



Prez Release

A Reminder

September 2009

As students graduate from AGTS, I often stay in touch with their subsequent ministries through their various electronic reports from around the world. I recently received one of those reports from an alum, Andy Raatz, who serves as a missionary in Moldova. His reflections are more than reports of his ministry in that nation; they are keen insights on what it means to follow Jesus. He writes: "Sorry, officer, but I know that light was still green. That is the sentence I rehearsed in Russian in my mind as I drove home through a Moldovan intersection today. I caught myself practicing preventive excuse-making, assuming I would meet one of our fine brothers-in-uniform on the other side!" But then Andy asked himself this question: "*Why was I rehearsing excuses before anything happened?*" Andy's answer to his rhetorical question was that throughout history, finger-pointing has been our first reaction. "God, it's not my fault, Eve gave me the apple. Don't look at me, it was the serpent!" Excuses have ranged from perceived weakness (Moses) to twisted obedience (Saul). In today's world, people prefer to blame their parents or repressed childhood memories. The truth is we make excuses; we make them even when they are not needed.

Andy's poignant thoughts pushed me to wonder about how followers of Jesus will respond to a recent event in Washington, D.C. On Friday, September 25 over 6,000 Muslims gathered near the U.S. Capitol building for Friday prayers. While this crowd was much smaller than the 50,000 expected, it was certainly viewed as an historic event, by those Muslims attending. I will not take time to define the spiritual significance of this event, which would take too much time. Suffice it to say this event was not merely symbolic; it was making a statement that a beachhead for the future of Islam in America was being established in plain view of all Americans. My guess is that reactions to this event will vary from anger to simply switching the channel.

But I'm reminded of Andy's keen insights on excuses. What excuses will followers of Jesus conjure up about the growing presence of Islam in our communities? Will we point to the evangelistic efforts of Muslims toward African American young men in prisons? Will we simply shun these new neighbors with stereotypes conjured up from seeing Osama bin Laden's pictures too many times on cable news channels?

This new and growing reality also carries with it a bridge to Islam for followers of Jesus that exists no where else in the world. *When Muslims in America are asked if they know a practicing Christian, over 50 percent will answer YES!*

Bottom line, this incredible opportunity has come to our shores. It carries with it incredible challenges, but the opportunities are clearly present. Gospel bullets and canned evangelistic efforts will simply be ineffective, this new and incredible opportunity requires an evangelism that actually looks people in the eye and engages them relationally over a period of time.

Andy is right; excuses are an automatic default position in too much of our lives. But for the opportunity to demonstrate the Good News of Christ's Kingdom to Muslims in America, we will have no excuse when we stand before our Lord on the big day of evaluation.



Byron D. Klaus
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
President

AGTS NEWS

AGTS Day of Renewal

Wednesday, September 30

Special Speaker

Dr. Sheri Benvenuti

You are invited to participate in the services
via live audio streaming.

Service Times

(Central Time)

9:30 a.m.

1:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m.

To connect to the live audio feed, visit
www.agts.edu

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The Prez Release is a commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. If you want to be removed from this mailing list or would like to update your email address, please contact sstarkey@agts.edu.