

Greetings church,

We're moving on to chapter 8 in The Search for Truth About Islam: A Christian Pastor Separates Fact from Fiction by Ben Daniel.

I want to re-iterate that the author is not writing an academic thesis nor is he writing a persuasive essay or argumentative paper attempting to win someone over to his cause. He is writing about a personal journey he has been on and inviting us into that journey. That is to say that this book is *very* readable and I strongly encourage everyone to not just read my reflections on each chapter but to **read the book for themselves** and to put your thoughts, questions, and reflections into conversation with mine.

The author uses chapter 8 to offer numerous counterpoints to the overarching narrative in United States culture and media regarding Muslim oppression of women. Tragically, his overarching conclusion is that oppression of women is not limited to practitioners of and adherents to the Muslim faith. "It would be naive at best and offensive at worst to suggest that women suffer no oppression or endure no abuse in many predominantly Muslim countries and communities, but the role of Islam in perpetuating the suffering of Muslim women should not be overstated, for suffering is not unique to Muslim women. *Women suffer in every part of the world, and the suffering of Muslim women is not worse - and in some cases is not nearly as bad - as the suffering of women in non-Muslim societies.*" (emphasis added)¹ Unfortunately women suffer across the world; across religions; across cultures. No one is "more" at fault than anyone else. There is equal blame to go around as regards the continued "less than" mentality regarding women.

One of the ways in which women suffer most is death rates while giving birth. Culture and media have a tendency to portray Muslims as backwards regarding female health care and specifically maternal care. However, is it really religiosity that is the defining characteristic when it comes to negative impacts regarding female health outcomes? "The bottom line is that twenty-eight of the forty most dangerous countries in which to give birth are not Muslim countries. And nineteen of the countries with the lowest rates of female literacy are not Muslim countries. The countries where childbirth is most dangerous and where female illiteracy is most prevalent have two things in common: they are overwhelmingly poor and African."² This goes to show that it is not, in fact, religion that is the most dangerous thing for women but economic disparity and economic inequity which continue to grow and increase at an alarming rate around the globe. The work before us is *not* converting people away from Islam but rather converting people away from the religion of greed. The author concludes "for those of us who are concerned about the health and well-being of women, the most important work is not changing Christianity or Islam. Rather, the more urgent need is to change societies and the men who dominate them so that women can pursue lives that are healthy, productive, and free".³ This is not more male bashing. This is an honest reflection of how the world has come to function through the millennia and generations of male domination and control. All the world; all the religions; all the cultures have work to do as regards learning to treat women as equals.

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Eddie

¹ Daniel, Ben. The Search for Truth About Islam: A Christian Pastor Separates Fact from Fiction. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY; 2013. p.140

² *ibid*, p.148

³ *ibid*, pp.158-159