

Midwestern: Muslim visitors came to play, not pray

February 5, 2014

I watched as they walked through the door of the Baptist Student Ministry building— five new Muslim students from Saudi Arabia—each one with a smile on his face. I couldn't believe my eyes. My heart raced, and as I welcomed them, I began to pray.



Joshua Hayter One of them reached out to shake my hand. "I'm Ali," he said. "We're here for Party for the Nations."

Every Friday, we invite international students—some who may not come to a Bible study or our worship service—to the BSM to play games, eat pizza and hang out with hopes that relationships will be built and then cultivated outside the BSM building.

It was Thursday night, and our weekly worship service was about to begin.

They arrived for pizza and games—24 hours early.

Misunderstanding

Nevertheless, I invited them to follow me to the coffee. I explain that Party for the Nations was the next day. I told them our worship service was about to begin, but I let them know they were more than welcome to stay.

In nearly seven years serving at our BSM both as a student and now as an intern, I can't remember the last time a group of young Muslim men joined

us for a worship service.

This miscommunication seemed to have God's perfect timing written all over it. But I began to wonder and worry: "What if the nation we pray for tonight is an Islamic nation? What if it's Saudi Arabia? How will they respond?"

It was five minutes until starting time, and I was in the office praying with the worship leaders. We prayed for our worship to be true and pleasing to God. We prayed that students would be brought to the foot of the cross. And we prayed for our Saudi friends that their hearts would be softened and they would see Christ in everything we do.

I joined our visitors in the back row. One of our freshmen girls, Carly, began to speak about the Lawangan people of Indonesia and how they are predominantly Muslim and have no written scripture available to them in their language.

Tension

The tension was thick. I could almost feel their blood run cold.

She went on to talk about the Lawangan and the need for Christians to go share the gospel and bring God's word to them in their language. As she finished with prayer, the band and I took our places on the platform and began to play softly.

Our first song was one we never played before.

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness

Whose love is mighty and so much stronger

The King of Glory, the King above all kings

Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder

Who leaves us breathless in awe and wonder

The King of Glory, the King above all kings

This is amazing grace

This is unfailing love

That You would take my place

That You would bear my cross

You would lay down Your life

That I would be set free

Jesus, I sing for

All that You've done for me

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

Worthy is the King who conquered the grave

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

Worthy is the King who conquered the grave

I watched as each of the Muslim visitors walked out the door of the BSM, one by one, no longer with smiles on their faces.

There for a reason

My heart racing, I silently prayed: "Lord, you know what you're doing. I know you had them here tonight for a reason. Help me to trust that as truth

and not be discouraged that they walked out so soon. You know them better than I do. Soften their hearts. Use our ministry to make the truth of the gospel real in their lives. I"n Jesus' name, Amen."

Had they stayed, they would have heard about forgiveness and how we are to forgive others even as we've been forgiven. They would have heard more about the amazing grace of our great redeemer and mediator for whom we sang—the one who breaks the power of sin and darkness, the worthy Lamb who was slain in our place and who conquered the grave, the King of Glory, the King above all kings—our glorious savior, Jesus Christ.

I wish I could say they were at Party for the Nations the next day. They weren't. And we haven't seen them since. But I'm confident God is just getting started. We undoubtedly will meet again this semester.

Until then, we pray. We pray God will work in their lives and that when the time comes, we will be given the words to say and it will be Christ and Christ alone whom we portray.

Josh Hayter, a graduate of Midwestern State University and former intern with the Baptist Standard and the Baptist General Convention of Texas communications office, is serving through [Go Now Missions](#) as a campus ministry intern with Baptist Student ministries at his alma mater.