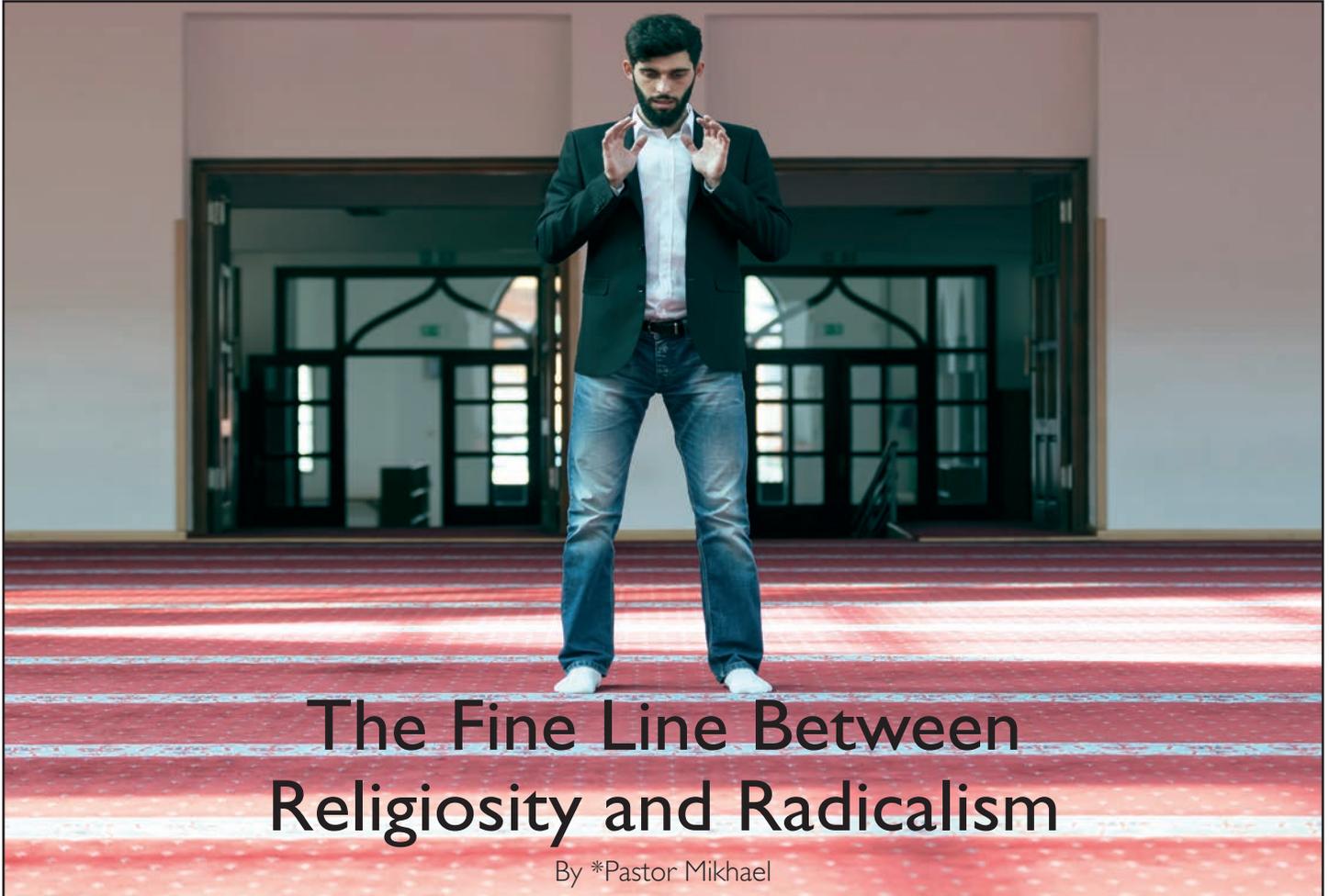


INTERCEDE

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The Fine Line Between Religiosity and Radicalism

By *Pastor Mikhael

**Pastor Mikhael is a veteran Asian minister, leader and author, and from a rich and deep background regularly teaches practical courses on how to share the gospel with Muslims.*

Present Islamic radical militancy in all its fury is at the tipping point in the so-called religion of peace. Such inhuman brutality begs to be adequately examined and questioned within the Muslim community itself.

