

# Snippets From KeyCom

February 2025

## Spiritual Blackmail

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Last month I wrote you about how many Muslims in Pakistan are becoming disenchanted with Islam and are looking for another way. I also wrote about Muslims who have been accused under the blasphemy laws. What I didn't tell you is that people are exploiting the blasphemy laws to line their own pockets. It's become quite a racket.

Here's how it works: A person is lured into joining a social-media group – often under the pretense of offering him a job in a foreign country. After a few conversations in which the victim supplies his personal information, he's sent some compromising content which reviles Islam. When the victim recoils in horror and contacts the group admin to find out what is going on, the admin tells him he has no idea what is going on and to forward the material so the admin can investigate. When the victim does so, his goose is cooked. The perpetrator can now truthfully claim that the victim sent the blasphemous material. And the blackmail begins. If the victim won't cough up the money demanded, he's turned over to the authorities. Some police departments and prosecutors are in on the scheme. They, too, start extorting money from the victim to drop the case or lessen the charges. Needless to say, when people fall prey to this kind of thing they start to wonder how people who claim to be devout Muslims can ruin the lives of others like this. If this is Islam, then there must be something better!

Unfortunately, spiritual opportunism isn't limited to the Muslim community. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy about false teachers who regard godliness as a means to financial gain (1 Timothy 6:3-5). It can be a real problem in mission work. For example, in Pakistan it has become commonplace for someone to designate himself a "Pastor," open a social-media account, post a description of the wonderful work he is doing establishing churches, along with a picture or two of him baptizing, and ask for donations so he can continue to take advantage of the "doors" God has opened for him. A favorite tactic is to tug at peoples' heartstrings by describing how a small donation would ease the plight of down-trodden brick-kiln workers. Often, tenderhearted American Christians will donate to such causes without bothering to check them out. It simply does not occur to them that the "Pastor" in question would manipulate their gullibility for his own purposes.

Should a donor attempt to do due diligence by traveling to Pakistan in order to investigate a "ministry" he is at a tremendous disadvantage because he doesn't know the culture or language. He has to rely on what he's told, which may or may not resemble the actual facts. He may be asked to baptize a "new convert" not realizing that the person has already been baptized multiple times. He may not realize that most of the large crowd assembled to hear him preach has not gathered as a result of the "Pastor's" influence or a desire to hear the Word, but has been borrowed from other "Pastors" with which his host has a reciprocal agreement. He may not realize that the brick-kiln worker he's rescuing from debt slavery has already been rescued a couple of times. He doesn't understand that a significant portion of donations received goes toward increasing the "Pastor's" extended family's standard of living. Suddenly, the man who lived in a tiny hut in the slums owns a large, multi-room mansion in an affluent part of town. The man whose only means of transportation was a bicycle now owns a late model car and employs a chauffeur.

Think I'm being cynical? Several years ago, one of the preachers I was working with asked me how much I was willing to pay per baptism. (The answer was, "Zero!") I've been roundly criticized by some of the locals who are becoming rich off of American donations for "holding down" the people I work with by not showering money upon them. In a country like Pakistan with persistent high unemployment, it would be relatively easy to hire a whole flock of preachers. But that's the problem. They would be hirelings. They would work, not from conviction or because they have a passion for the lost, but only to secure their salary. If someone were to offer more or a better benefit package they would happily jump ship and start preaching whatever doctrine their new employer required.

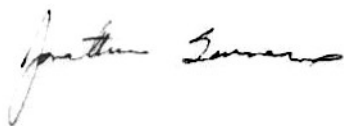
I will have none of it. If a man doesn't have enough "fire in his belly" to preach even if he's not paid, I wonder whether he's really been called. And if a man hasn't been called, then it's not likely that there will be any lasting results from whatever "ministry" he does. (By the way, I don't ask the men I work with to do anything I'm not willing to do. To set them a good example, I deliberately do not take any salary from the congregation I serve.)

Unfortunately, the kind of shenanigans some in the Christian community pull to attract dollars can be a real stumbling block for Muslims who are seeking truth. They've already been betrayed by their own coreligionists and wonder whether Christians are any different. We need to pray for them that they will not turn from the truth of the Gospel because of the insincerity of some who claim to follow Christ.

Here at Key Communications we're playing the long game. Sure, we proclaim the Gospel and pray for those Pentecost moments when hundreds or thousands give themselves to Christ. But we're also looking beyond with the goal of building self-sustaining congregations on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, rather than dollars. We're trying to bring local churches to the point where they can grow their own leaders and replicate. How I long for the day when the churches are not only strong in faith and doctrine, but are able to send out and support missionaries from their own resources!

It can be frustrating. It's disappointing when potential leaders choose the lure of material gain over service. It's heart-breaking when people choose worldly wealth rather than true riches. But, as long as God calls us to do it, we will continue to teach, train, exhort, encourage, mentor and guide. We will continue to prepare Gospel programming in the Urdu language for those who are seeking the truth. We will continue to publish commentaries and other study aids. Thank you for helping us to fulfill our calling!

Yours in the Name of the One who calls us to service,



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