INTERCEDE

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The Convert's Confusion

By Darrell Pack

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace… (1 Corinthians 14:33 KJV).

Why are you cast down, O my soul ? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me (Psalms 42:5-6 NKJV).

God is not the author of confusion, not in the orderly universe he created, not in the Church he bought with his own blood, and not within the soul of his redeemed children. Yet many converts to Christ who come from Islamic families face significant and even overwhelming confusion. To the convert the source of their confusion seems to be their new relationship with Jesus Christ, when in fact it is the result of a combination of natural and demonic effects. This confusion militates against joy, peace and confidence in the Lord and can deeply shake the faith of the new believer leaving Islam.

Confusion at its most basic level is the inability to think with clarity or act with understanding. Some would say it is to assemble issues, ideas, or events (mentally or physically) without order or sense. It can be caused by physical as well as psychological and spiritual states and conditions. It can range in severity from mild to intense, and in longevity from momentary to pervasive and continual.

Imagine yourself in a new town and nation, in a culture entirely foreign to you, and all around you the native people only speak a language unknown to you. Now imagine that the

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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 Hausfeld
International Director
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The feature article written by Darrell Pack in this issue of *Intercede* discusses the Muslim convert's levels of confusion when embracing the Christ of Scripture. Your first thought may be, "When I came to faith in Christ my confusion ended and clarity in life and eternity began." That is indeed my first thought. For those of us raised in a Western context where Christian/Judeo influences have shaped our worldview — it is difficult to imagine the worldview of a Muslim.

We can study the Muslim worldview through literature, and even observe it with our five senses to a degree. But the ultimate means of understanding the worldview of Muslims is through a personal relationship with them as persons of Kingdom interest and concern. It has been my privilege to do this in Pakistan and Central Asia, where our family served for many years. Presently I engage and befriend Muslims in Springfield, Mo., where we now live. Yet in all these personal relationships with Muslims — from Pakistan to Missouri — I still remain somewhat of an outsider in terms of fully comprehending their hearts and minds. Having come from various countries and cultures, each Muslim has a unique Islamic perspective of the world and of his place in an "Allah-willed" drama. So as my Pakistani friends say to me in English, "What to do?"

Mother Teresa said, "The first step of love is kindness." What a wonderful life lesson. This is especially true for Christ-followers in relationships with Muslims. As we begin friendships with Muslims the kindness we demonstrate can lead to a relationship of love. Through an intentional demonstration of Christ-like kindness and love we say to the Muslim "You can belong." Our hearts and minds are ever sensitive to the Spirit's leading to make the most of opportunities to talk about Jesus. At the same time, we continually pray for our Muslim friend. Often God will allow us to exercise the gifts of the Spirit — and it is not unusual for our Muslim friends to experience signs, wonders and miracles. The Muslim we have "belonged" into our lives — may now enter "belief" in the Jesus of Scripture. I have experienced no greater thrill in disciple-making than when a Muslim embraces the Jesus of the Bible. Yet also from experience, I know that the ministry of discipleship almost always starts in the context of "belonging" — and then moves to "belief."

As Darrell Pack writes, "Islam has been for the Muslim the defining myth of his culture, family, society, and self. As it crumbles in conversion to Christ it is profoundly disorienting and often causes massive confusion." Again ... "What to do?" Keep saturating the Muslim convert with the kindness and love of Jesus. Keep communicating their place of "belonging" — not only your life, but also the wider family of God. Gently guide them toward the Church incarnational — manifested locally and globally. Do your utmost not to allow your former Muslim disciple to be "alone in the faith."

The Muslim's new birth into the family of God can be likened to natural birth. Natural birth is traumatic and at times fraught with pain, danger and worry. As a mother is there to receive her child into her arms with belonging and belief, so we must be accountably present for our former Muslim friends as they embrace faith and community. As a result, much of the convert's confusion will dissipate in time. Pray a Muslim of your gender into your life — and start the process of "belonging to belief."

Martyrdom controversy

Wide range of estimates

The debate over the precise number of Christians martyred each year continues. In May, a Vatican spokesman told the UN Human Rights Council that as many as 100,000 Christians are martyred each year. That figure stems from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, recognized as "home to the world's leading scholars of Christian demographics" according to Judd Birdsall, formerly of the U.S. State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, and currently a PhD student at Cambridge University.