Although economic, social and injustice elements are most often cited by scholars as the reasons behind the rise of militant Islamists, I am focusing on the core matter that ultimately drives a “normal Muslim” toward violence and brutality. I believe that outweighing all the aforementioned reasons is the real issue – the theological element – that Islamic scholars are unwilling to adequately address or explain.

Certainly there is an element of economic consideration,

as one political leader said, “Marginalization leads to radicalism.” There is an element of truth in that statement. Terror groups often recruit economically impoverished people with promises of money and other favors that will improve the lives of their families, especially if the recruit dies as a martyr to the cause. But that is no longer always true, as a new breed of militants increasingly come from affluent and educated families.

Regarding social implications, one must admit that traditional societal norms, even in many predominantly Muslim countries, are breaking down and one result is that family values are not nurtured as before. As a result, broken societies are producing more lonely people than ever before. Some of them are from divorced parents, others are abused emotionally by their peer groups and pushed away. The pain of rejection and abuse creates loneliness. Many of these lonely people are ripe for companionship and camaraderie, and find

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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



During the last night at a recent World Missions Summit the auditorium was packed with over six thousand college students. The anointed speaker challenged the students with the unfinished task: over half the world's population still has not received an adequate presentation of the gospel. They were reminded that the missional task is so overwhelming that it can be accomplished *only through the power of the Holy Spirit*. The speaker then called the students to a time of Holy Spirit empowerment.

It was an awe-inspiring moment as students stepped into the aisles in response to the message. Missionaries from around the globe laid hands on the students to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The prayer time that followed was a sustained crescendo of voices calling out to the Lord for an *empowerment of the Spirit* to be enabled to reach the lost. My wife and I felt so humbled to be a part of this great student awakening. This service reminded us of the simple fact that *without the Spirit's empowerment and direction* the task of ad-

equating world evangelism remains only a dream. The Apostle Paul states this same reality: "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*" (1 Cor. 2:4).

In his book, *Living Among the Breakage*, Duane Miller researched the factors involved in the increase in Muslim conversions. Two of the transcendental factors were prayer, and God's timing and sovereignty. But a powerful and compelling factor common to many converts was *the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit*, manifested through dreams, visions and miracles. Miller says "In studying conversion narratives of Muslims, dreams and visions are fairly common although not always present. Among the Muslim converts whom I have met, it is not uncommon for someone to mention a dream or vision or miracle as one factor that contributed to their conversion." (p.92)

Let us rejoice in acknowledging that in these last days *the power of the Holy Spirit is at work* in the hard soil of Muslim hearts, preparing them to receive the seeds of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which lead to salvation. At the same time, *God is graciously pouring out His Spirit* upon the Church. At Global Initiative we believe our assignment will be accomplished *in the power of the Holy Spirit*. Undoubtedly, many young people who attended the World Missions Summit will be called to serve in the Muslim world. Beyond a call, they will no doubt need and seek for *Holy Spirit empowerment* in order to enter and affect the strongholds of Islam.

In our lead article you will read the impassioned cry of an Asian pastor describing the elements of radicalism within Islamic theology. He encourages the Church to be vigilant and to especially respond by preaching the truth in love – *in the power of the Holy Spirit*. My hope is that this edition of *Intercede* will challenge you to pray with even greater fervor *for the Holy Spirit to move across Muslim hearts and lands*. It is a fact that each year increasing numbers of Muslims are coming to Christ and entering the kingdom of God. Thank you for partnering with us as we "equip the church to reach Muslims" with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Please keep praying, keep giving and keep reaching Muslims for Christ *in the power of the Holy Spirit!*



Muslim World News



Blasphemy Trial Begins

Indonesia

Indonesian Christian Gov. Basuki Purnama (Ahok), fought back tears during the first day of his blasphemy trial.

Ahok – only the second Christian and the second governor of Chinese descent to lead the Indonesian capital city, Jakarta – is alleged to have “misused” a Quranic verse (which, some say, suggests Muslims should not be ruled by non-Muslims) during a speech in early October 2016.

Muslim leaders accused him of insulting Islam by quoting from the Quran. He apologized, but said his comments were directed at politicians “incorrectly” using the verse against him and not a criticism of the verse itself.

