Lamu, in partnership with his brother-in-law and other friends.

This has ensured a continued connection with his larger family and community and this way he is able to shine Jesus` light into the world.

Ezekiel's story on Omar:

When Omar came to us we had just started building a mission center. He approached me one evening as I was exiting the compound and requested to talk. We sat down on the side of the road; I still remember the exact spot. He said he wanted to know more about Christian faith as though being a Muslim he has had some doubts on some of the Islamic teachings. I shared briefly on the fundamentals of Christianity, especially on salvation through faith and not works. I told him, in case he is interested, I can arrange for him a bible study that can help him understand more. At the same time, I was reluctant, not sure of his intentions or I thought he is just looking for a clever way of getting a job at our site. Sure enough he agreed to come for bible studies at our home. He did this silently not to raise any suspicion from his fellow Muslims. I took him through what we call

“chronological bible stories” and selected books for close to a year. I remember the joy he had, when he first received his own bible. In 2004, we invited him for dinner to meet a visiting group of youths from our sending church in Nairobi. This was the day he openly declared his faith in Christ and it was such a joy. By this time, he was married and had one daughter. He did not know what will happen to his family, if the relatives and community realize his new found faith. After close to one and a half years later, Omar decided to let his wife know. We fasted and prayed for three days before he did so. Amazingly the wife was very graciously and she commented that she had already observed a very positive change. We invited her to join the house bible study and fellowship, which she did. A few months after she joined the study, she accepted Christ and was led to faith by a lady missionary colleague and a neighbor (Alice); it was such a joy to have a first couple believer from that tribe! About 20 years later they are a family of seven and a model of Christ in the community. They are very dear to us and friends who can be trusted. They went through many persecutions, but God has sustained them well in faith. They minister through the bible translation work, but also do farming with the rest of the community and this has given them great acceptance.



Some of the products from Omar’s Farm.