

## ESCALATION OF HARASSMENT AND INCREASED FAITH

Jeff Nelson<sup>1</sup> and Ismael Yusuf<sup>2</sup> (pseudo name)

### Introduction

A man born blind is healed by a miracle of Jesus (John 9). The Pharisees begin a campaign of harassment in an effort to dissuade people from following Jesus. The healed man increases in his faith in proportion to the escalation of harassment.

Ismael Yusuf (pseudo name), a Muslim man in an East African tribe is miraculously healed in the name of Jesus. His community leaders harass him. But the healed man increases in his faith in proportion to the escalation of harassment.

Both men grow in their faith as a direct result of their persecution. Persecution drives some away from their faith, while others draw closer to God through adversity. The love and power of Jesus is strong. The adversity seeking to drive them away from Christ has the opposite result. “Persecution tends to refine and strengthen faith, and even create an environment of greater growth.”<sup>3</sup> The more the provocation, the closer the men are drawn toward the God who healed them.

### A Man They Call Jesus

The man born blind does not have an immediate mature faith when he is healed. His faith grew through the attacks. When he was first asked about his healing, his confession was simply “The man they call Jesus” was the one who healed me (9:11). Jesus was simply a “man” to him at first.

### Yusuf’s Background and Testimony of Healing

I was born in an Islamic region of Northern Kenya bordering the republic of Somalia. Like all the other families in the community my family is Muslim. Biologically every child is by birth a Muslim in that part of the world and I was no exception.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jeff Nelson, with his wife Janelle and their four children, has served with Assemblies of God World Missions in Nairobi, Kenya, since 2001. He currently serves as the vice chancellor (CEO) of EAST University, an institution that is training hundreds of ministers and missionaries, as well as secretary of the Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) national Missions Commission. He has been active in leading two-thirds world missionaries and has launched over twenty churches among least-reached people groups and hard areas. Recently, the Joshua Project removed the Rendille tribe from their list of least-reached people groups, partly due to the efforts of EAST Missions. Jeff is currently writing his PhD dissertation titled *Preliminary Recommendations For Planting Churches Among Somalis In Kenya For The Kenya Assemblies Of God*.

<sup>2</sup> Ismael Yusuf (pseudo name) is a Muslim Background Believer from East Africa who was a mosque leader and provincial governor for an Islamic government before a miraculous healing which led him to Christ. He is currently studying at a seminary and preparing to serve Christ and plant churches among Muslim people.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Trousedale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville: Nelson, 2012), 145.

In my early formative years I had to attend *Duksis* (Islamic instruction schools) alongside the formal primary school. This was normative and imperative for every child. *Duksis* thrived in every village even where the government schools were not available. Every student brought firewood as the classes were conducted at night in the village open grounds. We sat around the fireplace as we were catechized through writing, reading and reciting. We wrote on wooden boards with charcoal pastes as ink made from charcoal dusts mixed with camel milk.

As a result of this early training and environment, Islamic culture and ethics permeated my cosmology. I observed the five pillars or duties of Islam. I labored to obtain righteousness through the performance of these duties and strived to walk the *Sirat Al-Mustaqim* (the straight path) in order to attain *fallah* (success) both in this world and hereafter. As early as in high school years the desire to advance the cause of *Umma* (community of Islam) through the propagation of Islam in order to bring about the actualization of the will of Allah on His earth burnt deeply within me.

To actualize my dream, I went for studies in Islamic *Sharia* (law) in Khartoum, Sudan after high school. The studies there further shaped my resolve. I came to believe *Umma*, as the true community of God on earth, are to rule the world on His behalf and anyone else in power anywhere on earth is an imposter. The *Umma* must reign over every public space. The *Dar-ul-harb* (region of war) areas not under Islamic *Sharia* must be subdued to turn it into the *Dar-ul-salaam* (region of peace) areas under Islamic *Sharia*.

Increasing victories for secularism at the expense of Islamic solidarity, which has imposed a rival claim for the allegiance of Muslims around the world, disturbed me. Theocracy was supplanted by political entities in certain Islamic nations, a gloomy state precipitated by triumph of the principle of nationality and concomitant growth of nationalism. These forces collide with the predominant theocratic conception of power that informs Islamic domestic and public arrangements.

Back home after studies across neighboring Somalia I found a fertile ground to advance my ideology. It was through the Islamic Court Unions, a theocracy that filled the governance vacuum left by the ouster of the autocrat Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. I joined its cadres and after a short while I was appointed governor of a region in Somalia (from 2005-2008).