The trial is widely seen as a test of the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation’s stance on religious freedom, since the country has a large Christian minority.

It was broadcast live on television and Ahok continued to protest his innocence, telling the court: “I had no intention of insulting Muslims or insulting the clergy. On that basis, I plead with the judges to consider my exception plea.” – *World Watch Monitor*

Church Demolition Begins

Nigeria

Anxiety is high among Christian communities in the northern state of Jigawa after authorities began demolishing churches in Dutse, the state capital. On Jan. 11, bulldozers escorted by security forces reduced the Redeem Christian Church of God and the Lord Chosen Church to rubble.

They arrived at the Redeem Church at about 10 a.m., according to Rev. Yakubu Musa, chairman of the Christian As-

sociation of Nigeria (CAN) for Jigawa. The authorities said they carried out the demolition because the church buildings had been built illegally.

According to the executive secretary of the Urban Development Board, Alhaji Garba Isa, the churches were built without obtaining permission as required by law. He also said notices were sent to them three times to discontinue the development of their buildings.

But Rev. Musa rejected the claims. He said there was no notice of demolition issued to the pastors of the two churches, or the leadership of CAN. Both churches had applied for official registration documents, he said, but the government had refused to grant them. – *World Watch Monitor*

Prison, Facebook, Cartoons

Algeria

A judge in Algeria has reduced a prison sentence from five years to one year for a Christian convicted of offending Islam with cartoons on his Facebook page.

Samir Chamek, 33, had been sentenced to five years and a fine of 100,000 Algerian dinars (US\$900) under Article 144 of the country’s 2006 law outlawing any “writing, drawing, statement or any other means” that denigrates Muhammad or the precepts of Islam. Cartoons of Muhammad published elsewhere had been shared on his Facebook page.

Islam is the state religion in the 97-percent Muslim country. Algeria grants the right to practice one’s religion as long as “public order and regulations” are respected, but proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims is illegal, the U.S. State Department’s latest International Religious Freedom Report notes. – *Morning Star News*

The Fine Line Between R

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it on the internet – where they are fed with new ways to have meaning in life. Their once-traditional perceptions change, depending on what they feast their young minds on. They yearn to do something meaningful with their lives and want a purpose for living. Some of them are well-educated, affluent and have a variety of life experiences. Others have lived a very secular “western life” without having anything to do with Allah and the prescribed life for a believer.

The injustice issue also causes some to turn to militancy. They perceive injustices from the western world in terms of how Islamic nations and peoples have been treated. Their perceptions form a strong emotional bond of brotherhood and create within them a strong zeal to help correct the injustices. Ultimately many identify with radical groups in order to defend Islam and its people.

All these elements certainly provide sparks that help to create the fire of radical Islam. But underlying all of the above is the necessity of understanding the powerful influence of the Islamic theological concepts of jihad (struggle for the cause of Allah), killing and the hereafter.

The Thin Line

There is a fine line between religiosity and radicalism. When researching the different strategies of how recruits are selected and then trained to be so brutal, one cannot fail to quickly realize that each militant group is very discreet in its selection process. As an initial step, they never speak of jihad, killing, or conquest. It is all about being a “good Muslim”. Recruits are encouraged to pray five times a day, and especially to faithfully read the Quran and Hadith (sayings of Muhammad). They are taught to live a good clean life as a devoted Muslim. They are so devoted that their families begin to see a stark difference in their lifestyle and ways. Most parents are initially delighted that finally their son or daughter has come to the right and straight path of Allah.

Then begins the second phase. They are now introduced to the concept of jihad for a good Muslim. The mentor may not be the same person who initially made the contact, but someone who has similar life experiences and is relevant to the recruit. The carefully chosen mentor will be his constant companion for an indeterminate period of time, until the seed of militant jihadism has been deeply planted and is eventually ready for birth. It is at this point that the recruit will either leave the process and return to his former



ways, or he will embrace more radical positions with his new-found perception and interpretation of relevant quranic verses and Hadith teachings. Almost without realizing it, he crosses over to another kingdom and another kind of faith to practice.

