

# Don & Evey Heckman Ministry Sampler for Special Partners

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*Working with Praxis Advocates & Frontiers*

## **Don Heckman – A passion for Muslims**

(A biography)

"I was saved twice by Africans," explained Don, an animated missionary, animated by a true passion for Muslims. Don is American, originally a Lutheran, brought up culturally in a German American background, which strongly impacted his future. Don launched out at 22 years old with the Peace Corps in order to enlarge his vision of the world. Don worked as a professor of math in Ghana from 1969 to 1971. It was his contact with his students where his faith became living and contagious. He discovered a living faith in the person of Jesus Christ through his contact with his students. He committed soon thereafter to working with Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

He got to know Evey, an English nurse, also with YWAM, whom he married in 1974. Evey went to Afghanistan and Ethiopia in missions. From 1971 to 1973, Evey was a nurse in Lausanne, Switzerland, acting as the chef of the nursing floor, practicing in French.

Evey and Don married in July, 1974 and launched into worldwide missions with Youth With A Mission. They had a troubling experience soon afterwards—something which marked their future vocation with Muslims. Completely lost in the great Sahara Desert, as they led a convoy of 37 people, they were saved by a young Tuareg nomad boy. The boy appeared miraculously, it seemed, as he walked around the side of a sand dune. The boy's parents were despairing at the loss of their son. He came to their rescue after a prayer time. Don and Evey drove the boy to the crossroads indicated by the boy, 8 miles away. There were his parents who were looking everywhere for him. Even more amazing was how Don and Evey, 7 months later, hosted two debriefing sessions in England and in Lausanne, Switzerland. Don met a prayer group in England and another one in Switzerland who both asked if they had met a young boy in the desert. The prayer groups felt led to pray that the Lord send them, in the desert, a young boy. It was with a remarkable sense of urgency that the prayer groups prayed such a remarkable prayer. They asked Don and Evey, "Was our prayer important?" It was. In fact, the young boy was a Muslim. That was the beginning of a calling.

In 1982, Don looked for further training in church planting. He enrolled in Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Later in 1990, the Heckman family felt called to France. The kids, boy-girl-boy, were 13-10-and 7 at the time. They began right away to find ways to plant churches. After a couple of years, and challenges and difficulties in ministry, their enthusiasm returned to church-planting, remembering what God had done in the middle of the Sahara Desert, an unforgettable mark of God's faithfulness.

One day, Don attended a pastoral retreat in Paris. During the retreat, he noticed that a North African was sitting alone, all by himself. No one talked with him. So Don sat next to him. The man was an Algerian, alone in his corner, but he was a converted Muslim and desired to plant a church specifically for bringing other North Africans to Christ. This man, Amar, was the man that Don later worked with for years, planting a church to bring Muslims to Christ. Don knew his vocation was for Muslims to become followers of Jesus. Major cultural changes had to be made to understand and live among this cultural group.

In 1995, Don and Evey joined Frontiers. By 2005, Don and Evey moved to the southeast of France that is near Switzerland, where no other missionaries are working among Muslims.

Muslims are extremely hospitable. Don doesn't hesitate to invite himself into their homes. "Can I come in and have a cup of tea with you?" Or, "Can I share in an evening meal with you?" Although impolite within our culture, it is an honor for them to receive a foreigner. "With passion, with emotion, without fear, it is necessary to dramatize Bible stories with sweeping arms and hand gestures, slightly raising the voice, just like it is done in their culture." You never want to delay talking to Muslims about God. If your first approach is the weather or something else, they are not convinced that you have a message that is very important.

Today, Don isn't focusing on building physical churches, neither at bringing Muslims into French churches. The plan is to initiate house groups in order to bring believing, former Muslims, together who are uprooted and placed in the western world of France. The goal is to meet the Lord and to love Jesus Christ.

