

Peter: [00:03](#) You have the peace of the Lord in you. You go to sleep peacefully. You wake up peacefully. It's not about money. It's not about wealth. It's not about properties you own. It's about having the peace of the Lord.

Intro: [00:17](#) Across the world today, millions of Christians are persecuted. They face discrimination, imprisonment, displacement, and even death simply because of their faith in Jesus Christ. These courageous believers are our brothers and sisters. We are in this together with them and we need to hear their voice. Join host, Sarah, as we discover their stories today on Release International's Voice Podcast.

Sarah: [00:47](#) Freedom of belief is something we tend to take for granted in the West. We can believe in any God or no God, and crucially we can change our mind when the evidence stacks up or when we have an encounter we just can't explain we can change our position. But in many places that kind of freedom does not exist. On today's podcast, I'll be speaking with a remarkable couple from Southeast Asia who made the daring choice to follow Jesus and who now work discreetly to help others in a similar position.

Sarah: [01:18](#) Peter, Hadassah, welcome to our Voice podcast. It's really lovely to have you here. And thank you so much for being part of the Release Women conference on Saturday. Peter, I found an out an interesting fact about you at that conference. Apparently you never go anywhere without a bottle of Coca Cola. Is that right?

Peter: [01:34](#) Thank you for having us. I do go places without Coca Cola, but I make sure that somewhere nearby there should be one.

Sarah: [01:49](#) I don't see one with you now.

Peter: [01:51](#) No. I left it back, actually. I left it back in a place where we were staying. But I got coffee so it's okay.

Sarah: [02:04](#) Oh that's okay, as long as it's caffeine.

Hadassa: [02:04](#) Substitute.

New Speaker: [02:04](#) I can relate to that, but on a more serious note, to start with, I should say that we're being deliberately vague about the work that you do and the country that you work in. So we'll use the more generic term 'Southeast Asia' to talk about what you do. With that in mind, would you be able to tell us a bit about your

own story, how you came to the Lord? I understand that you're both from a Muslim background?

- Peter: [02:26](#) Originally I'm not from a Muslim background because I was born in the Western world and I was born as a Roman Catholic. But because I married a Muslim woman, I had to convert into Islam. So, to convert into Islam comes also with an Islamic education, you have to know what Islam is all about and my wife was trying to educate me with the Holy book, the Koran, to become a good Muslim. But this is my wife's story. She should tell you what happened when she read the Koran and when she tried to teach me the Koran. We struggled a little bit because I'm a very curious person.
- Hadassa: [03:06](#) Well, God has a great sense of humour, bringing a person who am I calling my husband now from a different part of the world with a different culture and with a different belief system. But yes, you know, he encouraged me if I wanted to show him, I myself have to know very well what I'm talking about. So that is where my research started. Peter encouraged me to read the Koran in the language I understand. And when I started to read the Koran in other translation, actually the Lord touched me because I was seeking and Jesus actually revealed himself very clearly in the Koran. Due to that there is no turning back for me and that is why I prayed for Peter. I prayed for the children and we all came to Christ.
- Sarah: [03:57](#) Wow, that's amazing. It's amazing that Koran itself led you to Christ. Is Jesus mentioned in the Koran then?
- Hadassa: [04:06](#) Yes, many times Jesus is mentioned. It's mentioned that he is actually born of the Virgin Mary and his birth is a miracle. And it's mentioned the day he died, the day he was born and the day he ascended to God. And it struck me that that's what he brought, for someone who died and then goes back to God. And then it's mentioned that he's also coming back to judge the world and that he performed miracles. It's also mentioned in different Scripture that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And finally, when I come across the Scripture which says that Jesus is the Ruhullah, which is the Spirit of God. And Jesus is the Word of God - the Kalimatullah. And I got more intense in knowing more about Jesus. And leads me from one to another.
- Sarah: [05:02](#) And your father, he's an Imam, which is a Muslim cleric. How did you tell him and how did he react?
- Hadassa: [05:09](#) Well, I was very excited. Of course. I wanted to share to my loved ones, my parents and the minute he got to know about it

he was very, very upset with me and I tried to explain to him, tried to sit down, uh, to talk in a peaceful manner with him. He just didn't give me any chance at all. So basically he threw me out and I was ostracized more than 20 years ago from the whole family. I don't have any contact with them. And even if I tried also, nobody wants to have to anything to do with me. Then again, you know, finding the peace and the joy in the Lord - I have no regrets.

