

The CROSS or The CRESCENT

Understanding
Islam


TEACHER'S MANUAL

CROSS

or

The
CRESCENT

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Islam




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Acknowledgment

The emphasis of this manual is not only on the basic doctrinal differences between Christianity and Islam, but also on the witnessing methods and approaches to use with our Islamic friends. The Lord Jesus Christ employed certain methods to reach people during His time on earth. His example is the best example. Therefore, much of this manual expounds upon two explicit models Jesus used to reach Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.


I acknowledge my debt and deep appreciation for Daniel Sanchez who graciously allowed me to employ, in general, the format he used in his manual, as well as some of the ideas and insights he presented in his discussion.

I hope that this study would be of great benefit to all those wanting to learn more about the Islamic faith and for those who heed the call to reach out to Muslims, for whom Jesus died to redeem from eternal condemnation.

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Sharing Our Faith with Our Muslim friends

This study undoubtedly raises some important questions: Why should we share our faith with our Muslim friends? Would they be responsive to the gospel message? How can we reach out to these people? How much do we know about Muslims? These questions and many more are legitimate questions and are essential in developing a clear biblical strategy to witness to our Muslim friends. The underlying supposition of the study is that we need to share our faith with everyone, even Muslims, because Jesus died to save everyone who responds from eternal condemnation. There are over one billion Muslims in the world today. Four to six million reside in the United States of America alone.¹ We would like to see them experience new birth (see John 3:3) and become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Matt. 28:19-20).

This study will examine the principal doctrines of Islam, as well as pertinent cultural factors and relevant historical issues. This information will enable Christians to witness to Muslims in an informed and appropriate manner. The objective is not only to impart information, but also to equip evangelical Christians to share their faith.

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Introduction

Many non-evangelical Christian denominations, such as Catholicism, orthodoxy, Coptic, and the ancient orthodox church, share a common ground of beliefs with each other, whereas Islam rejects the basic tenets of Christianity. A brief survey may help us to comprehend some aspects of these fundamental differences.

The Fallen Nature of Man: Muslims do not believe in the fallen nature of man. According to them, man is born innocent, but he disobeys God because of his weaknesses. When he repents, as Adam and Eve did, God accepts his repentance. Islam teaches that human beings need teachers and prophets to guide them in the straight path.

The Fatherhood of God: Muslims reject the entire concept of the fatherhood of God. They believe it is blasphemous to hold to the fatherhood of God. He is the Creator and we are His servants. There is no personal relationship between man and God.

The Incarnation and Divinity of Jesus: Jesus is just a prophet like the rest of the prophets. It is true that He was born without a father, but Adam's creation is more miraculous than Jesus' birth, because Adam was created without a father or a mother. Therefore, Jesus is only a prophet, not God incarnate.

The Trinity: Muslims believe in the oneness of God. Therefore, they reject the trinity. For Christians, Jesus is divine because He is the Logos and was born of the Holy Spirit. As the Logos, He was with God from eternity.

Muslims charge that Christians believe in three gods: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christians are polytheists in the eyes of Muslims. Therefore, Christians are infidels, though they are called the People of the Book in the Qur'an (see Surah 5:69; 10:94; 16:43).

The Crucifixion: The Qur'an denies the crucifixion. Muslims believe that a crucifixion took place, but the one who was crucified was not Jesus Christ, but His likeness, the one who betrayed Him. And, since they believe Jesus was not crucified, then the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus never took place. Therefore, the whole concept of redemption or atonement is conclusively rejected.

The Bible: The Qur'an testifies to the truthfulness of the Bible. In many cases, it refers Muhammad and his followers to the Scriptures. However, Muslims claim that when the Qur'an refers to the Bible, it is referring to the original Bible before it was distorted by Christians and Jews. Muslims believe that Christians and Jews perverted the Bible, and the contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an are ascribed to this perversion of the original Scriptures. Originally, there was no contradiction because God was the source of both books.

The Inspiration: According to Muslims, the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad by God through the archangel, Gabriel. Though Muhammad penned the holy book, the words, style, and language are God's. Muhammad was merely the tool through whom the revelation was manifested in words. Since the Qur'an is God's style, diction, and content, Muslims allege that no human being can emulate the Qur'an in any way.

