



THE

VOICE

OF THE MARTYRS

December 2025

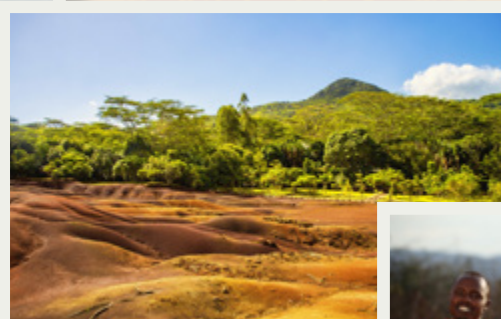
Ethiopia

FLEEING THE
SERPENT

CHOOSING CHRIST
OVER FAMILY



"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3



Three Things to Remember About Young Women Who Leave Islam to Follow Christ

The testimony of our precious Christian sisters Genet and Jalene highlights important facts about the situation for young women who come to Christ in Muslim communities around the world. We can pray and respond more effectively by understanding the following:

1. Girls are trapped in Islamic enclaves within free and even Christian nations. Please notice that Genet and Jalene were raised in an entirely Muslim village in Ethiopia, which is a majority Christian nation. We must be aware that young women are persecuted in Muslim subcultures regardless of the rights guaranteed by their governments. This happens in historically free and Christian nations, like the US, Ethiopia and Uganda. The enclaves exist in large cities as well as rural areas where fundamentalist Muslims have gained control of local governments. Islam inherently seeks dominance in all areas of life. If it has not yet dominated an entire nation, it will establish local *dominance* or at least an enclave within which a Muslim subculture can exert dominance over the families in a community.

2. Young Christian converts and seekers are sometimes persecuted through forced marriages to older Muslim men. I am not suggesting that a majority of Muslim marriages are abusive. They are not. However, we see a tactic of persecution repeated among Muslims in the enclaves described above: Girls who convert to Christianity, or are even found to be seeking more information about Christ, are forced by their domineering parents and their community to marry a much older Muslim man in order to “correct” the young woman. The husband is then able to force his young wife to bring forth children and raise them as Muslims.

3. We can see our precious sisters in Christ set free from their circumstances just as their souls have been freed in Christ. Praise God, many young women like Genet and Jalene are leaving Islam to find eternal peace and freedom in Christ. Many are currently trapped in the circumstances described above. Will you please pause right now and pray for them? Others who have been rejected and abused by their families are able to flee. As members of their new, eternal family, we must stand ready to protect and support them. You can see a beautiful example of how this is working in the lives of Genet and Jalene so far.

I hope you will join all of us here at VOM as we continue to pray for, serve and encourage Genet, Jalene and many others like them around the world. By God’s grace, we will do so for as long as it takes. In Christ, we are their family.

About the cover: Genet and Jalene were raised in a strict Muslim family and came to know Christ through the witness of a high school friend. Soon, they faced a choice: They could remain with their family or follow Christ.



Stepping on the COBRA'S HEAD

Once bound by ritualistic worship of demonic spirits, Abeba now points others to the freedom found only in Christ.



As a little girl, Abeba had never met a true follower of Christ. Growing up in central Ethiopia, where traditional spiritist rituals are commonly mixed with Islamic and Orthodox beliefs, Abeba's family worshiped a live cobra that they believed held great power. The cobra had its own small house inside their home, and Abeba's parents regularly presented it with offerings of milk and food, hoping it would bless them. "They would bow down before the snake, the cobra, and worship," Abeba said.

But the cobra did not bless their family. Instead, Abeba's mother began to act strange and soon developed debilitating symptoms. She lost her eyesight, lost her hearing and stopped speaking, all of which the local Islamic sheikhs attributed to demon possession. Eventually, Abeba said, her mother went into a trance and died. Later, her father died in his sleep, and she said her three younger siblings also died under mysterious circumstances. She blamed the cobra's spirit for their deaths.

Though still a young girl, Abeba knew what was expected of her. "I was the eldest child in the family," she said, "so I was the one who had the responsibility to give food and take care of the cobra's needs."

Fleeing the Serpent

Fearing that the creature's demonic spirit would harm her, Abeba ran away and found work as a maid. She doesn't know exactly how old she was when she started work, but she married at age 13 and had her first child the following year.