While CSGC researchers estimated that around 1 million Christians were martyred in the first 10 years of the 21st century, leading to an average of around 100,000 a year, Birdsall said he "found this figure puzzling". While he said he admires CSGC's "rigorous and interesting" work, his colleagues' annual reports for the State Department contained "accounts of dozens, sometimes hundreds, of martyrs. Some Christian organizations place the number as high as 1,000. Why the discrepancy?" One such organization is Open Doors International, which works in more than 25 countries to support Christians who face many levels of "persecution" — from extreme harassment and discrimination to torture and death.

Frans Veerman, director of the World Watch List, Open Doors' annual monitor of the 50 most dangerous countries in which to be a Christian, said that for the WWL 2012 the charity could confirm only 1,200 Christians actually killed because of their faith: "1,200 as the very, very minimum count".

Open Doors International Director of Research and Strategy Ron Boyd McMillan: "Every year, since we started WWL in 1991, the number of Christians killed for their faith was in the hundreds or thousands, never in the hundred-thousands." Thomas Schirrmacher, International Society for Human Rights, estimates a figure of between 7,000 and 8,000 Christian martyrs each year, and Veerman thinks that, when you add this first extra group of victims to the 1,200 verifiable cases, this could be about right. However Veerman also includes a second group who could be considered as martyrs too: Christians who die due to long-term discrimination, through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care.

The huge disparity between the figures from Open Doors and others — and the CSGC can be explained by the latter's decision to include Christians killed in conflicts. However, there is another area of activity apart from war in which Christians can die for their faith. As Birdsall concedes: "[CSGC's] definition goes far beyond deaths in the context of public proclamation of belief in Jesus. It is interested in the 'entire lifestyle' of the murdered believer. Even if a killer is not targeting Christians on account of their faith, Christians are 'counted as martyrs to the extent that their actions in such situations are a testimony to their faith.'

"The Center's broad definition and large numbers force us to reconsider our standard definitions of martyrdom. A martyr is not just a solitary saint mauled by lions in the Coliseum or a reformer burned at the stake. 'Situations of witness' vary widely and may seem quite mundane. Many martyrs are ordinary people with extraordinary courage and commitment."

John Allen, author of "The Global War on Christians," believes the precise figure is ultimately less important. "I think it would be good to have reliable figures on this issue, but I don't think it ultimately matters in terms of the point of my book, which is to break through the narrative that tends to dominate discussion in the West — that Christians can't be persecuted because they belong to the world's most powerful Church," he said.

"The truth is two thirds of the 2.3 billion Christians in the world today live … in dangerous neighborhoods. They are often poor. They often belong to ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities. And they are often at risk. And ultimately I think making that point is more important than being precise about the death toll."

— *World Watch Monitor*

social cues you have learned from your home culture do not apply at all. A smile in this strange culture means one is frustrated, a handshake is a threat, tears are signs of pleasure, and laughter is a declaration of sadness. No matter what you do in this setting you find that you can't understand your surroundings and you can't make yourself understood. The result would be confusion and frustration.

While I am perhaps overstating a little for effect, the fact is that the Muslim convert to Christianity can feel that he has made a trip to an alien world where he cannot understand or be understood. The result is often that he has latent regrets for having made the trip. Islam is for most Muslims an all-encompassing religion, worldview, social context, and ideology. Therefore, leaving Islam is for most a multifaceted attack on all aspects of the framework the ex-Muslim had always used to understand himself and his world. Without the framework the ex-Muslim can feel bereft.

Psychological confusion

Psychological confusion resulting from leaving Islam and converting to Christianity comes as a person has to wrestle with how he understands his own identity or self concept. Before coming to Christ the Muslim had a number of aspects of his personal identity clearly demarcated. Carl Rogers taught that the self concept has three different components: (1) Self image – how you look in your eyes; (2) Self worth – how valuable you think you are; and (3) Ideal self – what you wish you were really like.

