



*Guidelines for*  
**Sharing the Faith**  
**with Your Muslim Friend**

*The Do's and the Don'ts*

by Rev. Bernie Lutz

English Guidelines for Sharing the Faith with Your Muslim  
Friend: The Do's and the Don'ts  
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Soli Deo Gloria!

## **COVER PHOTO**

Pictured on the front cover are the late parents of Rev. Hesham Shehab.

## PREFACE

Statisticians tell us that the world population in 2015 is more than 7.1 billion people, and that 1.6 billion are of the Muslim faith. The Islamic faith is shattering all population growth records for a number of reasons, including polygamy, large families, and the desire to monitor world power, both religious and secular.

As believers, we confess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. We have many reasons for finding and using the best guidelines possible for a winsome witness with our Muslim friend. First of all, believers are duty bound, that is, committed to the task of witnessing the Christian faith. This witness is one of love and concern rather than motivated by the use of a sword or persecution (John 14:6). Secondly, believers have experienced an inner freedom that brings peace, joy and contentment. Believers are anxious to share this inner joy with others. Thirdly, believers confess that there is only one way to an eternal life with God that never ends.

The writer of this booklet has had a variety of practical cross-cultural missionary involvement. God has led him by the nose into a variety of global situations that forced him to find the most winsome way of sharing the Gospel. Often, he learned the hard way: the school of hard knocks!

In Milwaukee and Chicago, it was sharing with elementary school children. While serving at Concordia College, Edmonton, Alberta, it was helping high school and college students to become fulltime church workers. In Papua New Guinea it was telling illiterate Engas of a God who loves them and who is more powerful than all the *Timangos* and *Putititis* that surround them. In Nigeria it was helping seminary students grasp the meaning of winsome evangelism among Muslim peoples. In Lebanon it was finding a way to witness in a winsome way to the local person on the street. In South Sudan, it was creating a seminary curriculum and assisting the new Christians in becoming a recognized group of Lutheran Christians. In the

parish ministry in the Midwest, it was trying to find a winsome way to reach people who knew God in a small way but didn't really want to take on the full challenge of scattering the Seed in their daily activities.

I want to thank the Lutheran Heritage Foundation of Macomb, Michigan for their interest in publishing SHARING YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND. Special thanks to Rev. Dr. Robert Rahn, founder of LHF, and to Rev. Dr. Matt Heise, LHF executive director, for the second printing of this book. The information in this book is critical and urgently needed.

The writer does not claim to be a super cross-cultural specialist in sharing the Gospel in a winsome way; rather, he considers himself to be a tool that God has used in various ways. If there are any success stories, all praise, honor and glory be to the God of love. One Arabic phrase is his favorite, which is, "Allah mahabah." God is love. This love of God in the heart is the key to a winsome witness. Such love motivates the elect to seek the best method possible in sharing the Good News about Jesus.

In sharing the Good News about Jesus effectively, God's infinite love must be closely connected to each and every aspect of witnessing and sharing the message of hope.

GUIDELINES FOR WINSOME WITNESSING includes some do's and some don'ts helpful for sharing the Gospel in any ethnic culture. It has been created with special emphasis on reaching into the heart and life of a person who confesses Allah as his god, and Mohammed, Allah's messenger. *Missio deo* signifies God's desire for the enfranchisement of all the elect as they plant His Seed.

The current surge of the ISIS in the Levant, radical Islam is attempting to create a new Islamic State, a new Caliphite State. These events have forced the world to take a second but very careful look at Islam, its goals and purpose. The black and white flag of ISIS summarizes the *shahada*, the declaration that

there is one god and Mohammed is his messenger. Few Muslim nations or leaders have yet to take a stand to speak out against the extremism that has shocked the world. King Abdullah of Jordan is one example of a rare attempt to denounce and destroy radical Islam that is growing rapidly around the world.

You will find no footnoting or reference material in this booklet. I have listed books that have helped me personally to share the Gospel. In my experience, I have found that one-to-one conversations with a Muslim is the best way to read the Qu'ran. As in many religions, the mass simply follow the leader, believe the leader and do not become overly involved.

Special thanks to Missionary Rev. Hesham Shehab, living with death threats over his head for his faith in Christ's love and forgiveness. He helped to focus on the many sensitive issues that are causing a great divide in world nations. I have included special writings from Rev. Hesham on ISIS and Jesus and Islam. And with tears, I thank my late wife, Roberta, faithful and patient, who carefully read the first printing of this booklet, helped to shape and put this booklet into a meaningful and useful unit. And since the passing of Roberta, special thanks to Dr. Elly McDaniel, my new partner in life as of May 16, 2015, for her suggestions, especially a glossary of terms to help readers understand the Muslim faith. Believe me, much improved!

### **Bernie Lutz**

Saved to share the Good News with my Muslim friends!

Let us Go! Tell the Story! Now!

2015

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## PART ONE

### Winsome Activities in Sharing the Good News with Your Muslim Friend

#### 1. BE FRIENDLY

As Roberta and I walked the crowded cornice of Beirut, Lebanon, I would ask myself over and over, "How can I share God's love with these Muslims who are walking the same cornice with me?" By now I had learned that friendliness was step one in sharing the faith. Friendliness is the door to a Muslim's heart and life. Even before I understood the basic teachings of Islam and what they believe, accepting them as a friend was critical in reaching into their spiritual lives.

I knew what I believed; now I needed patience to share with those whose hearts suddenly opened, giving me an opportunity to tell them about God's love in His Son Jesus. I needed to recognize each person as a fellow human being. This truth had been planted deeply in my mind. I felt encouraged to share these thoughts generated by those I had rubbed shoulders with in various and meaningful ways. Faithful missionaries like: Ken Cragg, Roland Miller, Phil Parshall, Ernest Hahn, Hesham Shehab, Fadi Khairallah, Maurice Jahshan, past LCMS President Al Barry, Paul Heerboth, Gen. Jack Vessy (ret.), Otto Hientze, Bill Burce and other Muslim/Christian scholars. In order to expect a positive response from our Muslim friend, we must look for ways to present our message in a friendly way. A friendly personality is the key to opening the door to a Muslim's heart. **Far more important than our words is the attitude with which we speak.**

Be prepared to reach out and be a friend. Not just, "Hi." True friendship is unconditional. Unlimited. Real. Not a shirt sleeve love.

I asked myself, "Is my reaching out genuine? Do I really mean what my words have said to my Muslim friend?" I learned that reaching out means more than a friendly greeting.

***Why is friendliness the key to sharing the Gospel? Why is friendliness so illusive?***

## **2. BE READY TO TRUST YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND**

Your relationship with your Muslim friend is similar to that of developing a relationship with a spouse, relative or neighbor. When you trust someone you believe him/her and accept him/her unconditionally. Black hair, beards, mustache, and a Middle East accent may unconsciously cause lack of trust.

One day, a male nursing student visited my office on the fifth floor of a bank building in Beirut. He was filled with questions about Jesus. My interpreter warned me that Adham might be an Hezbollah spy, a Shi'ite terrorist group supported by Iran. "Be careful, have nothing to do with him!" he warned. I felt that Adham was a genuine, honest young man. I worked with him for three months, and one night just before we left for the USA on furlough, he said, "Dr. Lutz, I have Christ in my heart, and I will have him there as long as I live!" Tears of joy flowed down my cheeks! The power of God's Word! He still calls me from Beirut and tells me how lonely he is to be a Christian as he continues to live with his Shia'a family. Thank God I was led to trust this young man.

***What factors lead to distrust? Trust?***

## **3. BE VERY CLEAR IN SPEAKING YOUR MESSAGE**

Jesus loves everyone. Jesus loves Muslims, too. Think through what you are going to say carefully. Arrange in your mind exactly what you need to communicate with your Muslim friend.



Jot down and pray about the message you have in your heart. Determine what and how you want to share your thoughts spontaneously. See the example below:

- 1) Man's sinful condition (lost)
  - 2) God's view of sin (divides and excludes)
  - 3) What God did for lost sinners (justifies)
  - 4) How the Good News becomes a blessing (sanctifies)
  - 5) God calls sinners "friends," not "servants" (all by and through Grace)
- God loves you very much, my friend.

***Why is clarity so important in witnessing to a Muslim? What doctrine is so easily confused and destroys Christian witness?***

#### **4. BE A GOOD LISTENER**

Many people are not good listeners. The conversation is to be dialogical, that is, two way. You can let your Muslim friend know that you are listening in a number of ways. Your eye contact with him/her will be constant and sure. Your head, body and limbs will demonstrate your keen interest in what is being said. Your response and any question you pose will help to kindle mutual respect. You may feel tempted to interrupt your Muslim friend before he/she has finished speaking. Be patient. Listen carefully and your Muslim friend will respect you for your patience.

***Why is it difficult to be a good listener? What can a person do to become a better listener?***

#### **5. BE AWARE OF SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS**

We readily assume the outcome of many things. Do not assume anything. Be confident in what you know and believe (the Apostles' Creed). Study and learn about the Muslim faith. This

mutual understanding will help you to avoid theological differences that close doors to the heart of a Muslim.

Be able to discern basic doctrinal differences. Many biblical stories your Muslim friend shares with you may sound very much as you have learned and studied from the Word, but actually differ greatly. For example, consider the patriarch Abraham. Muslims and Christians revere Abraham, but there are significant differences in what is taught in each religious faith.

***Why is it so important to understand the basic teachings of Islam?***

## **6. BE READY TO TEACH, TRAIN, AND EQUIP**

There are some helpful materials available that tell about the religion and the life of a Muslim. Use materials that are unquestionably true and honest. It is difficult to find unbiased materials, but there are good, helpful materials available that will help train and equip you for reaching out to your Muslim friend. To teach is to make known new facts. It is only when we become friends that we can properly instruct and educate our Muslim friend.

***Whose task is it to train, teach and equip a Christian convert? What can you do to help your Muslim friend become a follower of Jesus?***

## **7. BE READY FOR A LONG TERM COMMITMENT**

Your desire to share the Gospel will prompt you to volunteer your living room, kitchen, your home. The location or setting where you meet with your Muslim friend is important. There are a number of acceptable places for getting together. It may be his/her home or your home. It may be a restaurant or outdoor park. The key factor in finding a congenial setting is to avoid offensive settings. When meeting with a German, a bar

area might be a great place to meet, but when meeting with your Muslim friend, avoid places that annoy, irritate or offend. Be ready to use your automobile for transportation. Many Muslims live on a meager existence, do not have an automobile and travel can be expensive. Your awareness of his/her need is important in helping your friend to meet with you on a regular basis.

Your Muslim friend will have many important matters weighing heavily upon his/her heart. The closer to the day when your Muslim friend is baptized, the greater his/her need for your support. When that day for confessing Christ as Savior arrives, your Muslim friend will lose family support and even have death threats coming from his/her family.

Are you willing to stand by your Muslim friend in crisis after crisis? The need for your love, encouragement, prayer, and support will vary from time to time, but it is a major factor for the conversion of your Muslim friend.

***Why do you think some Christians refuse to use our homes for Christian witness? Is total commitment really necessary? Where does the local congregation of believers fit into the outreach to the unreached in your community?***

## **8. BE READY TO INVOLVE YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND**

The relationship that you want to start and fan into warmth and beauty will not be a one way street. The relationship is to be a mutual relationship, one that involves activity for both parties. You may have newspaper articles to read, a Bible passage or book to read and study. Once you become acquainted with your Muslim friend, you may reciprocate with recipes, food, or simple activities such as changing a bicycle tire or making a bird house.

Make plans to be one step ahead of your Muslim friend. It is

important that you have a goal, and know the objectives that will help you reach that goal. There will be no deception or trickery. Your Muslim friend may remain adamant and very vocal about his/her Muslim faith. Do not let this offend you or anger you. Your plan is simply to plant the Seed. Knowing where you want to go with your Muslim friend is critical in keeping one step ahead of your planned or unplanned visits.

***Can you think of ways that you could involve your Muslim friend in strengthening your friendship?***

## **9. BE HONEST BUT HUMBLE**

When you learn something new from your Muslim friend and his/her faith, be ready to say, "I didn't know that!" Do not give the impression that you know everything about everything.