Throughout her adolescence, Abeba felt tormented by spirits. She became so anxious that she stopped working and begged on the streets. Dirty, dishevelled and neglected by her husband, she was mentally and physically unwell. When her infant daughter became sick, Abeba sought help from a local fortune teller, but the man advised her to go back and worship the cobra. Not wanting anything to do with the serpent, she eventually decided to visit a church.

The night before her church visit, Abeba dreamed of a man who offered her a palm branch and showed her a road full of light.

She didn't understand the dream, and she awoke feeling afraid that the cobra would get her children. Still, she went into the church as planned and asked for prayer.



▲ After suffering mental and emotional torment that she believed was caused by evil spirits, Abeba spent time begging on the streets.

"I was really very dirty, ..." she recalled, "but they were very kind. They treated me as a person, and they prayed for me." During the time of prayer, Abeba said, the Christians cast demons out of her, and afterward her countenance was completely changed. The Christians also prayed for Abeba's sick child, who was soon restored to health.

Abeba said she underwent a dramatic change after praying with the Christians. "Before that, I talked to spirits like they were a person," she said. "After they prayed for me, I just ... went back home and behaved like a normal person."

Abeba stopped begging on the streets and began to sell snacks made of corn instead. But her husband was not happy that she had become a Christian, so he told her that she had to choose him or Christ. When Abeba told him that she would not leave Christ, her husband threatened her with a machete.

Still, Abeba didn't let his threats stop her from attending church or practicing her faith. And after becoming pregnant with another child, she had a dream in which the same man who had appeared in her earlier dream told her to name the child "according to God's will." When the baby was born, she took him to church and dedicated him to the Lord with that name.

That's when her husband abandoned her and the children. "Let your Jesus help you with your life," he said as he left. "I am no longer your husband."

A Dead Tortoise and a Living God

Abeba found work as a live-in housemaid, but her employer was not happy that she attended church. "This Jesus doesn't really help you," the woman told her. "It is good if you return to your previous religion."

But Abeba remained firm in her faith. "No, I will not trade



► Girls in Ethiopia often work to help their families. Some make and sell *injera*, a type of fermented, spongy flatbread.

Jesus for anything,” she told the woman. “After receiving Jesus, I became peaceful and am experiencing joy in my life.” Abeba’s employer worshiped the spirit of a tortoise that she kept in the house. When the tortoise died one day while Abeba was at church praying, the woman blamed her for the reptile’s death. Upon returning from church, she was arrested by awaiting police officers and taken to jail.

“What did I do wrong?” she asked the police.

“You are following an imported religion,” they replied, “so we will not let you go out of this prison.” The police chief also asked Abeba if she had killed the tortoise, which she denied. He then told her he would release her from jail if someone would pay her bail.

Abeba told the chief that she couldn’t pay the bail and that she had young children who needed her to feed them. “I am calling on a great God, and he will come and release me,” she told him.

In response, the police chief spat on her and placed her in a cell. “You will stay in there, and you will die in there,” he told her.

Seeking a private place to pray, Abeba went into the jail’s latrine and knelt on two empty water bottles to protect her from the filth. “Jesus, You are my identity,” she prayed. “You are my leader, and You are my guide. You brought me from the wilderness and showed me this light, so please come forward and shield me. God, please show Yourself.”

Other prisoners told Abeba that she needed to find a

way to pay her bail because the jail was such a nasty place, especially at night. But there was nothing she could do but pray.

Later that evening, the police chief suddenly returned and ordered Abeba’s release. When she asked him what had happened, he grudgingly confessed that after he got home, her case had caused him such unease and anxiety that he could not eat dinner. So, he explained, he had come back to release her. After Abeba told the chief that it wouldn’t be safe for her to walk such a great distance home in the dark, he agreed to drive her home.

When Abeba arrived home, her young children were crying and frantic with worry. Moved by the children’s distress, the police chief asked them for forgiveness. He then gave Abeba some money so she could buy food for her children, and he told her to return to the police station on Monday to file charges against the woman who had accused her of killing the tortoise.

The next day, after learning what had happened with the police chief, Abeba’s employer also asked her for forgiveness. “I forgive you,” Abeba replied, “but it is good if Jesus forgives you.” Abeba invited the woman to church, and she was so moved during the service that she placed her faith in Christ and dumped all of her demonic idols down a toilet later that night.

On Monday, Abeba returned to the police station and told the chief that she had no intention of filing charges.

"I will not trade Jesus for anything."

