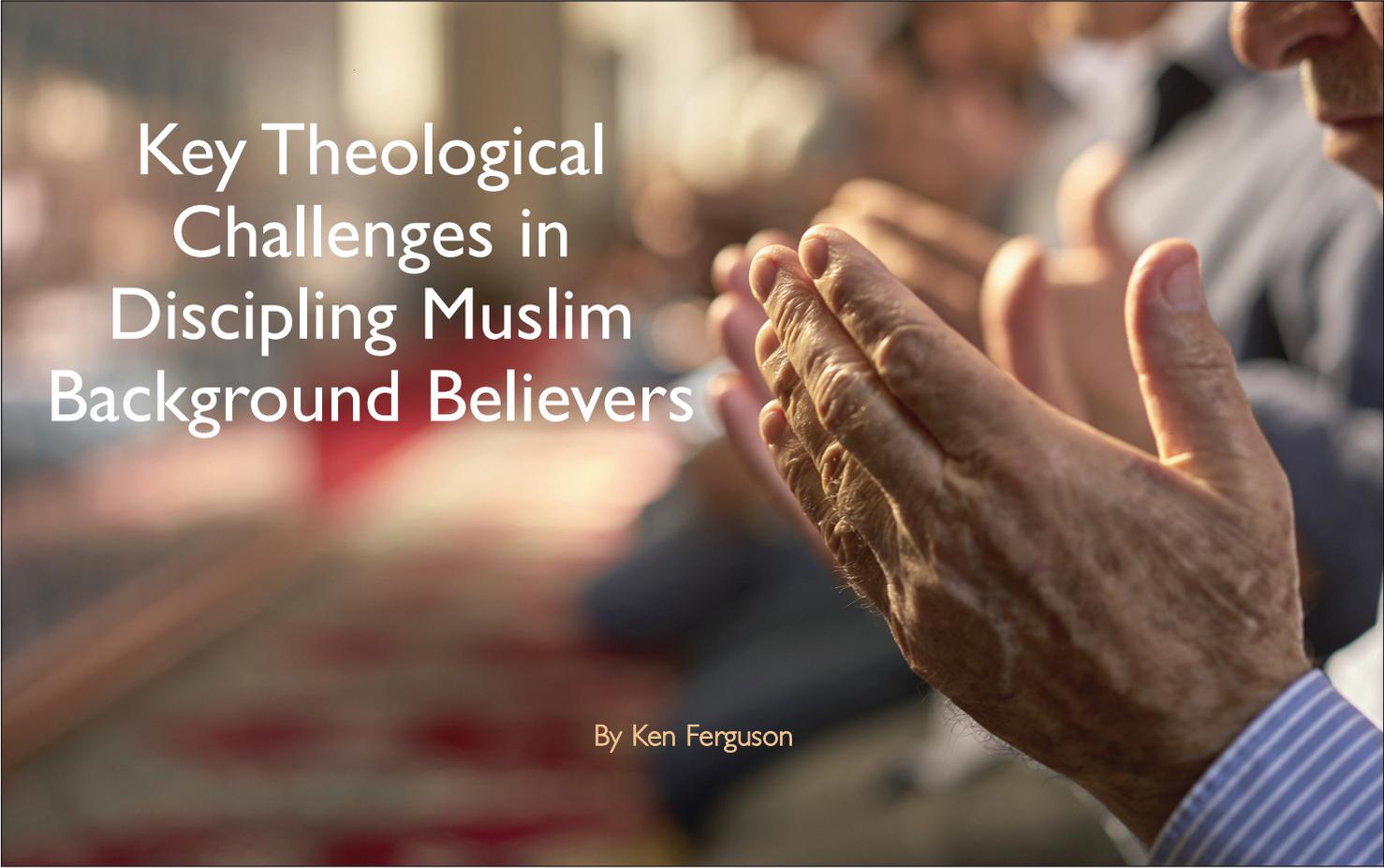




# INTERCEDE

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## Key Theological Challenges in Discipling Muslim Background Believers

By Ken Ferguson

One out of every five individuals on the planet is a Muslim, and 70 percent of the world's unreached peoples are Muslims. If the Great Commission is truly about making "disciples of all nations," then making disciples of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) is an integral part of the charge. Considering the vast differences between Muslims and Christians, one soon realizes the challenge. Islam has zero tolerance for any other religion, and seeks to isolate those who have converted to Christianity, silence their witness, and pressure them into reverting to Islam.