Sarah: [05:52](#) What are the consequences then of Muslims turning to Christ in the country that you live in?

Peter: [06:02](#) In the country where my wife and I are living in and ministering to these people, it can be extreme severe consequences. The male society is not that much affected, but the female society can suffer a lot because most of the time their children are involved. The young children or teenage children are involved and according to the Islamic law, which is called Sharia law, females don't have any rights. So if their husbands find out that the female has changed her faith, he can take absolutely everything away from her without any consequences to him. And even the court will not get involved because the court says we are not getting involved in domestic affairs. So, females are risking much, much more than the males do. But generally it is a total change of lifestyle for many, many people coming out from the oppression and turn from the bondage of Islam into the light of our Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom. And suddenly they have the opportunity to choose what they want, to choose when they pray, to choose what to say, and this and that. They are not used to this and this is sometimes a very confusing struggle for many of them to get used to the the new lifestyle they suddenly have by coming into the kingdom.

Sarah: [07:35](#) So you mentioned that it's much tougher for the women. What about the established church in the country that you live in? Are they able to support these vulnerable young converts? Are they able to give them a hug and help them through that difficult time?

Hadassa: [07:52](#) Well, the churches throughout the whole world is pretty much the same as in my country. There are churches who are very complacent. They don't want to have anything to do with us; no support whatsoever because of the law, which can jeopardise their existence. So they try not to have much to do with us.

Sarah: [08:17](#) So Muslim converts can't go to the church. They have to go underground if they want to meet together?

Hadassa: [08:22](#) Yes.

New Speaker: [08:22](#) So how did it change your lives when you became Christians? What happened next?

Peter: [08:31](#) How did it change our life? It's a good question. In an enormous way. When my wife accepted the Lord and started to go to church - she never actually pushed the family to follow her footsteps, but our children saw the changes in her and also came into the kingdom. But they have their own reasons for it. But I refused to come because I had my work, I had my position, I had my income. My God was my money and my reputation. So I don't need anything else. But apparently prayer seems to work. My wife always prayed over me when I was sleeping and God really put me on my knees with a miracle, with some extreme things which for Western people like where I come from, it's very difficult to accept, but I have seen it with my own eyes and I can't explain it and it really hit me so hard. So I said, okay fine. So after we've been all saved, if you want to call it that way, we were all in the kingdom worshipping the Lord, it has changed very much because my employer thought that I'm a Muslim, but when he found out that we are worshipping Jesus he called me in and said in this case we cannot keep employing you. And basically they canceled my work contract, my visa and everything was being taken away. So from one day to the other one, I had no more access to money. I had no more access to my company and to many other things. So basically I was broke, if you want to call it that way, it affected us very much. Yes.

Sarah: [10:09](#) Gosh, so you lost everything?

Peter: [10:10](#) Yes, we did. Within 24 hours we had absolutely nothing.

Sarah: [10:15](#) So tell us about that moment when you realised you had to leave the country.

Peter: [10:19](#) About three, four o'clock in the morning, people came to our house and raided us and they said, 'why we you teaching about Jesus, why are you doing this, why are you doing that?' So when they realised they cannot touch us legally they went towards our congregation. So some of our people who worship with us in fellowship with us suddenly disappeared or got beaten up for some reason. So we actually.. our presnce jeopardised other people. So we were praying very hard and the Lord says you better leave the country. So we were praying and saying, 'where to?' and he directed us to come to the UK. It wasn't our choice. It was the Lord's choice very clearly. And despite my personal, not refusal, but I don't really like cold countries and England is

always cold. But the confirmation came in one after another one until we say, 'okay, fine, your will shall be done, we go to England'.