Impressed by her decision, the chief gave Abeba his phone number and told her to call him if she had any future problems. Abeba's employer continued to attend church and grow in faith, and today she holds a lay position within the church. "We have become very good friends, sisters," Abeba said.

Life as a Sermon

To provide for her children, today Abeba sells Ethiopian *injera*, a kind of flatbread made from teff flour. And while she works, she also shares the Gospel with customers.

"My work is on the street," she said, "and every person, I tell about Jesus. Every person that comes, the priests, the sheikhs, all the people, I tell them about Jesus."

But some of her neighbours don't appreciate her Christian witness or her prayers. One man burst into her house and beat her when he overheard her praying that God would destroy pagan practices and witchcraft. Abeba, in return, forgave the man and secretly led his wife and daughter to the Lord. "We just follow the commandments of Jesus, because he told us to love our enemies," she said.

Though Abeba and her family continue to experience rejection in their community, she said God has been faithful to provide for her needs. On Christmas Eve 2023, Abeba found a basket of cooked chicken and some eggs that someone had anonymously left on her doorstep. She and her family gratefully accepted it as the Lord's provision and enjoyed it as a Christmas meal.

The next morning, some neighbours came to the door and asked, "Are you still alive?" Abeba later learned that

someone had put a curse on the chicken and the eggs, and the neighbours fully expected Abeba's family to have died during the night. Abeba responded to their question by praising God, telling them they were fine and were going to church.

Abeba wants more people to know the truth that has set her free from the worship of demonic spirits. She requests prayer that the Lord will use her to help more people come to know Christ, especially her husband, whom she hasn't heard from in years. "I want him to be a preacher," she said. "That is my hunger, and that is my desire. I want Jesus to rescue him from the pit."

Abeba would like to be a preacher herself, and despite her lack of formal training, she continues to proclaim the Gospel to the best of her ability. "I preach what God has done in my life," Abeba said. "I tell my stories. I am stepping on the head of that cobra and proclaiming the Gospel." ●





Doubly REDEEMED

Raised in a strict Muslim family, two young sisters choose Christ over home and family.

Most girls in Genet and Jalene's village in Ethiopia were married off when they finished the eighth grade. But Genet and Jalene's parents saw their academic potential, so the two sisters were instead sent away to high school in a different town. While staying in a boarding house there, the girls met a Christian named Mariam.

Though Christians make up the majority of Ethiopia's population, Genet and Jalene, who grew up as Muslims, didn't know any in their village. And they did not understand what Christians believed. Like other Muslim children in their village, they had been taught that Christians might try to trick Muslims into following Jesus and that any who converted would go to hell. At their local mosque, Genet, Jalene and their fellow pupils had to memorize and recite lengthy passages of the Quran, but they did not know the meaning of the Arabic words.

"We heard that the Christians worshiped three Gods, the Trinity," Genet said. "We heard also that Jesus was the Lord and the Son of God. We joked about how a person, a man born of Mary, could be God."

Genet preferred to stay away from Mariam, but Jalene was intent on convincing the Christian that Islam was the way. "Initially, my position was just to find ways of convincing her," Jalene said. "And in order to do that, I listened to Islamic sermons and collected information that could help me to win our debates." But both sisters grew to like the Christian

music Mariam listened to as they walked to school together.

As Jalene researched ways to convert Mariam to Islam, she found webpages that explained the Christian Gospel persuasively. "I began to realize that Christianity is really very nice," she said. "It's very simple, and if we believe in Jesus we can get eternal life. I started sharing my understanding with my sister, but she said, 'This is really not good. Are you sick? Just stop what you are doing!'"

Though firm in her Islamic beliefs, Genet struggled with a physical illness for which she could find no effective medical treatment. One day when Genet was very sick, Jalene played some Christian songs and read some Bible verses to her, and they brought Genet comfort. "I shared with her, '*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you - John 15:9*,'" Jalene said, "and also '*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest - Matthew 11:28*.'"

"It was a joy to read and get such a very inspiring message," Genet recalled. "I never heard Allah saying 'I love you.'" The sisters decided they wanted to meet Mariam's pastor (pictured above) in secret. When they met, the pastor prayed for Genet, rebuking demonic influences in her life. Both girls repented of their sins that day and came to faith in Christ, and later they were secretly baptized in a river.

"I was very happy," Genet said. "I felt like I was converted to a different person. I tell you that I *am* a new person." Genet said that after placing her faith in Christ, she stopped gossiping, lying and cursing, and her health improved

dramatically. The two sisters became regular attendees at a local church, though they wore masks so no one could identify them beneath their hijabs.