Converts from Islam face persecution and potential martyrdom. Failure to produce healthy disciples in Islamic society precipitates failure to plant churches. Many MBBs manage to endure the pressures of conversion, but some return to the mosque. Others emigrate, thus eliminating the potential for witness in their communities. Although extraction pro-

vides safety and security for these MBBs, it does not build churches in Islamic society.

You may ask, "Is there a difference in making a disciple from a Muslim background than from any other background?" The answer is yes. Certainly there are similarities, but the successful spiritual formation of converts from Islam requires careful bridge building from Islamic beliefs, values and practices to Christian beliefs, values and practices. We must teach the Word by clearly distinguishing sound biblical doctrine from ideology and cultural practice.

What people believe does make a difference. Christians base their faith on what they perceive to be truth as revealed in the Bible. Admittedly, different interpretations of truth produce different creeds or theologies, but most fundamental beliefs remain similar among orthodox Christian groups.

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# Until All Have Heard

*How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14*

Mark Brink

International Director  
Global Initiative:  
Reaching Muslim Peoples



At a recent Muslim awareness seminar in a U.S. church, a group of Christians were asked what comes to mind when hearing the words “Muslim” or “Islam”. The majority of responses were descriptions of the worst coming out of the Muslim world. A few reactions expressed a positive aspect such as hospitality and family. At the conclusion of this exercise a young man raised his hand and asked if he could come forward to share his thoughts. He shocked the participants with the following comments:

*I am a former Muslim who grew up here in America. Even as a small child I felt that people looked at me differently, because I was a Muslim. What shocks me even more is the attitude and words that were given by Christians just now when asked what comes to your mind when you think of Muslims.*

The young man went on to share his testimony, especially emphasizing that it was through much hardship that he came to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

As Global Initiative helps to equip the church to reach Muslims, we are always aware of the potential for fear,

anger and indifference toward Muslim neighbors. Our goal is to help Christians move from fear to faith, anger to compassion, and indifference to engagement. How is this done? It begins with a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts – in order to view lost Muslims as reachable. And while practicing great wisdom, Christians should always seek guidance from the Holy Spirit to make sure that new converts are not alienated from fellowship. Conversely, we want to help new converts grow in their walk with Christ.

The New Testament provides illustrations of how God transformed the blasphemer of God into the believer, the persecutor of the church into the disciple, and the hater of God into a worshiper. Our desire is to help the Church see that under the veneer of the shell of Islam is a lost person who needs to know the truth about Jesus Christ. It is the power of the Gospel that transforms the heart of the lost.

In the lead article of this *Intercede* you will come to understand some of the challenges that converts from Islam face as they practice their new faith and try to find their place in the fellowship of believers. May the Lord help us to rise to the challenge of reaching our Muslim neighbors with the truth about Jesus Christ. 





# Muslim World News

## **Blasphemy Acquittal Delayed**

*Egypt*

An Egyptian Christian, jailed for 38 months on unsubstantiated charges, has had his expected acquittal delayed again to February 2016, his lawyer said.

Bishoy Garas was sentenced to six years in prison from September 2012 for offending Islam, the then Egyptian President Morsi, and a Muslim sheikh's sister. However, the charges, relating to Facebook posts, were found on a fake Facebook page opened in his name.

He posted warnings on his own Facebook page about the fake account and alerted cyber police.

Still, he was sentenced despite new claims by his friends of a named hacker, as well as cyber investigation reports attesting to his innocence.

Garas was due to have a ruling in favor of his acquittal on 14th Nov. But the judge put it off again, owing to "the issue's sensitivity," his lawyer Magdy Farouk Saeed said. "The judge adjourned the case till Feb. 13, 2016. He does not wish to issue his ruling at this time in the full presence of the court," he added.

"This is due to the sensitivity of the issue," Saeed said, hinting that a "discreet" hearing with fewer attendees may be more appropriate.

Garas's lawyer, however, was still confident about his client's upcoming acquittal.

"The judge will rule in Bishoy's favor. It is as good as done," Saeed said, noting that his client was allowed to stand outside the dock during the hearing.

