

pointed to the Church. Jesus wasn't insulting His family; He was telling US that WE are His family, too!

You see, Jesus knew that even though most families are great, sometimes even the best families would let us down. Sin had come into the world, and even God's best gifts, like families, were affected. He knew that brothers and sisters would fight (remember how the first two brothers fought, and Cain killed Abel). He knew that sometimes parents might get divorced, or that a grandparent would get sick and die.

He knew that in some places, His children would face even harder problems than those. In Somalia, Africa, for example, more than 99 percent of the Somali people worship a false god called Allah. When a Somali person hears about Jesus and becomes a Christian, it's dangerous for them. Their families can become very angry and do terrible things to their sons or daughters, brothers or sisters who have turned away from Allah. They might hurt a new Christian physically, perhaps even kill them. Or they might kick them out of their families and chase them away.

When our families let us down, and even when Christians in Somalia are abandoned by their families, we can remember Matthew 12. Jesus wanted to show the people around Him (and us) how God's family would never fail them. God is our heavenly Father. The Church – wherever God's Word is taught in its truth and purity – is our mother. And other believers, even if they live on the other side of the world from us, are our brothers and sisters in Christ.



*We pray: Dear Father in heaven, thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for us, and for making us Your children. Help our brothers and sisters in Somalia. Let the people turn away from their false gods, and protect all who believe in You. Keep their faith and our faith strong. Amen.*

# mission:possible

Mark 9:23

## Devotions



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# “God came looking for me”: The Father calls His child out of Islam

by Mohamed A. Gurhan

“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’”

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt.”  
*Matthew 2: 13-14*

Much like Joseph, I am not a stranger to fleeing my home in the dark of night. Being a child of God in a country firmly in the grip of that false god, Allah, carries a price.

My parents were both strong Muslims and raised my numerous siblings and me according to Islamic law and traditions. Like any other Somali Muslim child, I attended Quranic School and learned the Quran, the creed and some important Islamic traditions. I never had any contact with Christians and knew nothing about Christianity or any faith other than Islam, except what the Quran said about them.

As a child, I never touched anything related with Christians for fear of being

cursed or condemned by Allah. I was taught that Christians worship idols and are wicked people. Christians are Allah’s enemies and our natural enemies, too. But God began to convert me – through the Quran itself!

In early 1977, I became an active member in my school’s wing of Muslim Youth Union (MYU). Our Islamic theology teacher started to teach us Sura Al Maryama (the chapter of Mary) of the Quran. The theme of the lesson was Issa ibn Maryama (Jesus, the son of Mary).

We were taught that Jesus was the Word of God, the spirit of God, the son of Mary, the Messiah, and prophet of God. Jesus never committed any sin, our teacher said. He demonstrated wonderful miracles that other prophets did not, including resurrecting the dead. Our teacher taught us that Jesus was never killed but ascended to heaven and is alive, and that He will come back and will kill “Tijal Awar” (the monster), restoring God’s Kingdom. He will reign for 40 years and will judge the living and the dead.

That really impressed me and I asked our teacher, “If Jesus had all of these unique



*Muhamed Gurhan*

## Who is your family?

God gives us lots of great gifts, but one of the best has to be our family. Remember when God made the first family, Adam and Eve? God told Adam to protect and guide the family. To Eve, God gave the responsibility of being a good helper to Adam – a partner. Together, they worked to take care of the world God made and to take care of the children they had.

And when He came to live on earth, Jesus had a family, too – His mother, Mary, and His earthly father, Joseph. Jesus was a good son, and He loved His family very much. But then in Matthew 12: 46-50, something strange happened. The Bible tells us:

While He (Jesus) was still speaking to the people, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. But He replied to the man who told Him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

What is THAT all about? Why wouldn’t Jesus go talk to His mother and brothers? Was He just being mean or rude?

Of course not! Jesus was teaching an important lesson to the people who had gathered around Him. Let’s look at these verses again. Who does Jesus point to when He says, “Here are my mother and my brothers”? It was the disciples, a group of people who believed that Jesus was the Son of God, come to be the Savior of the world.

In other words, Jesus



Read a verse, then answer the questions below.

