

The Crescent and the Cross: Engaging Muslims for the Sake of the Gospel





Introduction

Conflict





Introduction

Conflict
Fear





Introduction

Conflict
Fear
Solution?





Luke 5:17–26

Power

Partnership

People

Persistence

Priority

Polarizing

Proposition

Product

◆ “The power [*dunamis*] of the Lord” (v. 17)

➤ Not the power of men.

➤ Cf. Romans 1:16

“For I am not ashamed of
the gospel, for it is the power
of God for salvation
to everyone who believes”



Luke 5:17–26

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Product

◆ The unity and compassion of the community for a fellow citizen (v. 18).

- Muslim *ummah*
- 72 factions
- United & compassionate



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Product

- ◆ **Crowded condition (v. 19a)**
 - **Present Muslim nations**
 - **Third world countries**
 - **Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Malaysia**



Luke 5:17–26

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Product

- ◆ Persistent men trying to help a brother (v. 19b)
 - A product of the basic character of Islam.
 - *Islam* means *submission* to the will of Allah.



Luke 5:17–26

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- ◆ **The divine priority (v. 20)**
 - **Forgiveness.**
 - **A greater need than physical healing.**



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Product

- ◆ **The religious sensibilities of the Jews were offended (v. 21).**
 - **The accusation: blasphemy.**
 - **Only God can forgive sin.**
 - **Today, Muslims react to Jesus in much the same fashion.**



Luke 5:17–26

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- ◆ Jesus presented a proposal
—“Isn’t it easier to heal than to
forgive?” (vv. 22–24).
 - Jesus challenged their thinking
theologically.
 - Jesus declared His authority
(*exousia*) to forgive sin.



Luke 5:17–26

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- ◆ **Results of understanding who Jesus is and what He came to do (vv. 25–26):**
 - **Glorifying God.**
 - **Fearing God.**
 - **Muslim converts display the same two products of faith in Christ.**



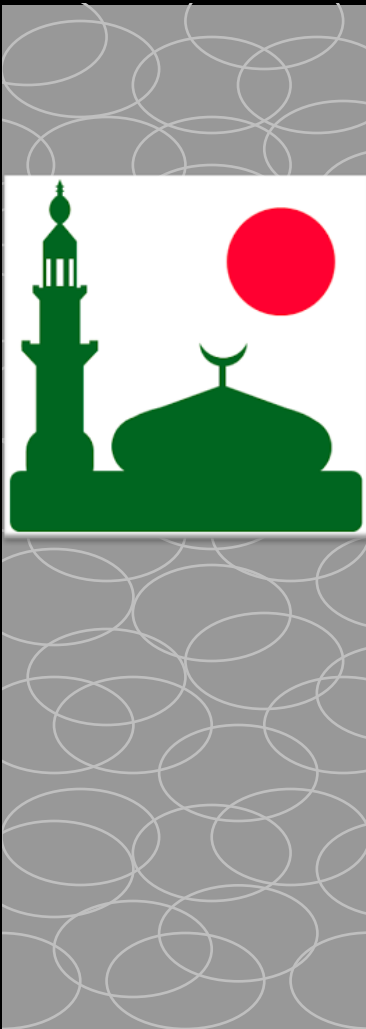
Characteristics of Islam



- ◆ ***Islam means submission.***
- ◆ ***A Muslim is one who is submitted to the will of God.***
 - **For a Muslim it is more important to submit to Allah than to obtain forgiveness.**
 - **Result: Fatalism—submission to *kismet* (divinely ordained fate).**



Characteristics of Islam



- ◆ **Muslims are theocentric.**
 - *Inshallah*: “If Allah wills.”
 - *Bismillah*: “In Allah’s name.”
 - Cf. materialistic orientation of Americans and Europeans.
 - Presents opportunity for witness.



Characteristics of Islam

- ◆ Muslims view Islam as the *final revelation*.
 - *Taurat* of Moses, *Jabur* of David, and *Injil* of Jesus superseded by the *Qur'an*.
 - Popular Muslim belief: OT & NT have been corrupted and abrogated.





Compassion for Muslims



◆ Hope: “Abandon All Hope”

➤ 1 Peter 3:15

◆ Grace & Forgiveness

➤ Every *sura* but one begins with,
“In the name of God, the gracious,
the merciful.”