Just as Muslims, Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God. However, contrary to Muslims, Christians believe that the inspiration of the Bible includes some aspects of the human element. Christians do not deny that God used the human element, such as the prophets' styles, the idiomatic phrases, and proverbs and customs of the time, to express what God intended to convey to the people.

Salvation: Salvation in Islam is based on belief in God, the angels, the Scripture, the prophets of God and His messengers, and the day of judgment. Good deeds are also necessary for salvation. In Islam, good deeds comprise an act of atonement in order to obtain God's favor. There is no assurance of salvation in Islam as we understand it in Christianity. As Christians, we are saved through the blood of Jesus Christ and our good deeds are the natural fruits of our being new creatures in Christ.


These issues are among the basic doctrines on which Islam and Christianity disagree.

What do Muslim believe? What are the five pillars of Islam?


Muslims believe in one God who created the entire universe; in all the prophets of the Bible and that Muhammad was the last prophet; in the "original" Bible, as they claim; in heaven and hell; in the day of judgment; in the resurrection of the dead; in the virgin birth of Christ; and in the prophethood of Jesus and His second coming. They also believe that there are angels and devils: Taking all these creeds at face value, Christians and Muslims seem to have much in common. However, their interpretations of these beliefs are different than Christianity's interpretations.

The five pillars of Islam

1. *The confession of faith:* Every Muslim must confess and believe that "There is no god but Allah (none has the right to be worshiped but Allah), and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."² In Islam, associating any god with God is the unforgivable sin.
2. *Prayers:* All practicing Muslims must pray five times a day in addition to the Friday congregational prayer. There is a set time for each of these prayers. This ritual demands strict discipline. Muslims all over the world join in prayer during these five official times of prayer. All prayers are to be uttered in Arabic. All Muslims (even non-Arabs) must learn these prayers in Arabic.
3. *Fasting:* Muslims are required to fast from sunrise to sunset during the lunar month of Ramadan. They are not allowed to eat, drink, smoke, or, for husband and wives, to have intercourse. It is a time of meditation, soul-searching, and identifying with the hungry. Many Muslim families who are wealthy provide food for wayfarers and poor strangers during this time.
4. *Pilgrimage:* It is the duty of every capable Muslim to make a trip to Mecca, the most sacred shrine in Islam. In Mecca, they are required to perform certain religious rituals that are mostly borrowed from the Pre-Islamic period. Each year, over two million Muslims go to Mecca and participate in prayer, offer an animal sacrifice, and celebrate the "eed" (the festival).
5. *Almsgiving:* Muslims are asked to tithe two and one-half percent of their annual income to the welfare of the community. This serves as their contribution for charities and for meeting the religious and social needs of society. This duty is obligatory of every able Muslim male. Today, in most Islamic countries, modern taxation has replaced tithing, though tithing for charities is still encouraged.



Muslims belong to one of the two major sects: the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. There are fundamental differences between the two sects and they do not harbor great love for each other. Therefore, as we try to reach out to Muslims, we need to find out about their sectarian affiliation. This will help us determine which approach we should use in witnessing to them. The African-American Muslims also belong to different groups with great differences.



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PREPARING TO SHARE OUR FAITH-PART 1

Bible Study: Jesus, the Samaritan Woman (see John 4), and Nicodemus (see John 3:1-21)

Methods employed by Jesus

Jesus approached the Samaritan woman differently than He did Nicodemus. In sharing the gospel with each person, many factors determined how Jesus addressed the needs of each one. Christian-s should also consider these factors when sharing their faith with Muslims.

With the Samaritan woman, Jesus did not conduct a theological dialogue. She was an ordinary woman with limited understanding of spiritual and legal issues. Her educational background was, undoubtedly, a decisive factor in choosing the right method by which to share the gospel.

