



Bridging the Divide 2018 Consultation Report

Finalized June 6, 2018

More than 40 scholar-practitioners and field workers, including Muslim background believers, gathered during the first week of June, 2018 to explore the theme of Spiritual Freedom and the House of Islam. We studied the Scriptures, discussed the nature of Islam, and explored case studies from various parts of the world. Together we affirm Jesus Christ as Savior, Healer, Lord and Deliverer. We also affirm:

- Teaching, Preaching, Healing, and Deliverance are central in the life and ministry of Jesus, culminating in His victory on the cross and His resurrection, and continuing through his ongoing work in the Church. Thus, these ministries are priorities to be demonstrated in our ministries to Muslims.
- All cultures are shaped and enriched by people created in God's image, yet all cultures are also corrupted by evil (2 Cor 4:4).
- The sources of bondage are related to the sinful human condition, aligned since the Fall with the powers of darkness in rebellion against Almighty God. This has resulted in cultural strongholds, distorted values, and social structures being defiled by sin and Satan.
- In many churches, especially in the West, demonic powers are not taken seriously and this does not reflect the supernatural worldview of the Scriptures.
- Christ and His Word have absolute power and authority over Satan and the dominion of darkness. As His disciples follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, they experience His power and authority when ministering in their respective contexts.
- Biblical discipleship must be holistic and include practical instruction on:
 - Our identity and authority in Christ
 - The ways Satan gains footholds and breaks down relationships
 - The importance of spiritual armor for resisting the evil one and sustaining godly relationships.
 - Healing, including inner healing, and deliverance.
- Amulets, charms, and other power objects, practices and places associated with the dark powers are incompatible with our life in Christ and are to be rejected and renounced.
- In confronting demonic powers, we agree that our practices must always be grounded in Scripture and informed by experience.
- There is a close connection between inner healing and deliverance in the ongoing process of attaining full spiritual freedom in Christ.
- The unique needs and perspectives of women in Muslim contexts merit focused consideration.

- The ministry of healing and deliverance, done under the leading of the Holy Spirit, should be exercised with careful discernment, in alignment with the Scriptures, and in mutual relational submission to others in the body of Christ.

Yet, we recognize continuing differences of opinion on a number of questions discussed during our time together:

- What is one's view of the nature of Islam, and how is this related to spiritual freedom?
- To what extent can the occult practices, sinful characteristics and structures encountered in Islamic contexts be considered 'Islamic,' or do such associations risk 'essentializing' Islam and 'Islamicising' sin?
- Are renunciation and deliverance integral to finding full freedom in Christ and in what ways should these be incorporated into the conversion and/or discipling process?
- To what extent do followers of Jesus who continue in certain Islamic practices risk subjecting themselves to any dark forces?
- Is the concept of 'dhimmitude' legitimate?
- Does the concept of the *dhimma* as a covenant, together with the associated concept of 'dhimmitude', offer keys for liberating Christians and churches into more effective ministry among Muslims?
- Does the concept of renouncing allegiance to Islam, as a commitment expressed by recitation of the *shahada*, offer insight for liberating Muslim-background followers of Christ?

Conclusion:

We recognize that the challenge of relating Christ and culture is one that has faced the church throughout its history. In the church's engagement with Islam today, we can draw upon rich resources of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and praxis.

We need to be careful that the way we view spiritual darkness and its relationship with certain expressions of Islam does not diminish our love toward Muslims. We need to approach our Muslim friends with love, gentleness and respect even when we perceive spiritual darkness.

We recognize the need to know and experience the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, and welcome His Lordship in all that we say and do. We affirm that the same Holy Spirit is at work through the varied gifts of his people and the varied contexts in which they work.

As we proclaim Christ as deliverer, we ourselves are called to know and experience freedom in Christ and the demolishing of strongholds in our own lives.

We need to continue to learn from practices of healing and deliverance in Muslim contexts, and reflect theologically on ways the Holy Spirit is leading Muslims to Christ and building His church among all peoples.

We also raised issues for further study:

- How can the Old Testament understanding of Yahweh and the gods of the nations inform our understanding of spiritual dynamics, religious allegiance, and other faiths?
- Can we develop proper guidelines for transparency and contextualization in Bible translation?
- How do our views on the roles of Special / General Revelation impact our ministry among Muslims?
- How does our orientation to modernity or post modernity impact our views on ministry among Muslims?
- How can the body of Christ best approach discipleship in the context of persecution?
- How can we continue to develop sustainable movements in Muslim contexts?
- How can we promote and encourage ongoing interorganizational cooperation between ministries and local churches?