While you do not accept the teachings of Islam, you will respect what your Muslim friend shares with you. It is important that you let your Muslim friend know that while you do not agree with him/her, you are really interested in hearing what his/her faith is all about.

***How can a person be "just plain honest" and "filled with friendliness but do this with humility?" What do you think humility means in this instance?***

## **10. BE FLEXIBLE**

God's Word is true and He is changeless. When listening to a Muslim share his/her faith, many teachings of Islam will differ and at times seem strange to you as a Christian. Be ready to say, "Thank you for sharing that with me. Would you like to hear what the Bible has to say about that?"

Being flexible simply means to listen and respond even though you do not believe and accept what the Muslim faith teaches.

Being flexible does not mean that you let the Gospel of Christ be changed into works of man.

Be ready to accept criticism. At times your Muslim friend will criticize what you believe, teach and confess. Your Muslim friend will challenge you on many issues and in many ways. Your task is to listen to these challenges. Your response is to be one of love and to help your Muslim friend hear the Gospel, clearly and distinctly.

***What areas of our relationship with a Muslim are flexible? What are some areas that are not flexible?***

## **11. BE THOROUGH**

Avoid abstract terms which confuse, and when given a choice, use concrete concepts. Many Muslim and Christian teachings require new words and often new concepts. When you meet with a Muslim friend, it is important that all terminology is clearly explained so there are no assumptions. It is important to take one theological concept at a time, and not jump from doctrine to doctrine. Use complete, short sentences. Ask questions that help you to know if your Muslim friend understands what you are saying.

Be ready to exchange ideas. Work on a positive attitude as you schedule your sharing sessions with your Muslim friend. Do not hold back; exchange your ideas with your Muslim friend. Let him/her know exactly what you are thinking about on a given subject.

Be ready to change gears. As you become acquainted with your Muslim friend, you will see the need to move more quickly through a given subject or perhaps to slow down and be more thorough.

***What are some dangers found in the sharing of the Gospel with a Muslim? What fears do you think you might have if you were to share your faith with a Muslim?***

## **12. BE READY TO REFRAIN FROM THINGS THAT ANNOY**

A Muslim's diet is quite different from Western diets. You should be aware of foods that he/she cannot eat or drink. Pork should never be served. Be aware that many sausages have pork included in their ingredients, and you should avoid serving your Muslim friend such foods.

Be ready to avoid alcohol. In most countries of the world, a glass of wine is inviting and offered to guests. Muslims avoid alcohol and it is important not to offer any alcoholic drinks to your Muslim friend. If you meet in your home, alcohol containers should be covered or placed in an area where they cannot be seen by your Muslim friend.

***Is there ever a time when you, a Christian, may choose to indulge in some personal activity that might annoy your Muslim friend?***

## **13. BE READY TO SHARE GOD'S LOVE IN A WINSOME WAY**

When we fully comprehend God's love in Christ, we spontaneously seek opportunities to share this love with other people, especially our close family members, neighbors and those who have not heard the Gospel.

The success of sharing the Gospel frustrates, angers and hinders the work of Satan and his evil forces (Rev. 12:12).

**John 3:16** God so loved the world...  
**I John 4:19** We love Him because He first loved us.  
**John 15:15** Jesus calls us friends, not servants...  
**I Corinthians 15:57-58** Stand firm; victory is ours.

***Is it possible to fully comprehend the love of God?  
Why is a spontaneous response sometimes the best response?***

## 14. BE READY FOR A LENGTHY RELATIONSHIP

Outreach with the Gospel has eternal ramifications. Whenever we share the Gospel of salvation, we will be ready for a friendship that will never end. The activity that you plan and incorporate into this relationship will lead to ties that unite and bring warmth and love. When your friend becomes a believer, you will continue sharing with him/her and make efforts to build an even stronger relationship. Should your Muslim friend remain aloof and unresponsive, you will now accept the task of finding a new better way to build a meaningful relationship. Be ready for a long, full friendship.

Friendship is unlimited! We want to be winsome in a way that brings our Muslim friend into a new friendship with Jesus. Church growth statistics remind us that over 90 percent of people who come to church do so because of a friend. As we get to know people better we can then love them better, too!

***Why could even the thought of a lengthy relationship with your Muslim friend tend to agitate you? What needs changing in your heart if you feel this way?***

### IMPORTANT NOTES

# Responses Which Are Not Winsome

## 1. DON'T BE A PHONY

Do not wear a mask. Nothing can turn a person off faster than a false impression. Be yourself. Let everything about yourself be real and genuine. Friendship must be honest. Before we offer Jesus to our Muslim friend, we offer our hand of love and friendship. Our friendship does not discriminate in any way. We too, must receive everyone, including our Muslim friend, on an equal basis. We are all in need of Jesus, who is our Friend and who calls us friends. John 15:15.

Do not put on a smug attitude, a pious front, or over-do the cheerful spirit. Just be yourself and share your faith in Christ in a simple, honest manner.

***Why is being a phony so atrocious? Should you be concerned about being a phony witness to your Muslim friend? How can you avoid appearing as a phony as you testify to the Good News?***

## 2. DO NOT BE A KNOW-IT-ALL PERSON

Listen carefully to your Muslim friend. Do not give the impression that you are a know-it-all! Do not let the conversation become only one way – your way. When you open your heart and life to your Muslim friend and listen, he/she will open up and share honestly with you.

Do not let your eyes wander. Your eyes are the road to your heart and mind. When your eyes wander and are not focused on your friend, it will hinder the communication process with your Muslim friend.

***What are the characteristics of a "know-it-all" person? Why would such a person turn off your Muslim friend?***



### **3. DO NOT ASSUME ANYTHING**

When sharing with your Muslim friend, do not assume that he/she understands what you want to discuss with him/her. Do not assume that your Muslim friend wants a shorter or longer meeting time. Do not assume that your Muslim friend does not drink coffee. Do not be legalistic. It is quite easy to become legalistic in one's approach to theology. ("This is the way it is and that is that!") Do not make unreasonable demands from your Muslim friend.

***What often happens when you make plans on assumptions? Why is failure imminent when we assume things?***

### **4. DO NOT RIDICULE YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND'S FAITH**

It may seem natural at times to ridicule your Muslim friend's faith without actually intending to do so. To avoid ridicule that may offend your Muslim friend, it is very important to be aware of sensitive issues that exist between Christianity and Islam. Know the true facts about Islam. While you will often disagree with your Muslim friend, you will avoid ridicule and lack of respect when discussing matters of his/her faith.

Above all, do not make fun of the Qur'an or Mohammed. The Qur'an is not to be thrown, dropped, or tossed about as if it were insignificant. The Muslim prophet, Mohammad, is to be respected as a special leader. This doesn't mean that you will accept the Qur'an or Mohammad. You will also respect God's Word, the Bible, at all times.

***How can you effectively share with your Muslim friend without making light of Islam when sensitive issues are discussed?***

## 5. DO NOT PERMIT ANY FALSE TEACHINGS

God's Word is truth and cannot be changed, ignored or in any way shaped to please men. It alone has the power to save and condemn. When you are confronted with a situation that compromises the Gospel, the truth must be stated, without apology or fear. God alone opens hearts to the Gospel, our work is to share the Good News. When differences of doctrine are noted, you must share the truth with firmness and love.

Do not be afraid to tell the truth in a spirit of love. You will do your Muslim friend a disservice if you do not point out the way to eternal life through Christ. He/she will be disappointed if you do not share your faith and your concern with him/her. A Muslim is deeply rooted in his/her faith and will understand your reason for wanting to tell the Good News about Jesus. Like Andrew, we too will say, "My friend, come and see!" John 1:46.

***How should I respond to my Muslim friend when what is said is in direct opposition to the Word of God? How far do I go in withholding the Truth about life and salvation to avoid any conflict that could alienate my witness to my Muslim friend?***

## 6. DO NOT BE STINGY WITH GOD'S LOVE

You have the Good News and you believe the Good News about Jesus. You believe that by God's grace you already have eternal life through faith. Do not be stingy about explaining the real Triune God to your friend. It is helpful to outline in your mind or on paper what you want to tell your friend about Jesus. The danger is that we try to share more than enough, and consequently, our Muslim friend is unable to absorb it all and we accomplish little.

When sharing with your Muslim friend, be sure to speak of a powerful and loving God. Use illustrations from the Bible and your life, to demonstrate God's love. Do not avoid speaking of

God. You will find this topic interesting, because your friend, the Muslim, also has something he/she will share with you.

***Are you better at speaking the Law or the Gospel? Why is speaking the Gospel so important to your Muslim friend?***

## **7. DO NOT USE ALCOHOL**

Muslims do not use alcohol, so to offer your Muslim friend an alcoholic drink is offensive. Avoid the subject by abstaining and by offering something wholesome and acceptable to your Muslim friend. When meeting in your home, remove those signs in your home which would indicate that you indulge in the use of alcohol. For example, wine bottles, cases of beer and such things may indicate that, for you, alcohol is important in your life.

If your home has a bar, it would be best to avoid meeting in that room, as this may give your Muslim friend the wrong impression and turn him/her against meeting with you.

***How does Romans 15:1 apply to avoiding the use of alcohol when sharing with your Muslim friend (e.g. avoid giving offense to the weak)?***

## **8. DO NOT MEET AT CHURCH**

While you may feel comfortable and at ease in your church setting, your Muslim friend is not ready to meet at church, even if the meeting is held in the church basement or parish hall. Just coming into a Christian setting is a huge step and only one step in the process of joining the Christian church. Your Muslim friend may not be ready to visit with you in a church setting. Perhaps in time he/she will want and perhaps even welcome such a meeting place. That decision will come soon enough.

***Why is finding a comfortable sharing area an important part of sharing the Gospel with your Muslim friend?***

**9. DO NOT PRESSURE YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND**

You want your Muslim friend to come to saving faith. You may not even realize it, but your desire for this to take place may enter your conversations and the action that you take when you visit with your friend. Of course you will invite, encourage and share your joy in worshiping God, but do not set time limits with your Muslim friend. Do not give up. Zwemer was a missionary to the Muslim for over 40 years and was blessed with only twelve converts to the Christian faith! You do not make converts. The Holy Spirit changes hearts. God uses us to scatter the Seed. Believe and trust God with your whole heart and soul. Do not give up easily. Matthew 10:14 indicates that there is a time to leave a place and go to another with the Good News, but only after honest effort has been taken to tell the Good News about Jesus!

You are eager to have your Muslim friend convert to the faith and be baptized! You water and fertilize with the Gospel, the Holy Spirit will work the change of heart. Be patient.

***Are you excited and happy about the opportunity to share the Good News with your Muslim friend? How might your expectations hinder your relationship with your Muslim friend?***

**10. DO NOT FALL PREY TO SYNCRETISTIC THINKING  
(that is, we all believe the same thing)**

There will be a danger of attempting to water down Christian doctrine that, at least on the surface, makes the Christian teaching and Islamic teaching agree, when in fact they do not. Syncretistic thoughts are always near. You must be careful not

to agree when there is a difference and to agree when there is unity of thought.

***Why is it tempting to become syncretistic in sharing the faith? Have you ever found yourself in a position to water down Christian doctrine?***

## **PART TWO**

### **The Challenge**

There are many concerns we need to consider. For instance: Is it possible that the differences between Christianity and Islam are so vast, so extreme, that there will always be constant hatred and warfare? What did Jesus mean when He said that His Followers should go to all nations?

(1) Is it good to avoid the term, "Jesus, the Son of God", when sharing with Muslims? (2) Why is it necessary to use caution when discussing the Qur'an? (3) How would you feel if a Muslim corrected you, a Christian, on the basis of the Bible?

### **WHO ARE THE MUSLIMS**

"Who are the Muslims?" needs to be asked and the topic thoroughly explored.

Islam: Islam means submission, not peace. It is a religious, cultural and political system. Islam is a culture, not a personal faith. There is a folk Islam which edifies Mohammed and makes him divine, and also includes Muslim saints and focuses more on superstitions, such as the Evil Eye, magic, jinns, etc.