In this respect, not all Muslims are educated people, or even well-versed in their own faith. Thus, we have to initiate a dialogue relevant to their educational and intellectual levels. Another factor to consider is that a large number of Muslims belong to "folk" Islam. Their worldview is confined to their daily existence or their empirical world.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, seemed to be an earnest man who was attracted by the character and teaching of Jesus. As a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus was well acquainted with religious matters. Therefore, Jesus conducted a theological dialogue. At the time, Nicodemus failed to understand the spiritual metaphors used by Jesus, but that did not hinder him from becoming a secret follower of Jesus (see John 7:50-52; 19:40).

It is obvious that Jesus intended to reveal to Nicodemus that in order to understand spiritual things, he had to free himself from the rigidity of the law. In many ways, Judaic legalism is similar to Islamic legalism. It is rigid, inflexible, and yet, ceremonial.

Jesus cultivated a friendship.

Jesus cultivated friendships in many ways. With the Samaritan woman, He went out of His way *geographically*. John 4:4 (NIV) states that Jesus "had to go through Samaria." At that time, Jews avoided going through Samaria on their way to Galilee. The fact that Jesus went through Samaria attests to His commitment to His mission and His interest in all of humankind.

As to Nicodemus, Jesus was not accustomed to meet with people secretly, yet Jesus met with Nicodemus under the cover of *nighttime*. Certainly, Jesus had His moments of privacy with His disciples, but, we rarely read in the Bible that He met with people secretly. To introduce Nicodemus to the gospel, Jesus went out of His way to meet this seeking Pharisee.

Jesus' commitment to building friendships was fruitful.

The stories of the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus also show that Jesus did not care about what was socially "accepted" at the time. John 4:9 points out that social contact between the Samaritans and the Jews was not accepted. The relationship between the two communities was based on hostility and hatred (see Neh. 4; Ezra 4). Despite that, Jesus, as a Jew, was willing to violate the traditional social practice to witness to the Samaritan woman.

Jesus again went against the socially accepted thing to do when He, as a Jew, met with Nicodemus, a Pharisee. Even though the Pharisees had plotted against Jesus because He had exposed their hypocrisy, Jesus still cared for them and met secretly with one of their leaders. Was Jesus playing a political game? Was He betraying His mission? Was He deceiving the public? Anyone who found out about this secret meeting would ask these questions. However, Jesus realized that there was an agonized soul who sought the truth, and His concern for Nicodemus was greater than His concern of breaking the socially accepted rules of conduct.

Application:

We as Christians have to take the first step in our relationship with Muslims. We must cultivate a friendship, just as Jesus did. A genuine friendship filled with love is the only way to build a relationship that eliminates suspicion, fear, and alienation.

Jesus created an interest.

The Samaritan woman belonged to a folk religion. Her empirical world was dominating her life. Jesus had the opportunity to speak with her about an essential element for surviving: water.

This woman came to draw water from the well of Jacob (see John 4:12). When Jesus asked her to give Him a drink, He immediately created an interest in the woman because she could not understand why a Jew would ask a Samaritan woman to give Him a drink. Asking for a drink was Jesus' prelude to speaking about spiritual matters.

Although Nicodemus was a teacher of the Jews and belonged to the mainstream of Judaism, Jesus' metaphor of salvation derived from the physical life confused Nicodemus. Jesus recognized Nicodemus' spiritual need, but in order to create an interest, He presented Nicodemus with a confusing statement that this Pharisee could not perceive through his legalistic training.

In both cases, the interest Jesus created was intensified as He proceeded to talk about spiritual

matters. To the Samaritan woman, Jesus talked about spiritual water. He told her, "whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst" (John 4:14, NIV). He spoke of the water of eternal life, and her soul was yearning for such water. She wanted a different kind of life than she was living.

To Nicodemus, Jesus talked about being "born again" (John 3:3, NIV). Jesus told Nicodemus that "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6, NKJV). This was a new concept that had never occurred to the teacher of the Law.

Application:

Creating interest is essential in any conversation. Jesus mastered this art. As we follow His footsteps, we can often create an interest in the gospel. Building friendships helps us discover the needs of people. As we attempt to meet these needs, we will reveal our Christian characteristics. Psychologists tell us that some of the basic needs of human beings are: (1) to love and to be loved, (2) to feel secure, (3) to overcome a sense of guilt, and (4) to have assurance about the future.