What matters is not great theories. Don arrives at a Muslim home, with the TV blasting the whole time. But that doesn't matter. Don says, "Most Muslims are searching for God, but they get on the wrong path. For Muslims, Jesus is the Messiah who will return and judge the earth. This alone is an open door for a strong discussion. But we first must do a lot of listening."

Last November, Don knocked on the door of a Muslim family. Don said, "I am a HANIFI Christian" (that is, just like the faith of Abraham who believed in one God.) The mother in the home was very intrigued. She asked, "Then do you know how to slit the throat of a lamb?" Don was never trained for this at seminary. Thinking of what to say, he said, "No, I don't know this. But you can surely teach me." The discussion was already off on a good footing.

## **New role and job description for Don and Evey Heckman**

March 1, 2011

Don and Evey find themselves uniquely placed on the doorstep to Algeria, having served for two decades in France among both French and Kabyle churches, having ministered broadly in Algeria, and having established extensive networks of trust in the region. As Don lays aside his former roles within Frontiers, he and his wife aspire to leverage their networks of trust within France, in order to give themselves wholly to the efforts of the Special Task Force for the Unengaged of Algeria, still working within Frontiers.

Under the oversight of Steve MacLurg and the Irish Sending Base, and in close collaboration with the French Sending Base, in partnership with the Scott and Michal Sullivan family, Don Heckman will give himself fulltime over the next three years to this task force.

The Task Force for the Unengaged of Algeria will commit to the mission of fostering collaboration between God's-team efforts currently working into Algeria, gathering and collating demographic data to assess the unfinished task, identifying effective platforms for expatriate and national teams targeting the unengaged of Algeria, and recruiting and training teams to engage the regions and people groups of Algeria who are waiting for the Gospel. The Task Force for the Unengaged of Algeria is a provisional task force on an initial 3 year assignment to complete these objectives, subject to annual review under the broad accountability of the Irish Sending Base.

Don will be accountable for his goals, activities, and time logged to Steve MacLurg, who will receive a written accounting from Don on a monthly basis. Don joyfully commits to a full work week of ministry related to the goals of the TFUA.

A review of the progress of the TFUA will be submitted to the Principal SB Overseer as part of the normal Irish SB review. A full assessment of its progress and accomplishments, along with recommendations as to continuing the TFUA, will be reviewed by the Irish SB and the Principal SB Overseer in three years, by March 2014.

## **In The Loop Sampler (February 7)**

Dear Loopers, greetings to Atessa and to all of you. I'm so excited.

In Malta last week, we left the Dolmen Hotel for the airport, with flowers on balconies, flowers growing up the walls, and sidewalk cafes. I got to Gate 7 in the airport and waited for an hour because I love being early for flights. In Gate 6, just over from Gate 7, was seated a young Muslim lady called Atessa. The rule "never witness to a Muslim of the opposite sex" is generally true, but not specifically true. So I went over and sat right next to Atessa, who was veiled, long sleeved, with a double veil that didn't look like our North African ladies. She said she was Iranian, studying math and business in Malta.

My docile personality had to change to the readiness of witnessing to a Muslim. (I'm sharing pretty honestly now.) I asked if she was married. She said she was divorced 14 years and has a beautiful son of 12 years. Forgive me for being close to crazy in the standards of the Western culture. But I asked, "Were you beaten?" Atessa, "Yes, but not all the time. Yes, constantly insulted, but only beaten sometimes."

"I am a Hanifi Christian." I said. Her: "You must read our Holy Koran, because Hanifi comes from the pure faith of Abraham. You must read our book." D: "My faith is Hanifi because Jesus is the Son of God." A: "What Son of God? God cannot have sex with Mary. There is no Son of God." D: "Are you so foolish? In your Farsi language, a bad person is called 'Son of Evil.' Even your beautiful dress is called 'Son of Beauty.' In English if we say a person is a son of evil, it's crazy, no one can say that." A: "So what does Son of God mean?" D: "He is just like the perfect God." D: "You have it, you have it, you have it. Now you pray and tell people that Son of God is Jesus the perfect exact image of God. Pray." A: "I believe Jesus is the Son of God."