- Sarah: [11:18](#) Today I'm speaking to Peter and Hadassah Hawk, Christians who live and work in Southeast Asia. After choosing to follow Jesus, they faced rejection from their family. And Peter lost his job with no means of income and no visa they were forced to leave their home.
- Hadassa: [11:37](#) We thought that we are so glad that we leave the country, running away from persecution, but coming to England and for seven and a half years here, actually it was the beginning of the trial that God put across our path. To strengthen, to squashe us and to raise us and to build usto be more wiser, to be more...
- Peter: [12:03](#) Humbler.
- Hadassa: [12:03](#) Humbler, yeah. Humble and put his compassion in our heart. So it takes us that seven and a half years. As Peter says he's not very fond of the cold country. So we were praying and praying and he was asking specifically, 'we want a hot country, a nice, beautiful ocean, white Palm trees a white sandy beach' and two weeks later, Peter got a job in the Caribbean. So we moved to the Caribbean for another two years. We had a good life in the Caribbean, having all the luxuries. He was running a five star hotel; that kind of lifestyle. And then one day the Lord spoke differently to each of us, to just drop everything and come back to our country. So that's what we did.
- Sarah: [12:42](#) Oh, tell us about that. How did you know that God was calling you back to Southeast Asia?
- New Speaker: [12:47](#) It's a beautiful paradise. Yeah. But then we got the impression that the Lord speaks to us saying, 'this is man's paradise, not my paradise' and then asking, 'are you still willing to serve me?'. I said, 'yes, we are willing to share a few, of course.' And then certain things happen to my wife separately then to me. I was just sitting in my office doing my accounting and then a visual voice... not visual... audible voice goes into your head and says, 'Go back to Southeast Asia'. Okay, why do I want to go back to where there's troubles - that doesn't make sense. But knowing over the last seven, eight, nine years, God working in us, I trust him. 'Okay if it's your will, I go.' So I resigned my job and the owner of the hotel, actually this is how the enemy works, says 'Peter if you stay on, don't go, I double your salary'. It's not 10% more, he doubled my salary. I said, 'no, it's not about money, my God...' But he's not a believer so he didn't understand... 'My

God asked me to go back where I came from' and I resigned. But now how am I going to tell my wife?!

- Hadassa: [14:06](#) Yeah at the same time, the Lord put me through this dream that I had. It's an sleep overnight and get up the next day. But the dream that he put me in lasted for six months in one night dream. And during this six months I was going through a grief where actually I lost Peter in the dream and I started to accept the fact that I am alone. And you know, every day I wake up in the morning and try to pull myself together, try to move on. And it lasted about six months in this dream and during this time, at the end of the dream, one day I was sitting on the veranda overlooking the beautiful ocean, the Caribbean, a wonderful sunset. And here I felt the presence of God just next to me and said to me 'now that you're alone, are you still willing to serve me?' Without hesitation I said 'yes Lord, I'll go anywhere you send me.' Then he said, 'Go back to Asia' and that is when the next thing I realised I woke up in reality and I saw Peter actually lying in the living room watching TV. So that was hard. The Lord spoke to me. Yeah. And I was afraid to tell him because this is one of the best jobs he ever had. He got a good life. How am I going to tell him?
- Sarah: [15:17](#) So you were both trying to pluck up the courage to tell each other.
- Peter: [15:20](#) For nearly a week I pretended to go to work, but it took me nearly a week until I got the courage together to tell her that I think we should go back and instead of being angry with me she just rose her arms and said 'hallelujah, let's go back'. It was really unexpected. So we packed our stuff and we left.
- Hadassa: [15:40](#) So that was six years ago.
- Sarah: [15:42](#) So you've been back in Southeast Asia for six years?
- Hadassa: [15:45](#) Yes now.
- Sarah: [15:45](#) Have you returned to the ministry that you are involved in?
- New Speaker: [15:48](#) Of course, it all started all over again. Those old friends started coming back again and meeting new people, new disciple group, new congregation. It's a very exciting time. Challenging time, but we're more mature, we're more wiser. So we know what we're supposed to do. We keep very low, under the radar, and we've been there since.