As we reflect the love of Christ in our lives and manifest it in our friendships to Muslims, our actions will produce an interest that will hopefully lead to questions about our faith. As this happens, we can share our testimonies with them of how Jesus has made a difference in our lives.

Jesus comprehended both situations and refrained from condemnation.

Jesus did not condemn the Samaritan woman or Nicodemus. When the Samaritan woman admitted that she had no husband, Jesus confronted her with her sad history. He unveiled to her the reality of her vain life and the emptiness of her soul in order to urge her to seek the living water. Certainly, He disapproved of her lifestyle, but as He proceeded to reach out to her, He was full of compassion.

Jesus did not condemn Nicodemus either. Even though Nicodemus failed to understand the spiritual things Jesus spoke of, Jesus realized Nicodemus' heritage. Therefore, Jesus continued His teachings and illustrations in an attempt to help Nicodemus better understand the truth.

Application:

Though there are fundamental differences between the Christian faith and Islamic faith, Christians must not condemn Muslims. Certainly, we disagree with their creeds and their lifestyle, but it is not our mission, as Christians, to condemn them. Our main task is to share the love of Christ and His changing power with them. We cannot expect Muslims to act like born-again Christians until they actually are. Rather than condemning, we should seek the positive aspects of their life. By doing so, we will have a positive attitude as we witness to our friends.

Application:

Jesus commanded us to preach the gospel to all nations. He did not call us to argue or debate with others. If we are to follow His example, we ought to focus on relationships. Arguments and debates are often counterproductive in witnessing, especially with Muslims. Instead of arguing, we should ask, "What is your personal relationship with God?"

Jesus concentrated on what was essential to salvation.

With both the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus, Jesus refrained from discussing religion. Instead, He concentrated on what was essential for their spiritual welfare. He told the Samaritan woman that she needed the living water, eternal life. To Nicodemus, Jesus talked about being born again. He did not discuss the Samaritan creeds or the Judaic law, but He focused on presenting the good news to both of them.

Jesus emphasized that the focal point was a spiritual relationship with God. It is the spiritual relationship with God that counts, not where God should be worshipped (Zion or Gerizim) or how He should be worshipped (by applying the law and Judaic rituals). To the Samaritan woman, Jesus said, "true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23, NIV). To Nicodemus, Jesus revealed the

spiritual relationship between the Father and born-again child (see John 3:3-8).

Jesus communicated the message patiently.

It was not easy, at first, for the Samaritan woman or Nicodemus to comprehend what Jesus was talking about. Their mind-sets were limited to their own experience, though in two different levels. However, Jesus was not impatient with them. He tried to walk the road of knowledge step by step with them. It took the Samaritan woman some time to realize that Jesus was talking about the living water, not physical water. Her understanding corresponded with the terms she used to refer to Him. At first, she called Him a Jew (see John 4:9), then Sir (see John 4:11), which

indicated some respect, then a prophet (see John 4:19). Finally, she referred to Him as Christ (see John 4:29).

Jesus shared with Nicodemus on a more theological level, but He started with the basic phenomena of birth. At first, Nicodemus could not understand the relationship, but Jesus patiently communicated the spiritual facts in response to Nicodemus' questions. Although the Gospel of John does not tell us how much Nicodemus grasped of Jesus' teaching, John 3:10-21 implies that Nicodemus began to comprehend some of the spiritual teachings. Otherwise, Jesus would not have continued with His dialogue.

Application:

As we endeavor to reach out to Muslims, we have to understand that Muslims come from a completely different religious background, culture, and mind-set. It is not easy for them to understand our Christian terminology. To them, Jesus is neither the Savior nor the Son of God. We must patiently communicate with Muslims until they are able to understand the plan of salvation.