We discuss Islamic history. Islamic history is an essential part of a Muslim's world view, and since Islam is a shame culture, the present backwardness and defeat of the Muslim world

weigh heavily on the communal awareness of Muslims and their world view. This leads to the spread of conspiracy theories in the Muslim world.

## **UNDERSTANDING ISLAM FOR EFFECTIVE OUTREACH**

Jesus tells us to love all people, even our enemies! What does it mean to love a Muslim? Does this mean avoiding the truth about salvation? Does this mean that we are to avoid telling a Muslim about Jesus, the Son of God, because it may offend him/her? If we really believe the truth of the Gospel and what it means for each one of us, then we will want to share this Good News about Jesus with our friend, the Muslim. The important point of this work is to recognize that there is an effective way and a not-so-effective way of communicating the Gospel. Prayerfully, we will study and learn the best ways possible to communicate the Gospel so that our Muslim friends will open their hearts to listen to the Word of the Spirit, and through it come to know Jesus, the Word, who became flesh.

One evening, about 30 kilometers east of Beirut in the mountains that surround this beautiful city, a group of Hezbollah asked the presenter, "Where do you find your inner peace?" What prompted their question? Was it the constant tension between Lebanon and Israel? Was it some inner struggle that brought this topic to be explored? When sharing the Gospel, we need to find the best possible method to share this Good News. It is important to know what the person you are speaking to actually believes about the way to salvation.

When considering outreach to the Muslim, it is important to note that there are different kinds of Muslim sects. It is necessary to first of all determine some basic facts about the person before we proceed with our communication. For instance, is this person a man or a woman? A Sunni or a Shi'a? From Saudi Arabia, Indonesia or Pakistan?

The following subject areas are offered as a brief description of Islam's basic teachings. The information is not complete, but

will help in understanding Islam. This information will help to make your visit with your Muslim friend fruitful. Understanding basic Islam will help you to communicate the Gospel with those who embrace Islam. We will never fully understand or comprehend all of the differences which exist between each Islamic sect; however, it will be very helpful for us to have a basic understanding of Islam, its teachings, and, an awareness of some of the major differences found in Islam.

**The following nine (9) considerations are helpful in carrying on a meaningful conversation with a Muslim:**

### **I. CONSIDERATION ONE: ALLAH IS ONE**

Without doubt, the Islamic teaching about Allah rates number one in trying to understand any Muslim in this world. The *Shahada* is a Muslim's creed: There is one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger. All Muslims look to Allah as a great god. From the taxi driver, the local imam, the professor in the classroom, the woman of the house, Allah is revered, honored, and confessed in a very special way.

Many Muslim homes have a special framed picture listing 99 different names for Allah. The two first names of this list of 99 for Allah are the most compassionate (*al Rahman*) and the most merciful (*al-Rahim*). Missing from this list of 99 beautiful names of Allah is "God is love" (*Allah mahabah*). This is the heart of your reason for outreach to your Muslim friend!

Two attributes of Allah stand out for a Muslim: merciful and compassionate. One finds these two expressions used in the Qur'an at the beginning of every chapter (except one), Hadith, all Islamic discussions and in the Friday worship service.

Sura One, the opening verse of the Qur'an, begins, "Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!" From the man on the street who polishes shoes to the suicide bomber, all exclaim, "*Allahu akbar!*" God is greater, not just great. They include here

the thought that God is greater than anyone or anything in this world. Allah stands alone! He has all power.

One of the common Arabic expressions that is used is *inshallah*. Inshallah is a term that means, "If Allah wills, it will be so." Very often in a Muslim's conversation one hears this expression, "inshallah" – Allah will save me "if he wills!"

Certainly the Christian who confesses any of the Three Christian Symbols (creeds) will find the creeds a special commonality that affords a timely opening for you to begin a conversation with your Muslim friend.

In Islam, Allah stands alone. The Muslim is satisfied to give Allah all honor and glory. Allah is not to be studied as an object or thing. The Muslim accepts the Qur'an's teaching concerning Allah, and that is sufficient for him. To constantly explore, research and investigate matters about Allah are of little interest. Allah is a mystery in many respects, and as a good Muslim, he accepts what the Qur'an has revealed. That is it. All Muslims share this belief, "God is Greater than all else, and this God is one."

It is beyond the comprehension of a Muslim to even think of Allah as having a son. This is blasphemy. Because of Islam's strong teaching regarding this subject, it is advisable to delay a conversation about God who has a son. For a Muslim, the Christian truth that God's love is so great for sinners that He gave His Son, Jesus, for the lost is blasphemy. Eventually the conversation will lead to this necessary and vital topic, but it is important to first establish a friendship, and then step-by-step enter those areas of theology which are so deep that even we Christians cannot comprehend.



## II. CONSIDERATION TWO: MOHAMMED (ALLAH'S MESSENGER)

Growing up in rural Northern Minnesota and attending a one room school, I clearly recall that books and teachers alike referred to people of the Islamic faith as Mohammedans. Then after World War II, as the Middle East oil products became more valuable, there was a strong reaction from within Saudi Arabia to resist the name, Mohammedanism, and insisted on using the name Islam for those who are followers of Mohammed.

Muslims reject the idea of Mohammed being on the same level as Allah. They deny the prophet any worship, but hold him in very high regard. Mohammed and Islam are very closely linked together, since it was Allah's chosen, Mohammed, who was the main entity to introduce Islam to the Arab Peninsula. They say, "Mohammed is only a human being, a man."

Mohammed was born in 570 A.D. and died in 632 A.D. It is interesting to note that Muslims do not credit Mohammed with founding Islam, for they believe that Islam goes back to Adam. The Qur'an states that Abraham called himself the first Muslim.

Muslim teachers state that Mohammed received his first visit from Allah, through the angel *Jibril* (Gabriel) when he was 40 years old. Mohammed was married to Khadijah and living in the city of Mecca. He is said to have received visits from Jibril for the next twelve years. During these twelve years, Mohammed unsuccessfully tried to convince the residents of Mecca to stop their idolatry of worshiping 360 gods and accept the god he believed to be the true and only god.

In 622, Mohammed was forced to leave Mecca and move to Medina, located about 200 miles north of Mecca. There, in Medina, Mohammed is said to have received the final revelations from Allah.

Mohammed is believed to be Allah's messenger and is said to be the final messenger, or prophet, of Allah. The Qur'an states

he is "the seal of the prophets" (Sura 33:40). Mohammed soon became a model for his followers. What Mohammed did, a follower must do also. What was reported about his personal life, including marriage and personal habits (such as bathroom procedures), became sacred and were followed without variance. Mohammed's sayings were collected, recorded and shared. These reported sayings, called Hadith, are very valuable for making decisions on matters where the Qur'an is vague. There are more than 100,000 doubtful Hadith. These traditions are said to number over 7000 authentic sayings and continue to guide Muslims in leading a proper life.

After Khadijah died, Mohammed married many women. Among his many wives was a Christian woman and also a Jewish woman. He took a six-year-old child to be his wife and consummated this marriage when she was nine years old. Mohammed's wife, Khadijah, gave him four daughters who lived beyond the infant stage of life. The many wives of Mohammed were unable to give him a living son who could have assumed spiritual leadership when he died in 632.

Muslims revere Mohammed so highly that whenever his name is spoken or heard, people respond, "Peace be upon him!"

### **III. CONSIDERATION THREE: THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION**

The Qur'an is the word of Allah. The word Qur'an means "to recite," and Muslims teach that the Qur'an is the very word of Allah and is to be memorized and spoken. While special clerics study and discuss the writings of the Qur'an, Muslims simply accept this holy book as sacred and refrain from discussing points which, from a human standpoint, may be questioned.

Muslims accept the Scriptures of Moses, called *Torah*, the writings of David called the Psalms, and Gospels of the New Testament, which are called the *Injil*. The Qur'an has 114 chapters, and these are listed by their length, shortest to the longest, except for Sura number one.

The inner walls of mosques are painted with many verses from the Qur'an. The writing is a form of calligraphy that is very colorful and beautiful. The writer has seen the Dome of the Rock Mosque, mosques in Syria, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, and was overwhelmed by the beauty of such writing.

The Qur'an is carried with great honor, never thrown or treated disrespectfully. The reader of the Qur'an often will kiss the Qur'an before reading, and at the conclusion kiss the book reverently before setting it in its proper place in the mosque or in the home. The Qur'an is a very special holy book for the people of Islam.

People of Islam believe that Allah came to various prophets in the past, but that as time went by, the Jews and Christians changed the words and disobeyed Allah. From the beginning of time, Allah sent special prophets to guide his people. He never gave up on his people, even when they turned away from him. God finally sent a prophet to bring the real and final truth, and that prophet was Mohammed. Muslims believe that these prophets were infallible.

The Qur'an refers to Jews and Christians as *People of the Book*. At times the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*) are honored and at other times strongly condemned.

The writer found that in Lebanon, many Muslims were interested in having a Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. (Sunnis and Shi'as) Many Muslims have an interest in the Injil (the Gospel).

#### **IV. CONSIDERATION FOUR: ISLAM'S PUBLIC CONFESSION**

The presenter lived in Hamra, a downtown center of Beirut, Lebanon, which had a population of over 100,000 people. We were surrounded by many mosques, and consequently, at dawn each day, the early morning quiet was shattered with a

call to prayer. This was a very meaningful experience and long remembered!

Every Muslim is required to make public expression of his/her faith. For Islam there is no middle road; either he accepts and publicly demonstrates his faith or he rejects and refuses to publicly confess there is one Allah and Mohammed is his messenger.

The *shahada* is the basic confession of a Muslim. One anonymous writer defined *shahada* as "the confession of Muslim creed": "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah." This is the Muslim's statement of faith: There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger.

Anyone who confesses the *shahada*, and follows through with works that demonstrate this confession, is a Muslim. It is a simple, yet profound statement. It is brief and yet permits a wide variety of beliefs. Muslims around the world share in this confession of faith, yet may differ on many other issues.

As Christians, we, too, can relate to the *shahada* whenever we make confession of our faith in one of the creeds, the common symbols of the Christian faith. Muslims avoid long creedal statements and subject areas that are not clearly understood.

Many points of interest appear in this consideration. We find the field is open for discussion and will be helpful for building bridges into the heart of our Muslim friend. Discussions regarding democratic form of government, women's rights in prayer and worship, or building a community youth center may help to unite and be a positive factor in developing an honest and loving friendship.

## **V. CONSIDERATION FIVE: ISLAM INCLUDES ALL FACETS OF LIFE**

Sura number one of the Qur'an reminds the reader that Allah

created the world and he is called the lord of the worlds. Allah is above all and in all things. He is the one who controls hearts, ambitions and thoughts. Muslims have a word that is used to explain this thought. It is *Tawhid*, or the oneness of Allah.

Islam has a problem with the western world's concept of separation of church and state. For Islam, there is only one state, and that is total devotion to Allah in thought, word and deed. All actions are to demonstrate this in the lifestyle of each Muslim. Muslim means one who surrenders to Allah. Every action of a Muslim is spiritual and relates to service to Allah.

The *Fatiha* (the opening Sura) helps us to understand the oneness of the people of Islam.

### **THE EXORDIUM**

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe  
The Compassionate, the Merciful,  
Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!  
You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help.  
Guide us to the straight path,  
The path of those whom You have favored,  
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,  
*(Muslims believe these are Jews)*  
Nor of those who have gone astray.  
*(Muslims believe these are the Christians)*

Muslims believe that Allah is lord of the universe, and so he is lord of each life as well. It is impossible to separate the sacred from the secular. For instance, Friday – the day for worship and public confession – is no different from Saturday in the Middle East, a day to do business.

Christians would have no real problem in discussing this consideration with a Muslim. The Blue Laws of yesterday went too far to separate the sacred from the secular (i.e., no Sunday paper, no alcohol sold on Sunday, no sports on Sunday). Yet, there is a thread of truth that must be maintained when discussing the

### Third Commandment.

Muslims have always had a difficult time with Islam's teaching on everyday affairs of life. Modern life has placed many heavy challenges on traditional Islam. For instance, it is not always easy (possible?) to put into practice many of Islam's theories regarding God, the Creator of the Universe. Islam has accommodated the letter of the law of the Qur'an. For example, a pilot of an airplane can fulfill his ritual prayer vigil either before or after the flight has been completed. This is true for a Muslim surgeon performing open heart surgery and for those whose activities require constant care.