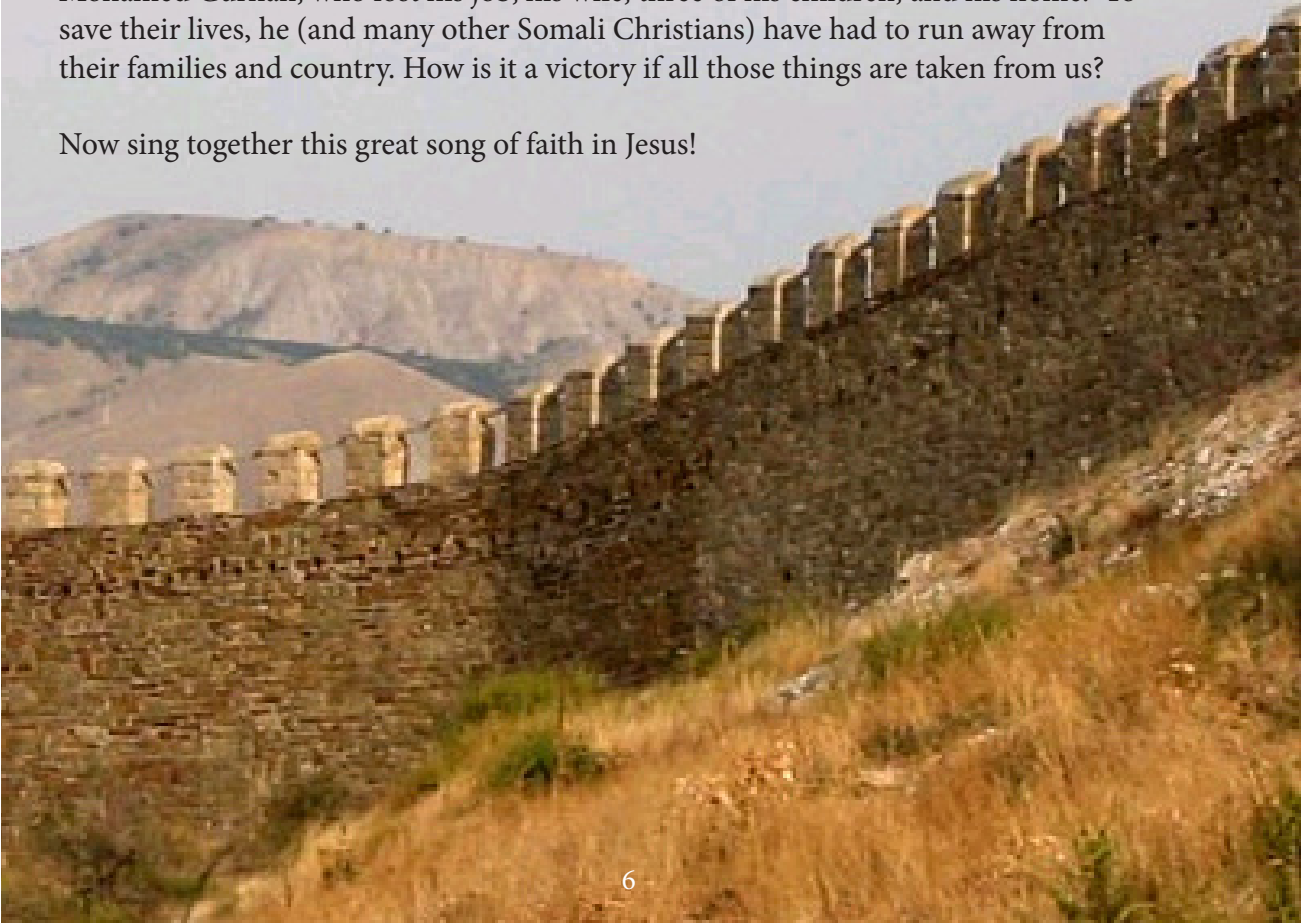
**Verse 1:** What is a fortress? Why do people build them? How does God act as our shield or weapon? Who is “the old evil foe”? What is guile? How does the devil try to trick us?

