

Yakubu dresses in traditional Muslim Hausa robes and hat, but, he is a dedicated Christian. Yakubu was converted to Christ in Jos in 1980. Since 1991, he has been a full-time Evangelist dedicated to winning Muslims to Christ. His ministry, *Bazata*, means “*Unexpected*.” He explains that their strategy of using drama, films and Gospel music in the traditional Hausa style, is unexpected, but the primary inspiration for their ministry name is that Jesus will come at a time that no one expects.

When I asked him about the problems he encounters in his ministry, he mentioned that their Gospel van has often been stoned by angry Muslim mobs. Recently every window in their vehicle was broken by a Muslim mob offended by the Gospel music played in their mission vehicle. During the recent cartoon riots (ostensibly in protest of the obscure Danish newspaper that published some cartoons on Mohammad) at least 30 churches were destroyed and over 1,000 Christians murdered by rampaging Muslim mobs in Borno State. A bishop was burnt to death in his car, and another pastor was roasted on a stick over a fire.

“*But, despite the threats and these troubles, we see God at work,*” declared Yakubu. At one town, soldiers and military police surrounded his van and challenged him:
“*Are you aware that preaching in public is illegal?*”

Yakubu responded:

“*Yes, we know that public speaking is not allowed, but our message is one of peace, so we did not think that the ban during this time of rioting applied to us.*”

Nevertheless, the military police arrested them and threw them into a cell at the barracks. The next day the commandant came to them:

“*You are lawless. You were preaching in public.*”

Yakubu responded: “*We must obey God and we must preach the Gospel. This message of God’s peace is what the people need at this time.*” They were eventually released, but their *Jesus* film was confiscated. However, one of the Muslim police officers expressed a personal interest in seeing the *Jesus* film in Hausa. Yakubu organised a copy of the *Jesus* video in Hausa for him. The officer later expressed great appreciation for the film.

“*Persecution opens doors to ministry,*” explains Yakubu. “*Because of the opposition, we reach*

people with the Gospel who we would never otherwise have met.”

Yakubu’s *unexpected* evangelistic strategies include film evangelism, market preaching, and a T.V ministry that reaches 4 million Hausa viewers for 30 minutes a week. 60% of their viewers are Muslims. He explains: *“There are many secret Christians amongst the Muslims. But because of Sharia law and the death sentence for ‘apostasy’, many of these Muslims cannot openly attend Christian churches. This is not only for fear of their own lives, and for that of their family members, but also for fear of bringing reprisals from Muslim militants against any church that would receive them as a Muslim convert (‘apostate’).”*

“Sharia law was enforced in Northern Nigeria as a reaction to the rapid conversions to Christ. Sharia is a desperate attempt to stem the tide of people leaving Islam. Our problem is not winning Muslims to Christ, but insufficient resources to sustain enough missionaries and evangelists in Northern Nigeria. If there was freedom of worship in the North, 50% of the Muslims would turn to Christ,” claimed Yakubu.

“There are many Muslim study groups who are using the Quran and the Bible to study who Jesus is. We know Muslims who have found Christ in the Quran. There is a sheik who came to Christ and told us that he had found Jesus from studying what the Quran says about Jesus. We have a name for these people. In Hausa it is: ‘nutane neman gaskiya’ (people searching for truth)”.

“Amongst the Muslim Hausa and Fulani there are many tens of thousands of hidden disciples, secret followers of Christ, who for fear of persecution and out of concern for the safety of their families, and to protect the churches from being burned down by Muslims, continue to go to the mosque and go through the motions of being a Muslim publically. But they are only pretending to be Muslims. They recognise Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who died for their sins, and they are trusting Him alone for Salvation.”

Yakubu says that evangelism amongst Muslims in Northern Nigeria is *“risky, but worth the risk.”* Yakubu mentioned some of the recent encouraging responses to their Gospel preaching. *“We had a Muslim woman visit our office. She has been horribly abused by her Muslim husband and feared what would happen to her and to her children if she came out openly for Christ. She had been watching our T.V. programmes and was convinced that Jesus is God’s way of Salvation. In the light of eternity, she knew what she must do. She gave her life to Christ. And for many months followed Jesus secretly. Now she has let her husband know that she is a*

Christian and is being beaten. We have to continue to pray for her protection.

