

Should I be discouraged?

In the summer of 2023, I told a group of evangelically-minded Christians from out of state that our duty is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than use persuasive arguments to prove that Christianity is more reasonable than Islam. Some of the people in this group were accustomed to seeing many Muslims leave Islam as a result of their evangelistic methods.

During that conference, someone wanted to know how many local Muslims have become Christians. I said that only a few have begun to follow Christ. In the minds of some in my audience that day, the fact that so few local Muslims have begun to follow Christ proved that my evangelism approach was ineffective. When I said that only a few Muslims have begun to follow Christ, one woman spoke up and said, “That is troubling.” I responded by reminding them that during the hundred years that Noah was building the ark, nobody responded. I said that it is our job to proclaim the gospel. God is the One who gives the increase. If Noah saw no fruit in one hundred years, I too should patiently continue, as he did. (One man piped up by insisting that Noah’s job was not to evangelize, but to build the ark. I responded by saying that since he was a believer, **Noah evangelized his neighbors.**¹ No true believer wants their neighbors to perish.)

In early 2023, I heard a Dearborn pastor say that it was very discouraging that so few unbelievers were responding to their church’s evangelism outreach. I suspect that some Christians who know me might wonder if I am discouraged, or if I ever become discouraged in the ministry, since so few local Muslims have begun to follow Christ. As best I can tell, I generally do not get discouraged about this. Rather, I stay focused on my job, namely, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. It does not surprise me that so few people respond to it in genuine faith. After all, I Corinthians 1:18 says that **the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing.**² Now if I thought it was my job to convince people intellectually to become Christians, I would be utterly discouraged and conclude that I am an utter failure. But that is not my job. My job is to proclaim the gospel. I know ahead of time that, even though some unbelievers will gain an intellectual understanding of the gospel, NONE of them will ever believe from the heart unless God moves upon them. This is why I pray so much for specific unbelievers. I pray and continue to pray that God will make His Word come alive in them so that they see the light of His glory, and joyfully embrace Jesus as Lord.

Having said all this, I must admit that I sometimes experience discouragement in my ministry when people do not respond to my message. But it generally is not because so few unbelievers respond. Rather, the greatest source of discouragement in my ministry is due to the apparent

¹ I should also note that II Peter 2:5 says that Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

² The gospel is indeed foolishness to those who are perishing. On the contrary, it is “the power of God” to those who are believing. (See Romans 1:18-19.) The gospel propels those who are believing unto the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. They endure to the end because they believe its promise from God to raise and glorify all who believe and continue to believe.

dullness in many believers. I do spend considerable time proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers. But I spend even more time writing and communicating gospel truth to believers. I am glad that some Christians have been and continue to be helped by my books, articles and videos. But it seems that many Christians that become exposed to my books, articles and videos are so set in their thinking, that they are unable to properly consider them and receive help from them. As a result, I fully identify with the prophets who experienced rejection. Below is a quote from one of them:

"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'" And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed" (Isaiah 6:8-10).

The prophets experienced discouragement because "God's people" were dull of hearing. Instead of being helped by the prophets' message, they stuck to their traditions and their understanding remained distorted. Like me, they did not expect the unbelieving foreigners to respond to their message. Because they did not expect them to respond, they were not discouraged about their lack of response. But from their writings, it is apparent that they were discouraged by the lack of response and dullness of "God's people." It caught them off guard because they assumed that God's people would listen. Like them, I experience discouragement because of the dullness of "God's people." Many times I thought, "Well, if I just clearly point out what God has said, they will surely hear and be helped." But I have discovered that there is a principle that applies to both unbelievers and believers alike. Only God can reshape the hearts and minds of unbelievers and believers.

So, I take consolation in the fact that in the case of both unbelievers and believers, God is the One who gives the increase. It is my job to preach truth. It is God's job to sanctify people in the truth. So, I resolve to fulfill my duty to proclaim truth and continue asking God to use it to help both unbelievers and believers.