Conclusion: Review of principles

1. We should *cultivate friendships*, which may mean going out of our way geographically, socially, and circumstantially, if we are to witness effectively to Muslims.
2. We should *create an interest* in spiritual matters, by relating to felt needs or by helping Muslims rethink their beliefs.
3. We should *comprehend situations and refrain from condemnation*. It is harmful to criticize Muslims, the Qur'an, or their prophet. Our mission is to help them see how Jesus can create them anew through His love and grace.
4. We should *concentrate on what is essential to salvation*.
5. We should *communicate patiently* with Muslims, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to them the truthfulness of the gospel.

Group Activity 11

Examine attitudes

Invite the group to express their attitudes by playing a word association game. Write down the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the words:

1. Muslim
2. Qur'an
3. Muhammad

Allow students to share their answers that may come from their own experiences or from impressions gained from the media, books, or some other source. After they share their responses, help them analyze their attitudes and understandings of Islam. It is important to know that you do not have to agree with Muslims theologically or compromise your convictions in order to witness to them. However, you must realize that unless you love them and care for them you will not be able to witness to them effectively.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus met people with whom He disagreed concerning: (1) their lifestyle (i.e., the Samaritan woman); (2) theology (i.e., Nicodemus); (3) values (i.e., the

rich young ruler); or (4) self-righteousness (i.e., the Pharisees). It is clear that even though Jesus disagreed with them, He loved them through words and example. Jesus taught us to:

1. Love our neighbors as ourselves (see Matt. 22:39).
2. Minister to the needs of those who are different from us (see Luke 10:30-37).
3. Forgive others (see Matt. 18:21-22).
4. Love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (see Matt. 5:43-48).

What you should *not* do

- *Do not* criticize Muslims, their doctrines, practices, culture, or their way of life. Even if you have a valid point, it is counterproductive to criticize them for three reasons: (1) it is against the spirit of Christ; (2) it will only antagonize them; (3) it will create a gap between you and them, and once a gap is forged, it is not easy to bridge the gap.
- *Do not* ridicule Islamic practices. Their rituals are part of their daily ceremonial religious performances. Islam is a way of life and these practices are intermingled in every aspect of a person's daily routine.
- *Do not* be negative just because you differ from them. You can disagree without being disagreeable.
- *Do not* be indifferent to Muslims when they try to convey their creeds and practices. Their explanations will help you comprehend their way of thinking and why they react to other religions the way they do.


What you *should* do

- Love your Muslim friends. Seize every opportunity to manifest your love in practical ways.
- Pray for your Muslim friends. It is not you who is going to change them. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that produces change in people's lives. When you pray, mention them by name. If you have a Muslim friend who is sick, pray for him or her privately, and in person at his or her home if granted permission to do so.
- Show a genuine positive attitude when a Muslim is introduced to you. Extend to him or her a friendship that is full of Christ's love.
- Live a Christlike life. Muslims should see the difference between you and non-Christians. Unless they see a difference in your life, they will not feel the need to change.

Practical Instruction

The United States has become a mission field. Many Muslims who are now living in the United States are from countries that are closed to missionaries. Even national Christians are not allowed to witness to their Muslim neighbors in their own native land. Having these Muslims in the United States is a tremendous opportunity to reach out to them. They are not subject to the same social, religious, political, and legal pressures they experience in their own countries.

Muslims come to the United States believing this is a Christian country. They always associate the West with Christianity. To many of them, the materialistic Western culture is a reflection of Christianity. Since Islam is both church and state, Muslims apply the same concept to Western countries. It is important to tell them that there is not a Christian country in the world, and that the Christian faith is a personal experience between the individual and God. It is a personal relationship between an individual and God.



Learn as much as possible about the Muslim culture, religion, practices, and goals. This will help you to become more acquainted with Muslims and it will help you establish some common ground with them.

Remember that Muslims often do not understand Christian terminology. If you use Christian terms, it is important that you define what these words mean. The best thing to do when talking with a Muslim is to avoid using distinctively Christian terms. Try to use common words accepted and understood by Christians and Muslims. Instead of using "born again," you can say you are a committed Christian. Instead of calling Jesus the "Son of God," which is blasphemy to a Muslim, you can call Him the "Word of God," because the Qur'an grants this title to Jesus. By avoiding Christian terms, you are not compromising your faith.