Our goal was to create a certain environment for the *Umma* where Islamic *Sharia* and culture ruled and to reject with violence any political arrangement that marginalizes the *Umma*, an intentional expansion of Islam, an attempt to demarcate sacred spaces and boundaries against surrounding infidels. We rejected separation of religion and politics because Islam covers all aspects of life. It is a self-contained worldview.

The court unions brought some sort of sanity in an otherwise chaotic Somalia.<sup>4</sup> However in 2006 invading Ethiopian forces ousted it.<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Shariff Hassan, the Court's president fled. Abdullahi Yusuf, the infamous president made in Nairobi by IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) member states was installed.

---

<sup>4</sup>“Profile: Somalia’s Islamic Courts” BBC News (June 6, 2006) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5051588.stm> (accessed February 13, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Bill Roggio, “The Rise & Fall of Somalia’s Islamic Courts: An Online History,” *The Long War Journal* (January 4, 2007), [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the\\_rise\\_fall\\_of\\_som.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the_rise_fall_of_som.php) (accessed 13 February 2013).

### Treasure in the Trash

It was during this time I fell ill to cancer. I was in great pain and bed ridden for about eight months. Occasionally, my family would carry me to our shop, and would lie on a mat there just so I would not be solitary. One day, as I lay there, I noticed a bundle of old magazines and newspapers near me. Sometimes they were used for wrapping wares bought from the shop. I reached out and pulled one from the bundle for the lack of anything better to do. It was a Christian publication and inside I found the gospel message that ended with a statement about the healing power of Jesus Christ.

It peaked my curiosity enough that I hid it under my arm and waited until I was back in my room to read it. I took my pain medication, lay down and began to read it again. I had never thought of Jesus as a savior, only as a messenger as taught in the Muslim faith. In fact, the concept of salvation was foreign to me. The problem of man to me was not sin (disobedience) but ignorance of the will of God. Therefore, there was no need for a savior and salvation. Rather, man needed divine guidance to aid him to know the will of God in order to attain success. Now I realize this position fails to consider the rebellious nature of humanity seriously. People reject even what may appear to be obvious truth.

My pain was so acute and the situation so desperate that I decided to make the best gamble of my life by saying the prayer outlined in the magazine. I added to it a vow of following Jesus forever if he healed me from that infirmity. "Today Jesus I commitment myself to you. I am sick and suffering. If you heal me I will follow you forever." I fell asleep and woke up past midnight and was comfortable. No pain! I had a tumor that I could feel. I reached to feel it, and couldn't feel anything! I stood and walked. No pain! I had not been able to walk without support for sometimes. "Eureka!" I cried out, "Now I know Jesus heals!"<sup>6</sup> I woke up my wife to break the good news. Unfortunately she rebuked me for attributing the healing to Jesus. She tried to correct my euphoria by giving glory to Allah, but I remained adamant since I knew by whose name the healing occurred.

### Confronted by the Religious Leaders

The blind man's neighbors brought the healed man to the Pharisees. What were they thinking? Why would they bring this man before the religious leaders? Surely they knew the leaders would find fault with this man because of his association with Jesus. The Pharisees manufactured a superficial reason to find fault with Jesus. "The day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath" (9:14). In the next chapter we find the real reason they hated Jesus. "We are not stoning you for any of these (great miracles)...but...because you...claim to be God" (10:33). Jesus answered them, "Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'" (10:36)?

---

<sup>6</sup> Miraculous healing is among the list often given by Muslims who come to Jesus. J. Dudley Woodberry, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks, "Why Muslims Follow Jesus," *Christianity Today* (October 2007), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/october/42.80.html?start=1> (Accessed January, 15 2010). The study was conducted "between 1991 and 2007, about 750 Muslims who have decided to follow Christ filled out an extensive questionnaire on that basic question. The respondents—from 30 countries and 50 ethnic groups—represent every major region of the Muslim world."

### Yusuf's Encounter with Leaders in the Mosque

Later the following day I went for *Jumaa* (Friday) prayers at the mosque without human aid. The faithful were people known to me and they all knew my ailing condition. When the prayer was over, I approached the front and took the microphone from the Imam. It was not difficult for me to do this since it was common for me to give talks there. I aided in the building of that mosque. Furthermore, I was an elder there.

I stood before them as the congregation gazed at me. Plainly I narrated my healing story. The joyous chorus turned into fury when I announced that the healing took place by the name of Jesus. The mob descended on me, beating and kicking me. They were dragging me out.