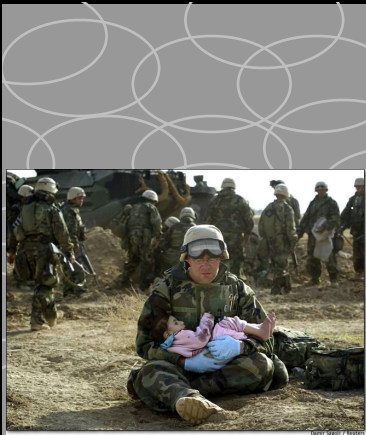
➤ Allah’s benevolence or
providential care, not His gracious
mercy.



Compassion for Muslims

◆ Grace & Forgiveness

- No close relationship with Allah
—too distant and impersonal,
powerful and sovereign.
- Forgiveness is earned, not
granted.

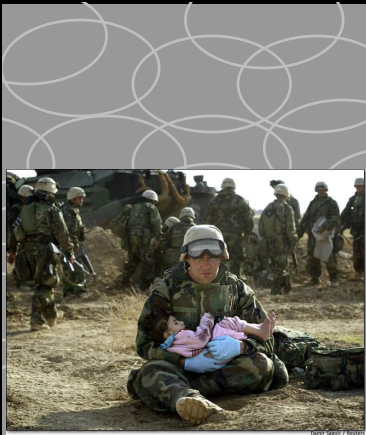




Compassion for Muslims

◆ Grace & Forgiveness

- Allah's forgiveness is inscrutable
- In Islam, no one will be certain until the Day of Judgment.
- No example of a direct confession of sin in the Qur'an.
- No developed personal analogies (e.g., Prodigal Son).

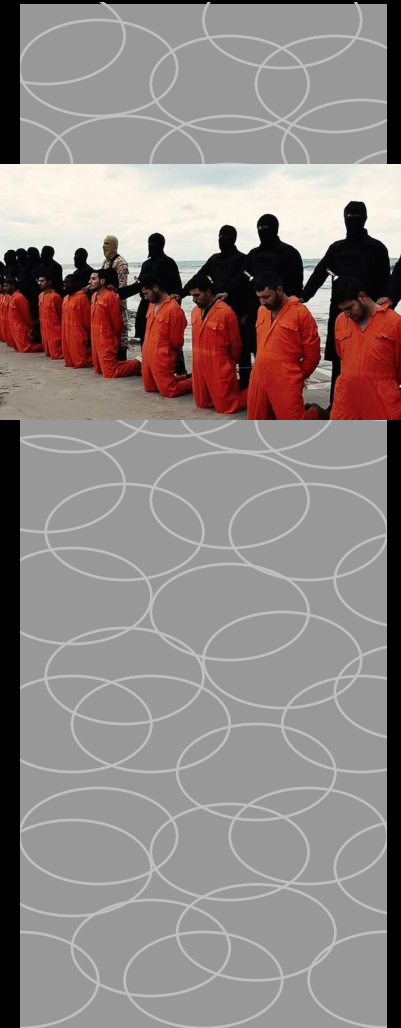




Conflict with Islam

◆ Different viewpoints.

- Converts to Christianity are thought to have thrown off all moral restraints.
- Islamic culture threatened by degenerate Western cultural influences (TV, movies, music, and lifestyle).





Comparative World Views

Concept

Muslim

“Christian”

Unity

Emphasize—*ummah*.

Only if pragmatic.

Time

Respect past.

Orientation to future.



Comparative World Views

**He in whose heart no history is enscrolled,
Cannot discern in life's alloy the gold.
But he that keeps the record of the Deed,
Adds to his life new lives a hundred-fold.**

> Arabic poet



Comparative World Views

Concept	Muslim	“Christian”
Unity	Emphasized— <i>ummah</i> .	Only if pragmatic.
Time	Respect past.	Orientation to future.
Family	Solidarity.	Individualistic.
Peace	Integration, external.	Contentment, internal.
Honor	All important.	Not the priority.
Status	Family, name, age.	Wealth, accomplishment.



Comparative World Views

Concept

Muslim

“Christian”

Individualism

Subordination.

Independence.

Secularism

Unacceptable.

Largely acceptable.

Change

Undesirable.

Desirable.

Efficiency

Little or no concern.

Imperative.



Just the Facts

F A C T S

◆ Forgiveness

- What the Muslim desires deeply.
- What is exceedingly difficult to obtain in Islam.





