

Snippets From KeyCom

July 2025

Standing Tall

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It might have been a scene from a low-budget thriller. Unfortunately, it was very real. A young woman stood tall, calmly waiting for the bullet which took her life. A tribal council (Jirga) had sentenced her and her paramour to death. (Reports are unclear as to whether or not the couple was married. If they were married it was against their family's wishes.) A video of their "honor killing" went viral in Pakistan. A few days later another video went viral. It was of the woman's mother telling why and how she had arranged her daughter's death. The authorities arrested the mother and some thirteen others involved in the killings. It remains to be seen whether anyone will go to trial.

"Honor killings" are not unusual in Pakistan. One group estimates there are about 1,000 each year, which is two or three times the number officially reported. A particularly tragic case happened just a few days ago. Sajid Masih, a young man from a village near the city of Gujranwala, converted to Islam so he could legally marry the Muslim girl he loved. They eloped and were married in court. The couple immediately moved to Karachi hoping to avoid the censure of their families. In spite of the marriage, her family filed a kidnapping case against Sajid and burned his parent's house. Then, her brothers somehow tracked the couple down. One morning workers found Sajid and his wife's bodies in a ditch near the boat basin outside of Karachi. Both had been shot execution style, in the head.

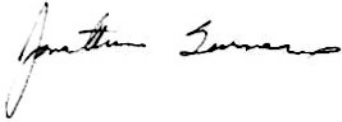
In prior 'Snippets' I've talked about how people in Pakistan and Iran are turning away from Islam. But Sajid's experience reminds us that there can still be a serious penalty to pay for crossing the line of cultural expectations. No one in Iran or Pakistan can take freedom of conscience for granted. Someone turning away from Islam, particularly to embrace Christ, puts his or her life on the line. It is especially dangerous for women. Many Muslims would feel fully justified in killing a family member who had 'dishonored' their name by converting.

This raises an interesting question. A friend wrote to me about the issue of "secret believers." Is it legitimate for someone to continue to conform to the outward trappings of Islam while actually following Christ? It is not mine to judge, nor am I the one who faces the consequences of converting. Yet, it seems to me that someone who clings to his old way of life and hides his faith in order to avoid persecution, has not fully surrendered to Christ. Should we not confess Christ and let the chips fall where they may? Should we not trust Christ to guard us even though we have to, "walk through the valley of the shadow of death"? (Psalm 23:4) If a woman is willing to put her life on the line for the man she loves, should she not be willing to do it for Christ? Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33 NIV)

The irony of Sajid Masih's case is that he renounced Christ in order to gain an earthly reward, yet lost everything. Those who turn from Islam to Christ may lose everything in this life only to gain what is eternal. As the Apostle Paul writes, we are "more than conquerors" when we stand tall in Christ's love, even though, "we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." (See Romans 8:31-39.)

Here at Key Communications our goal is to let the people in Pakistan know that Christ is worth living for. Even more, Christ is worth dying for. One of the hopes we have in Christ is that even if we die in 'dishonor' we will rise in glory! (See 1 Corinthians 15:42-43.) Thank you for your part in helping us proclaim this message of love, hope, reconciliation and victory to the Muslim world.

Yours in the Name of of Him who raises our heads,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan Turner".

Jonathan Turner
Key Communications
PO Box 13620, Portland, OR 97213
(503) 233-7680