Garas was also not subject to any further questioning by the judge, he explained. — *World Watch Monitor*

## **Boko Haram Reign Continues**

*Nigeria*

Some 2.5 million people have been displaced by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region since 2013. Boko Haram was the world's deadliest terror group in 2014, ahead of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, according to a report released Nov. 18, 2015, by the Institute of Economics & Peace. It was responsible for 6,664 deaths in 2014, more than any other terrorist group in the world, according to the Global Terrorism Index; it said the Islamic State had killed 6,073 people during the same period.

The Index, which tracks attacks globally, also said the Islamic State and Boko Haram were responsible for half of all global deaths attributed to terrorism. Both are known for singling out Christians in their attacks.

With the world's attention on Paris and the 132 lives lost on 13th Nov., the radical Islamist group Boko Haram killed 49 people in two attacks in less than 48 hours in northern Nigeria. On 17th Nov., 34 people lost their lives in a suicide attack in a busy vegetable market, in Yola, Adamawa State. Some 80 others were injured. The following day, 15 people were killed and 53 injured in twin blasts in a popular phone market in Nigeria's main northern city of Kano. According to local sources, two female suicide bombers detonated their bombs.

In recent months, dozens of towns and villages in northeastern Nigeria, taken over by militants last year, have been liberated by the Nigerian military. But the situation is still volatile as the radical group has intensified suicide attacks both in Nigeria and neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and Niger.— *Open Doors International*

# Key Theological Challenges in Disci

Continued

Muslims, on the other hand, base their faith on teachings from the Quran and from the Hadith, which are collections of traditions concerning what Muhammad said and did. To Muslims, their prophet was not only the receiver of revelation as expressed in the Quran, but the interpreter of that revelation. They follow those teachings so they might stay on the path toward God's mercy and perhaps enter paradise. The following are some areas that we take for granted that must be taught to converts from Islam.

For Muslims, the Quran reveals God's will and law, not his character. They believe Allah is completely separate from creation, unknowable and unapproachable. Christians believe the Bible to be a self-revelation of God. While Muslims believe the Quran was sent (*tanzil*) down from heaven in the same form as it exists in the throne room of God, Christians believe that the Holy Spirit inspired writers, and they communicated God's message

Muslim Background Believers should be taught God is not merely transcendent (separate from creation), but he is also immanent (near). He communicates by interacting in history. They should be taught revelation in the Bible provides examples for instruction, gives wisdom, makes disciples, reveals truth, gives freedom, and leads to salvation. Additionally, God's Word teaches, reproves, corrects, trains, prophesies, predicts, shows how prophecy is fulfilled, gives hope, and establishes the believer. In other words, Scripture produces disciples. It forms Christ in the believer (Galatians 4:19).

Muslims accuse Christians of worshiping three gods. Christians use the non-biblical term "Trinity" to express the biblical idea that the one true God reveals himself in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Although the Bible neither uses nor explains the term, this self-revelation of God teaches the concept. Concerning mankind's relationship with God, Christians believe in transcendence. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

Christians also believe in immanence, or nearness. This refers to God's presence in the world and his interaction with creation. Just how close is God? "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Not only does the Bible

teach immanence, but it describes God as love. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8). Paul refers to God as "the God of love and peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

Islam denies the deity of Jesus Christ. Although Jesus never explicitly claimed, "I am God," he made statements that could not have been made by someone less than God. He said the angels, usually referred to as God's angels (Luke 12:8-9; 15:10), and the kingdom, usually referred to as the kingdom of God, belonged to him (Matthew



13:41). Furthermore, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus consistently set himself up as superior to Moses and the Law of Moses (Matthew 5-7; Luke 6:20-49). In John's Gospel, Jesus understood his role as judge of all mankind (John 5:22), and he explicitly declared that all would honor him just as they honor the Father (John 5:23).

Jesus also states the Scriptures testify about him, and he strongly implies one obtains eternal life only by com-

# Equipping Muslim Background Believers

from Page 1

ing to Him (John 5:24). Jesus actually made a claim to preexistence: “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” (John 8:58). Jesus forgave sin, claimed to have a special relationship with the Father and he had a special role in creation. The epistles teach that he is the exact representation of God the Father (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

Muslims deny the Crucifixion. Christians believe that the vicarious atonement of Christ provided salvation from judgment, deliverance from the power of sin and death,



and acceptance by God. Jesus understood it as his mission. His sacrifice distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Jesus explained that all the Scriptures predicted his suffering (Luke 24:46-47).