## **VI. CONSIDERATION SIX: SHARI'A, ISLAMIC RULES FOR LIVING**

For Islam, there is only one set of rules – Allah's! Allah's rules guide all facets of life: government, spiritual, civil, personal. It is nonsense, Muslims believe, to try to separate secular from the spiritual realm. *Shari'a* is the road that leads to peace. Etymologically, *shari'a* is derived from Arabic, meaning "the trodden path." It is the detailed path for Muslims to obey and follow. Rejection of *shari'a* is a rejection of the faith of Islam.

It is through *shari'a* that Islam has been able to evolve as a civilization, a culture, and a comprehensive world order.

There is one god, Allah, and his rule is final. Allah's word is to rule nations and families. There is no difference. Allah's rule is called *shari'a*, the religious law. The Qur'an is basically a book of laws, so when *shari'a* is sought and incorporated into a system to rule the mass, it is then required that the Qur'an and its laws are used to deal with all forms of government, judicial, executive or legislative.

*Shari'a* instructs the Muslim on how and what to eat, how to receive visitors, how to buy and sell, how to slaughter animals,

how to clean himself, sleep, how to go to the toilet, how to lead a government, practice justice, pray, and perform other acts of *ibadat* (worship).

All life is governed by Allah. Period. There are many different kinds of laws, but ritual law and family law are two of the most important laws. For the Muslim, ritual law is that which governs the religious and devotional aspects for everyday life. The family laws deal with matters of marriage, dowry, divorce, inheritance, and endowments.

When, for example, the Qur'an does not speak clearly on some issue, Muslims look to the *Hadith* for guidance (e.g., how quickly should one eat his food, should a Muslim kill all infidels or only some). Shari'a very often becomes the law of the state, especially where Islam is in the majority. In Western nations where there is no major plurality, Muslims fight for the right to observe ritual and obedience to family laws of the Muslim faith.

Thus, in Western societies, where Muslims are in a minority, they demand prayer time, time off for worship, and observance of all the family laws applicable through shari'a.

Some Muslims believe that traditional Islam needs variance and mobility in this modern day of change, while others are fighting for no change at all and argue that the Qur'an is not changeable. Either view, however, accepts the Qur'an and the principles of being under the hand and guidance of Allah.

This consideration offers the communicator an opportunity to discuss a number of topics with his Muslim friend.

## **VII. CONSIDERATION SEVEN: THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS**

The Muslim community is strong. There is a strong spirit of oneness among people of Islam that attracts and makes it painfully difficult for family members to separate from the larg-

er Muslim family. This family spirit of oneness is felt more than it is seen. While we on the outside see divisions and problems, Muslims value the oneness they enjoy with fellow Muslims.

The Arabic word for community is *Umma*. The Umma is the total membership of Islam and the oneness they experience. Umma is not based on family, tribe, clan, nationality, race or language. Simply, Umma is the family community of Allah. Since Allah is the Final Truth in all things, visible and invisible, the community owes him its existence. What Allah says is good for the community is good; what he says is bad is evil, and therefore must be rejected. The Umma is not able to change Allah's laws, for it is divinely established by Allah. The Qur'an states, "You are the noblest community ever raised up for mankind. You enjoin justice and forbid evil. You believe in Allah" (3:110).

The Umma stands for justice and righteousness. Muslims remind us that justice is a treasured virtue. We learn from the Hadith that one of the greatest *jihads* is the word of justice spoken to an unjust leader. The Umma is held together by the principle of unity and equality. The Qur'an states, "The believers are a band of brothers. Make peace among your brothers and fear God, so that you may be shown mercy" (49:10).

The Umma, formed in the 600s, has experienced two very serious problems. These problems have made possible the rise of the Sunni and the Shi'a. The problem arose over leadership for the Umma. The Shi'a believe that the head imam of the Umma should be a descendant of Mohammed. The Shi'a developed a theology of the infallible imam. The Sunni Muslims believe that any qualified Muslim can be a leader, and the authority of the community is based on Shari'a which is derived from the supremacy of the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the consensus of the Umma in all matters. The Sunnis are 85 percent of the Muslims.

On the other hand, Christians do not believe that the systems of political power can establish the Kingdom of God. Jesus showed that the Kingdom of God can never be politically



maintained or established. It is rather through the redemptive suffering love of Jesus Christ that the Kingdom of God becomes present in human history.

The Kingdom of God grows quietly through the means of grace. This Kingdom is the extension of God's love and grace. It is an invisible yeast!

### **VIII. CONSIDERATION EIGHT: EQUALITY IN ISLAM**

The Umma is a very important and precious commodity for Islam, and the opinion of the community gives tremendous strength to major decisions that need to be made. Muslims maintain that each individual person is important and no one is to lord it over another person.

It is argued that the Pilgrimage to Mecca proves the oneness of Islam and that it supports personal equality. Rich and poor, male and female, circumvent the *Ka'bah* as one community in a demonstration of complete and total unity.

Where does individual equality fit into Islam's overall comprehensiveness, its laws, its community? For instance, are all members of Islam actually treated equally? Are there poor Muslims and rich Muslims, are there educated and uneducated, are there kings, princes and paupers, are there religious leaders and common Muslims, men and women? The answer is yes, indeed! There are many differences found among individual members of Islam, and each of these differences has the potential to divide and destroy. Despite these and other factors which tend to make distinctions, Islam vehemently denies that it in any way tolerates discrimination of any form, and it celebrates the oneness found only in the Muslim community.

Therefore, when communicating with a Muslim, it must be understood that even if the equality that one would expect seems lacking, the person you are speaking with doesn't see it

that way. Islam, in general, gives the impression of total equality among members of the community. Yet, it is the individual Muslim who lives and experiences the actuality of sinful mankind. In other words, what is said and what is taught often conflicts with what is actually true.

*The Qur'an clearly teaches that each person is different from the other.* Allah did not make every person the same, but each with different gifts, talents and personalities. At the same time the individual, as a slave of Allah, must also consider the obligations which he owes to Allah as one who surrenders to him. The Muslim must walk a tight rope of decision-making in terms of social, political and economic concerns.

To illustrate briefly, a Muslim businessman makes money. In a sense it belongs to him, yet he is obliged to give alms to the poor. He has the right to make money, but not the right to forget the less fortunate. Also, the matter of human rights is governed by the Qur'an regarding husband and wife, inheritances received by their offspring, matters of the will and testimony in court.

The outsider, non-Muslim, sees the lack of equality in Islam rather than the oneness and unity that it so strongly espouses. However, Muslims believe they are created equal by Allah, they are responsible to Allah, and they have free access to Allah at all times.

Finally, one of the valuable adhesive qualities found in Islam is its ulama, that is, its clergy. Only males may serve as clergy in Islam, and the clergy have a great influence on the direction of Islam in every nation and in every mosque. The clergy lead in worship, offer prayers, attend to the five prayer times scheduled each day and give counsel. The clergy is a very powerful force that connects the people with Allah, his prophet Mohammed and the Qur'an. The clergy have the responsibility to insist on perfect obedience to all the traditions of Islam.

Islamic fundamentalists are now found wherever the Mus-

lim faith is followed. Radical extremists have been identified and appear everywhere Muslims live and work. At this point it seems that only a small percentage of the total world Muslim population practice extreme views of worship and life. One finds within Islam those who tend to look for revival and change within the Islamic faith. The world of Islam has a great distance to go to demonstrate an equality for all Muslims within its doctrines, teachings and its present practice.

## **IX. CONSIDERATION NINE: JIHAD, AN ISLAMIC TRADITION OF AGGRESSION AND SUCCESS**

In the Qur'an, sura 9 discusses the concept of struggling and striving for a deeper and stronger faith. This whole process of growing stronger in the faith and becoming more active is called *jihad*.

The term *jihad* has several meanings and each must be carefully considered. In the first sense, jihad takes on the concept of inner struggle against all evil and Satanic temptations that invade the human heart. Each Muslim is reminded that he must personally struggle against those things which are from Satan. Such evil concerns are very serious because they disobey Allah.

The second sense found in the concept of jihad is more of an outward and physical struggle against those who oppose Allah. Any corruption that appears should be opposed with great aggression. When Islam is threatened, every possible means is to be used to destroy the enemy of Islam. This means not only carrying a sword, but using the sword as well. When oppressors, no matter how vile, permit Muslims to pray, these oppressors may be tolerated. It is when non-Muslim enemies threaten the Islamic faith that severe jihad is necessary. The Qur'an states, "Fight for the cause of Allah with the devotion due to him. He has chosen you, and laid on you no burdens in the observance of your faith, the faith of Abraham your father. In this, as in former scriptures, He has given you the name of Muslims, so that the Apostle may testify against you, and that you your-

selves may testify against your fellow-men" (Sura 22:28).

We consider Mohammed and his use of the jihad for his followers. He survived to see only the beginnings of jihad. Within ten years, his followers added Egypt, Middle East (Fertile Crescent) and Persia to Islam! He was now 62 years old, tired and worn out from warfare and inner fighting that was stressful and took its toll on his health. He had received the Qur'an, become Islam's spiritual and secular leader, and was very successful. When he died, his followers were stunned. It was his friend and compatriot for many years, Abu Bakr, who cemented for all earthly time the connection between Allah and Mohammed as his prophet. At the time of Mohammed's death, Abu Bakr said, "There is no god save Allah, and Mohammed is his Messenger." Abu Bakr stated, "Those who worship Mohammad should know that Mohammed died, but those who worship Allah know that Allah never dies!" Since its inception, Islam has had its times of jihad and war and times of quietness and peace. Today one out of every six persons on this planet earth is a Muslim. One out of four are Christian. However, the Muslim faith is growing faster than the Christian faith.

Today global jihadism has infiltrated into mainstream Islam through *Wahhabism*, and is clearly seen in the *Hezbollah* of Lebanon and the *Al Qaeda*. Usama bin Laden and Aymen al Zawahiri are two illustrations who represented the current global jihadist movement.

Evangelism, as we know it, is now being practiced by Islam. Today, individuals, governments, societies and various Islamic groups are doing actual outreach in a formal way that is called *da'wa*. *Da'wa* means reaching out to someone and calling to them, "come."

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The writer has worked in Nigeria, Africa and the Middle Eastern country of Lebanon and for seven years in South Sudan. He

has found that Muslims, in general, are content to live in the faith that has been imparted to them by their parents, the faith they were born into at the time of their birth. When we have the privilege to actually come into the personal life of a Muslim, sometimes uninvited, we must be very much aware of what I call "hot topics" or "nerve topics." These topics are sensitive issues and affect the inner response of your Muslim friend, with whom you intend to carry on a dialogue. When a "nerve topic" is used, it calls for an immediate reaction which usually ends the sharing process quickly.

The topics chosen are not a final list of concerns, but rather what the presenter considers important for those who wish to effectively share the Good News with a Muslim.

Without a doubt, at the top of the important list of things to remember in visiting with a Muslim is friendship. Jesus calls us friends. Jesus is our Friend. It is Jesus that we share with our friend, the Muslim.

## **IMPORTANT NOTES**

## PART THREE

### TERMINOLOGY HELPFUL FOR SHARING WITH A MUSLIM

When sharing with a Muslim, you will discover that he will often use words that are unfamiliar. The following Arabic words are helpful and important for understanding a Muslim and his faith in Allah. (Note: See also the glossary on page 73.)

*Allah* is very important, and is the name used for God. The term Allah has been used by Christians Arabs for centuries. The Muslim has 99 names for God. Two common terms for Allah are *al-Rahim* (merciful) and *al-Rahman* (gracious). The term Allah was well used long before Mohammad was born. The polytheistic Arabs had established the term allah for their god. A follower of Mohammad or slave of Allah is called a *Muslim*, meaning one who surrenders to God, and *Islam*, surrendering to God. *Qur'an*, sometimes spelled Koran, is the Muslim's holy, inerrant book. This word means to recite.

