

## **Overcoming Our Fear of Radicalisation**

Some years ago Bruce Bawer wrote the book: *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within*. The sentiment expressed in this title is very much in the mind of many Christians throughout Europe. They consider radical Islam one of the biggest threats for the future of the Church in Europe. In this session we will look at the question: How can Christians relate to Muslims in a way that is in agreement with the truth of God's Word without closing their eyes for the harm radical Muslims can cause?

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### **DEALING WITH FEAR<sup>1</sup>**

#### **A. WHAT DO CHRISTIANS FEAR?**

- 1. Historical fear**
  
- 2. Fear of losing space**
  
- 3. Fear of beliefs**
  
- 4. Fear of death and persecution**

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<sup>1</sup> Some of this is taken from Reisacher, Evelyne A. "Fear and Muslim-Christian Conflict Transformation" in *Peace-building by, between and beyond, Muslims and Evangelical Christians* Mohammed Abu-Nimer and David Augsburg (eds), Lexington Books, Lanham, 2009, pages 157-170

## **B. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF FEAR**

### **1. Fear involves both non-conscious and conscious processes**

### **2. Fear can mask reality**

*“Our brain has two separate problem-solving systems. (1) Serious challenges with a sense of immediacy are rapidly and reflexively processed by our brain’s innate stress-driven, conceptual problem-solving system. This system responds quickly on the basis of a small amount of emotionally intense information. It’s not interested in details. It’s thus quite vulnerable to making racist/sexist/elitist responses based on only a few highly visible emotion-charged elements –but it’s also capable of making impulsive altruistic responses. (2) Challenges without a sense of immediacy are processed more slowly and reflectively by our brain’s curiosity-driven, analytical problem-solving system.”*

(quoted by Reisacher, page 162)

### **3. Fears can be grounded or ungrounded**

### **4. Fear can be acquired**

### **5. Fear can be regulated**

*“If fear is not autoregulated or interactively regulated, secure relations will never develop.” (Reisacher, 163)*

## **C. HOW TO REGULATE OUR FEAR?**

### **1. Acknowledgement**

## **2. Identify our secure base**

*“In childhood, the child uses the caregiver’s smiling face to return to joy and keeps the memory of this joyful face that he or she recalls later to regulate negative emotional states during safe social interactions.”*

### **a. Can Muslims be our secure base?**

*“If Christians try to find their secure base always outside the Muslim community and if Muslims always try to find their secure base outside the Christian community, the ties between the two will be weak or insecure.” (Reisacher,159)*

### **b. Can we be a secure base for Muslims?**

*“Many themes in the Bible refer to the care that believers should provide for those whom the society does fear such as the aliens in the OT (Ex. 22 and 23) or the Samaritans in the Gospel and the Greeks, also called Barbarians during that time, in the Epistles. God’s message points believers toward the embrace and reconciliation with fellow humans rather than fear, mistrust, or prejudice. (Reisacher,169)*

## **3. Look for positive stories of interaction between Christians and Muslims**

*“I suggest Christian communities look for stories of positive emotional interactions within Muslim-Christian relationships that can be used as fear regulators. There is a need for stories where Muslims and Christians acted as a secure base for each other. ...What are the happy and joyful memories that people can recall between the two communities that will help them reconnect? (Reisacher, 169)*

## **4. Look for well-documented facts**

## **5. See Muslims as they really are**

*“Sometimes our fears can be like a screen hiding the true identity of the other person. We look at our fears, rather than at who the person really is. God says in Ex. 23:1 “ Do not spread false reports”. Fear can make us blind, so that we do not witness the reality anymore.” According to Proverbs 12:17: “A truthful witness gives honest testimony.” The Bible call us to see others as they truly are and care for each other as we all participate in the same humanity.” (Reisacher, 169)*

## **6. Establish relations with Muslims**

*“ If Christians want to develop secure bonds with Muslims, they need to autoregulate their fears with positive images of smiling faces of Muslims, and that means proactively engage in social exchange with them to be able to experience joy in their presence (Reisacher, 163)*