

## LONG EDITION

During 2015 there were several incidents in the UK in which believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs) were physically assaulted or pressured to leave their homes.

- **PRAY** for healing, physical and psychological, for those affected
- **PRAY** for wisdom in where and how to live
- **PRAY** for effective networking throughout Mahabba to provide support to those who move

Such incidents are often presented as persecution, meaning religiously motivated persecution. It is common that there are other factors at work, e.g. family pressures, extended family feuds and tribal-like score-settling. We need to be careful about using simplistic labels and hasty judgements.

At root in these incidents is the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) or Freedom to Believe:

- **PRAY** that the authorities will clearly uphold the freedom to believe including to convert
- **PRAY** that Muslim community leaders will uphold the right to convert from as well as to Islam

An example of this comes from Bradford, where a joint statement was issued in 2015 by the president of the Council of Mosques and a Bishop.<sup>1</sup>

Determining appropriate behaviour for BMBs is rarely easy. One approach is to be aware that all aspects of behaviour fall somewhere along a continuum between an in-your-face direct proclamation of the Gospel that will cause offense and avoiding anything that might be regarded as challenging others. Two relevant verses are:

*"Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished."*  
 Galatians 5:11

*"The wrath of a king is like the roaring of a lion; Whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life."*  
 Proverbs 20:2 (NKJV)

Crucial to assisting BMBs is to listen well. Key areas to assist their consideration of include:

- When and how to witness, especially to family
- Baptism, which can be perceived as betrayal of background, family and community
- Church incorporation, attending, participating and taking formal membership
- Withdrawing from Islamic practices, notably mosque attendance and Ramadan practices; keep the context in mind here, namely the believer's practices prior to their decision to follow Jesus
- How to describe themselves; some refer to themselves as ex-Muslims



A key issue for those supporting BMBs to beware of is the danger of giving them a high profile too soon. In general, it is best to let them mature as believers before using their testimony widely.

- **PRAY** for the Spirit's guiding wisdom for each believer
- **PRAY** for the Spirit's wisdom for all involved in discipling new BMBs

There are calls in the UK for greater teaching of religious literacy.

- **PRAY** for accurate teaching of Christianity
- **PRAY** for good teaching on the diversity within all major religions
- **PRAY** for education to encourage critical thinking and the widespread acceptance of conversion

Universities: a place where many are exposed to new influences, opportunities and temptations

- **PRAY** for Christian witness to Muslims on campuses
- **PRAY** for chaplains (of all faiths) to support freedom to believe
- **PRAY** for Christians to be good friends to Muslims during their university days and beyond

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.westyorkshiredales.anglican.org/content/christian-and-muslim-leaders-issue-joint-statement-freedom-belief> (checked 18th January 2016); the statement itself is not dated.