In the plane, she sat directly across from me. I didn't shake her hand, but crossed my hands with a very small bow to her. Friends, we probably will have one more sister, an Iranian, in the kingdom of heaven.

You can take great liberties in your personality with Muslims who think that Westerners, being without passion, are not worth listening to. Will you please pray for Atessa?

Much love from Don and Evey

## **In The Loop Sampler (June 2009)**

Dear Loopers, in the Loop with us in Ministry, prayer and support

Evey and Don, that's us, we went to a clinic in Lyon for my muscle fiber MRI yesterday. We planned our day in Lyon to meet a new couple interested in linking up with us, helping us reach out to Muslims in France.

The nurse at the MRI took me into the changing room to prepare me for the scan. She brought her clipboard to check off some questions, like, "Would you object to an imaging fluid being injected into your veins?"

The nurse, Ylam, an Algerian Muslim, practically told me her life story in the changing room after me greeting her. This could only happen in France. "Hi, I'm called Ylam, and I was born in France from Algerian parents who came from Constantine, Algeria, near the Tunisian border. No, I'm not sure if I'm really French or Algerian, since I feel like both, depending on the circumstance I find myself in. But yes, I'm a committed Muslim. I read the Koran, though to my shame I read in French, not in Arabic, which is a shameful thing, since it was meant to be read in Arabic. But I can't, my Arabic is so poor. I'm 26 years old, and I'm having a huge problem finding a boyfriend because my parents want to select my future husband according to Islam, and I just can't honor my parents—which causes me great pain. You are a Christian with the faith of Abraham? I've never heard of such faith. Thank you so much for praying for me and for this blessing of Jesus on my life. Now let's go to the MRI."

Such a contrast, but Jacques, a Frenchman, was there in the MRI waiting room, with a very different story. He came from Dieu-Le-Fit, a village which means, "God did it." Jacques, who brought his adult daughter to the MRI, told me the story of the dogs in his village who find truffles under tree roots that the local priest then uses as communion wafers as he serves Holy Communion. (Truffles are fungi tubers that cost as much as \$500 per pound.) Secularized France is more readily a place to find God-seeking Muslims than locals who know of the Lord as more than a religious idea. What a double take, as I sat there with Jacques, thinking of Ylam, the Muslim nurse who just opened her heart to God for answers.

Still in Lyon, we met the couple, Justin and Allison, who flew in from Texas to meet us (as well as to see a few others in France) to determine the potential of being linked up some way. We marveled to hear their story of God leading them together as a couple to somehow touch Muslims for Christ. We've been in correspondence for a long time. We know, as it has been the case for us, the Lord will lead Muslims to cross paths with this fine young couple. We ask for your

prayers for Justin and Allison, for their paths to be made clear in future ministry. Pray for Ylam, because she is a real seeker of God who needs to find herself in Him. Pray for Jacques, as well, because it is almost prophetic that he lives in a village called, "God did it." May that become his proclamation and conviction.

Much love to you all, and thanks for your commitment to us in ministry,  
Don and Evey



## **In The Loop Sampler (June 25, 2010)**

Dear Family and Friends,

The Algerian Consultation was held this week. Many people paid more than their own fees to cover the less wealthy national Algerians who also came to our Consultation.

Our expectations were by far surpassed. We learned that two years ago, more people die on the fields because of hostage taking than due to road accidents. This alone is a need for prayer. This is a worldwide fact. At the consultation, we had professional Hostage Crisis Management instructors come to teach us.

In the Kabylia area of Algeria, there is at least one church in every town, city and hamlet. This means that there are 1,500 churches in Kabylia alone.

The police come to close down churches. They hand out “close notices,” but share those papers with trembling hands, so great is the anointing of God on the Kabyle land. Then many of the police get converted to Christ on the spot. Like the book of Acts, no one dares to counter the work of God in Kabylia.

