

Testimony

Nabeel Qureshi (1983 - 2017)

On Saturday, September 16, 2017, Nabeel Qureshi, age 34, entered into the joy of his master, Jesus Christ, after enduring a yearlong battle with cancer.

ISLAM WAS ALL

Nabeel was born in California as a U.S. citizen to Pakistani immigrants who fled religious persecution at the hands of fellow Muslims. His parents were devout members of the peaceful Ahmadi sect of Islam, which differs from orthodox Islam on some minor doctrines but shares with it a belief in the six articles of faith

- belief in tawheed [absolute monotheism]
- belief in the prophets
- belief in the books
- belief in the unseen
- belief in the day of judgment
- belief in the decree of Allah



and holds to the five pillars of the faith

- reciting the shahada (witness of faith)
- praying the salaah (ritual prayer)
- paying the zakaat (alms)
- fasting
- performing hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

Nabeel's family was the most loving and tightly knit family that he knew. It was entirely centered on Islam, which formed the framework and blueprint of his life. His mother taught him Urdu and Arabic before he learned English at the age of 4. By the age of 5, he had read the entire Qur'an in Arabic and had memorized many chapters.

His parents also trained him in apologetics so that he would not only believe in Islam, but could defend it and refute other religions like Christianity.

ENCOUNTERING THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

In August 2001, while a student at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, Nabeel observed fellow student David Wood reading the Bible in his free time. Nabeel regularly read the Qur'an, but it struck him as odd to see a Christian reading the Bible on his own.

Nabeel challenged David's belief in Christianity, beginning with the charge that the Bible had been corrupted over time. Wood aspired to be a Christian apologist, and the two young men formed a friendship and engaged in debate that lasted for several years.

In working through David's arguments and examining the evidence for himself, Nabeel eventually became convinced of the general reliability of the New Testament.

He next raised the objection that Jesus never claimed to be God. After being shown this was untrue, Nabeel challenged David that Jesus had never died on the cross. Again, by being willing to investigate the evidence, Nabeel changed his mind.

It was now two and a half years later, and Nabeel raised the greatest stumbling block for accepting Christianity: how could one man die for another man's sins? And how could the one true God be a Trinity? He was now reading the Bible and considering Christ's claims for himself.

In return, David began to challenge Nabeel's confidence in the claims of Islam. Intellectually, Nabeel held to Islam for several subjective reasons (like the kind of life it produced), but objectively, the central claim was that Islam was true because Muhammad was a true prophet of God. But after studying primary sources and biographies, Nabeel eventually concluded that he could not reasonably hold to the idea that Muhammad is the greatest of prophets and history's most perfect man.

From December 2004 to April 2005, Nabeel experienced three vivid dreams that strongly suggested to him that Christianity is true and that Christ should be followed.

Later that year, he traveled to Washington, D.C., Canada, and England to search out knowledgeable Muslims who could answer the arguments against Islam that he had encountered. "I heard various replies running the gamut from terribly unconvincing to fairly innovative, and I encountered people that ranged from sincere to condescendingly caustic. At the end of my research, the arguments for and against Islam still hung in the balance, but one thing was abundantly clear: they were far from approaching the strength of the case for Christianity."

CHRIST IS ALL

Nabeel described for Christianity Today his final conversion to Christ, while a medical student, and the effect it had on his world:

I began mourning the impact of the decision I knew I had to make. On the first day of my second year of medical school, it became too much to bear. Yearning for comfort, I decided to skip school. Returning to my apartment, I placed the Qur'an and the Bible in front of me. I turned to the Qur'an, but there was no comfort there. For the first time, the book seemed utterly irrelevant to my suffering. Irrelevant to my life. It felt like a dead book.

With nowhere left to go, I opened up the New Testament and started reading. Very quickly, I came to the passage that said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Electric, the words leapt off the page and jump-started my heart. I could not put the Bible down. I began reading fervently, reaching Matthew 10:37, which taught me that I must love God more than my mother and father.

"But Jesus," I said, "accepting you would be like dying. I will have to give up everything." The next verses spoke to me, saying, "He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake will find it" (NASB). Jesus was being very blunt: For Muslims, following the gospel is more than a call to prayer. It is a call to die. I knelt at the foot of my bed and gave up my life.

A few days later, the two people I loved most in this world were shattered by my betrayal. To this day my family is broken by the decision I made, and it is excruciating every time I see the cost I had to pay.

But Jesus is the God of reversal and redemption. He redeemed sinners to life by his death, and he redeemed a symbol of execution by repurposing it for salvation. He redeemed my suffering by making me rely upon him for my every moment, bending my heart toward him. It was there in my pain that I knew him intimately. He reached me through investigations, dreams, and visions, and called me to prayer in my suffering. It was there that I found Jesus. To follow him is worth giving up everything.

In another place, he recounts the incredible pain this created in his family:

After my family learned of my conversion, they have not been the same.

My mother has tears in her eyes whenever I see her; a quiver in her voice whenever I hear her; and absolute despair on her face in sleep and while awake. Never have I met a mother more devoted to her children than my mother, and how did I repay her? In her mind, decades' worth of emotional and physical investment ended up with her son espousing views that are completely antithetical to everything she stands for.

My father, a loving, gentle, and big-hearted man with every ounce of the emotional strength expected of a 24-year veteran of the U.S. military, broke down for the first time that I had ever seen. To be the cause of the only tears I ever saw fall from his eyes is not easy to live with. To hear him . . . the man who stood tallest in my life from the day I was born, my archetype of strength, my father . . . to hear him say that because of me he felt his backbone has been ripped out from behind him, feels like patricide.