Sarah: [16:07](#) So it's Muslim converts coming into your house and you're meeting together as a house church. So you've gone from being Muslims and having everything, becoming a Christian, losing everything. Then gaining everything again, this idyllic paradise in the Caribbean and then deciding to go back and lose everything again. What's going through your heart and mind as that happens?

Peter: [16:29](#) You're not the first one who asked us this question, especially because we are mixed, couple - Western, Asian - they say you guys must be nuts. You must be crazy. We got called many, many different things. But from the bottom of my heart, I can say this is the most beautiful time of our life.

Hadassa: [16:47](#) mmm

Peter: [16:51](#) When people pray in churches about breakthrough. 'Oh Lord give me the breakthrough. Give me the breakthrough.' You know what the breakthrough is? When you have the peace of the Lord in you. You go to sleep peacefully. You wake up peacefully. It's not about money. It's not about wealth. It's not about properties you own. It's about having the peace of the Lord.

Hadassa: [17:17](#) No bondage.

New Speaker: [17:17](#) There's no bondage to this world and this peace is...

Hadassa: [17:19](#) priceless.

Peter: [17:23](#) Is priceless, yeah. This is the breakthrough, which we believe in.

Sarah: [17:28](#) Wow. It sounds like there's a lot of challenges to what you do. It's lonely at times, but also I can see in your eyes this real joy.

Hadassa: [17:37](#) Amen.

Sarah: [17:37](#) How can we get alongside you and pray for you?

Peter: [17:40](#) For me, from my point of view, I think the most important prayer is the knowledge that people are alongside us, especially when the people come out from Islam and come not only to our house church but to other places, they always feel very lonely. They say, 'you are the only person I can hold on to', but they need to know that they're others there as well. They need to know that there are people alongside praying for you, supporting you and this and that, and if they really fall, it's not

only you who can catch them there's a whole safety net who can catch them. As we mentioned before, that when you work with Muslim people who want to come out of the darkness and come into the lightness of the kingdom, you're facing a lot of challenges and you feel very much alone because the established churches are very much afraid of getting involved because they're feeling the consequences. And we also felt very much alone, but a few years ago we knew about Release International, for example, we also know about Open Doors and other companies. But we never thought that we are important enough for them to get involved with us or that we shall get involved with them. But a few years ago, somebody from Release International came to Southeast Asia and contacted us and we had a meeting and it was so encouraging. How comes this particular, company, or organisation has an interest in us. And then we realised that actually we are not alone. There are people in foreign countries, in other countries who know about our situation. Not particularly about us directly, but about the Islamic situation coming out of the bondage. And there are people who pray. And, Release International is very supportive to our cause in many ways, not only in prayers, also financially and in their presence - they're coming regularly to visit us and also being part of our house fellowship. And also share in our house fellowship that they are there for the people which gives a lot of encouragement to many people. So we are very grateful for being known by Release and being accepted into their family of Release International.

- Sarah: [20:22](#) Thank you so much for sharing your story with us and you're truly so inspiring both of you and we really appreciate your time.
- Both: [20:30](#) Thank you so much. Thank you for everything and God bless you and thank you for all your prayers,
- Sarah: [20:36](#) For Peter and Hadassa following Jesus means everything. It's more important than work, more important than money, even more important than their personal safety. And they recognise that an intrinsic part of following Jesus means helping others to follow him. Disciples make disciples. They have been called to do this in a context where choosing to follow Jesus almost always involves risk and rejection, but they still serve and still people come.
- Sarah: [21:06](#) Thank you so much for listening to Release International's Voice podcast. Please do subscribe through your favourite podcast app and stay connected to the voice of persecuted Christians. There are many other ways you can get involved. Peter and

Hadassa just told us how special it is for them to know that Christians in the UK are aware of their work and praying for them. For more information about how you can support persecuted believers across the world, please visit our website, [www.releaseinternational.org](http://www.releaseinternational.org) or find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Outro:

[21:40](#)

Remember those who are in prison as if you were in there together with them and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Do not abandon them!