You should also be aware of the different Islamic movements and sects in the United States. The Sunnis regard themselves as the orthodox Muslims. The Shi'ites split from the mainstream of Islam over 1,300 years ago. The Ahmadiya, which is an Islamic heresy, also live in the United States. Among the African-American Muslim community, there is the Nation of Islam. This sect is rejected by the mainstream of Islam. There is also the sect of orthodox African-American Muslims. Your understanding of these different sects will help you develop better methods and approaches to witnessing to Muslims.

Chapter Two

PREPARING TO SHARE OUR FAITH-PART 2

Be Deeply Rooted in Your Faith

In order to be able to witness to Muslims, Christians should be rooted in their faith and have a reasonable understanding of Islam. Here are five major characteristics that distinguish Christianity from any other religion in the world.

1. The center of our faith is Christ. Without Christ, there is no salvation. Nothing else can save us, including the teachings of Christ, except for the One who died for us, Jesus Christ. Our Christian doctrines are the result of believing in Him. Doctrines do not save us, nor do doctrines have the power to respond to our prayers. Only Christ, a living person, has the power to answer our prayers, to strengthen us, and to care for us. We do not see this characteristic in any other religion.

2. The power of Christ. Our faith in the living Person provides us with the power that changes us into new creatures. In order to obtain God's favor, Muslims strive to do good deeds. They believe that their good deeds provide atonement. However, their efforts are futile because they lack the divine power found in Jesus. They cannot, through their own strength, live up to God's standards. In Christianity, Jesus does not expect us to do good deeds before we come to Him. To the contrary, He invites us to come unto Him, as we are, with our sins, burdens, spiritual poverty, and weakness. When we come to Him, He gives us the power to change. Once Christ dwells in us, we are able to live a Christlike life and, as a result of being Christlike, we do good deeds. This characteristic is unique to Christianity and is not seen in Islam.

3. The love of Christ. Jesus' immeasurable love led Him to die on our behalf to save us from eternal condemnation. That same love can be ours, if we believe in this living Person. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies (see Matt. 5:44). How can we love our enemies if we do not possess the love of Christ in our life? This unconditional love does not know barriers, races, colors, or languages. It is this type of love that will help you build relationships with Muslims. No other religion shares this type of love.

4. The fatherhood of God. God is our Creator, yet, spiritually He is our Father. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to say when He uttered the model prayer. God created us in His image. As Christians, we are His children. Our relationship with Him is unique. It is a relationship of veneration, love, respect, and spiritual sonship. This characteristic is not found in any religion other than Christianity.

5. The assurance of salvation. Christianity is the only faith in the world that guarantees the assurance of salvation. Based on Jesus' promises and His atoning act on the cross, Christians can be sure that when they die they will go to heaven. On the cross, Jesus paid the price for all the world's sins. All those who commit their lives to Him are saved. In Islam, salvation depends on God's mercy and will. No Muslim, even the most devout, can have the assurance that when he dies he will go to heaven. This type of insecurity concerning the hereafter creates feelings of fear, worry, and emptiness.

These unique characteristics of Christianity are important to comprehend before witnessing to Muslims. Understanding these qualities of your faith will help you relate the essence of Christianity to others.

Sources of Knowledge in Islam

The Qur'an and the Hadith provide the foundation for the Islamic faith. The Qur'an is the Muslims' holy book. It is divided into 114 surahs (or chapters). The surahs are not organized in chronological order, but are organized according to the length of each chapter, the longest chapter to the shortest chapter. The only exception is the first chapter, al-Fatiha, "The Opening." The chapters do not center around specific topics. In many cases, the chapters deal with unrelated themes.

The Hadith (Islamic Tradition) is the second most important source of Islamic faith. The Islamic Tradition includes the deeds and sayings of Muhammad and some of his close companions. Muslims always refer to the Hadith to interpret or explain a certain verse or incident related to the Qur'an, or to refute a point. The Qur'anic verses are brief. Clarification or a description of the circumstances in which these verses were revealed is often demanded. The Hadith provides interpretations of these verses. For example, the Qur'an denies the crucifixion of Jesus in undocumented verse, but does not give any detail. The information about what took place at that time and the one who was crucified is found in the Hadith. Thus, the Islamic Tradition has become the haven to which Muslims resort. Christians need to recognize the significance of the Hadith for Muslims and its impact on evangelism.