Their family, however, eventually discovered that they were attending church, so they made them move to a school in a different town. While there, they found a church to attend, and this time they didn't wear masks. But in 2022, when their family learned that they were determined to further their relationship with Christ, Genet and Jalene were forced to return home and ordered to cease their new religious practices.

In further attempts to draw them back to Islam, family members brought in mullahs and village elders to pressure them. Still, the sisters stood firm and did what they could to continue growing in faith, including hiding a Bible inside a larger book so they could secretly study God's Word. Then, one day they were discovered in a surprising way.

A boy in town was believed to be possessed by a demonic spirit, so some Islamic leaders gathered to pray and recite Quranic verses over him. With the whole village, including the two sisters, present to watch, the boy suddenly screamed, "Genet and Jalene are still Christians; they are practicing Christianity! They are worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are going to the church now!"

The girls were shocked. "Previously the information was only disclosed to the family members," Jalene said. "Now everybody heard about it. They started looking at us angrily."

From then on, they were closely monitored. But Jalene, who was a bit more assertive, had grown tired of hiding her Christian faith, so she told her mother exactly what she believed. "I understood the truth," Jalene said, "so I just wanted her to know the truth that I understood. The Bible says if someone doesn't speak to an unbeliever, who is going to speak?"

The girls' mother, however, was not open to the truth, and Genet and Jalene soon learned that their parents were planning to marry them to older Muslim men. So the sisters, who had just completed high school, decided to flee.

Though they had very little money, they snuck out of a family member's home late one night and caught a bus to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, which they had never visited. When their family learned that they had run away, they tried to scare the girls into returning by warning them of the city's dangers. "We told them we trust in God and God will help us," Jalene said.

A Christian woman who met them at the bus stop helped them get jobs as housecleaners. They told the woman that they did not care what they got paid as long as they were free to attend church. But it soon became clear that Jalene's employer was not going to allow her that freedom, instead making her work every day from 5am until at least midnight.

Concerned about their spiritual growth, the sisters contacted pastors they had met when they first became Christians. One arranged for them to leave their jobs and, with the help of the global body of Christ, train to become hairdressers.



► With help from local pastors and the global body of Christ, Genet and Jalene trained as hairstylists and have set up a small beauty shop.

"We want to help Christians who are persecuted because of their faith. We want the Gospel to be spread and preached."

At 20 and 21 years old, today the sisters run a hair salon in a tiny one-room building. A hanging bedsheet divides the hair salon from their living quarters. Despite their circumstances, the two are happy, and they want others to know their source of joy. "God was very good to us," Jalene said. "We are very grateful for God's provision and protection."

Nahum 1:7 has helped sustain the sisters through many challenges. "God is good, and he is a refuge in times of trouble," Jalene said.

The sisters request prayer for their family members' salvation and that God will use their hair salon for more than just creating external beauty. "We want God to bless what we have started," Genet said. "Now we have a skill, and we want to share it with other Christians who are persecuted like us. We want to help Christians who are persecuted because of their faith. We want the Gospel to be spread and preached." ●



A Gift of Comfort *and* Joy

FOR THE PERSECUTED



Persecuted Christians stand firm in their faith despite threats, physical attacks and imprisonment, shining the light of Christ in the world's spiritually darkest nations. Today, you can bring help and encouragement to those who have suffered for Christ, including the families of Christians imprisoned or killed for their witness.

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- » *providing Bibles to Christians in dangerous, difficult regions*
- » *sharing inspiring testimonies of persecuted Christians with the global body of Christ*

