

LASANA, A MUSLIM FULANI OF GUINEA BISSAU, IMMIGRANT TO WESTERN EUROPE



The 29 countries of Western Europe are going through a period of unprecedented peace. It is also a period of ethnic fragmentation caused by political and economic integration. Many of Europe's great cities today hold a multitude of cultures and languages, drawn there by educational and work opportunities, or from fleeing from war, famine, economic deprivation, and other horrifying situations.

Western Europe is the home of approximately 230 least-reached groups. This includes tiny Gibraltar with its 74% of its population least-reached - to France which is Western Europe's greatest challenge. France has over 7 million least-reached people in 41 different ethnic groups. Now is the time for bringing the gospel to the least reached found in Western Europe!

Here is the story of one such person's journey to faith:

My name is Lasana. Although today I live in Portugal, I was born and raised in a village in Bissau, capital of Guinea Bissau. I grew up in a fundamentalist Fulani Muslim family. We lived next door to the Evangelical Mission headquarters. Through daily exposure to these missionaries and their teachings, my family came to respect them. However, my father's influence was far-reaching though he died when I was still a toddler. A respected man in our community, he was a devout follower of Islam. Thus, we could not attend the church services next door, and no one in our family converted.

This proximity did impact us, however. One of the women was well-known because she helped many people. My brothers and I grew up listening to her stories from the Bible. When we were older, we began to visit the mission to play with the children of the missionaries. My family feared their Christian influence in our lives, but greatly respected these good people.

Around the age of 12 years old, I met a missionary named Stan. He invited me to church and some times I went, but always secretly and with fear of my family. Stan showed great love to my family. When my Mama was very ill, Stan helped take care of her. My family drew very close to Stan, and from that time on, I could be with him more openly. Thus, I continued visiting the missionary children next door and helping Stan to learn our local language.

Although Stan shared Christ with me, still I had not received Jesus for fear of my family. They had threatened to throw me out of the house if I converted. As a result, some of the believers questioned why I spent so much time with Stan. They thought I was interested in receiving material benefits but not interested in receiving Jesus.

The years I spent under Stan's influence during my adolescence helped me to begin to understand that Stan taught and lived the truth. Others in my family were affected as well. My older brother, too, decided my friendship with Stan was

motivated by hopes of receiving something. One day this brother struck me hard because I borrowed his pair of shoes without permission. Stan, hearing this story, gave my brother a new pair of shoes instead of giving some to me.

Stan's love and forgiveness toward my brother, signified by the offender receiving the gift, rather than me, really made an impact on my brother. After that time, my brother never hit me again, and he asked me about Stan with much respect.

Three years later Stan was forced to return to his country due to illness. When Stan left Guinea, I felt that I had lost a father. However, we continued to write one another. Two people at the mission were tremendous help to me during those days. One of the missionaries' daughters taught me to play the guitar and was a great help to me in many areas. The second was a missionary named Miss Isabel. I could always ask her anything about the Bible or about anything in Stan's letters.

At the age of 17, I was born again. One day in secondary school, I experienced a strange thing—a voice within me but nobody was speaking with me. I felt God say that now was the time for me to come to Him because He had a plan for my life. I left the class, and when my friends followed, I said to them, "I must give my life to Jesus." They were shocked because they knew that I was Muslim. They had never known anyone who converted from Islam to Christianity.

I went directly to the mission headquarters to tell Miss Isabel. It was such a surprise for her! She asked me many times if I truly wanted to convert. She was very glad but concerned for the consequences from my family and their threats. Miss Isabel guided me to receive Christ. I knelt down and confessed my sins. I felt totally free.

Of course my family was shocked and furious. They stopped any economic support for school. They began to criticize me daily, sometimes to the point of verbal torture. My friends scorned me. In spite of all my family did and said to me, I continued with my new faith.

Some years later, God opened the doors for me to study in a Bible Institute in Western Europe. I know that God's plan for me is to serve him as a musician and to compose songs for Him. I want to completely dedicate my life to Him.

At the moment, He lets me play the guitar for a famous secular band. We have visited several European countries, and I have been able to testify of Christ as an artist in some difficult situations, including with famous Muslims who have dropped their convictions in order to follow alcohol, money, fame and secularism.

I also serve alongside a missionary couple in the planting of a church of African Muslims coming to faith here in Portugal. We work together to share the gospel through ministries in a hospital and a language academy. The area where we live has many Muslims, many of whom can only read and write Arabic. In teaching them to read and write in other languages, we can help them practically and share God's love to them. Pray for God to fill my hands with fruit for His glory!

Please pray for:

FINDING THE FATHER:

These least-reached are far from the Lord for many reasons. Pray that they will turn their hearts to their Creator who can give them eternal life and that they will find the Father who seeks them continually.

FIRMNESS OF FAITH:

Pray for the few believers among the least-reached groups in Western Europe to continue to grow in their faith in Jesus. Pray for those translating the scriptures into their languages to quickly and effectively provide the Word that helps them grow strong.

FEARLESS WITNESSES:

Pray for others to join in fearlessly sharing their faith to the Fulani and other immigrant groups as well as all the 230+ least-reached groups living in Western Europe through language study, medical ministry, music and many other ways.

FRUIT THAT REMAINS:

Pray for those who have heard the Word, even if they are now far away, to come to know Jesus fully and for wisdom, clarity and skill for those who share the Word among all these groups.

FULLNESS OF LIFE:

Pray for good health for the Fulani and other groups as they often die at an early age due to malnourishment and sickness in their homelands; pray also for those who are seeking to minister to their physical needs and those of the other least-reached peoples, so they find the fullness of life and health Jesus offers them.

www.ethne.net

