

Witnessing to Muslims, I

There is a strong interest in understanding Islam in the western world as well as a strong interest in understanding how a Christian can share their faith with a Muslim. Many Christians that would generally have no concern about sharing their faith are frightened over the idea of speaking to a Muslim about Christianity. The concerns are based on the images we have of Muslims, a fear of a negative reaction from the Muslim, and a fear that some knowledge of the Koran will be required.

The information in this document is designed to provide a person who wishes to speak to a Muslim about Christianity with a few basics that will make your discussion with the Muslim believer both uplifting and meaningful. It will begin the process of softening their hearts to the Lord.

Witnessing is About Love

If you feel that you want to take out your anger over the events of 911 during your discussion with a Muslim, then you should not even begin the discussion.

If you feel you want to let them know that they are following a false religion and argue over the pedigree of their prophet, then you should not even begin the discussion.

If you have a genuine desire to see them saved, then you should first ask the Holy Spirit to direct your words and then start the discussion.

Remember what John wrote in his first epistle. To paraphrase what He said, "If a man says he loves God yet hate his brother – he is a liar."

Reaching Muslims for Christ is a Process

Start from the understanding that it will be a long process and will be frustrating at times. Why? Because witnessing to them is only in a small part about theology. A Muslim's decision to accept Jesus Christ is 10% theology based and 90% Community based (Umma). When you witness to a Muslim about Jesus Christ, your theology is the truth and most will admit they know it is the truth, but they are extremely fearful about leaving the community of their upbringing.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior and know it was by grace, then your theology is miles ahead of anything that most Muslims know. But, you cannot replace easily the community to which they all belong.

Islam means peace?

There is some idea that Islam translates as the word "peace" in English. That is not correct. Islam means Submission. So a Muslim is one who strives to submit to God. Muslims are essentially fatalists. Everything that happens no matter how big or small is God's will. *En Shalla* is a phrase commonly used by Arab Muslims. It means, "If God wills it."

A works based faith

Islam is a works based faith. The famous author and Christian apologist CS Lewis said, "Islam is the ultimate [works] heresy of Christianity." So a Muslim is one who must continue to follow the 5 "pillars of Islam" and continually try to do good works. The 5 pillars are:

- **Confession of Faith.** "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of God."

- **Pray.** Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day: shortly before sunrise, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and after sunset.
- **Give alms.** Muslims are to give about 2.5 percent of their wealth. Zecat or Tacat.
- **Fast during Ramadan.** For one lunar month, from sunrise to sunset, Muslims are not to allow anything to pass down their throat. (Theoretically, a good Muslim would even spit out his or her saliva.) Then from sunset to sunrise, they are permitted to eat as little or as much as they want. This is their way of developing discipline and relating to the poor. (Travelers, young children and pregnant or nursing mothers do not need to keep the fast.)
- **Make a pilgrimage to Mecca.** Every Muslim who is financially able is supposed to travel to the birthplace of Islam once in his or her lifetime.

You Catch More Bees with Honey than Vinegar

Most Muslims will be interested in knowing more about Christianity. In some cases they may want to witness to you about Islam. In some cases they are just curious. They all have a lot of false information about Christianity. Their only reference is television and the orthodox worship they see to some extent in their native countries.

You can use the 5 pillars to make a connection to a Muslim in witnessing. If the 5 pillars are brought up, or if you ask them to tell you about them, here is a way you can start your discussion using them as the basis:

- **Confession of Faith** ("As a Christian I believe what the Torah says, "hear O Israel, The LORD our God, the LORD is one.") Deut.6:4
- **Pray** ("As a Christian I believe what is written in the Injeel (Gospels), ("Pray without ceasing") 1 Thess 5:17
- **Give Alms** (As a Christian I believe what is written in the Injeel (Gospels), (Paraphrase James 1:27, "Reach out to the homeless and widows)
- **Fasting** (As a Christian I believe in fasting. We do not have a public time for it and consider it a private matter between us and God)
- **Pilgrimage** (As a Christian we believe God is present everywhere, but it is enriching if we can visit the places where our faith started)

But, as a Christian I do not believe that my salvation is based on those practices. I am certain of my salvation because God promised to save me by His grace.

Grace Versus Mercy

Islam is a faith of uncertainty. Allah is “capricious” and can at his whim accept the Muslim to paradise or send them to hell. They rely on the “mercy” of Allah. There is no certainty of paradise in Islam except through Jihad. Your certainty of salvation will attract their interest.