Just the Facts

F A C T S

◆ **Forgiveness**

◆ **Assurance**

- **What the Muslim lacks completely.**
- **What can be obtained only by death in either *jihad* or *haj*.**



Just the Facts

F
A
C
T
S

- ◆ **Forgiveness**
- ◆ **Assurance**
- ◆ **Compassion**

- **What Muslims need as evidence of Christian faith.**
- **Priority of hospitality.**





Just the Facts

F
A
C
T
S

- ◆ **Forgiveness**
- ◆ **Assurance**
- ◆ **Compassion**
- ◆ **Time**

- **What it takes**
 - ◆ to understand,
 - ◆ to trust, and
 - ◆ to harvest.





Just the Facts



- **What is sin?**
- **How does sin affect one's relationship to God?**
- **How do you obtain forgiveness for your sins?**
- **What does the Quran say about how we should forgive others when they sin?**
- **What does the Quran say about God forgiving our sins?**
- **How can you know that your sins have been completely forgiven?**



Just the Facts

Indian college president:

1st time Christ came to India—in the company of a trader.

2nd time Christ came to India—flanked by a diplomat and a soldier.

3rd time Christ came to India—as an uplifter of the outcast and poor—as an educator, relief worker, and doctor.

4th time Christ comes—disentangled?—nothing but the Gospel and forgiveness. The door will open.





Just the Facts

◆ Secret Missions?

- 1 Thessalonians 2:1–7
- Confirms Muslims' suspicions
- Ignores Muslim respect
- Produces persecution
- Gives in prematurely
- Fails to be opportunistic





Just the Facts

F A C T S

- ◆ **Forgiveness**
- ◆ **Assurance**
- ◆ **Compassion**
- ◆ **Time**
- ◆ **Scripture**

➤ **“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”**
- Romans 10:17



Religion & Culture

How to Correct Misunderstandings

The Misunderstandings

- Time magazine ran a cover article asking the question, “Should Christians Convert Muslims?” The artwork featured a militant-looking clenched fist holding a metal cross, reminiscent of a Crusader’s sword.



The following slides in this green-bordered format are from “Islam & Christianity” © Rose Publishing, 2006.

Religion & Culture

How to Correct Misunderstandings

The Misunderstandings

- This imagery correctly symbolizes some typical Muslim misunderstandings, especially when viewed with the cigarette advertisement on the back cover. The advertisement featured a sensual goddess-like model with men fawning at her feet.
- These pictures display some fears of Muslims: to be dominated militarily and corrupted morally by “Christianity.”



Religion & Culture

How to Correct Misunderstandings

Correcting the Misunderstandings

- Followers of Jesus, through their words and actions, are called to show Muslims that God loves all people so much that Jesus died on the cross for their sins. (Islam denies Jesus' death; claims that he was lifted up to heaven and a substitute died instead of him.)



Religion & Culture

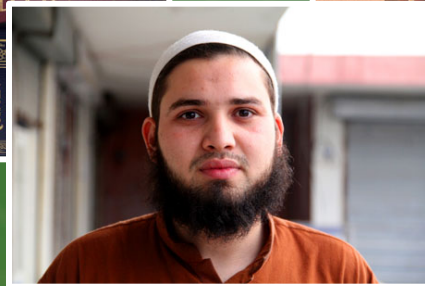
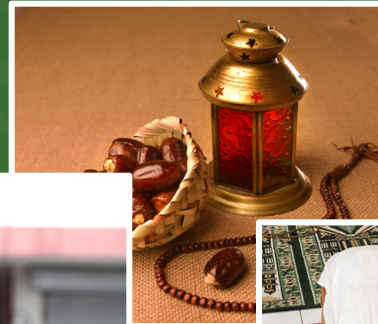
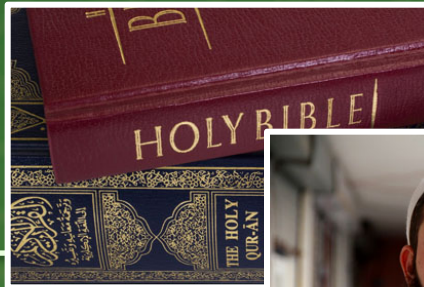
How to Correct Misunderstandings

Correcting the Misunderstandings

- Jesus also defeated Satan and death by rising from the grave. He made it possible for all of God's children to live with him forever. This “good news” should be attractive to Muslims.