All of these are things that Christ powerfully heals, corrects, and augments within the believer's soul as he walks with Him in increasing sanctification by God's Holy Spirit. But before a convert builds the new framework for such self interpretation, the old Islam framework through which the Muslim constructed his self image, self worth, and ideal self has to crumble. That often leaves the Muslim in an existential angst; his is now a homeless mind, a soul unanchored and cut adrift from all the moorings that once held him secure.

In his book "The Cry for Myth," Rollo May writes, "A myth is a way of making sense in a senseless world. Myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence. Myths are like the beams in a house: not exposed to outside view, they are the structure which holds the house together so people can live in it." (p. 15) Islam has been for the Muslim the defining myth of his culture, family, society, and self. As it crumbles in conversion to Christ it is profoundly disorienting and often causes massive confusion.

As we intercede for converts from Islam to Christ Jesus we can effectively pray using these passages:

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7 NIV).

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty (2 Peter 1:16 NKJV).

Relational and social confusion

The convert from Islam is not only facing his self concept questions, but he is also trying to reposition himself in his old society while maintaining his new spiritual identity. This is confusing and challenging. First, it means that he will have to face his relationship to Muhammad bin Abdullah, the prophet of Islam, and all representatives of official Islam. Many Christians, and missionaries, do not really understand this aspect of the convert's challenge in leaving Islam. But Muhammad bin Abdullah is not merely a religious figure for many Muslim societies; he is their ideal religious, cultural, and social icon. Further, those *imams*, *ulema*, and *fuqaha* – who are the religious experts of Islam – are all Muhammad's representatives. To leave Islam and follow Christ necessarily involves directly lowering Muhammad from his elevated status and as a consequence indirectly lowering the relative status of all his representatives, living and past. It is the effective erasing of one's cultural heroes. This is akin to an American Christian coming to believe that the apostle Paul was spiritually deceived and George Washington was a fraud. How does one relate to a society while rejecting the foundational iconic figures upon which that society is built?

This same process applies to all of the convert's Muslim heroes and models. The convert must now process the fact that the college professor who is the most intelligent man he has ever known is wrong on the most important topic of all. His father, the bravest man he knows, is wrong on life's central reality. His grandmother, the most loving person in his life, is wrong – and horribly so – on the most consequential matters of life. Even the most influential friends in his life are wrong. This social