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Prayer Diary

December 2025

M	1. LIBYA	Pray that Christians will find fellowship and discipleship with a local group of Believers.
T	2. TUNISIA	Pray that Tunisian Christians will share their faith wisely and boldly, despite its prohibition by authorities.
W	3. BAHRAIN	Pray that Gospel seeds will be planted and take root in the hearts of Bahrainis.
T	4. ETHIOPIA	Pray for Christians like Abdu who suffer great loss for leaving Islam to follow Christ. Pray for their joy and peace.
F	5. UAE*	Pray that churches will find creative ways to reach Muslims with the Gospel.
S	6. IRAQ	Pray that Muslim extremists in Iraq will experience God's love, repent and turn to Christ.
S	7. BANGLADESH	Pray that Christians who are rejected by family members because of their faith will show God's love to them.
M	8. KYRGYZSTAN	Bibles are available but expensive in Kyrgyzstan. Pray that everyone who wants a Bible will receive one.
T	9. LAOS	Pray for Christians who are kicked out of their village for following Christ. Pray that they will not lose heart.
W	10. TAJIKISTAN	Bibles are available only in some Tajik cities. Pray that every Tajik Believer will own a copy of God's Word.
T	11. COMOROS	Pray for new Believers, who are often persecuted by their families for converting from Islam.
F	12. MALDIVES	Pray that new Christians in the Maldives will find ways to be discipled in the faith.
S	13. JORDAN	Pray that churches ministering to Muslim refugees will have the resources they need to continue their work.
S	14. BURUNDI	Pray that Christian converts from Islam will be strengthened through fellowship with the body of Christ.
M	15. CHAD	Thank the Lord, according to Psalm 9:9, for Christians working to help Sudanese refugees in Chad.
T	16. UGANDA	Pray for Christian converts from Islam who suffer harassment and attacks from family and community members
W	17. IRAN	Many Christians must worship in secret because of government oppression. Pray that covert fellowships will thrive.
T	18. INDIA	Pray that every Believer in India will have access to God's Word and be grounded in His truth.
F	19. SIERRA LEONE	Pray that Christians will feel close to God, according to Romans 8:35–39, even after their homes are destroyed.
S	20. ERITREA	Pray that formerly imprisoned Christians will see the Lord's provision in physical, emotional and financial healing.
S	21. MYANMAR	Pray for the encouragement of Christians who have been targeted by warring factions in the ongoing civil war.
M	22. TURKIYE (TURKEY)	Pray that followers of Christ in Turkiye will remain faithful despite pressure from authorities or family members.
T	23. KUWAIT	Pray for discipleship efforts that foster spiritual maturity among Kuwaiti Believers.
W	24. KAZAKHSTAN	Pray that Kazakh Christians will step boldly into leadership roles. Use Acts 13:47 as a guide to prayer.
T	25. LEBANON	Pray that Lebanese Christians will be encouraged despite political instability and a struggling economy.
F	26. NIGERIA	Pray that widows and orphans will experience God's comfort, presence and provision in their loss.
S	27. COLOMBIA	Pray that pastors and their families who live in "red zones" will be encouraged by the global body of Christ.
S	28. CHINA	Pray for the advancement of the Gospel in China by any means necessary.
M	29. NIGER	Pray that many Fulani people will come to know Christ through the witness of Mahmud and his Christian family members.
T	30. IRAN	Pray for pastors imprisoned in Iran — for their continued ministry work, for their families and for their release.
W	31. MYANMAR	Pray for courageous and compassionate Christians ministering among the Rohingya Muslim population.

*UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

PLEASE NOTE:

We would like to apologise to our 'prayer warriors' for the mistakes made in our previous Newsletter where we incorrectly recorded the dates for our Prayer Diary. Hopefully, that won't happen again.

Stand with Persecuted Christians



Serve persecuted Christians in hostile areas and restricted nations and be a voice for them. Your gift addresses all ministry needs, including the immediate needs of our persecuted brothers and sisters, while calling Christians around the world into closer fellowship with the persecuted and to a deeper commitment to Christ.

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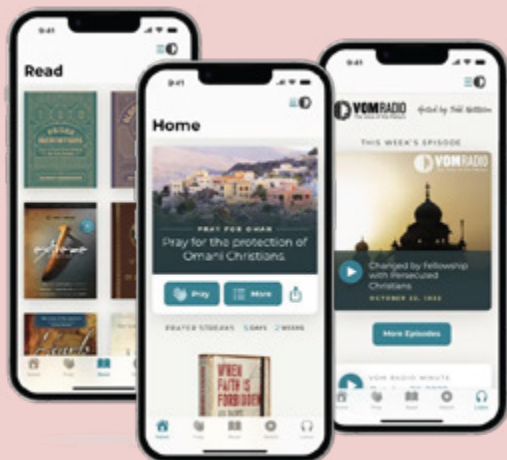
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Type in "Voice of the Martyrs" when searching or click on the appropriate Google Play or App Store icon.

Daily reminders to pray for the persecuted; research Hostile or Restricted countries and the work VOM are doing there; connect to VOMRadio plus much, much more.



VOM App



"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3



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