Some elders intervened to seek the opinion of the Imam and Sheikhs. Argument broke out; the more youthful were calling for my immediate execution. I had defiled the faith, and the mosque, which under *Sharia* required me to be put to death. In the ensuing commotion and confusion, I was able to slip through the back door of the mosque.

### A Prophet

The Pharisees could not agree about Jesus. Some began from their interpretation of the Law. Others began from their understanding of God. The group that began from the Law said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath" (9:16). While others reasoned, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs" (9:16)? The leaders considered this former blind man "steeped in sin at birth" (9:34) and well below their intellectual and theological capacity. Yet in their disagreement they turned to him and asked, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened" (9:17).

The healed man was listening intently to their dialog. In his mind he had to process this debate. Was this man they call Jesus a sinner? Jesus had given the man a miraculous gift on the Sabbath that no one else had given him on any day of his life. The Pharisees had never provided his healing. If the man called Jesus was willing and able to heal him, he must be a special, loving, and powerful man. The healed man increased in his faith and understanding of Jesus. He no longer replied "The man they call Jesus" healed me. Instead he boldly proclaimed, "He is a prophet" (9:17).

### Family Fear

"The Jews still did not believe that he had been born blind" (9:18) so they sent for his parents. What a brilliant ploy? Jesus could find a man who looked like the man born blind. He could deceive others by parading him as the former blind man and gain followers. Those who would seek to deceive others believe the worst of even the most pure of heart. The chief priests would later seek to deceive by paying the guards a large sum of money to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep" (Matt. 28:13).

Three questions were asked of his parents. "Is this your son?" "Is this the one you say was born blind?" And, "How is it that now he can see" (John 9:19)? The parents answered the first two questions in the affirmative. But they were "afraid" (9:22) to identify with Jesus as the healer. The Pharisees "had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) would be put out of the synagogue" (9:22). They distanced themselves from him and said, "He is of age; ask him" (9:23).

### Yusuf's Family

Jesus had miraculously healed me. To date He has helped me to keep the promise to follow Him. But it has not come without a cost. Back in my village the riotous youth divided my livestock. They burned my house. My father disowned me. The night after my stock was divided he could not stand to intervene when I approached him under the cover of night from my hide out. He could have mobilized clan elders to recover my livestock, as is the norm. He dismissed my plight but added he would neither kill me nor protect me. I was dispossessed of my children and wife. Unless Christ intervenes I will not be allowed to ever live in my hometown again.

I am not able to stay with my daughters and see them grow. I have a *fatwa* (death sentence) issued against me. Any Muslim anywhere in the world who would carry that out believes he will receive his reward in paradise.

### Jesus is From God

The Pharisees, having confirmed that the man was really healed and having succeeded in isolating the man from his family, called the healed man again. They may have been frustrated in not finding deception in Jesus' ministry. They may have been frustrated in not being able to demonstrate their power to throw the parents out of the synagogue. They summoned the man and said, "Give glory to God" (9:24). This was an oath formula<sup>7</sup> such as swearing on the Bible to tell the truth. "We know that this man is a sinner" (9:24). It is often that the evil voice wins in an evil crowd and the righteous voice wins the argument in a godly crowd. The Pharisees who earlier argued, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs" (9:16) were now silenced.

The healed man used a powerful tool: his testimony. "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see" (9:25). He overcame by the word of his testimony and his love did not shrink, but grew in the face of opposition (Rev. 12:11). The blind man's confession grew: the man they call Jesus, the man I acknowledge as a prophet, he is my healer.

### His Disciple

The Pharisees, perhaps getting frustrated with their case, or perhaps trying to get the man to stumble in his retelling, said, "How did he open your eyes" (9:26)?

The healed man, now gaining a Spirit-empowered boldness standing before the authorities (Matt. 10:17-20), replied, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too" (John 9:27)? The healed man did not show the fear of his parents toward the Pharisees. He was growing in his faith in the Christ during this encounter. There was something about the love of Jesus, God's son, which was drawing the man toward his healer. Even under threat of exclusion from the synagogue; even under interrogation by the religious authorities; even under intimidation by powerful community leaders, he stood boldly and defied their question.

In this question, we see a further growth in his faith as well. The healed man had progressed from only knowing his name, to calling him a prophet, to proclaiming his as healer, to now identifying himself as a disciple of Jesus.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Josh. 7:19, Ex. 14:17, 1 Sam. 6:5, Ps. 96:8, Isa. 42:12, and Jer. 13:16.