**Verse 2:** What would happen if we tried to fight the devil all on our own, without God’s help? Who is “the valiant One” who fights for us? What does valiant mean? What does Sabbaoth mean? (Lord of hosts – that is, Lord over the army of angels)

**Verse 3:** Discuss the image of devils surrounding us, but Jesus leading us safely through. What are times when we are afraid? Remember that Jesus, our shield and weapon, protects us during those times. Who is the world’s prince? (Satan)

**Verse 4:** Discuss the second half of this verse in particular, remembering people like Mohamed Gurhan, who lost his job, his wife, three of his children, and his home. To save their lives, he (and many other Somali Christians) have had to run away from their families and country. How is it a victory if all those things are taken from us?

Now sing together this great song of faith in Jesus!



characteristics, did the wonderful miracles you mentioned, and will come back to rule us, why do we need Mohammed? Why not follow Jesus?” Instead of explaining and convincing me, our teacher rebuked and threatened me. I could not argue with him, for he was in the top leadership of MYU. I had to obey and keep quiet.

But I was burning inside. I was starting to doubt what I was taught all the 20 years of my life. Soon I resigned from MYU and stopped worshipping in the mosque. I became faithless indeed.

I started my search for God. After meeting people from different faiths and countries all over the world – Buddhists, Confucians, Shintos and Mormons – I was not satisfied.

Then one evening, at last I met a Somali Christian with a Bible, and he allowed me to borrow it. I read the whole New Testament and soon realized that everything I’d been taught since childhood was distorted. I was convinced by the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is indeed the right One to follow as my Lord and Savior.

Immediately my life changed. I got inner peace and started living with hope and a lot of expectations in life. I stopped worrying

about the future and became confident of my salvation. I had been looking for God, but here God came looking for me, to save me.

My life changed in other ways, too. Being a Christian in Somalia is not easy. It is a militantly Muslim country where anyone suspected of being a Christian can be beaten or killed with no repercussions. After becoming a Christian, I was arrested,

fired from my job, and twice lost my home and all my worldly possessions. More than once, my children were kidnapped by Muslim relatives. Finally, the government of Somalia issued an order for my death, and they have promised a

handsome reward for anyone who accomplishes the task.

Yet, in the midst of these challenges, God has always led us to find other Christian friends and given us opportunities to tell others about His dear son, Jesus Christ.

When LHF started its Somali translation projects, I was invited to join the translation team. With others, I organized those Somali converts and seekers who wanted to worship with us at the LHF chapel, and I translated Dr. Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism with Questions and Answers* into the



Somali language.

When my family was in trouble, our Christian friends at LHF stood for us and supported us in every possible way. My children and I became better and stronger Christians. Those years we lived next door to LHF center in Nairobi, we experienced the real meaning and joy of Christmas. Today, in our new home, we eagerly wait and happily celebrate the whole Christmas season, a family tradition that will abide in us evermore.

Christ Jesus, and our Christian family, are not only our source of Christian knowledge, but also our source of confidence and encouragement; our home of refuge when we smell danger; a place to turn for help when we are in trouble; and our kin and clansmen, as Somalis depend on their clans.

Like Joseph being called to safety in Egypt, I believe that the Lord has called me and my family to new lands to better prepare us for His Great Commission. We are trying to make all kinds of necessary prepara-

tions, for our vision is to serve Him and preach the good news of His Gospel to the world. We dream His church established among all the nations, particularly Somalia.

And you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, are helping to make this dream come true. The books about our Savior, which you are helping to provide in the language of my people, are very important tools for spreading the Gospel.

The books are easy to keep hidden, so people who are seeking to know Jesus can read about Him privately. There aren't any Lutheran pastors in Somalia, and so when people have questions about the Bible or who

Jesus is, these books and my website help to answer their questions.

Thank you, my brothers. Thank you, my sisters. We will probably never meet on this earth, but I know that someday we will meet in heaven.

May God bless you always.

**“We dream of  
His church  
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## **“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”**

*Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 656*



**Nearly 500 years have passed since Martin Luther wrote the words to the famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Luther based the hymn on Psalm 46, where it is written, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”**

**The hymn, which is sometimes called “The Battle Hymn of the Reformation,” has brought strength and comfort to many people throughout the years, but especially to martyrs who went to their deaths, singing, “Though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The Kingdom’s ours forever!”**

**Let’s read through this powerful hymn now, keeping our persecuted Christian friends in Somalia in mind as we make our way through the four verses.**