



Islam's View of Sin and Salvation

Reaching Muslims, Part 2

by Rich Wendling and Daniel Shayesteh on October 1, 2011; last featured July 5, 2017

Christians should love, not fear, Muslims. If you look under the surface, you'll see just how hopeless their religion leaves them. By faithfully sharing God's grace as revealed in His Word, you can watch the light of Christ's salvation break into their darkened hearts.

In reaction to the many terrorist attacks worldwide, including 9/11, many Westerners consider Muslims to be their enemies. Many hate Muslims and fear any kind of contact with them. But Jesus commands us to react in a different way. The Muslim, like everyone else, is precious to God and needs to be reconciled with Him through Christ. We Christians are commanded to lovingly share the gospel with everyone, regardless of his or her religion.

Reaching Muslims Series

Read part 1: Islam's View of God and His Revelation

Part 1 of this series examined the Islamic view of God, the Trinity, and the Bible, along with the Christian response. Now let's examine the Islamic view of sin and salvation, and look at ways to share the gospel with a Muslim. By learning a few basic truths, any believer can share his or her faith fruitfully with these precious people, whom God loves.

The Role of Presuppositions and Apologetics

The Islamic worldview, as with any belief system, is based on presuppositions that color the way a Muslim understands the evidence for Christianity. By recognizing a Muslim's presuppositions, the Christian can chip away at Islam's foundational beliefs. When God opens the Muslim's eyes to Islam's shaky foundation, he or she will be more open to the truth of the gospel.

The role of apologetics in evangelizing the Muslim is to reveal the inconsistencies of Islam's holy book, the Quran, in contrast to the consistent truth of the Bible and Christianity. While Islam fails to explain the human condition or to provide sinners with rock-solid hope for the future, God's Word abundantly satisfies all these longings through Jesus Christ.

Islam's View of Man's Sinful Nature and the Christian Response

Like the Bible, the Quran teaches that people are descendants of Adam and Eve and are imperfect sinners. However, the Quran also teaches that their god, Allah, inspired sin in humankind (Quran 4:88; 7:16–18; 9:51; 14:4; 16:93; 35:8; 57:22; 74:31; 91:7–9).

Muslims believe that humans are sinners because Allah has willed it. They have no understanding similar to the Bible's teaching that humans, not God, caused sin through rebellion against God (Romans 5:12, 5:18–19).

Islam's View of Salvation and the Christian Response

The Quran's teachings regarding salvation are inconsistent. On the one hand, the Quran teaches that salvation is based on purification by good deeds (Quran 7:6–9). A Muslim can become righteous through prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and living according to the Quran. Yet the Quran also teaches that Allah has predetermined every person's destiny, and one's righteous acts may or may not affect Allah's decision (Quran 57:22). It teaches that everyone, both the righteous and the unrighteous, will be led into hell by Allah, before the righteous will enter heaven (Quran 19:67–72). Therefore no Muslim can know his or her eternal destiny in this life. Even Muhammad himself was unsure of his salvation (Quran 31:34; 46:9).

Today, whenever Muslims mention the name of Muhammad, they always add the phrase, "Peace be upon him," because Muhammad's eternal destiny is uncertain, and the Muslim must ask Allah to be merciful to him. This contradiction between the Quran's teaching of salvation by works and its teaching of Allah determining salvation, regardless of one's works, results in Islam being the world's most uncertain religion regarding salvation.

CONTRAST THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE MUSLIM'S SALVATION WITH THE CERTAINTY OF SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

When sharing his faith with a Muslim, the Christian should contrast the uncertainty of the Muslim's salvation with the certainty of salvation through Jesus Christ (John 5:24). Contrast the Muslim belief in righteousness through works with the Bible's teaching that no good work can make a person righteous; it is only through Christ's righteousness that a person can be saved (Romans 5:21). Contrast the Muslim belief that all will enter hell with the Bible's teaching that only Satan, the demons, and the unsaved will enter hell (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 20:15). Contrast the Islamic teaching that salvation is through Allah's arbitrary choosing and can only be known after death with the Christian hope that the truly repentant heart can be saved by grace through personal faith in Jesus Christ's finished work on the Cross.

Sharing Your Faith With a Muslim

First Peter 3:15 forms the biblical basis for a clear and effective approach to evangelism. Using this verse, this act of sharing the gospel with a Muslim can be broken down into several steps.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. The first priority in any witnessing opportunity is to begin with a right relationship with God. We must begin by recognizing that we cannot reach the Muslim on our own. No matter how well we know the most effective ways to share our faith, unless we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts, words, and actions, our conversation will probably be unproductive. Many Christians have prejudice and fear of Muslims. We must carefully examine our motives and beliefs, and ask God to purify our hearts and attitudes.