It is at this point I make my case on the theological element of radicalization. The militant group who has made initial contact with and befriended the recruit now takes him through an indoctrination process regarding quranic verses that speak of killing the infidel. Their teachings are clear: “Kill the infidel wherever you find them, if you win you are a *gazi* (victor) and if you die, you are a *shaheed* (martyr). Either way you win.” In fact they are taught the *shaheed* has a fast track entry into heaven. In Islam there is no assurance about attaining heaven, only Allah knows who will and who will not make it to heaven. In this backdrop then, to die as a *shaheed* is the only sure way to heaven.

The Heart of the Problem

When an Islamic scholar is asked about violence in the

Religiosity and Radicalism

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And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Quran 9:5

O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allah, you adhere heavily to the earth? Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life compared to the Hereafter except a [very] little. If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. And Allah is over all things competent. Quran 9:38, 39

Fighting has been enjoined (prescribed, Ordained) upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not. Quran 2:216

So let those fight in the cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed or achieves victory – We will bestow upon him a great reward. Quran 4:74

*And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and *fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors. Quran 2:191-193 (*fitnah – disbelief. In modern usage, the term is used to describe forces that cause controversy, fragmentation, scandal, chaos, or discord within the Muslim community, disturbing social peace and order.)*

Quran, he will most often flatly deny that it exists, saying, “The Quran does not speak of violence and killing the innocent.” The truth is there are many quranic verses that speak of killing and violence, but most orthodox Muslim scholars twist the context. Militant groups tell their recruits, “What those Islamic scholars are preaching is not true Islam. They want to please the western nations and leaders, therefore they preach a watered-down theological version of jihad.” That begins to make sense to the new recruits. They have now read for themselves, studied, and understood with their own minds what the Quran really says about jihad and killing infidels. Along with becoming more devoted to their religion, they are initiated into a new world of militant jihad. They are being radicalized within a span that extends from four to eighteen months.

Depending on interpretation and context, there are at least one hundred and nine jihad-related verses in the Quran and Hadith which advocate violence and killing. Here are examples of quranic verses which appear prominently in promotional materials and on websites of militant groups:

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Orthodox Islamic scholars need to be forthright in the interpretation of verses like these on violence and killing. If not, they can be sidelined by militant groups. This is not only a religious issue, but also an ideological matter. Ideological wars cannot be won by force, but by the correct teaching, interpretation and practice of the elements present in the Islamic scriptures. Some scholars make very careful statements on these verses, hesitating to present the full truth, wishing to not tip the balance in favor of militants. They are also fearful that they themselves will be branded as terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. A few are brave enough to endeavor to explain the verses in the context in which they were given – but militant radicals refuse to accept the idea that the Quran is to be interpreted in its context – only in its content.

As a rule, Islamic scholars say the Quran is universal and effective in any given time in history. For militant jihadists who practice a literalist interpretation of each verse of the Quran, the conclusion is that the context does not matter. Our hope is that Muslim scholars will be brave enough to admit and assert that contextual understanding may offer options to diminish extreme jihadist interpretations. At the least, allowing contextual interpretation would hopefully encourage individual scholars to assert opposition to literalist jihadist positions without fearing for their lives. On a larger scale, if Muslim scholars would provide a contextual option

to all matters of faith and practices in Islam, it would provide opportunity for revolutionary and needed change. Such an atmosphere would prompt seeking Muslims to ask largely unanswerable questions about the foundations of their faith.

The Unequivocal Answer

When I declare the gospel message, I often say these are opportune days for the Church. No matter how extreme you take the message of the Lord Jesus Christ, it will never encourage you to hate or kill someone. In fact, the deeper you get into the words of the Lord Jesus, it will only teach you to have a radical love. Jesus teaches us to love and feed our enemies and forgive those who wrong us. If we are struck on the cheek, we are to offer the other one. These elements are absent in Islam.

It is time to clearly proclaim the truth of the Word of God. Sometimes the Church's language is like that of politicians. They join in "peace and harmony" services and offer politically correct statements, emphasizing commonalities and ignoring or understating differences. It is time to speak honestly of the differences and to proclaim the gospel message – despite the differences. Sometimes people in the Church exhibit the same spirit as the people of the world. They speak out in hate and prevent the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. We must speak the truth in love.