The first chapter of the Qur'an is called *al-Fatiha* or "The Opening." The chapters of the Qur'an are called *suras*. They believe that Allah used his messenger *Jibra'il* (Gabriel) to give Mohammed revelations. The term *rasul* means a messenger. The term *din* is used to describe religion. *Ramadan* is the month in which Muslims fast. They eat no food, drink no water or have no sex during the daylight hours. A fast is called *sawm*. *Id-al-Adha* is a special festival when Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son (Ishmael). *Hadith* are the many sayings and traditions of Mohammed. The Qur'an, the Hadith (Traditions) and educated opinions of Muslim scholars are used to create *shari'a*, or law of Islam for Muslims. The term *malak* refers to an angel, *jinn* are lesser spirits and evil spirits are called *shaitan*. He often refers to this confession as the *shahada*. It includes "there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger." *Bismi'llah* means "In the name of Allah" and used as an invocation. The term *nabi* refers to one of the prophets used in the Qur'an. The

term *salat* refers to the prayers done five times each day. A Muslim faces toward Mecca when he prays and this direction is called *qibla*. A Muslim school is called a *madrassa*. The day for worship is Friday at noon, and male Muslims then go to the *masjid* (mosque).

A Muslim will refer to *halal*, things permitted, and to *haram*, things forbidden by Shari'a. The money given to help jihad and those in need is called *zakat* (2.5 percent of annual savings; 10 percent of their harvest). When a Muslim visits Mecca, this is called the pilgrimage or *Hajj*. A male is then called *hajj* and a female *hajji*. The Five Pillars of Islam: Shahada, Salat, Zakat, Sawm and the Hajj. The five common beliefs of Islam: faith in God, acceptance of the prophets, acceptance of holy books, acceptance of angels and belief that there is a Judgment Day.

A person who does not believe is *kafir*, or guilty of blasphemy. A person who commits idolatry is *mushirk*. The term for Judgment Day is *yawm al-din*.

The term *jihad* has several meanings, but basically means to struggle. An act of war to defend Islam or expand the boundaries of the Islamic state is also called jihad. A *fatwa* is a statement by an Islamic authority. People of the Book, that is, Jews and Christians, are *ahl al-kitab*.

A Muslim greeting: *as-salam oleikum*, meaning "peace be with you."

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

It is very important that an evangelist be aware of basic Arabic terminology, and recognize what a Muslim believes by the use of these terms. When sharing with a Muslim, the communication is to be dialogical (that is, both parties responding).

A basic summary that I have personally found helpful:

1. The reason for the sharing is based on love.
2. Friendship and concern are to be indicated in the tone of voice.
3. No finger pointing; only use the pronoun "we."
4. Use both God's Law and God's Gospel with the same tone of voice.
5. Trust God the Holy Spirit to bless your visit.
6. Visit as the Word is shared. (Psalm 37:5)

## **IMPORTANT NOTES**



## PART FOUR

### ISLAM'S UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION

Muslims often think about death and what may or may not follow death. The Qu'ran refers to the topic salvation, but has no sure way about how to find paradise. The term "salvation" is not commonly used by Islam and therefore this term has not been used. Muslims have a different concept or view of heaven. Unfortunately, this new life in paradise depends upon the number of good works or the absence of evil works found in the life of a Muslim. In the beginning, Mohammed did not use the term salvation and there is very little information from the early history of Islam on the subject.

Muslims do not believe or teach that the human nature is sinful, so therefore they believe we do not need a savior. They do teach that there is a hell, where there are various degrees of punishment. Some can work their way out of hell; some cannot and must suffer eternally.

We consider some very important doctrinal points which deal with the subject "salvation." The main concern for the average Muslim is how to escape Allah's displeasure and wrath, not how to find peace with Allah. The question arises, "What does Islam teach about soteriology?" (the work of Christ that saves) Does the specific term "salvation" occur in Islam? How does disobedience and sin fit into the picture of Paradise for a Muslim? Is there a hell for sinners? If so, how can one escape Allah's punishment? How can one escape the fires of hell in Islam? Is a Muslim troubled about the uncertainty of his salvation? How is it possible to move from the thought, "I am saved, **if Allah wills it**" to "I am saved?"

Related topics to consider: Original sin in Islam, good works and forgiveness of sin in Islam and the need for a Savior in Islam.

# JESUS IN ISLAM

By Rev. Hesham Shehab

Isa Ibn Maryam (English: Jesus, son of Mary), or Jesus in the New Testament, is considered to be a messenger of God in Islam who was sent to guide the Children of Israel, with a new scripture, al-Injil (the Gospel). The belief that Jesus is a prophet is required in Islam. This is reflected in the fact that he is clearly a significant figure in the Qur'an, appearing in 25 verses. It states that Jesus was born to Virgin Mary (Arabic: Maryam).

Jesus is described in different verses in the Qur'an. Jesus is also recognized as a prophet and messenger of God. The most common reference to Jesus occurs in the form of "Ibn Maryam" (son of Mary), sometimes preceded with another title, usually al-Masih. It is the most frequently mentioned title which translates to "the Messiah." However, this does not correspond to the Christian concept of Messiah. Muslim scholars have no convincing explanation for using a Judeo-Christian title. Qur'anic verses also use the term *kalimatu Allah* (meaning the "Word of God") for Jesus. Some exegetes explain away the use of the term "Word of God" as the "command" of God to Mary that made her conceive without a husband. Chapter 19 of the Qur'an mentions that God's Spirit appeared to Mary in the form of a human being and conveyed to the Virgin the news that Allah will provide her with a "a pure baby."

The Holy Spirit is mentioned several times in the Qur'an, but is described by exegetes to be the same as the archangel Gabriel (Arabic: *Jibrayil*).

To aid in his ministry to the Jewish people, Jesus was supported by the Holy Spirit and was given the ability to perform miracles (such as healing the blind, bringing dead people back to life, etc.) which no other prophet in Islam has ever been credited with, all by the permission of God rather than of his own power. According to the Qur'an, Jesus, although appearing to have been crucified, was not killed by crucifixion or by any

other means; instead, "God raised him unto Himself" (Qu'ran 4:157-158). In the 19th Sura of the Qu'ran (in verses 15 and 33), Jesus is blessed on "the day he was born and the day he will die and the day he is raised alive," which clearly declares that Jesus will experience a natural death and will be raised again on the day of judgment.

Like all prophets in Islam, Jesus is considered a Muslim. Islam rejects idea of the Trinity and the view that Jesus was God incarnate or the Son of God (Qu'ran, 5: 116). The Qu'ran says that Jesus himself never claimed to be the Son of God, and it furthermore indicates that Jesus will deny having ever claimed divinity at the Last Judgment, and God will vindicate him. Islamic texts misinterpret the Trinity to be three gods, and forbid the belief in the three persons of the Triune God, and accuse Christians of associating partners with God, emphasizing a strict notion of monotheism, which is *tawhid*.

Numerous titles are given to Jesus in the Qu'ran and in Islamic traditions, the most common being *al-Masīh* ("the Messiah"). Jesus is traditionally understood in Islam to have been a precursor to Muhammad and is believed by Muslims to have foretold the latter's coming.

Jesus is unique for being the only prophet in Islam who neither married nor had any children. Muslims believe that Jesus will return to earth at the end of times to restore justice and to defeat "the false messiah," also known as the Anti-Christ. Jesus will not return as a new prophet, but as a follower of Islam, since according to Islam, Muhammad was the final prophet. According to the Hadith, upon his return, the Muslim Jesus will break the cross, kill the swine, and abolish al-Jizya (the tax imposed on Christians and Jews by Sharia law) in order to confirm the end of Christianity and Judaism as "false" religions, and every Jew and Christian would believe in him and become a Muslim.

## COMMON GROUND WITH CHRISTIANITY

Isa is the son of a virgin named Maryam (Mary), who, according to the Qu'ran, was the best of all women. Isa is a prophet supported with the Holy Spirit (Qu'ran 2: 87) and the messiah in both religions (but the Christians add that besides having a human nature, he would be God too, which the Qu'ran clearly denies). Isa is the "Word of Truth" (Qu'ran 19: 34). Isa, through God's power and will, cures the blind and the leper, raises the dead to life. And Isa will come back at the end of times to destroy the false messiah (Hadith).

These common terms used by both faiths, even though they denote different concepts, could be used by the Christian evangelist to start a conversation with a Muslim friend. The best strategy for starting such a conversation that could lead to sharing the Gospel should be asking questions about the meaning of those important common terms that mean different theological concepts, with patience and humility.

## **PART FIVE**

# **WHO ARE THE MODERN DAY ISIS**

*By Rev. Hesham Shehab*

### **WHO ARE THE ISIS?**

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has emerged from radical Sunni Jihadists in Iraq who fought under the banner of "al-Qaeda in Iraq" (AQI), led then by the Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who was killed in 2006 in U.S. airstrikes.

The goal of AQI, since being founded in 2004, has been to create a hardline Islamic state crossing over the borders of Syria and Iraq. In 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which metamorphosed from AQI, declared a new state, the Islamic State (IS), and a caliphate led by a supreme religious leader called a caliph.

### **WHAT IS A CALIPHATE?**

Caliph means successor in Arabic, and the title was given to the successor of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam (died in 632 AD). This title is mainly used by Sunnis (85 percent of Muslims), while Shiites prefer the title imam. The caliph was supposed to combine both the mundane and spiritual authority that would allow him to lead the Islamic nation that is supposed to cross nation-state borders that were drawn by the colonial powers after the end of the World War I in the Middle East.

One map drawn up by AQI as early as 2006 shows a region similar to the territory it controls today in northeast Syria and northern Iraq. The area is roughly the size of Belgium. However, the word used for Syria in Arabic (and used by ISIS) "Sham" includes a far larger area that includes Jordan, Lebanon and Israel.

The single most important factor in ISIS's recent resurgence

is the conflict between Iraqi Shias and Iraqi Sunnis. ISIS fighters themselves are Sunnis, and the tension between the two groups is a powerful recruiting tool for ISIS.

## **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHIAS AND SUNNIS?**

The difference between these two Islamic groups originated with a controversy over who got to take power after the Prophet Muhammad's death.

Abu Bakr, his father-in-law and old friend, was chosen as caliph, but a minority of Muslims favored another man, Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. Ali's followers became known as Shiat Ali, partisans of Ali – Shias. However, the circumstances then did not help Ali in gaining the caliphate for more than two decades, and two more caliphs then succeeded Abu Bakr consecutively (Umar and Uthman).

In 656, Ali became by default the fourth caliph after Uthman was assassinated in a rebellion. The rebellion and assassination of the caliph led to a civil war that pitted the Shiites of Ali against the clan of the slain caliph (Uthman) and other Muslims. Ali himself was assassinated in 661 after violence spread, and one of Uthman's cousins, Muawiya, who was the governor of Damascus, and the main competitor of Ali took over and declared himself caliph. Muawiya ruled uncontested for 19 years, but on his death bed, he appointed his son Yazeed as his successor. Hussein, Ali's son, rejected the blood succession and tried to lobby the Iraqis against the new caliph. Hussein travelled from Mecca and Medina to Iraqi, with the intention to lead a rebellion against Yazeed who ruled the caliphate from Damascus, Syria. In 681 A.D, the Iraqis turned Hussein down, who had to face the Syrian army with a small entourage of family members and followers. Hussein was killed and beheaded in Karbala, Iraq (60 miles south of Baghdad). His "martyrdom" later became the cornerstone of the Shiite theology and could be compared to Calvary in Christianity. Shiites see Hussein's endeavor to claim the caliphate as a struggle to rectify the Islamic nation and history of Islam. Every year, Shiites celebrate the

anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussein in processions and pilgrimages to Karbala for ten days. Shiites re-enact the death of Hussein's last stand for the "Truth" in dramatic plays and acts of self-flagellation that could lead to letting of blood. The annual rituals that surround these events ignite the animosity between the two Islamic groups (the Sunnis and Shiites) and open the wounds of the past. Shiites use the word imam instead of caliph to describe their leader who is supposed to be a descendant of Ali. According to Shiites, only imams who are descendants from the bloodline of Ali are qualified to lead the Islamic nation, while Sunnis believe that any qualified Muslim could assume the caliphate.