The Pharisees responded with a higher level of harassment. They had progressed from simple questions (9:15), to displaying their superiority (9:16), to threatening exclusion from the synagogue (9:22), to now “hurling insults at him” (9:28).

The healed man again displays Spirit-empowered speech far above his education<sup>8</sup> when he presented his logical argument. Like a prosecuting attorney he states: “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (9:30-33).

The Pharisees had no logical reply, so they resorted to further verbal abuse. “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us” (9:34)! Then they took drastic action and “threw him out” (9:34) of the synagogue. He had been excommunicated from the body. He was removed from the community. He was cut off from social relationships. Had he counted the cost? His devotion to Jesus, a man he had only met for a brief encounter, resulted in being cut off from his family, his community, his social relationships, and his religion. But what did he gain: A relationship with a loving God, through his Son Jesus Christ and fellowship with his growing band of followers? Evidently he determined that the price was worth the purchase. What he gained was worth far more than what he gave up (Luke 9:23-26).

### **Yusuf, a Disciple**

After the healing I did not immediately stop praying in the mosque. The healing was sudden. I had not prepared for it.

Overcome with joy I risked declaring the healing in the mosque. Before that confession of healing by Jesus I had performed the *salah* (prayer) in the Islamic way. I knew Jesus had healed me but didn’t stop going to the mosque. It was partly because there is no Christian church in my area. Even if there was, I am not sure whether I would have gone there on that day.

The violence meted out against me ushered me into the Christian world. After I was formerly led to Christ elsewhere by a man I met before I was healed. I sought him out to ask about Christ. I enrolled in a discipleship class. During which period I struggled with the concept of the son ship of Jesus. Beyond any shadow of doubt I knew Christ had healed me. But what is his identity? Did he heal me in the capacity of God’s son? This thought was anathema: portraying God in anthropomorphic terms.

### **Jesus Seeks Him Out**

The pericope could have ended there, but the inspiring Spirit chose to reveal another encounter. The same Jesus, who healed the man, is concerned about his spiritual life and returns to minister to him further. “Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’” (9:35)? Jesus heard. And he showed interest in this man. He shows interest in every person on earth. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all would spend eternity in loving relationship with him (John 3:16). Jesus found him. Jesus

---

<sup>8</sup> See Acts 4:13 for a similar case of astonishment at unschooled and ordinary men.

is seeking (Luke 19:10) for the lost and the disciples who are honestly seeking to know him more. Jesus appears to those who are ready to accept him.

The healed man responds to Jesus’ question, “Who is he, sir?” “Tell me so that I may believe in him” (John 9:36). The same man who boldly defied the Pharisees abusive questions now gently responds to Jesus’ probing inquiries. He demonstrates genuine hunger for more faith.

Jesus who had opened his eyes a short time before now says, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you” (9:37). Jesus now opens his eyes to see in faith the Son of God.

The healed man exclaims, “‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him” (9:38). Faith is so simple for the man seeking after God. He had experienced Jesus’ healing, love, and teaching. His response was belief and worship. The progression of the healed man’s faith was mature. This is similar for the East African Muslim Background Believers. “Often conversion for Muslims seems to be a process.”<sup>9</sup> He had traveled from a point of no faith, to calling Jesus a man who had healed him (9:11), to declaring him a prophet (9:17), to calling himself a disciple (9:27), to declaring that he was from God (9:33), to stating publically that he believed in Jesus (9:38), and to worshiping him as Lord (9:38). Like many today faith does not mature in a moment or in a day. It is a growing process. Sometimes it comes through adversity. Sometimes that adversity is the very thing that provides the mental and spiritual process through which faith is formed.

| <b>Increased Harassment</b>   | <b>Increased Faith</b>     |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Simple Questions (John 9:15)  | Jesus is a man (John 9:11) |
| Displaying superiority (9:16) | Jesus is a prophet (9:17)  |
| Threatening exclusion (9:22)  | I am His disciple (9:27)   |
| Hurling insults (9:28)        | Jesus is from God (9:33)   |
| Further verbal abuse (9:34)   | I believe (9:38)           |
| They threw him out (9:34)     | Worshiped Jesus (9:38)     |

### **Yusuf, A Worshipper**

Then I believed most biblical books are composite writings probably composed or edited over an extended period of time and by a variety of scribes before reaching their canonical forms. My worry was – is the Son of God – a later addition to the biblical texts?

Islam believes the gospels as they are today are corrupted while it (Islam) does not show us the original. Islam sees itself as the fulfillment and replacement of Christianity.