“Our biggest problem in Nigeria” explained Yakubu, “is not how to bring Muslims to Christ, but the problem of many churches not having any programme to deal with Muslim converts. In fact, even more serious than that, many churches refuse to accept Muslim converts for fear of violence and having their church disrupted or even burned down by Muslim mobs in retaliation.”

Yakubu explained that: *“The slightest provocation results in violence against Christians. There is continual, daily persecution and secret killing of Christians in Northern Nigeria, even by government leaders.”* It is widely believed that the governor of Borno State sponsored the cartoon riots in his area. Many rioters reported having been paid to burn churches and destroy the property of Christians. On numerous occasions churches and pastors’ homes have been bulldozed down by state government order. *“Persecution is a daily reality in Northern Nigeria.”* Thousands of churches have been destroyed in Northern Nigeria in recent years.

Often the Muslims will seek to provoke a crisis in order to mobilise reaction against it. During the recent (Danish) cartoon riots, a student stood up in a high school class and started reading the Quran aloud, disrupting the lesson. Despite numerous attempts by the teacher to persuade the student to sit down and allow the lesson to continue, the Muslim student continued reading the Quran aloud. When the teacher finally took the book out of the student’s hand, the Muslim started shouting *“Allah akbar!”* Armed mobs with weapons then gathered and began to riot.

In Northern Nigeria it seems to be a regular tactic to burn churches and bulldoze pastors homes in order to impoverish the Christians and intimidate them, preoccupying them with expensive and time consuming concerns for basic survival. In this way the Muslims seek to undermine the evangelism of Christians in the North.

Although the Hausa and Fulani tribes are considered to be totally Muslim, there are tens of thousands who have turned to Christ and who are openly worshipping in Christian churches. Most of these have endured threats and attacks, have been rejected by their families, have lost their homes and are in danger of being murdered.

Although it is generally believed that all Hausas are Muslim, many are in practice pagan. They

are called the “*Marguzawa*” (people who have dodged Islam). These animistic Muslim Hausa are the most responsive to the Gospel. Many thousands have come to Christ recently.

“We chose market days for our preaching and film evangelism crusades in the North,” □ Yakubu explains that from those outreaches other invitations come to show the film or speak in the neighbouring villages. When they show the □ Jesus □ film in Hausa or Fulani it is often the first film that many of these villagers have ever seen. They used to use the 16 mm projector, but now, have moved to video projector with generator. Typically, almost everyone in the village will attend one of these □ Jesus film showings.

“We point out that in the Quran, Surah 19:21, it is said that Jesus is a sign of mercy from Allah, and that we cannot see God without mercy. Therefore, we tell the Muslims that according to their own Quran, they will not be able to see God without Jesus.”

Yakubu also quotes in Surah 3:55 – 56, *where the Quran tells us that Allah declared to Jesus that he would cause Him to die and raise Him to himself. That he would greatly exalt those who believe in Him above those who do not believe. And that Allah will cause those who refuse to believe in Jesus to suffer everlasting punishment.”*

“We emphasize stories from the Bible that are also in the Quran, such as Noah and the Ark,

Abraham, Moses and Jesus,” explains Yakubu. “We also often travel with Fulani converts who can communicate with the people fluently in their own language, and quote verses from the Bible in Arabic. Evangelising Muslims is risky, but it is worth the risk.”

I asked Yakubu: *“How do your churches survive?”*

“This is the miracle of God,” answered Yakubu. “Often we have thought that we have prayed our last prayer, or that this will be our last outreach. Sometimes while we are preaching mobs will begin chanting: ‘Allah akbar!’ This is normally the prelude to violence. Recently, one of the converts from Islam was arrested for having hosted a Jesus film showing in his home. Although he was an old man, they locked him up. Sometimes the chief has told us that we are not allowed to preach in the area. But in some other areas where the chief has come to Christ, the whole village has been converted.”

Please pray for Yakubu and for his co-workers. And please pray that our mission will be able to supply them with the Bibles and books and film evangelism equipment necessary for their dynamic evangelism amongst Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may be spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.” 2 Thessalonians 3:1 – 2

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