If Muslims are confused concerning the role of Jesus, they have no clue concerning the Holy Spirit. Muhammad admitted that Allah did not communicate much about the Holy Spirit (Quran 17:85). One Muslim commentator,

Yusuf Ali, identifies the Holy Spirit as a title for Gabriel. Some scholars believe that Muhammad identified the Holy Spirit in the Christian Trinity as Mary. Some Muslims claim that the Paraclete of John 14:26 refers to Muhammad, based upon a misspelling of the Greek. They claim the correct rendering would mean the “exalted one,” corresponding to the meaning of Ahmad, a derivative name of Muhammad.

Christians believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and he is coequal with the Father and the Son. The Church as a body of believers (1 Cor. 3:16-17), and the physical bodies of individual believers (I Cor. 6:19-20) are sacred because the Holy Spirit lives in them collectively and individually. The Bible teaches the Holy Spirit empowered Old Testament individuals for service to God. Jesus is the best example of someone empowered by the Spirit. Jesus is Isaiah’s “Servant of the Lord” in chapter 42. He will bring justice to the nations, be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, open blind eyes, free captives from prison, and release those who sit in darkness from the dungeon (Isaiah 42:1-9).

In Luke 4:18, Jesus applied the words of Isaiah to himself: “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,” (Isaiah 61:1). Converts need to understand that the same Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus Christ is available to help believers today. Jesus said that he would not leave us alone, but he would send another “Helper” (John 14:16, NASB), and he promised that the Helper would be with us forever. Jesus then identifies the Helper as the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

MBBs need to be filled with the Spirit according to Acts 1:8 and 2:4. The Holy Spirit filled all of the disciples, and they began to speak in other tongues as Pentecost fulfilled Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16-21). The Holy Spirit strengthened New Testament believers in the face of persecution and will help MBBs also. Encourage your friends to receive Holy Spirit baptism by faith.

A look at Paul’s use of metaphors will help MBBs better understand the Church as their new community. Disciples “are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow

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# Key Theological Challenges in Discipling MBBs

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citizens with God's people, and members of God's household..." (Ephesians 2:19). Citizenship indicates rights and responsibilities, blessings and obligations. Family suggests greater intimacy and greater responsibility than citizenship. In Ephesians 2:20-22, Paul describes a building, a holy temple in which God inhabits by his Spirit, and the building materials are believers.

Paul's favorite metaphor of the Church is the "Body of Christ," (Ephesians 4:11-12). Christ ministered through his physical body on earth; now his body is the Church. It shows the Church's unity and diversity (1 Corinthians 12:12), depicts the universal Church (Ephesians 1:20-23) and points to the relationship of the Church as a group of believers with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

MBBs should be carefully taught why Christians celebrate the ordinances of the Church. All who repent and believe on Christ as Savior and Lord are to be baptized by immersion, declaring to the church and to the world that they have died with Christ and have been raised with him to walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47-48; Romans 6:4).

The Lord's Supper symbolizes the fellowship that believers have with the Lord and with one another. It provides a means of grace and opportunity for spiritual growth. The symbols representing the Lord's body and blood express our sharing of the divine nature of the Lord (2 Peter 1:4), memorialize his suffering and death, and prophesy his second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Islamic prayer is ritualistic and perfunctory, offered to a transcendent deity in an act of submission. For Christians, prayer is conversing with the Almighty. We need to teach new MBBs that God hears and answers prayer. For Christians prayer is not a way of appeasement or gaining favor with God. It is a means of grace, fellowship and guidance. Likewise, Bible study is not merely obligatory formality, but Christians believe that the Word is spiritual food and is life giving (Hebrews 4:12). We should encourage disciples to study in order that they may grow spiritually. The Bible provides guidance for disciples. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Many Muslims feel powerless against forces of evil

and circumstances of life, so they turn to spirits and mediums for power. Followers of Christ do not have to live under Satan's bondage or in fear of his power. Luke 10:19 records that Jesus gave his disciples authority over the power of the enemy. Disciples should be taught that believers have an arsenal of spiritual weapons available to them (Ephesians 6:10-18).