The title of imam denotes more spiritual authority than the title caliph. Shiites believe that the imam is infallible, superior to a caliph, and has more authority to interpret or write Sharia law. Mainstream Shiites believe in 12 imams: the first was Ali and the last imam was Muhammad ibn al-Hasan who was born in 869 AD and went into hiding. That twelfth imam is believed to be the Mehdi, the hidden Shiite Messiah.

Mainstream Shiites believe that the Mehdi is the ultimate savior of humankind who will emerge ahead of Isa al-Masih (Jesus Christ) in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace and justice to the world (see page 43).

Mainstream Sunni Muslims believe that only Jesus will come back and fulfill that mission. However, he will be a Muslim Jesus who will abolish Christianity and lead the Muslims to victory over all nations. According to the Qu'ran, Jesus was not crucified, but was lifted to heaven (Qur'an 4:157). The Hadith, which is believed to be statements made by Muhammad, talks about Jesus waiting alive, in the second heaven, and state that Jesus will come back.

### **But what about the conflict in Iraq?**

U.S. troops and allied Sunni militias defeated al-Qaeda in Iraq during the post-2006 troop surge; however, the surge did not

destroy its fighters completely.

The group, formerly known as AQI, is headed by Iraqi-born Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badry, who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi has proclaimed himself caliph of the Islamic world. He was associated with Al Qaeda as a religious figure early in the U.S.-led war in Iraq and became the leader of AQI in 2010.

As he left Camp Bucca, near Iraq's southern border with Kuwait, he told his captors: "I'll see you guys in New York." It has been claimed that al-Baghdadi, who uses a variety of aliases, was only radicalized while in U.S. custody. However, it is more likely al-Baghdadi was an Islamic fundamentalist before the U.S. and Britain invaded Iraq. Baghdadi was a follower of Zarqawi. He is believed to have been born in Iraq in 1971 and earned a Ph.D. in Islamic studies in Baghdad. In 2011, senior AQI members regrouped following the freeing of high-profile members held by the Iraqi government.

In 2012, sensing an opportunity, Baghdadi dispatched some foot soldiers to join the fighting against Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria.

Assad, who is considered a Shiite Muslim and an ally of Iran, crushed a wide popular uprising led by Sunni Muslims in his country. Syrian government forces massacred and raped Sunni civilians. The civil conflict in Syria led to the creation of different armed Islamic groups; some of them were allies of AQI and fought against the Syrian regime. Most of those Islamist elements received support from Sunnis in oil-rich states and Turkey, driven by the indignation at the massacre of Sunnis by a Shiite regime supported by Iran and Hezbollah (who are both Shiites).

The Sunni-Shiite divide is a major fault line in the war in Syria and Iraq, and it has attracted thousands of foreign Sunni fighters, as well as the support of the Shiite regime in Iran (to the Shiites in Iraq). This sectarian conflict has pitted Sunnis and



Shiites against each other in the region and caused a lot of human suffering. More than 400,000 Syrians were killed and more than 11 million have been displaced.

In April 2013, Baghdadi changed the name of the organization from AQI to ISIS. In 2013 he announced that the group was merging with Jabhat al-Nusra, the other al-Qaida affiliate in Syria, to form a new group called the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (greater Syria).

Nusra, predominantly Syrian in membership, is more focused on the overthrow of Assad, whereas ISIS is more international and interested in expanding its territory and enforcing Shariah law.

In February 2014, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri disassociated the worldwide terror network from ISIS, following its huge gains in Syria. Extraordinarily, this was because al-Zawahiri, Osama bin-Laden's right-hand man at the time of the 9/11 New York attacks, felt his one-time protégés were responsible for too many civilian deaths.

Al-Qaeda does, however, recognize its jihadist affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (regarded as less extreme) in Syria.

## PART SIX

### CONTEXUALIZING CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Contextualization refers to a meaningful, true, relevant and clear presentation of God's Word in a cross cultural setting. It is required that Christ's ambassadors understand the culture of their Muslim friends, and by the use of words, apply the teachings of Scripture in a way that is completely true to the original biblical text of the Hebrew and the Greek. Our witness must become indigenous for the one listening. In other words, planting the Church into the hearts of people who are in this world, yet not of this world (John 17:14-19). Contextualization is not only relevant in a spiritual sense, but to all other variables within the context of the Islamic society.

For example, in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the culture did not understand the concept of Jesus as the Lamb of God because there were no sheep in PNG. What was a "lamb" anyway? There was no word for "forgive me" or "I am sorry." When sharing the Good News in a cross cultural situation, whether in the USA or in foreign homes, it is imperative to know something about the culture of those with whom we share the Gospel.

We need to discuss and implement meaningful Christian worship. In some denominations, congregations have problems with contemporary worship, or perhaps the traditional forms as specified in a printed hymnal. Contextualizing Christian worship so that it is meaningful for Muslim converts amplifies the challenge to create meaningful Word and Sacrament worship for Muslim converts.

The Qur'an is the music of Islam. Its words are chanted in the mosque and in their homes. *Ibadat* is the Arabic for worship and includes actions of prayer, ablutions and actual prayer position. All that Allah's servant does in obedience to him is called *ibadat*.

In proper Islamic worship, it is taught that the right ritual and

the right attitude belong together. Worship, then, is to be more than a rote response by the worshipper.

The three Christian creeds were formed to deal with the heresies and false teachings of that era. Perhaps we might consider changing the wording of our creeds to include concepts of God, such as all-loving, all-knowing, all-saving. The Creed may then be confessed as this, "I believe in God, all-loving, all-knowing, all-saving, the maker of heaven and earth."

The term, "Son of God" used in Christian worship is questioned by Muslims and often brings about anger and disgust among them. Many Muslims believe that People of the Book teach that Allah had intercourse with a woman, Mary, and Jesus was born. Consequently, when they hear the phrase, "Son of God" they think "blasphemy." It is important that we as Christians explain that this is a biblical metaphor, used by people in the Old and the New Testament. "Son of God" is not a biological description of Jesus' birth but a theological statement or testimony that uses a human metaphor, or figure of speech.

There are three important dimensions in Islamic worship. They are submission, faith in Allah and righteousness. Righteousness here refers to the faithful deeds performed by a Muslim that earn Allah's respect and blessing. Faithful observance of the Five Pillars of Islam.

For a Muslim, having the right attitude toward worship includes:

prayer	fear of Allah
hope	trust
aspiration	remorse
sacrifice	vowing
appeal for success	supplication
appeal for refuge	awe
homage	apprehension

The Qur'an teaches: "He that invokes another god besides Allah – a god of whose divinity he has no proof – his Lord will bring him to account. The unbelievers shall never prosper." (Sura 23:117)

A number of important attitudes are stressed for proper worship, including that of fear. Fear is cherished by the Muslim because the Qur'an states "...fear me, if you are true believers." (3:175)

For Islam, hope and trust are two important attitudes for true worship. Having hope and trust in Allah, a Muslim is promised a great reward. A Muslim is to repent of sin and try to be righteous before Allah, before it is too late. Another very important attitude is supplication. The Qur'an states, "...you alone do we ask for help" (1:1-4). Mohammed said, "If you need aid, offer supplication to Allah" (Al Bukhari, Hadith). A Muslim must fulfill his vows to Allah, and if he successfully does this, it constitutes *ibadat*. This, with proper worship, takes him to Paradise.

To seek refuge in Allah is an important aspect of worship. It is taught that Allah protects those who take refuge in him. Sacrifice is also an important aspect of worship for a Muslim. It is the devotional state of the mind which is important in sacrifice, not flesh and blood (especially in the hajj season).

Prayer is a religious duty and the heart and essence of Muslim faith. Prayer is before sunrise, midday, afternoon, evening, and around 45 minutes after sunset. The posture of prayer is also critical to meaningful prayer. Before prayer, a Muslim must be spotless and clean (2:222). It is only when a Muslim is in the condition of *taharah* that he can perform the salat. Two things are important: (1) A male Muslim has the intention of being clean and (2) ablution before prayer – face, hands and feet. Also, *ghusl* (a full shower or bath) is to be taken after sexual intercourse. Worldwide, the Muslim who prays is standing barefooted and facing towards Mecca. It is in worship, which is a total way of life, that a Muslim gives witness to the reality of his faith in Allah. Through *ibadat*, the Muslim expresses the

submission and peace which is Islam.

A number of obligatory rituals are important for worship. Allah has commanded that a faithful Muslim put into practice a number of other acts of worship. These are the five Pillars of Islam: **shahadah, salat, zakat, sawm and hajj**. The obligatory beliefs are: one Allah, angels, his books, his messengers, the Last Day and divine destiny.

Mohammed is said to describe ritual prayer, five times a day, as "the essence of religion" (*Sahih Tirmidhi*, Damascus, reported by Abu Hurayrah). Prayer is a religious duty and will be accounted for first on the Judgment Day.

True worship is helping the poor, giving food to the hungry, helping the sick, selflessness, and seeking the pleasure of Allah, plus salat.

Righteousness for a Muslim is believing in Allah, Last Day, angels, scripture, prophets, alms to the poor, love for Allah, keeping vows, patience in time of tribulation, adversity and stress.

It is through worship that each individual Muslim can hope for paradise!

Muslim worship is thoughtful, and onlookers are impressed by their discipline and commitment to their god. We note the intensity of their submission to their god, Allah. The forms and practices of Christian worship are less important than the spirit in which we worship. Jesus invites us to worship the Father in heaven in spirit and in truth. For Christians, the baptism by water with the word (infants and adults) and the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ (in, with, and under the bread and the wine) are the most profound symbols and expressions of Christian worship.

For the interested Muslim, public Sunday worship is a new concept and very different for a Muslim since he/she practices public worship on Fridays. The Scriptures are read, hymns

are sung, prayers are offered to the Triune God. Many times a sermon is included in a Christian service. In most services an offering is taken to support the work of the Church and to help the poor and needy.

Christians teach that true worship is offering ourselves as living sacrifices to God and to our fellowmen. Christian worship is a participation in God's saving redemptive love. How should the Gospel be contextualized in order that a Muslim, too, can be edified? Does having the right attitude make any difference to God? When, for the very first time, a Muslim actually visits a Christian worship service, he/she will probably be filled with fear and apprehension. The Christian worship service will contain many things that at first disappoint the Muslim, bring anger, turn him off, bring up doubts and concerns, and in some cases, just do not make any sense.

***What can a Christian congregation do to help avoid disappointment and dispel the fears which so often fill the heart and mind of a Muslim who visits a Christian worship service, which is said to be giving homage to Allah?***

## **CREATING MEANINGFUL PUBLIC WORSHIP FOR MUSLIM CONVERTS**

Some generalizations for planning worship for Muslim converts:

1. Some Muslims will visit a Christian church purely out of curiosity. Key: Offer warm hospitality.
2. Some visit to make a decision to become personally involved.
3. Friendship is to be offered at all times, shared and experienced.
4. Basic to worship: Jesus is perfect and sinless, we who worship are sinners.
5. As followers we seek, we strain for, and we need new strength.

6. We come as people in need, yet each worshiper is different.
7. Long-time members cannot visualize a newcomer's thoughts or needs.
8. Long-time members do not enjoy criticism or change, they feel no need.
9. Visitors need to learn the value of key teachings and practices in the church.
10. Old timers need to see it like strangers see it.
11. Special explanations for each step of the worship are to be practiced.
12. The Word of God must be preached, explained clearly, and all terms explained.

### **Muslims who visit a Christian worship setting find:**

1. If they join, they can expect abandonment by their family.
2. Life will become very lonely for those who take the step.
3. The job and employment factor may soon be acute.
4. Faith is weak and not able to accept the results of change.
5. It may be deadly...death threats.
6. Unknowingly, church members stare at them.
7. Members of the Christian church are often tongue-tied.
8. The Muslim thinks of himself as a traitor to the Umma.
9. Muslims may think Christians worship a human being, not Allah.

### **Shared feelings: How?**

1. We are all sinners. We all need Christ. He loves us all. He is our Friend.
2. In Christ we are truly Friends!! We accept, we share, we love.
3. Friends of Muslims begin with prayer, believing that prayers are answered.

Jesus made no rules about worship. He stated two requirements: worship in spirit and truth. Worship doesn't depend upon place or style. John 4.