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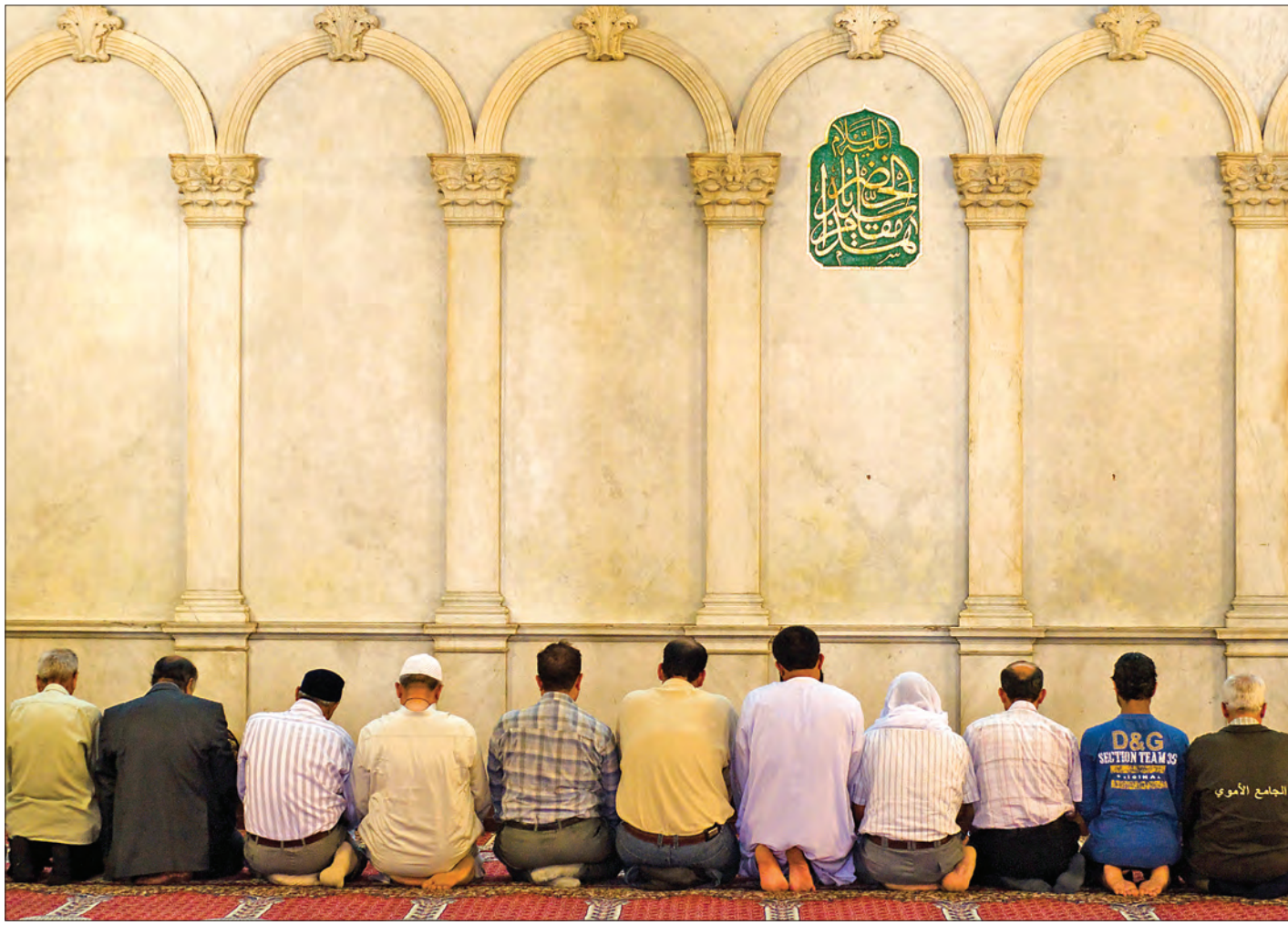

isolation and relational reassessment creates potential for major confusion.

As we intercede for the convert in this matter we can benefit from divine wisdom taken from Romans 11:28: *Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers* (NKJV). Notice that Paul here shows how the believer must at times develop a bifurcated or dual-natured relationship with a population. On their side they are enemies to us; that is they oppose, resist, hinder and impede all our goals. Yet, they remain beloved to us. This is not a simple matter to either emotionally embrace or mentally to conceive. It is an application of our Savior's command to love your enemies… (Luke 6:35 NKJV). Pray for the convert to be given divine wisdom to reframe his view of his role in society at large and among his friends and family in particular.

Spiritual confusion

This is the most important and dangerous area of confusion that the convert will likely face: spiritual confusion. This is experienced in three basic ways: (1) Confusing the voice of one's own spirit for God's voice; (2) Confusing the social pressure of peers and family for the voice of God; and (3) Confusing demonic voices for God's voice.

One's own spirit: The new convert from Islam is especially in danger of confounding the voice and work of the Holy Spirit with the voice of his own inner man (Eph. 3:16). Watchman Nee wrote, "Satan can operate through undisciplined souls; he also can directly attack those who know nothing of the cross. Our soul life constitutes the adversary's fifth column within us. It gives ground to the enemy." Many Muslim Background Believers have little

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discipleship, little spiritual fellowship with believers, and little training in developing spiritual discernment. They can easily confound the voice of their own spirit or soul with God's voice.

Social pressure: It is not uncommon that the drumbeat of criticism, ostracism, rejection, and persecution from the convert's society and even family can deeply influence the emotional and psychological state. The convert can sometimes feel deep inner impressions that he confounds with God's leading. A cacophony of voices from around him form into a single chorus and resonate within him until he feels the voice must be supernatural.

Demonic voices: Satan and his minions are speaking to the heart and mind of the ex-Muslim. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ* (2 Cor. 11:2-3 NKJV). The key word here is simplicity; walking with Christ is a simple and pure concept but Satan calls God's word and will into question. Demonic forces utilizing concepts coming from Islamic and folk-Islamic sources complicate issues in the mind of the Muslim Background Believer.