But Kabyles are now reaching out to other cultures, including Egyptians and Arabs who are imported into Algeria to “Islamicize” and radicalize the high schools. Rather than detesting these troubling people, the Kabyles are bringing them to confess Christ.

Oh, yes, there are troubles. Among 1,500 churches in Kabylia, there are hundreds of different theologies, all dependent upon the outlook of the leader of the group. But there is life. Much life and even obtuse methods of evangelism take place. God is in this. One non-believer receives a vision, then another non-believer recites the other half of the vision. They both had similar or identical visions. There is one God who gave the same vision to 2 people to create unity, of course.

Kabyles are now on the move, planting churches among the Tuareg nomads, among the Arabs, among people in Libya, among Tunisians. The Kabyles, when arrested by the police, have to tell how many converts have been registered in all of Algeria. They “low-ball” the number by saying, 50,000 converted Kabyles. They then laugh, because 50,000 is an incredible understatement, just so as not to alarm the Islamists.

Every town has a church. Satellite TV broadcasts are reaching women. The then



converted women say, “Oh, I just now turned to this channel. Did you see this?” She had already come to Christ and wants to act more like a nonchalant person who just discovered satellite TV. But there are problems. Many men come to Christ but fear telling their wives. In this macho culture, women are the gossip champions and the enforcers of Islam in the household. We’ve heard of one man who had waited 16 years to tell his wife he is a Christian. These are mostly older men. Younger men shout the Gospel from the rooftops.

The dark purging of the 1990s is over. Now there is more stability and a remarkable passion among Algerian Muslim followers of Jesus. The Kabyles want to be called Christians, to identify with other Christians all over the world. Algerian Kabyle Berbers are very noble to insist on the gospel, don't you think?

Thanks for praying for us,

## **Job Description**

**April 8, 2011**

**Don and Evie find themselves uniquely placed on the doorstep to Algeria, having served for two decades in France among both French and Kabyle churches, having ministered broadly in Algeria, and having established extensive networks of trust in the region and having planted an MBB church, Bethesda Eglise, in Paris.**

**As Don lays aside his former roles within Frontiers, he and his wife aspire to leverage their networks of trust within France, in order to give themselves wholly to the efforts of the Special Task Force for the Unengaged of Algeria who live in France, Algeria, Morocco and in Libya.**

**Under the oversight of Steve MacLurg and the Irish Sending Base, and in close collaboration with the French Sending Base, in partnership with the Scott and Michal Sullivan family, Don Heckman will give himself fulltime over the next three years to this task force still within Frontiers.**

**The Task Force for the Unengaged of Algeria will commit to the mission of fostering collaboration between God's-team efforts currently working into Algeria, gathering and collating demographic data to assess the unfinished task, identifying effective platforms for expatriate and national teams targeting the unengaged of Algeria, and recruiting and training teams to engage the regions and people groups of Algeria who are waiting for the Gospel. Don and Scott, under Steve's tutelage, will create a spiritual mosaic mapping of Algeria, of Algerian leaders in France and elsewhere. This mapping will stand like silos of raw material for the purpose of enlarging the engagement with the unreached.**

**The TFUA is a provisional task force on an initial 3 year assignment to complete these objectives, subject to annual review under the broad accountability of the Irish Sending Base. Steve and Roger and the Irish sending base will evaluate and recommend directional and specific and creative ideas to power this task force.**

**Don will be accountable for his goals, activities, and time logged to Steve MacLurg, who will receive a written accounting from Don on a monthly basis. Don joyfully commits to a full work week of ministry related to the goals of the TFUA.**

**A review of the progress of the TFUA will be submitted to the Principal SB Overseer as part of the normal Irish SB review. A full assessment of its progress and accomplishments, along with recommendations as to continuing the TFUA, will be reviewed by the Irish SB and the Principal SB Overseer in three years, by March 2014.**

**Evey and I expressly commit to this Job Description in all teachability and with great enthusiasm.**

**Signed, Don and Evey Heckman**

Love to all, Don and Evey Heckman