Jihad does not necessarily mean what we have come to think of from the 911 attacks against nonbelievers. Technically the Muslim is participating in Jihad if they are “forcefully promoting Islam”. It may be proselytizing or even just public speaking about the faith. It may be them inviting you to see the Mosque or to celebrate the Iftar (Breaking of the fast in Ramadan) with you.

Your encounter with a Muslim

If you believe you are called by God to witness to Muslims then you need more information and study than is provided here. However, if you want to be prepared to share a witness to a Muslim when the opportunity presents itself then what is provided here is probably adequate.

If you want to argue over theology or the pedigree of the Prophet Mohammed then you should rethink witnessing to Muslims.

When you encounter a Muslim:

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to direct you and your conversations. Just a quick whispered word is OK.
- Be courteous and loving. Outside of the close family unit, and in particular outside of the community (umma), most Muslims do not have close friends.
- If you use the name Mohammed, please refer to him as “the prophet Mohammed” or just “the prophet”. No religious Muslim will say his name without a blessing on him.
- Show an interest in their beliefs. Allow them time to articulate their views.
- Become acquainted with their basic beliefs, but unless you really want to know everything it is not important to read the Koran and the Hadith.
- If they suggest or want you to read the Koran ask them to get you a copy in English and ask if you can give them a copy of the Bible in English and their heart language (it may not be Arabic). (The Koran says it is OK to read the Torah (1st five books of the Hebrew Bible), the Zabur (Psalms) and the Injeel (Gospels).
- Ask lots of questions about Islam. You will probably discover they do not know a lot of answers for your questions.
- Ask them if they would like to know what you believe.
- Be willing to examine passages of the Qur’an concerning their beliefs. You don’t have to respond.
- Stick to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith but also take time to respond to all sincere questions.
 1. Point out the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ for salvation.
 2. Stress that because of Jesus, His cross, and resurrection, one may have the full assurance of salvation, both now and for eternity (see 1 John 5:13).

3. Share the plan of salvation with the Muslim. Point out that salvation is a gift and not to be earned.

- Be willing to become a friend and involve them in community, “your umma”, or introduce them to a community of saved Muslims.

The “Trap” Questions

You may be asked questions that will become a “trap” unless you are prepared to give them an answer. They will be expecting your answer to be one that rejects them, their prophet, and their faith. The questions may go something like this:

“What do you think of Islam?”

“What do you think of the Prophet Mohammed?”

“Why does the US government support Israel (Palestine) and allow them to kill the Palestinians?”

The goal in answering these questions is to find some common ground to allow you to continue your witness and generate some curiosity in them about what you just told them without compromising your faith. Here are a few facts about Islam, (although we won’t really totally agree with them in our response), that you can use to provide an answer to these types of questions and keep the door open.

- Muslims believe in one true God, whose name in Arabic, is “Allah”
- Muslims believe in angels, both good and bad
- Muslims believe that God revealed His word to men and women in certain “books”
- Muslims believe in God’s many prophets (including Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and others)
- Muslims believe that there will be a second coming of Jesus that will usher in a last day of judgment
- Muslims believe that Jesus was born of a virgin named Mary
- Muslims believe that God is involved in human affairs
- Muslims believe in life after death

So here are some ideas regarding how to answer those types of questions that will allow you to tell the truth, but still have an opportunity to continue the contact with them.

What do you think of the prophet Mohammed? – “The prophet Mohammed wanted to restore the worship of the one true God. As a Christian I share that desire.”

What do you think of Muslims? – “Muslims believe God revealed Himself in the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospels. As a Christian, I share that belief. Muslims believe that Jesus will return and usher in a time of final judgment for which all men and women need to be prepared. As a Christian I share that belief.”

What do you think of the Koran? – “I’m sure it must be an interesting book, but as a Christian I do not see how it adds to the other revelations Muslims accept – The Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels.”

Why does the US government support Israel and allow them to kill Palestinians? – “I am not here representing the US government. I just wanted to find out more about you and your faith.”

Finally, **please be sure to ask them if there is anything you can pray for them about.** In particular mention that you will have your church begin praying for them in whatever matter they bring up. Write it down and do what you told them. Most Muslims will be shocked that you will do that.

Be sure to follow-up with them and don't hesitate to invite them to your church activities.

Finally, remember that it is the Holy Spirit that convicts and draws them to Jesus. Let Him work.

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