Reaching Out to Muslims



Reaching Out to Muslims

Do's & Don'ts

- **Do** make it clear you are a follower of Christ, by your loving words and righteous lifestyle.
- **Don't** assume your Muslim friend understands your meaning of "Christian."
- **Do** take time to build a relationship. Practice hospitality.

For a Christian to use some Muslim-friendly words can help avoid misunderstandings, but it can also lead to the impression that one is interested in converting to Islam. This is a risk worth taking in order to communicate the Good News as a truly positive message, not as a corrupting influence.



Reaching Out to Muslims

Do's & Don'ts

- **Don't** be surprised if you are rejected at first. It is best to offer Muslim friends store-bought sweets and to avoid anything with pork or alcohol.
- **Do** approach your encounters as a learner. Ask questions.
- **Don't** take notes and treat Muslim friends like an academic project.

Bismillah (Bis-mi-LAH)

“In the name of Allah.” An invocation frequently used by Muslims. The longer version, *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim*, means “in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” As a way to honor their Muslim friends, Christians can ask for help to memorize and appropriately speak this Arabic phrase because similar terms are deeply rooted in biblical understanding.

Reaching Out to Muslims

Do's & Don'ts

- **Do** correct their misunderstandings of your beliefs.
- **Don't** argue. If they want to debate with a Christian, refer them to the website www.debate.org.uk/.
- **Do** talk about Jesus. Use his title, *Isa Al Masih*.
- **Don't** insult the prophet Muhammad.

Salaam Alaykum

(Sa-LAAM Ah-LAY-kum)

“Peace be upon you.”

Universal Muslim greeting that Muhammad required to be used. It is virtually identical to the Aramaic phrase Jesus spoke when appearing to the disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:36; John 20:19).

Reaching Out to Muslims

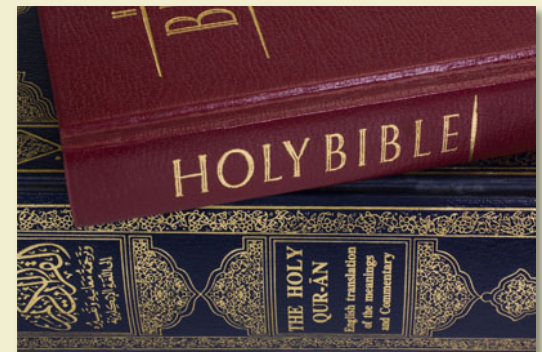
Do's & Don'ts

- **Do** pray out loud with your Muslim friends. Ask if you can pray for their practical needs, healing, and worries. Look for opportunities and pray in Jesus' name.
- **Don't** start your prayer with "Our Father..." because Muslims have a misunderstanding about the fatherhood of God (as sexual). Wait until you correct this misunderstanding before using "Father" or "*Abba*." At first address your prayer to "Almighty God" or "Lord God."

Reaching Out to Muslims

Do's & Don'ts

- **Do** use your right hand in giving and receiving gifts.
- **Don't** use your left hand for eating food (especially when learning to eat with your hands). The left hand is used for toilet cleaning; the right hand for eating.
- **Do** treat your Bible with respect. Store it high on a shelf. Some wrap it in a beautiful cloth.
- **Don't** put your Bible on the floor or in the bathroom as reading material. Many Muslims are superstitious about the bathroom.



Reaching Out to Muslims

Do's & Don'ts

- **Do** be gender-sensitive: interact man to man, woman to woman.
- **Don't** allow any compromising situation, even just to protect from a possible rumor. An Arab proverb says, “A man and woman alone together are three with the devil.”
- **Do** observe body language. Take your shoes off when entering a home or place of prayer (especially if you see shoes at the threshold).



Reaching Out to Muslims

Do's & Don'ts

- **Don't** sit so that the sole of your foot or shoe is facing someone. Women, don't look men directly in the eye, or at least quickly avert your glance.
- **Do** practice modesty, even among Westernized Muslims. For women this is very important since family honor is tied to their behavior and reputation.
- **Don't** assume Muslims think the same as you, even if they dress the same.



Conclusion

- ✓ Encourage the individual to read the Bible for themselves and to ask questions about what they have read.
- ✓ Begin with the Gospel of John.
- ✓ Remind them that even Muslims call Jesus (Isa), **Kalimatullah** (“the Word of God”).
- ✓ Love them unconditionally.
- ✓ Pray fervently for them.