... and always be ready to give a defense. The next priority for successful witnessing is to prepare by understanding Muslim presuppositions, beliefs, and culture, and understanding ways to make the gospel understandable and relevant to the Muslim. This has been the primary focus of this article series. We need to be aware of barriers that might prevent a Muslim from hearing the gospel (see below), as well as points of contact that can generate interest in the gospel.

Cultural Mistakes to Avoid When Sharing the Gospel

Be sensitive to potential cultural barriers that may hinder a Muslim from listening to the gospel message:

- Muslims face ostracism and possible persecution if they accept Christ.
- Muslims believe the gospel is corrupted and cannot be trusted anymore (see Part 1).
- Muslims are sure that theirs is the last and perfect religion, superior to Christianity, and it is unwise to follow an imperfect religion like Christianity.

- Most Muslims do not know their own scriptures. Without assistance they may be unable to compare the Quran and the Bible.
- Muslims often do not know how highly their own holy book speaks of Jesus and will be amazed.
- Muslims consider it an insult if people greet them by shaking the left hand, refuse hospitality, speak to the opposite sex, or demean their faith.
- Do not rush to share your faith. The Christian must earn the right to be heard.
- Avoid political discussions. Keep the focus on the gospel. Many Muslims equate American politics with Christianity.
- Both the Bible and the Quran should be treated with the utmost respect. A Muslim is offended when we display a marked-up or damaged Bible, or treat the Bible casually. Don't place a Bible on the ground.

... *to everyone who asks you.* One difficulty in sharing the gospel with a Muslim is the mistrust between Muslims and Westerners. The best way to overcome this mistrust is to build strong friendships with Muslims based on honesty and love. In Muslim culture, friendship is very important. By building relationships, the Christian can gain an opening to present the gospel in a way the Muslim can hear. As your Muslim friend sees genuine love and honesty in your relationship, he or she may begin asking questions that can open his or her mind and heart to the gospel.

... *a reason for the hope that is in you.* The hope of Christianity is that through Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and our relationship with God is restored. There are several key blessings of the gospel Muslims need to understand because their religion does not offer anything comparable (the first three concepts are explained in Part 1):

- We can know God and the truth (Exodus 33:11; Isaiah 40:5; Acts 17:23), but Muslims cannot (Quran 3:7; 7:188). God is unknowable in Islam. Muslims can't experience God personally, but we can because He wants to be known and "dwells" in the heart of His people (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19).
- We can rest assured in God's absolute justice, both now and in eternity, but Muslims cannot. If people are crying for God's peace, justice, and salvation now, why should God ignore their present needs until the afterlife, as Islam teaches? The God of the Bible, in contrast, answers our prayers now and will settle all injustices in the future (1 John 5:14–15; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10).
- Through Christ's grace we are reconciled to God and can wholeheartedly submit to Him on earth, but Muslims cannot. Despite the importance they place on submission, Muslims cannot submit meaningfully to a god who is impersonal and does not reveal himself (see Part 1). You can only submit to someone whom you can know and who is revealed to you.
- God's grace gives us a new identity as redeemed beings, but Muslims do not have this privilege (2 Corinthians 5:17). God has saved us *to be good* in order to be able to *do good*: in Christ *being* comes first, not *doing* (Ephesians 2:10). People must be established in God's kingdom first before they are able to do good. In Islam (and all other religions) doing comes first in order to become good.
- We have God in us (Galatians 2:20), but Muslims do not (Quran 42:51). God is accessible through the gospel. In the New Testament the word *Immanuel* means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). The word *us* indicates that He seeks personal and intimate fellowship with us.
- Through the gospel we are reconciled to the God of love and peace and are able to love and have peace, but Muslims are not. God reveals Himself as the great lover of humanity (John 3:16). He reveals that He loves reconciliation and unity (2 Corinthians 5:18). We are united with God and can reflect His love and peace to others through our words and actions.
- We are saved and have the joy of salvation, but Muslims are missing both (Quran 7:188). Muslims need to discover that salvation must happen in this life rather than in the afterlife (Hebrews 9:27). If being separated from God's kingdom happens on earth, then salvation (being restored to God's kingdom) also must happen on earth if it is to bring joy. Similarly in our homes, we want to enjoy love and unity with our loved ones now, and not postpone it for an unknown future. God desires humanity to enjoy love and unity with Him here in this life.

... *with meekness and fear.* Our attitude before God is key to fruitful conversations with Muslims. We cannot be proud or arrogant. Presenting the gospel in a nonthreatening way with straightforward honesty, humility, and respect will allow our Muslim friends to hear our message.

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Additional Resources:

Christ Above All by Daniel Shayesteh

The Difference Is the Son by Daniel Shayesteh

Unveiling Islam by Ergun and Emir Caner

Love Your Muslim Neighbor by Edward Challen

Escape from Darkness DVD by Daniel Shayesteh <http://escapefromdarkness.org/>

Excerpt from Daniel Shayestah's Book



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