I could not be sure. Fear gripped me. If I kept entertaining the doubt of the sonship I may lose the healing. So I concluded – whoever he may be –he in fact heals.

I promised to serve him. But my encounter with him lacked doctrinal content. I thought it deceptive to think I had an experience with Christ only to find later that my faith lacked objective reality. Likewise, it is empty to have a faith simply of content without being able to experience God himself.

---

<sup>9</sup>David W Shenk, “Forms of Change,” in *Encountering the World of Islam*, ed. Keith Swartley (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2005), 241.

## A Believer and Worshipper

The Pharisees happened to hear the healed man proclaim, “Lord, I believe” (9:38-40). They had observed the healing hand of Jesus. They had seen not only the physical change, but also the spiritual development that happened in his life through his encounters with Jesus. They heard his testimony that could not be refuted. Yet in the end they were blinder than the blind man was at the beginning of the story.

### Epilogue: The Son of God

Epilogue: Jesus and the Pharisees meet again in the next chapter of John in this ongoing dialog (10:19-21). They clash not over the superficial excuse of healing on the Sabbath, but on the true reason for their hostility: Jesus claim to be the Son of God<sup>10</sup> (10:22-39). The healed man came to acknowledge Jesus as God’s Son and he worshiped him. The theological hurdle of the Trinity and God having a son is a stumbling block for many in Jesus’ day and today. But for those who meet Christ personally theological acceptance follows. Adeney shares a similar story of a lady from a Muslim background. “Latifa began to cry—a deep, cleansing cry. ‘Joy replaced everything I felt was wrong,’ she says. ‘At that time I knew all my questions about the Trinity had no meaning because I had met Jesus personally.’”<sup>11</sup> The healed man in East Africa came to acknowledge Jesus as God’s Son and he worships him.

### Yusuf Acknowledges Jesus is the Son of God

My desire grew to serve God. I knew I would need to study the word of God. One of the people mentoring me suggested a seminary. This led me to seminary where I began attentive, loving, and intelligent inquiry. My move is from experience to scriptures to theology. I only knew Jesus emotionally, rather affectively. But I couldn’t stop there. I want to know him intelligently and objectively.

I spent a lot of time in the library doing my inquiries. Slowly I developed some rudimentary Christology. Christian witness is of events – the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus. Different gospel traditions are fitted together in order to contextualize the church’s

---

<sup>10</sup> Recently some scholars are advocating that the familial terms (Son and Father) be translated with words not offensive to Muslims. Jesus however knew that his claim to be the Son of God was offensive to the religious leaders of his day. Yet he felt it was important so he brought it to the forefront in his dialog with the religious leaders. The Son and Father terms in Hebrew, Greek, and even English allow for both biological and non-biological relationships such as “he is like a son to me.” However the difficulty comes in languages such as Arabic and some Turkic languages in which the words Father and Son require biological interpretation. In such a case it would not be appropriate to translate Jesus as God’s biological son. This conjures up the repulsive idea to both Muslims and Christians of God having sex with a woman. In such language cases, a non-biological term, yet carrying the concept of “like a son” would be appropriate. For more see: Joseph Cumming, “Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?” (Springfield, MO: *Enrichment*, Summer 2012 Volume 17 Number 3), 56-62. Also see: Rick Brown, Leith Gray, and Andrea Gray, “The Terms of Translation: A New Look at Translating Familial Biblical Terms” *IJFM* 28:3, Fall 2011, 105 – 120. I personally conclude that we should not shy away from using the term “Son of God” because Jesus did not (John 10:31-39), but in languages, which force the meaning of “son” to be biological, we must not translate the term biologically, but find another appropriate translation.

<sup>11</sup> Miriam Adeney, *Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women* Kindle Location 624.

reflection on this Jesus event. The enthroned Jesus to whom the gospels bear witness does not cease his work but continues it with his disciples.

I came to be amazed at the structural unity in biblical Christology. These are books written in different epochs. He is predicted in the Old Testament, fulfillment comes in the gospels, proclamation in the Acts, explanation in the Epistles, culmination in Revelation. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

This is a journey that began in experience. When there is present an authentic community of the Messiah ministering to the real need of a Muslim, demonstrating Christ’s love and Christ meeting that Muslim at the point of a particular real need either directly or through his representatives, that Muslim will turn to Christ, having thus encountered his compassion. In the New Testament almost all people whose needs were met by the savior followed him.

