



The Harvest Times

A Publication of World Missions

The World Next Door

By Ashlee Englund

The haunting melody penetrated my brain. It didn't seem to be the department store's music. The words were not in English, and there was some kind of Eastern flair about it. As I washed my hands at the bathroom sink, it slowly dawned on me. Right here in Macy's at Oak Park Mall, I was hearing the Muslim call to prayer.

As I turned toward the door, I faced a small rest area with a bench or two. There was a lady, her hair wrapped in a blue printed scarf, kneeling toward the corner—east, I presumed. A little girl with riotous curls looked on. The call to prayer must have been playing on a phone.

I exited quickly, not wanting to stare and make her feel uncomfortable—not sure, in fact, what to do. But the sight haunted my soul.

I've seen the pictures of Mecca and watched video footage of thousands of pilgrims dressed in white, bowing before the box-like Kaaba. I've been sobered at the sight. But no pictures and no video prepared my heart for the jolt of seeing her bow to her false god, there in a restroom at Macy's.

A sorrow settled deep inside and still affects me as I relive the moment. As I told my husband when describing the scene to him, "She needs Jesus."

According to J. D. Payne in his e-book *Unreached Peoples, Least Reached Places*, some 8 million international immigrants entered the United States from 2000-2010 alone. In 2013, 823,000 international students came to the U.S. for education, and according to International Students, Inc., an astounding 75% of them never entered an American home. Representatives from as many as 361 unreached people groups live here. The nations—and, yes, even the unreached—are coming to your town and my city.

In all our national pride—there's nothing wrong with patriotism, after all—we must refuse to belittle or disdain those immigrants with whom we rub shoulders. What about your Hispanic neighbors or the



grocery store clerk who doesn't celebrate Thanksgiving? Am I tempted to roll my eyes, to wish they would go back where they came from?

Maybe instead God wants to work through you and me to welcome these people, to build friendships, to introduce them to Christ, and perhaps even through them to influence their family members still in their home country. If we feel a stirring in our hearts toward world missions, what better place to start than with those immigrants here?

I probably will never see the Muslim lady from Macy's again. But may she serve as a reminder to me to open my eyes, to see the fields across my street, about my city, and around the world that are white unto harvest.

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AROUND THE WORLD

ASIA

Content withheld for security reasons



Milk vendor



World Missions

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