Praying for clarity

• Pray that converts from Islam experience clarity that Islam cannot answer the tragedy that is sin. *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12 NKJV).

• Pray they maintain clarity that God is truly their loving and gracious Heavenly Father who is ever mindful of them. *Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows* (Matthew 10:29-31 NKJV).

• Pray for clarity about the supremacy of Christ. *A good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him* (1 Peter 3:21-22 NKJV).

Prayer Profile
The Pathan

Altogether there are approximately 11.5 million Pathans that make up 55 percent of the population of Afghanistan and 13 percent of Pakistan. All Pathans speak Pushto, of which there are three dialects and many local variations. Pathans are mainly farmers.

Pathans say that "to be a Pathan is to be a Muslim." Men and women follow orthodox Sunni Islam. Some of the religious practices have animistic undertones. Many Christian groups have attempted to reach the Pathans for Christ but have experienced many difficulties and little fruit. Presently there are only a few workers among this resistant group.

- Pray for wide distribution of the Pushto Scripture.
- Pray for humanitarian and compassion workers laboring among the Pathan.
- Pray for the political unrest that plagues the countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Pray for dreams and visions to come to spiritually hungry Pathans.
- Pray for "platforms" to provide open doors for more missionaries.

*For further information on the Pathan, visit www.joshuaproject.net.

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

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Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer

Friday, Jan. 3, 2014. Please pray
…for the 4-5 million Muslims in Thailand. Pray that Christian workers would hear the call to reach out to them.
…for Muslims living in the neglected frontier of Southeast Asia. Pray that Christian workers would hear the call to witness and reach out to the Muslims of Myanmar.
…for political leaders across the Muslim world. Pray that God would intervene directly in the lives of key officials, opening windows for Christianity.

Friday, Jan. 10, 2014. Please pray
…for Muslims attending mosques today. Pray that the Lord would reveal His love to them in miraculous ways.
…for house churches in Saudi Arabia. Pray for these underground congregations.
…for refugees across the world. Approximately 80 percent of the world's refugees are Muslims.

Friday, Jan. 17, 2014. Please pray
…for the Muslims of Yemen, the poorest country in the Arabian peninsula. Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would find open hearts in Yemen.
…for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) across the Islamic world seeking discipleship and fellowship.
…for continued successful witness to Muslims through print, television, radio and Internet ministries.

Friday, Jan. 24, 2014. Please pray
…for MBBs in Chechnya. Muslim Chechens cannot change their religion publicly.
…that mature and vibrant churches will be planted among Muslims in Africa.
…for young believers in Senegal to be filled with the vision to share the Gospel with friends and neighbors.

Friday, Jan. 31, 2014. Please pray
…for efforts to reach 200,000 Muslim immigrants in Japan.
…for millions of Muslims living in Latin American countries.
…that God will protect Indonesian house churches. They are under steady scrutiny and pressure.

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Friday, Feb. 7, 2014. Please pray
…for the Muslims of Russia. Moscow is home to 3 million Muslims, most without official registration.
…for the Maldives. Pray that Christian radio would penetrate the Maldives, where all citizens are required by law to be Muslims.
…for Muslims in Angola. Despite its location in southwestern Africa, Angola is home to about 250,000 Muslims.

Friday, Feb. 14, 2014. Please pray
…for Germany's 4 million Muslims. Germany has a larger Muslim population than Kuwait, Lebanon, or the UAE.
…for Muslim students to receive witness of Jesus Christ in Western universities.
…for an estimated 1.5 million widows in Afghanistan, with an average of five to eight children each.

Friday, Feb. 21, 2014. Please pray
…for national churches across the Muslim world as they continue training Christian leaders.
…for Christians in Mindanao, Philippines, faced with becoming part of an Islamic sub-state.
…for Muslims in Turkmenistan, the most closed country in Central Asia.

Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. Please pray
…that Muslims in Turkey will hear witness of Jesus Christ, despite hardline Islam threatening the political balance.
…for Muslims in Syria, where the country's future remains uncertain as President Assad attempts to keep power.
…for churches in Kazakhstan. Due to a 2012 law, a church is required to have 50 local members, 500 regional members, and 5,000 national members. Essentially, the law allows for the liquidation of small churches.

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