Sometimes we think that the needs of people are not their real needs. Muslims having been inoculated from Christ from birth don’t think they have spiritual needs that Christ can meet. Intervention initially should avoid clashing with their belief system. Neither should we mutilate biblical truths by revising or otherwise in order to make the gospel attractive to them. We should not over contextualize or amend biblical Christology. It is tantamount to reducing the word of God to the work of man.

We rather maintain ministry of ‘presence’ among the Muslim becoming to them what Jesus became to persons he encountered. We are his instruments, if he healed we heal, if he fed we feed, and if he forgave we forgive. Muslims encountered in these ways by Christ will shelve their doubts and follow him. We should not engage in fruitless Christological arguments in witness to Muslims. The converts whose needs Jesus satisfied will go back to scriptures and theology to inquire and the spirit of truth will illuminate their minds and reveal the true identity of the son of God.

The great Christological controversies in the early church should remind us how the issue of identity confused and divided the church. This should be our prayer, “stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:30).

Now I am not ashamed to call Jesus the Son of God. I know what it means. He is the one who rescued and holds my life in safety and took me out of a life – denying situation and placed me in a life affirming one. The rescuer plucked me from a dehumanizing ambience and placed me in a position where I can grow toward authentic humanity. I came in my sickness and weakness. He gave healing and strength. I surrendered my rebellion. He helps me do his will. He is my companion and provision. He can become all of these things and more to any Muslim.

### **Conclusion**

The stories of these two healed men demonstrate persecution is a powerful force. “Many in our own group...have suffered much persecution after conversion. Yet, the precious prize of knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, and God as Father, was a gift worth suffering for.”<sup>12</sup> Harassment can push people towards God if they do not succumb to fear, social pressure, false theology, and faulty logic. “For us, persecution is like the sun coming up in the east. It happens all the time. It’s the way things are...Persecution for our faith has always been...a normal part of

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

life.”<sup>13</sup> When the Spirit is working in the life of a seeker through healing, loving relationships, or nurturing mentorship, harassment can serve to strengthen the faith of a growing disciple until they come to maturity in Jesus the Messiah. The right time for a mentor to advise a disciple to reveal their new faith is a matter of prayer and prophetic importance as in the life of Mordecai and Esther.<sup>14</sup>

Adeney identifies this point in telling the story of Latifa. “Looking back now, she is thankful for that period of persecution because it helped her mature spiritually. It brought out the fruit of the Spirit in her life.”<sup>15</sup> The tactics of the enemy used by the Pharisees of Jesus’ day and religious leaders today include intimidation, interrogation, insult, exclusion, deception, and even stoning, or other means of physical harm may keep some from following Christ. But there are those, like the stories above, who are driven closer to Christ with each progressive measure of harassment. It may not be good or necessary to push seekers to quickly to form theological opinions about God. But as these two men demonstrate, with time, growing relationship with God, and proper mentorship, believers will grow to form biblical theological opinions about God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>13</sup>Nik Ripken and Gregg Lewis, *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 161.

<sup>14</sup> Jeff Nelson, “Going Public with Faith in a Muslim Context: Lessons from Esther” *IJFM* 28:4 2011, 191–194.

<sup>15</sup>Adeney, Kindle Location 631.

## REFERENCES

- Adeney, Miriam. *Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women* Kindle.
- Brown, Rick, Leith Gray, and Andrea Gray, “The Terms of Translation: A New Look at Translating Familial Biblical Terms” *IJFM* 28:3, Fall 2011.
- Cumming, Joseph “Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?” (Springfield, MO: *Enrichment*, Summer 2012 Volume 17 Number 3).
- Nelson, Jeff. “Going Public with Faith in a Muslim Context: Lessons from Esther.” *IJFM* 28:4 2011.
- “Profile: Somalia’s Islamic Courts” BBC News (June 6, 2006)  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5051588.stm> (accessed February 13, 2013).
- Ripken, Nik, and Gregg Lewis. *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.
- Roggio, Bill. “The Rise & Fall of Somalia’s Islamic Courts: An Online History.” *The Long War Journal* (January 4, 2007),  
[http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the\\_rise\\_fall\\_of\\_som.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the_rise_fall_of_som.php) (accessed 13 February 2013).
- Shenk, David W. “Forms of Change.” in *Encountering the World of Islam*, ed. Keith Swartley Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2005.
- Trousdale, Jerry. *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus*. Nashville: Nelson, 2012.
- Woodberry, J. Dudley, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks. “Why Muslims Follow Jesus” *Christianity Today* (October 2007),  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/october/42.80.html?start=1> (Accessed January, 15 2010).