## **THE PRICE CHRISTIANS PAY TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS**

Jesus said in Matthew 10:37-39, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." The power of God and His Word is to guide and comfort sinners on their journey to Paradise.

A Christian family from Minnesota experienced the death of their 18-year-old Marine son in Iraq. Through the tears and pain that followed, the Holy Spirit led this family to develop a mission foundation, through the Board for Mission Services of the LCMS, to offer grants to help missionaries bring the Gospel to the Muslim of this world. This family paid a great price, but in the end God filled their hearts with His peace and love. Through the death of their son, Muslims around the world are learning of Jesus, the Savior of the world.



## PART SEVEN

### LEARNING FROM THE PAST- IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Why do Christians and Muslims hate each other? As we reflect on past history, we learn why this rift developed and what we can do to heal the huge gulf between Christianity and Islam. The key to a fruitful dialogue is honest friendship and the love of God. We communicate in a spirit of truth as we share the Good News about Jesus.

#### SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST:

- I. The Holy Scriptures as revealed by God in Century One.
- II. The Early Christian Church; its fantastic growth
- III. The Crusades: the positive and negative results
- IV. The work of Raymond Lull, first missionary to the Muslim
- V. The work of Martin Luther, faithful servant of the Word
- VI. The work of Samuel Zwemer, energetic outreach person to the Muslim

#### 1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AS REVEALED BY GOD

We learn from the book of Genesis about creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God's chosen, His prophets of the Old Testament, speak both Law and Gospel, as the Morning Star is so often promised to comfort and assure God's people of His love.

We learn from Jesus, God's Son, the perfect image of Love

itself. The birth, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ are the keystone of the Christian faith. We learn from the twelve, those who were called by Jesus to sit at his feet and learn how to communicate love by word and deed. We learn from the book of Acts about the exodus of the faithful Christians as they leave the holy city of Jerusalem. We learn that those scattered were not seminary graduates, but common lay men and women filled with the Holy Spirit!

We learn that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the very Word of God. We learn that God chose common laborers, fishermen, tax collectors to record for the world His Story of Salvation. The **Master Plan** was perfect, and no one can add or subtract from God's holy Word.

## 2. THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We learn from history that the Church failed Christ! The enthusiasm and desire to scatter the Seed gradually lessened. The once vibrant Christian body soon became muted and weak, as God's people concentrated primarily on theology and doctrine rather than evangelism and telling the Good News about Jesus. The Arabian Peninsula remained ignorant of the Christian message.

Geographically, Northern Arabia is only a stone's throw from Jerusalem! The sand dunes and slightly populated oases were neglected, and it was from this dusty and dingy area of Mecca that a man by the name of Mohammed was born.

The Early Christian Church was challenged in a number of ways. First by Nestorius, then by the Monophysites, and also by the Lord's faithful. (Nestorians separated the two natures of Christ with Christ having only human nature. The Monophysites believe that Jesus had only a divine nature.) Each of these listed affected the Early Church and also had some influence on Mohammed. He often traveled these areas as a member of Khadija's caravan trading business that originated out of Mecca.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity became an active issue in the Church and brought about a number of meetings. One was held at Nicea, where the Nicene Creed was heard and adopted as the official teaching of the Church (around 325 AD). The overall concerns within the Christian church were over the personality of Jesus. Was He both divine and human? Was He only human, or was He only divine? Nestorius (around 451 AD) placed emphasis on Jesus, His humanity, that He was true Man. Others from Egypt, Ethiopia and Syria taught that Jesus had one divine nature, that of a spirit.

For centuries, the Church was under Byzantine leadership, a strong and vast power, which controlled not only the civil concerns but also the spiritual and religious concerns. When the Byzantine Empire was at its height, Mohammed was playing marbles in Mecca!

Through the constant caravans that carried produce back and forth and the Christianization of some of the tribes of Arabia, many came in contact with the Jewish and Christian faith. However, little effort was taken to evangelize the Arab peninsula. The people were generally uninformed and clueless regarding the road to salvation in Christ. Mohammed, 600 AD, had relatives who were Christian, and there were other people in his life who called themselves Christian. Mohammed married a Christian woman and a Jewish woman, yet he rejected these teachings and created a new religion. He gathered information from these teachings and eventually founded the religion of Islam.

Arabia was polytheistic, with some tribes having a god for each day of the year. Within two decades, he developed a world view system that spread to most parts of the then-known world. Mohammed was to become one of the world's greatest religious leaders.

### **3. THE CRUSADES**

After the death of Mohammed, the leaders of Islam actively, forcefully carried their faith to North Africa and Europe. The popes of the Roman Catholic Church organized armies of Christians to repossess the Holy Land. A few brilliant and faithful leaders stood tall, but in general, the Christian Crusades began in earnest in 1096 AD were organized by Western Christians to stop the expansion of Islam and to recapture the Holy Land, occupied by the Muslims.

Historically, a rift between the Eastern and Western Church had grown stronger and split into two major traditional church bodies. By the 11th century, the Roman and Orthodox bodies were permanently divided, basically on issues dealing with the Virgin Mary and clergy. During this time when the Christian church was quarreling, Islam spread quickly and dominated the Middle East, Persia, India and North Africa. The deepest hurt for Christians was that Islam controlled the holy city, Jerusalem.

The crusades continued until the Reformation and then declined rapidly during the 16th century with the advent of papal authority. Today, the radical Islamists use the Christian Crusades for their reason to behead, burn Christians and torture them.

### **4. THE WORK OF RAYMOND LULL (about 1300)**

Raymond Lull was born in Palma, Majorca, a large island off the coast of Spain. He was well educated, wealthy and enjoyed life as a tutor for the royalty. Lull was a skilled musician and celebrated poet. He received a number of visions showing Christ suffering on the cross. After the fourth vision, at the age of 32, he joined the Franciscan order and dedicated his life to telling the Good News about Jesus. Pollack calls Lull "the first missionary to the Mohammedans" (*Better Than Gold*, p. 56).

Raymond Lull became a missionary to North Africa where the Crescent of Mohammed ruled and the cross of Christ was unknown. He studied the Arabic language, read Arabian scholars and sought support from local Christians to begin seminaries. At 56, Lull set out alone to preach the Gospel to Muslims of North Africa. He shared the faith with the Muslim leaders of Tunis, won many arguments, and was hated by the Muslim leaders. They were about to execute him, but his zeal touched the heart of an important leader who changed the sentence from death to banishment from the country forever. His ship was set to leave Tunis, but he hid and the ship sailed without him! There, in Tunis, he witnessed Christ secretly. He did not win many souls, so he left Tunis to seek help from the church, as he witnessed in Majorca, Cyprus, Syria and Armenia. He was a prolific writer and all the while composed tracts and literature about sharing the Gospel. It is said that he wrote 4000 tracts and books. In 1307, he set sail for North Africa a second time, preaching Christ in the market places. He was imprisoned again. Muslims offered him money, position, honor and pleasures to convert him to Islam, but to no avail. Now 73, he could not be bribed. He was deported to Pisa. In 1314, Lull returned to North Africa once more. He was 79 now. In Christian love, he threatened the Muslims that God would punish them if they did not repent and convert. He was stoned to death on June 13, 1315. As Pollack states, "Lull was like Jonah the prophet, Paul the missionary and Stephen the martyr" (p. 62).

Lull teaches us that love has a special power to drive us to share and tell the Good news about Jesus with others. His courage and boldness to share the Good News is a required attribute for missionaries, especially in our modern age. True love is found in Jesus on the cross, bringing eternal life. We must share this Good News!

## **5. THE WORK OF MARTIN LUTHER (about 1500 AD)**

Dr. Martin Luther is well known, especially to those of us who are Lutheran. We know about his personal life and his devotion

to the Word of God. What we do not know so clearly is his concern for the people of Islam.

In clear and unmistakable words, Luther condemned the teachings of Mohammed and the religion of the Turks. The Turks were a serious threat to Europe. On the basis of the Word, Luther condemns the religion of Islam.

Of the Qur'an Luther stated, "When that Mohammedan monstrosity, the Koran, is at its best, it is nothing but a sausage stuffed with sentences mixed together in confusion from the Law and the Gospel. For both Jewish and Mohammedan fanatics have picked from Scripture whatever served their institutions and the flesh" (W 42, 603).

Of the Qur'an Luther said, "By reading it, Christians may see what an utterly accursed, shameful, wretched book it is—full of lies, fables and all abominations....Be pleased to allow this book freely to circulate, without hindrance, for the glory of Christ, for the good of Christians, for the harm of the Turks, and to the disgust of the devil" (W-Br 10, 162).

Of the Pope and Islam, on justification by faith, Luther said of Islam, "But they do agree in their opposition to Christ and in their desire to have this doctrine of justification by faith abolished" (SL 5, 153).

Of Islam, Luther stated, "Mohammed denies that Christ is the Son of God, denies that He died for our sins, denies that He rose again to bring us to life, denies that through faith in Him sins are forgiven and we are justified, denies that He will come as the Judge of the living and the dead – though he does believe in a resurrection of the dead and a day of judgment - denies the Holy Spirit, and denies His gifts" (W 30 II. 207).

Of Islam's civic and social virtues, Luther said, "You will observe a courageous, strict, and respectable conduct among Turks so far as their outward life is concerned. They do not indulge in wine, do not over indulge in drinking and eating as we do, do

not dress frivolously and lavishly...Moreover, they have organized their government and administer it as we should like to have it administered in German lands" (W30 II, 189).

Luther was well aware of the threat of Islam first-hand, and that his attitude towards the Turk was shaped by historical facts, whether true or false. Luther's attitude toward Islam was positive and hopeful. Luther taught that Christians should study and learn the truth about Islam and make an effort to understand Islam's religion, as well as to discover why some Christians surrendered to the Allah of Islam.

## **6. THE WORK OF SAMUEL ZWEMER**

Samuel Zwemer died in 1952, so we move through five quick centuries of time. Many exciting historical events happened during this period of time, including the printing press, improved health, better education and successful outreach movements. Zwemer is known as "The Apostle to Islam."

Samuel Zwemer was from Michigan and had a strong desire to share the Gospel with the lost. He found Robert Wilder's thinking regarding outreach as helpful and became one of his followers. He wanted to work in Arabia but was turned down by the American Missionary Society. Though not sent by the Reformed Church, he set out on his own to Basra, Iraq. He studied the Arabic language and became an excellent speaker and writer in the Arabic language.

He was instrumental in organizing a number of mission activities, including the 1910 World Mission Conference held in Edinburgh. Throughout Zwemer's life he was encouraging, recruiting, lecturing, teaching and writing in a helpful way that opened doors to Islam around the world! Zwemer wrote more than 50 books, many journal articles and tracts.

One of Zwemer's greatest contributions was his ability to motivate and recruit evangelists to serve among Muslims. He

worked among Islamic peoples for 40 years and had fewer than 12 converts.

### **HOT TOPICS OF THE DAY**

- I. Jesus, the Word of God
  - a. Mary a saint but not a deity
  - b. Jesus the Son of God the Father
- II. One God not three gods (Trinity)
- III. Why aren't Muslims speaking out against global fundamentalists and radical Muslims?
- IV. What are Muslim Imam's teaching in mosques in the USA or elsewhere?
- V. Conversion to Christianity
- VI. Dietary eating: e.g. eating pork or having a glass of wine.
- VII. The Qur'an as the inerrant word of Allah
- VIII. Equality for men and women in Islam
- IX. Salvation in Islam
- X. Jihad as a Sixth Pillar of Islam
- XI. ISIS



## **PART EIGHT**

### **HELPFUL HINTS FOR CHRISTIANS INEXPERIENCED IN SHARING THEIR FAITH WITH A MUSLIM**

Seven common topics are included in this section which may be helpful for you as you prepare for visiting and sharing with your Muslim friend.

These topics are only starters to help you develop your own best personal methods of sharing the faith with your Muslim friend.