In conclusion, in this cursory look at key theological issues involved in discipling Muslim Background Believers, we're reminded of our inadequacies. The challenge of discipling MBBs requires unqualified reliance on the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. 

## *Prayer Profile: Teymur Afghanistan and Iran*



The Teymur are a small semi-nomadic minority tribe, scattered throughout western Afghanistan and northern Iran. While farming, they stay in towns and live in brick huts, but during spring and summer, they wander through the mountains, living in tents. Their remote location and wide dispersion make them hard to reach with the gospel. Pray that:

1. Gospel broadcasts will penetrate their hearts.
2. Compassion ministry efforts will build bridges of friendship.
3. Iranian Christians will be successful in witnessing to them.

\*For more information, see [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net)



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*Jumaa Prayer is now on  
Facebook. Please join today:  
Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer*



**Friday, Jan. 1, 2016. Please pray**

*...for the people and churches of France as they cope with and respond to the tragic events of last November.  
...for Suhaila (pseudonym) who leads a ministry to Muslim women in the West Bank/Palestine.  
...for the Jordanian Church as it assists Syrian refugees.*

**Friday, Jan. 8, 2016. Please pray**

*...for Christians in European countries as they minister to the steady stream of refugees.  
...for young Algerian converts from Islam who are sharing their faith with Muslim peers. 96% of Algeria's 40 million people are Muslims.  
...for Turkmenistan. 95% of its 5 million people are Muslims. The government is again cracking down on those who gather for Bible study.*

**Friday, Jan. 15, 2016. Please pray**

*...for the nation of Mali. 87% of Mali's 16 million people are Muslims.  
...for Christian workers in Muslim areas of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation. 80% of its 255 million people are Muslims.  
...for Muhammad (pseudonym) in Eritrea, who lost his family and job after he left Islam to follow Jesus.*

**Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. Please pray**

*...for Christian outreach in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 49% of its population of 3.7 million are Muslims.  
...for Global Initiative team members who are ministering in Burkina Faso, Africa during Jan. 22 – Feb. 5.  
...for a church in Cairo, Egypt as it ministers regularly to 600 Sudanese refugees; most are Christian by background, but many are Muslims.*

**Friday, Jan. 29, 2016. Please pray**

*...for outreach teams in Albania. 68% of Albania's population of 3.2 million are Muslims.  
...for believers in Somalia wracked by oppression from Al-Shabaab, a radical Islamist group.  
...for the many Turkish pastors and congregations God has raised up in recent years. 96% of Turkey's 76 million people are Muslims.*

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND  
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. – 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***

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## **Friday, Feb. 5, 2016. Please pray**

*...for Christians living in hostile Muslim territories to show love boldly to new converts whose families have disowned them.*

*...for the protection and release of Christians wrongfully accused and imprisoned in Iran. 98% of Iran's population of 79 million are Muslims.*

*...for Saudi believers who are struggling with their faith because of fear and distrust. 93% of Saudi's population of 29 million are Muslims.*

## **Friday, Feb. 12, 2016. Please pray**

*...for radio broadcasts in Afghanistan. Hundreds of Muslims per month have requested written materials.*

*...for secret believers in southern Bangladesh, where extremism is on the rise. 88% of Bangladesh's 160 million people are Muslims.*

*...for Abdullah (pseudonym) in Kyrgyzstan, who has been beaten by his family since his conversion one year ago.*

## **Friday, Feb. 19, 2016. Please pray**

*...for Christian outreach ministries to the thousands of Yezidi families in Dohuk, Iraq.*

*...for the Uyghurs of China. 99% of China's 11.5 million Uyghurs are Muslims.*

*...for the 100,000 unreached Muslim Digos of Tanzania and Malawi, Africa.*

## **Friday, Feb. 26, 2016. Please pray**

*...for the growing number of Muslims coming to faith in Morocco. 99% of Morocco's 33 million people are Muslims.*

*...for TV and Internet programs in Arabic – with a potential audience of over 300 million people.*

*...for the Lord of the harvest to call more workers to share Christ among the 1.6 billion Muslims of the world.*

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