It was then that I wondered why God had let me live; why had God not just lifted me to himself when I had found the truth? Why did I have to hurt my family so much, and practically eschew the ones who loved me more than anyone else?

The answer was sought and found in God's Word. After accepting him, it is my duty to work for him and walk his path. For now, my loss was to be comforted by his words found in Mark 10:29-30:

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."

AMBASSADOR AND APOLOGIST

Nabeel went on to study Christian apologetics at Biola University, graduating with an MA in 2008, while also completing his medical degree at Eastern Virginia Medical School, graduating in 2009. In 2012, he completed an MA in religion at Duke University, and then entered an MPhil and PhD program at Oxford University in New Testament studies. In 2013, he became an itinerant speaker with Ravi Zacharias International Ministry.

In February 2014, Nabeel published his first book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Zondervan), which landed on *The New York Times* bestseller list, and was awarded the Christian Book Award for both "Best New Author" and "Best Non-Fiction Book" of 2015. It has sold more than a quarter of a million copies.

In 2015, Nabeel's wife, Michelle, gave birth to their daughter, Ayah Fatima Qureshi, named after a Christian martyr.

In March 2016, Zondervan published Nabeel's book *Answering Jihad: A Better Way Forward*. Five months later, in August 2016, Zondervan released *No God But One: Allah or Jesus? A Former Muslim Investigates the Evidence for Islam and Christianity*.

CANCER

On the day of the book release for *No God But One*, Nabeel wrote the following on Facebook, announcing that he had been diagnosed with advanced stomach cancer:

Dear Friends and Family,

This is an announcement that I never expected to make, but God in His infinite and sovereign wisdom has chosen me for this refining, and I pray He will be glorified through my body and my spirit. My family and I have received the news that I have advanced stomach cancer, and the clinical prognosis is quite grim. Nonetheless, we are going to pursue healing aggressively, both medical and miraculous, relying on God and the fact that He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

In the past few days my spirits have soared and sank as I pursue the Lord's will and consider what the future might look like, but never once have I doubted this: that Jesus is Lord, His blood has paid my ransom, and by His wounds I am healed. I have firm faith that my soul is saved by the grace and mercy of

the Triune God, and not by any accomplishment or merit of my own. I am so thankful that I am a child of the Father; redeemed by the Son, and sealed in the Spirit. No, in the midst of the storm, I do not have to worry about my salvation, and for that I praise you, God. . . .

Friends and family, may I ask you to fast and pray fervently for my healing? I do not profess to know the will of the Lord, but many of my close friends and confidants are convinced that this is a trial through which the Lord intends to bring me alive and refined. May His will be done, and may I invite you to seek Him in earnest, on your knees, fasting on my behalf, asking our Yahweh Rapha for healing in Jesus' name.

And as you pray and fast, "I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." Philippians 1:18-20

For His Glory, -Nabeel

In October 2016, his wife, Michelle, suffered a miscarriage, and in May 2017, Nabeel announced that the radiation had not worked and that the cancer had spread to his chest.

During this time, Nabeel's parents came to Houston, where he lives, and helped to care for him:

As a Christian apologist with a special focus on Islam, Nabeel was often introduced as a "former Muslim." He felt ambivalence about the label, wondering if he would be forever bound by the life he left. When asked about this he responded:

We don't identify other Christians as "former adulterers," "former narcissists," etc. I have been made a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), I strive every day to cast off the old self and to put on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24), reflecting the fact that I have been born again from above (John 3:3). I would be thrilled if I never had to talk about Islam again, focusing instead on the awe-inspiring power of God's incarnation and resurrection!

But, he added:

. . . as long as there are Muslims, there will be Christians who need to be equipped to share the Gospel with them in compelling compassion. Until that is no longer the case, I am honored to discuss my former way of life to build up the body of Christ.

GLORY AND JOY

Today, Nabeel Qureshi, beholding his Savior face to face, is able to declare what is true:

*I have fought the good fight.
I have finished the race.
I have kept the faith.*

*Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.
(2 Timothy 4:7-8)*

Entering into the joy of his Master, he undoubtedly heard the words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

. . . . Gleaned from The Gospel Coalition

What Ravi Zacharias Said at Nabeel Qureshi's Funeral

At the memorial service Thursday, September 21, 2017, Nabeel Qureshi was remembered for his unusual passion for Christ and the significant evangelistic impact he made before he died last Saturday at 34. Hundreds gathered at Houston's First Baptist Church and thousands more online to honor Qureshi, whose life and ministry was cut short by aggressive stomach cancer.

"He was a man of incredible, undying energy, and it was a privilege to cover the globe with Nabeel Qureshi," said Zacharias, who recalled stories from their final ministry trip together—to Malaysia—earlier this spring. The global evangelist shared with the crowd the unusual distinctives of Qureshi's deep understanding of sin; Qureshi's devotion to his family, who were heartbroken when he left Islam to claim Christ; and his confidence in his evangelism.

Zacharias addressed Qureshi's parents, who are Pakistani Americans and Ahmadi Muslims, greeting them in their native tongue. Their only son had converted to Christianity while in medical school. "His biggest heartache was the pain the family was going to feel at his commitment to Christ," Zacharias said. "His passion was tearing him apart over his love of his Heavenly Father and his commitment to his earthly father and mother and family."

The evangelist described Qureshi as "fearless" and "a man on a mission" as others attempted to discredit his message or even threatened his life as he preached in areas where Christians suffer persecution. "He did not care about those who fabricated stories about him; he did not care about those who tried to knock him off," Zacharias said. "He was willing to be an ambassador for Christ right to the end."

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
Psalm 46:1*



The family requests donations to be sent to
gofundme.com/NabeelQureshi



CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF
NABEEL QURESHI
APRIL 13, 1983–SEPTEMBER 16, 2017