



Jeff & Diane Brown working to lengthen the list of tribes, peoples, and languages that worship God

BROWNEWS Online

Hey, we have a new photo, from here in the UAE, on the home page of the website:

<http://incolor.inetnebr.com/dannyk/brown>

Daniel has big hair!

An "Angus" New Year

While Diane and Alyssa were in the US, and Daniel was at a youth group lock-in, Jeff and his friend "Benjamin", a Muslim-background follower of JC whose people hail from the same area as the people with whom we work, went to a New Year's Eve party at the apartment of the "Angus" man called "The Doctor". *[We have adopted the use of the nickname "Angus" for the group of tribes we work with, for security reasons. And the men have been given western nicknames for security also.]* There were several other "Angus" men there. It was an interesting time. This "party" was a dozen men, sitting on the floor around a big sheet of something like clear wax paper, eating and drinking.

Here is the scene. The room was about four meters square with indoor/outdoor type carpet. A TV was on to an Indian movie with no sound. In the room were the TV, a cot, and a bookcase. They all sat, Jeff included, in their baggy shalwar kameezes, cross-legged on the floor. On the paper were bottles of liquor, bottles of soft drinks, ashtrays, glasses, and plates of food eaten by grabbing it with hunks of soft flat bread. Only "Benjamin", "The Doctor", two other men "Martin" and "Harry", and Jeff spoke English. All were Muslims except "Benjamin" and Jeff. So what about the drinking and smoking, you might ask? Well, their people, while Muslim for a few centuries now, never thoroughly embraced it. It was imposed on their peoples, and never really caught on. So they drink, smoke, and carouse at will – when living outside their homeland, that is, where the socio-religious pressure is less. Only one of them, the devout "Harry", and Jeff drank only the soft drinks.

Interestingly, when midnight came, there was no acknowledgement of it, even though this was supposedly a New Years party. If Jeff hadn't pointed it out – because in our culture it is a big deal, so he couldn't help himself – it is likely nobody would have noticed. About 2 or 3 am Jeff left them to party on.

Always thinkin'...

Alyssa's recent question-for-the-morning: "Do animals have belly buttons?"

Recent Alyssa question: "What is God?"

On the TV show Seinfeld, the four friends in the show meet seemingly daily at a Manhattan diner to eat or pass the time. Jeff is now part of a social scene reminiscent of that. Jeff, "Benjamin", "The Dr.", "Martin", and "Harry" (all from the "Angus"

region) meet often at an ethnic restaurant run by people from their province, to eat or pass the time. This is where Jeff gets most of his language practice in.

Muslim-Background Followers of JC

Jeff has been asked by an Anglican priest friend here to meet with any Central Asian Muslim-background followers of JC who from time to time show up at Anglican buildings. They don't fit in with the others who make up these congregations, who are almost all from non-Muslim backgrounds. Right now he knows of two for Jeff to meet, one of whom is a former Mullah. Should be interesting.

It's All One Story!

"Martin" (same guy from the New Years party) recently lost his job. So he had lots of time on his hands. For an upcoming trip, Jeff needed to go to an embassy he had never been to before – that of "Martin's" home country – and asked "Martin" for help. With a captive audience during the drive time, Jeff took a couple hours to tell "Martin" the Whole Story, from Creation through to the death, resurrection, and ascension of JC. Since his culture transmits information verbally, not in writing, and because he is polite, he listened well the entire time. Hopefully not "in one ear, out the other".



Who Is a Muslim?

Jeff recently had to take the car we drive into the shop for repairs. While he and the mechanic, Mohammad, were negotiating which repairs we wanted done and the price, they asked each other what countries they are from. Mohammad, intrigued when Jeff showed knowledge of his country as well as his province and city, asked Jeff about his work, so Jeff told him about the humanitarian work our NGO does in Central Asian countries. Mohammad seemed a bit puzzled that a westerner (meaning "a rich person") wouldn't simply go ahead and have all of the more than \$2,300 in "repairs" done, be they necessary or not. Jeff told him that the common people in Central Asian countries see the western employees of many NGOs driving fancy cars and living in big houses, and they think that the money which is supposedly going to help the people is really going to support the lifestyle of the foreign NGO workers. So, Jeff said, he would rather have more money go to the people who need it and less money go to fixing his

car. Mohammad said that, although Jeff is from America, which is not a Muslim place, he talks like a Muslim! Jeff told him, "You probably got that impression because, even though I *am* a follower of JC, according to the definition of the word "Muslim" I am also a Muslim! The definition of a "Muslim" is simply a person who submits to God and obeys His laws. That is what I do:

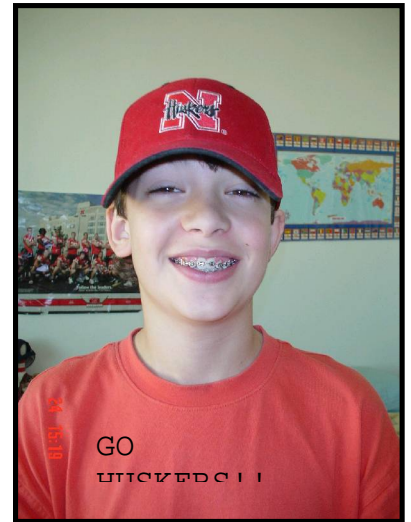
submit to God and try to obey His laws... and I am a follower of JC. In other words, I am an Isahi Mulsim: one who obeys God and follows 'Isa (JC)." This seemed to make some sense to Mohammad. There is a possibility that all of us will travel to Mohammad's city this year, so Mohammad said we are welcome at his family's home there and gave Jeff the phone number.

We love how freely people in Asia talk about religion and politics, two of the supposedly taboo subjects in polite North American company. It's refreshing.



Look! Camels!!!

Driving to the neighboring Emirate of Umm al Quwain, we listened to "Ben Hur" on CD in the car. It was very interesting to listen to this story here, now. The Arab names and characters in the story were more noticeable than ever before. Since it was Eid holiday when we went, every thing was closed and the streets were empty. There were lots of camel sightings though, and for Alyssa that was the highlight of the trip. Well, it's a toss up which she enjoyed more, the camels crossing the road and eating trash out the dumpsters, or the packs of goats roaming freely.



As we drove to another area within that emirate, to Alyssa's delight we got to see lots more camels! Still, the roads were empty and we saw almost no people. Well, except for the one boy (in a robe) on his bicycle with a steering wheel. That was cool, so Daniel said. Imagine that. An Arab boy on a dusty, deserted road... and an American boy driving by, admiring the well-worn bicycle, because of it's steering wheel. Hmmmm.

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News from Jeff & Diane

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