The topics chosen are:

- 1. Peace of Mind and Heart**
- 2. Love that Covers a Multitude of Sin**
- 3. A Forgiving God**
- 4. What the Christian Faith Is All About**
- 5. The Life and Work of Jesus**
- 6. The Certainty of Eternal Life**
- 7. Abraham, a Wonderful Example of Faith**

# 1. PEACE OF MIND AND HEART

(Begin and end with a private prayer)

- A. Lead into the topic with a question
  - 1. Use a contemporary illustration
  - 2. Use a personal experience
- B. Discuss the term Peace
  - 1. Synonyms
  - 2. Opposite means
- C. Why is peace so difficult to have
  - 1. What are things that upset us
  - 2. What can be done to stop those things which disturb us?
- D. Where can peace be found
  - 1. In wealth?
  - 2. In power?
  - 3. In fame?
  - 4. Why not?
- E. What does God have to do with a person's peace of mind?
  - 1. How does knowing God help?
  - 2. Explain the peace that only God can give to us.
  - 3. Why is God's peace so important?
- F. Present your beliefs openly
  - 1. State what you believe
  - 2. State Bible verse that support your beliefs
  - 3. Trust God and His Word

## **2. LOVE THAT COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SIN**

(Begin and end with private prayer)

- A. What is love?
  - 1. What is the meaning of the word love?
  - 2. What basic meanings are there for the word love?
- B. How love is used to please God
  - 1. How do we show love for God?
  - 2. How do we show love for man?
- C. Bible teachings on love
  - 1. Jesus: I give you a new commandment that you love one another
  - 2. Love is the fulfillment of the Law
  - 3. Love is eternal
- D. Application in real life
  - 1. Can we love someone we hate?
  - 2. Can we learn to love someone we hate?
  - 3. How does God show His love for us?
  - 4. How does God demonstrate His love for sinners?
  - 5. Love is God's chief attribute. Why?

### **3. A FORGIVING GOD**

(Begin and end each session with private prayer)

- A. Work your way into the topic
  - 1. The world is hard and selfish.
  - 2. Discuss this statement, look at facts.
  - 3. What is the result of this attitude?
- B. What is sin?
  - 1. Sin is missing the mark.
  - 2. Sin angers God.
  - 3. Sin brings condemnation, death, hell.
- C. What is forgiveness?
  - 1. Why should God forgive our sins?
  - 2. How grace fits into forgiveness of sin.
  - 3. Man's inability to save himself.
  - 4. Man's works cannot save his soul.
- D. How God deals with man's sin
  - 1. Sends a Messiah, the Christ.
  - 2. The Redeemer brings forgiveness.
  - 3. This blessing is a gift for everyone.
  - 4. Opens door to heaven.
- E. Scripture explains
  - 1. Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9; John 15:15
  - 2. Matthew 11:27; John 8:28-29
  - 3. Mark 1:11; Matthew 16:16-17

#### **4. WHAT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS ALL ABOUT**

- A. Man created perfect
  - 1. The Fall into sin
  - 2. Became enemy of God
  - 3. Three enemies: devil, world, his flesh
  - 4. A hopeless situation
- B. God's Rich Grace
  - 1. Grace is undeserved love.
  - 2. God provides a way to overcome the three enemies: devil, world, flesh.
- C. God provides the solution to the problem of sin.
  - 1. God deals with man's sin by sending a Savior
  - 2. This Savior's name is Jesus.
  - 3. Jesus suffered and died for everyone.
  - 4. We must believe in Jesus to be saved.
- D. The Holy Spirit
  - 1. The Holy Spirit gives us faith.
  - 2. The Holy Spirit keeps us in the faith.
  - 3. The Holy Spirit makes faith grow.
  - 4. The Holy Spirit leads us to eternal life.
- E. The new man
  - 1. Responds in a spirit of joy.
  - 2. Is confident of God's blessings.
  - 3. Shares the Good News with others.
  - 4. Knows heaven is his/her eternal home.

## **5. THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS**

- A. Jesus' birth and early life
  - 1. God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother.
  - 2. Mary conceives by work of Holy Spirit
  - 3. Jesus born in Bethlehem stable.
- B. Jesus lives in Nazareth as a youth.
  - 1. Shepherds are first to worship Him
  - 2. Wise men from the East worship Him
  - 3. Fellow Jewish leaders question His power
- C. Jesus' public ministry
  - 1. Baptized in Jordan
  - 2. John: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
  - 3. Jesus anointed as:
    - a. Prophet
    - b. Priest
    - c. King
- D. Jesus has two natures
  - 1. God (to keep the Law)
  - 2. Man (to take our place)
- E. The blessings of His suffering and death
  - 1. The world now is forgiven
  - 2. Everyone has been redeemed.
  - 3. God's love goes out to all
  - 4. Only those who take it. Enjoy it!
  - 5. The Holy Spirit gives faith; we cannot come to faith by our own works.

## **6. THE CERTAINTY OF ETERNAL LIFE**

- A. Everyone who believes will have eternal life
  - 1. John 6:47....he who believes "has"
  - 2. Eternal life is heavenly joy forever
  - 3. There are no tears, illness, death
  - 4. All this through faith in Jesus
- B. What happens when we die
  - 1. Body begins to turn to dust
  - 2. Soul received at once into heaven
  - 3. Unbelievers imprisoned in hell
- C. The Bible tells us of heaven
  - 1. Many rooms (John 14:2)
  - 2. No more tears (Rev. 7: 16-17)
  - 3. Don't know everything now (1 John 3:2)
  - 4. It is a wonderful place (Luke 12:3; Psalm 16:11; Rev. 5:13)
- D. What should our attitude be towards death
  - 1. Death is a doorway to Heaven
  - 2. We have final victory over sin and all evil
  - 3. We fear no evil (Psalm 23)
  - 4. Jesus will take us to heaven forever
- E. What is our goal as a Christian
  - 1. To live in God's eternal Paradise
  - 2. To thirst after His precious Word
  - 3. To avoid anything that hinders the way
  - 4. To seek the Crown of Life (Rev. 2:10)
  - 5. To enjoy the blessings of the faith

## **7. ABRAHAM, AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH**

- A. God's call to Abram
  - 1. Abram had moved from Ur to Haran
  - 2. Abram's family lived in this area
  - 3. A call came to Abram, move to Canaan
  - 4. Abram is 75 years old, he accepts
- B. God's promise to Abram
  - 1. To bless him
  - 2. To make his family great
  - 3. To bring eternal hope to the world through his seed
- C. Abram trusts God
  - 1. He leaves his home and moves
  - 2. He lives in tents all his life
  - 3. He is dependent upon God
  - 4. His name is changed from big daddy to father of all nations: Abraham
- D. Abraham and Sarah given a son
  - 1. They take history into their own hands and Ishmael is born through Hagar.
  - 2. Now in old age God gives them Isaac
- E. The test of Abraham's faith
  - 1. Take your only son, sacrifice him
  - 2. Abraham trusted God and obeyed
  - 3. Abraham believed in God
  - 4. Abraham is commended for his faith (Hebrews 11:8-19)
  - 5. Abraham, an example for us, too



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>Ahl al-kitab</b>	Muslim name for Jews and Christians
<b>al-Fatiha</b>	the first chapter of the Qur'an, meaning "the opening"
<b>Al Queda</b>	extreme followers of Islam
<b>al Rahim</b>	God is merciful
<b>al Rahman</b>	God is compassionate or gracious
<b>Allah</b>	the one powerful god
<b>Allah mahabah</b>	God is love
<b>Allahu akbar</b>	God is greater
<b>as-salam oleikum</b>	a greeting meaning "peace be with you"
<b>Bismi'llah</b>	means "in the name of Allah" and is used as an invocation
<b>caliphate</b>	caliph means successor in Arabic; title given to successor of Mohammed
<b>dawa</b>	reaching out to someone, evangelism
<b>din</b>	a term used to describe religion
<b>Exordium</b>	preface to Qur'an
<b>Fatiha</b>	the opening sura of the Qur'an
<b>Fatwa</b>	a statement by the Umma, a new command to "do"
<b>five pillars of Islam</b>	Shahada, Salat, Zakat, Sawm and Hajj
<b>Hadith</b>	many sayings and traditions of Mohammed, used to clarify the Qur'an
<b>Hajj</b>	a pilgrimage to Mecca (male – hajj; female – hajji)
<b>halal</b>	things permitted
<b>haram</b>	things forbidden
<b>Hezbollah</b>	Shiite radical Muslim followers from the Middle East
<b>Ibadat</b>	instructions how to act and how to worship
<b>Id-al-Adha</b>	a special festival when Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Ishmael
<b>Injill</b>	Gospels of New Testament
<b>Inshallah</b>	if God wills
<b>Isa</b>	the name given for Jesus
<b>Isa ibn Maryam</b>	Jesus, son of Mary

<b>ISIS</b>	an Islamic state in Iraq and Syria
<b>Islam</b>	the religion of submission to Allah and Mohammed, his prophet
<b>Jibril</b>	the angel Gabriel
<b>jihād</b>	struggling and striving for a deeper faith in Islam, an outward, physical struggle against the infidels
<b>jinn</b>	lesser spirits
<b>Ka'bah</b>	a highly regarded cubic building in Mecca
<b>kafir</b>	an unbeliever
<b>Kalimatu Allah</b>	word of God
<b>Khadijah</b>	Mohammed's first wife
<b>Madrassa</b>	a Muslim school
<b>malek</b>	angels
<b>Masjid</b>	a place of worship, mosque
<b>Mecca</b>	Arabian city, the birthplace of Mohammed
<b>Medina</b>	city in Arabia where Islam (as religion and state) was originated
<b>Missio deo</b>	the great mission of God
<b>Mohammed</b>	a man who lived in Arabia around 600 AD, founder of the Islamic faith
<b>mushirk</b>	a person who commits idolatry
<b>Muslim</b>	one who surrenders to Allah
<b>nabi</b>	one of the prophets in the Qur'an
<b>qibla</b>	direction to which one prays, facing Mecca when in prayer
<b>Qu'ran</b>	(sometimes spelled Koran) sacred book of writings for Islam. The word Qu'ran means recitation.
<b>Ramadan</b>	the month in which Muslims fast. They eat no food, drink no water or have no sex during the daylight hours.
<b>rasul</b>	a messenger
<b>Salat</b>	prayer five times each day
<b>Sawm</b>	observing Ramadan, a fast
<b>Shahada</b>	The Muslim's creed, there is one god, Allah and Mohammed is his messenger
<b>Shaitan</b>	evil spirits

<b>Shari'a</b>	religious law that rules the people. The Qur'an, the Hadith (traditions) and educated opinions of Muslim scholars are used to create shari'a
<b>Shia</b>	Muslims who follow Ali, Muhammad
<b>Sunni</b>	Muslims who believe that Abu Bakr was the rightly chosen caliph after Mohammed's death
<b>Sura</b>	chapter of the Qu'ran
<b>tawhid</b>	oneness of Allah
<b>Torah</b>	Scriptures of Moses
<b>Ulama</b>	the religious leaders of Islam
<b>Umma</b>	the community of Muslim believers who accept Allah
<b>yawm al-din</b>	Judgment Day
<b>zakat</b>	the money given to help jihad and those in need (2.5% of annual savings; 10% of their harvest)

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## **A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

### ***Bernie Lutz***

Bernie, a missionary, a Lutheran educator has served as a pastor, missionary, teacher and professor, serving on three continents and in seven nations (U.S.A., Canada, Papua New Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, Lebanon, South Sudan and soon Ethiopia). He was elected three times to serve on the LCMS Synod's Board for Mission Services. He served as a committee member of the LCMS Blue Print for the Nineties. He chaired the Outreach to the Muslim ad hoc committee for the BFMS. He has traveled six times to serve as a lecturer at CLIHM in Yambio and, *deo volente*, will travel to Ethiopia and South Sudan to teach at the Lutheran Seminary in the fall of 2015. He presently serves as a Lutheran Heritage Foundation representative for northern Minnesota and preaches mission messages. He was awarded the PNG Independence Medal for helping Papua New Guinea to become an independent nation in 1976. He earned the Doctorate of Ministry from Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN and has been honored with a DD from Concordia Seminary Fort Wayne, and LittD from Concordia University, St. Paul, MN. He was married to Roberta Will and they celebrated 58 wonderful years of wedded bliss and by God's grace they enjoyed fulfilling the Great Commission. Roberta died in Bernie's arms July 5, 2014.