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Friday, March 3, 2017. Please pray for

...*children in Yemen*, where war has created famine and disease. Yemen's population of 25 million is 99% Muslim.
...*Christian ministries assisting Muslim refugees in Europe*. For many refugees, this is their first exposure to Christians.
...*Holy Spirit-inspired creativeness* for social media ministries dedicated to sharing the gospel with Muslims.

Friday, March 10, 2017. Please pray for

...*the youth of Iran*. 70% of all Iranians are under the age of 35. Of Iran's 80 million people, 98.5% are Muslim.
...*a visionary church in a Muslim area of India*. Many Muslim converts attend, but the church's vision is to see at least 500 Muslim converts in their fellowship. Of India's population of 1.2 billion, 150 million are Muslims.
...*Mansour (pseudonym), a new follower of Jesus* from a Muslim background in Morocco. He recently survived a knife attack. Of Morocco's population of 34 million, 99% are Muslim.

Friday, March 17, 2017. Please pray for

...*Samir and Jihan (pseudonyms)*, a Syrian Muslim couple who fled to Turkey months ago. They viewed the Jesus Film, and later Jesus appeared to Jihan in their meager apartment. Both have received Jesus and are preparing for baptism.
...*increasing occurrences* of dreams, visions and supernatural healings in Muslim lives.
...*material and financial provision* for New Life Center in Melilla, a Spanish enclave in North Africa. NLC ministers Christ to mostly Muslim immigrants and refugees.

Friday, March 24, 2017. Please pray for

...*Egyptian believers working in Libya*. Memories of slain compatriots remain fresh, but many Egyptian Christians still willingly choose to be tentmakers here. Of Libya's 6.2 million people, 99% are Muslims.
...*protection of Ethiopian Christians*. In the last eight years many Ethiopians have been killed by Islamic extremists. Of Ethiopia's population of 100 million, 34% are Muslims.
...*a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit* in the lives of expatriate Christian workers in restricted-access Muslim countries.

Friday, March 31, 2017. Please pray for

...*equipping classes for sharing the gospel with Muslims* to be conducted in the country of Albania during April 3-14.
...*tension in Jakarta, Indonesia*. Muslims have demanded the Christian governor be jailed for "blaspheming Islam."
...*Mustapha (pseudonym), an Iranian convert* who boldly proclaims his faith in a European country. A Muslim hearer said "I heard you preach in the park a few weeks ago and cursed you, but now I have eyes to see that Jesus is the Son of God."

*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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[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*

Friday, April 7, 2017. Please pray for

...discipling ministries among followers of Jesus from Muslim background in Palestine. God has sovereignly called scores of Muslim Palestinians to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord.

...Institute of Islamic Studies classes at a major Asian seminary during April 10 – May 19. Students from many countries seek to be better equipped to reach Muslims with the gospel.

...church outreaches to Muslims in Senegal, Africa. Senegal's population of 13 million is 92% Muslim.

Friday, April 14, 2017. Please pray for

...house church plants in an Arab Muslim-majority country in the Middle East. In the midst of continuing Muslim sectarian strife, believers are planting new house churches.

...Fatima (pseudonym), in Kurdistan, a Muslim lady who is reading the New Testament in order to "see if it is true."

...gospel "seeds" that have been planted among Muslims in southern Thailand. Of Thailand's 68 million people, 7 million are Muslims.

Friday, April 21, 2017. Please pray for

...Muslim Iranian seekers being ministered to in Northern Ireland.

...Sulieyman (pseudonym), a Muslim seeker in a West Asian Muslim country. After years of studying the Gospels, he recently decided to become a follower of Jesus, but lives with fear of family reaction.

...an Evangelical-Lutheran church in Germany, where hundreds of Muslims, mainly Afghans and Iranians, have converted in the past three years.

Friday, April 28, 2017. Please pray for

...targeted Christians in Uzbekistan who have been punished with two years' corrective labor for having religious literature (Bibles and songbooks) at home. Of Uzbekistan's 31 million people, 93% are Muslim.

...protection for thousands of Berbers in Morocco who have become followers of Jesus. Of Morocco's population of 34 million, 99% are Muslim.

...Iranian Shireen (pseudonym), 38, arrested on November 5, 2012 for leaving Islam to worship Jesus. She is in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. Additional time has been added to her four-year sentence.

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