

Dear friends, I hope you are well. In this newsletter I will report on my ministry, family, and some reflections on the Taliban and how they can be a gospel opportunity. I hope you find it encouraging and will pray for these things.

### Training others who can train others

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)



Gezahegn and Bsrat

When I was in Ethiopia in 2019, Gezahegn and Bsrat helped me train many university students at the IFES National Conference. We taught three

groups of 80 students and each lesson went for three hours. This means they had nine hours of experience with me. Fast forward to 2021, and the National Conference is on again, but I cannot go. The IFES senior leaders ask me for an older person to take my place. I suggest Bsrat (26yo) and Gezahegn (31yo), but the IFES leaders say they are too young. I assured them they were ready. Bsrat and Gezahegn are given the



Students receiving the book. A senior leader wrote:

Your challenge was big and eye opening for me to believe in them (Bsrat and Gezahegn).  
Mathi - IFES National Leader

Bsrat and Gezahegn did such a good job that they were asked to give the lessons to the older trainee missionaries. The IFES National Director wrote to me and said,



Training missionaries.

Thank you so much for empowering Bsrat and Gezahegn for the wonderful task. Their seminar was so

awesome, and I heard wonderful feedback from the students. Praising the Lord. Thank you so much for playing such a crucial role.  
Robel - IFES National Director

Praise God for this. This is exactly what we want to see happening. Please pray that Bsrat and Gezahegn will continue to grow in this area and are not filled with pride and arrogance.

### Debates, seminars, and lectures

Recently, on the Launceston UTAS campus the students and I organised a debate and tutorial. The debate was with the Tasmanian Sceptic Society on the topic, *Is it reasonable to believe in God?* It was a full house and a great encouragement to the students to see the reasonableness of our faith. The tutorial was a smaller event in which we invited a UTAS philosophy lecturer to come and give us a seminar on the nature of truth. The goal of this event was to give the students practical experience and an example of how to speak up in a tutorial context as a Christian.

One of the up-and-coming Muslim debaters is a man called Jake Brancatella. He has spent a lot of time learning the Early Church Fathers and is skilled in philosophy. He has been quite successful in tying Christians in knots regarding the incarnation and Trinity. I had an opportunity to debate him on the subject, *Is the incarnation coherent?* I did a lot of preparation but was still very nervous and did not sleep much the night before.



However, thanks be to God, I was able to untangle the misdirection that Jake relies upon. In short, I showed how his philosophical categories were inadequate, and that the biblical categories of creation, accommodation, temple, and image provide the coherent categories for understanding the incarnation.

There have also been opportunities to speak at US student ministry conferences and at the Melbourne School of Theology, and I am training student groups and ministry apprentices through AFES. If you wish to view any of these events please go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/engagingwithislam/> Please pray that I can travel again soon.

### **French translation**

The Indonesian translation of my book is making progress and now IFES is considering a translation for the French speaking world. Please pray that they will be keen to do this.

### **Family**

The big news is that our youngest child, Rebecca, has now finished her year 12 studies. This is the end of an era for us as parents! Rebecca is planning to study psychology.

I have been underpinning and laying concrete around the house.

### **The Taliban and the Gospel**

Several months ago, Western forces pulled out of Afghanistan and the Taliban assumed control. How should we understand the Taliban? What do they think they are doing?

To understand the Taliban we need to understand that the Qur'an teaches there are 'true' Muslims and 'hypocrite' Muslims. The true Muslim is the one who follows what Muhammad has commanded (Q33:35-36). The hypocrite Muslim is the one who does not (Q2:278-279, 49:9). *Taliban*, is an Arabic word that means, *students*, in particular, students of the first Muslims. That is, the Afghanistan Taliban are claiming to be the true Muslims.

The Qur'an instructs true Muslims to make Jihad on the hypocrite Muslims.

O Prophet! Strive [Arabic: Jihad] against the disbelievers and the hypocrites! Be harsh with them. Their ultimate abode is hell, a hapless journey's end. (Q9:73, 66:9)

Muhammad ordered that hypocrite Muslims be compelled to obey Islamic law, and he had the mosque of the hypocrites destroyed (Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 609). His example (sunnah) defines Islamic law.

A clear line of demarcation has been drawn between the hypocritical "Muslims" and the true Muslims, and instructions have been given regarding the treatment that should be

meted out to the hypocrites. (S. Abdul A'La Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol. 2, p. 229)

Therefore, since the Taliban believe they are the true Muslims, they believe it is their duty to compel other Muslims to conform to them, and this what we see the Taliban and Islamic State doing to nominal Muslims. That is, it is not the West's fault for what the Taliban and Islamic State do to their fellow Muslims.

This teaching of the Qur'an leads to mayhem. Who is the 'true' Muslim? Who is the 'hypocrite'? Each generation disagrees and this internal warfare has always been part of Islam. In our day, both the Taliban and Islamic State believe they are the true Muslim yet they are at war with each other. In practice, Islam does not work.

Most Muslims we meet reject the Taliban and Islamic State, often saying they do not represent true Islam. In this case they are now claiming to be the true Muslim who can judge the other. This can be a gospel opportunity. We can point out that the Taliban, Islamic State, and now them, all claim to be true Muslims; and that the Qur'an instructs the true Muslim to make Jihad on the hypocrite; and this simply does not work in practice. Islam does not work. It fails to understand human sinfulness and the inability to bring God's kingdom. It is only the gospel that is realistic about human sinfulness and failure, and it is only Jesus who establishes God's kingdom.

### **Partnership in this work**

Thank you very much for your support of this ministry. We are partners in this work. There is still much work to be done and I need your partnership. Please consider supporting me in this work.

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