[hun:h and State

Muslims do not separate religion from the state. Law and faith comprise the ideal religio-political system of the Islamic state. This is contrary to our understanding as Christians of the relationship between church and state. The following points should be explained to Muslims:

- There is not a single Christian state in the world. Christianity is a personal experience between man and God. Muslims associate Christianity with the West, and Islam with the East.
- It is of utmost importance to explain to Muslims that what many in society consider Christianity is not true Christianity. Many people call themselves Christians, yet they do not understand that Christianity is much more than a label to affix to oneself—it is a life that has been changed by believing in Jesus Christ. Most Muslims are appalled at the immorality they see in our streets. They believe this is Christianity. We must help them understand what Christianity is.
- As Muslims compare their religious values, which are reinforced by their culture, with the secular values of the West, which they believe to be Christian values, they feel that their values are superior. Christians should help them compare their Islamic values with Christian values that, in most cases, contradict the secular values. This will help Muslims realize that Christian values are higher than the secular world's values.

Once we clarify the above mentioned points to Muslims, they will acquire a better understanding of Christianity. These points may also open the door for a discussion that leads to a fruitful Bible study. The Sermon on the Mount is an excellent passage of Scripture to study at this point of communication.

Bible Studly: Jesus and Nicodemus-Part 1 (see John 3:1-21)

The experience of Nicodemus is so significant, that this case needs closer examination. Certainly, Nicodemus was a religious person. He was so devoted to his religious tradition that Jesus recognized Nicodemus' position as "Israel's teacher" (John 3:10, NIV). Because of his qualifications, Nicodemus was admitted to the Sanhedrin, the highest religious authority in the country. He was also a Pharisee. But, there was something lacking in his life, and he hoped to find this missing element in Jesus' teachings. Nicodemus' eagerness was stronger than his fear. His main concern was to discover the meaning of salvation.

How Jesus described salvation

1. Salvation is a spiritual experience.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5, KJV). Jesus indicates that a person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit (see John 3:6). This fact is very important in witnessing to Muslims because being born of the Spirit precludes human effort as a means of salvation.

Nicodemus, who was the product of his legalistic religion, relied heavily on the law and religious ordinances. Likewise, Muslims resort to the performance of the five pillars of Islam and other rituals in an effort to obtain salvation. Human efforts have failed to secure the salvation of man in the past, as well as in the present. As Jesus talked about the spiritual experience, He was explaining to Nicodemus that being religious was not enough to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus needed a spiritual birth. He needed a transformation in his life that only Christ could provide. This transformation could not be described in any way other than a "birth."

The changing power of Christ should be explained to Muslims on a practical, not theoretical, basis.

2. Salvation is a gift.

It was not easy for Nicodemus to understand the concept of a new birth. His mind was enslaved to the law, but he longed to know more about it. He asked Jesus, "How can this be" (John 3:9, NIV)? Nicodemus essentially asked, "how can all my sins, my mistakes, my habits, and even my worldview be erased and changed? How can a person who has lived as long as I have start all over again? How many sacrifices do I have to offer to be totally cleansed of all my iniquities so I can be accepted by God?" These same questions are present in the minds of Muslims, too. The belief that good deeds erase one's sins is predominant in the Islamic faith. Good deeds are a means, not a result, of salvation. This is not what Jesus taught. It is true that Muslims rely on God's mercy and that He is the sole judge who determines the destiny of every human being. But for Muslims, there is no guarantee that God will bestow His mercy on even the most devout Muslim.

In Christianity, salvation is a gift bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. Every genuine Christian knows for certain what his or her eternal destiny will be.

3. *Salvation is received through faith.*

Jesus told Nicodemus that salvation is attained through faith alone. Maintaining the law, performing religious rituals, and doing good deeds would not save him. Jesus made it clear that one must believe in Him to have eternal life. Jesus stressed this point three times in His conversation with Nicodemus (see John 3:15-16,19).

Muslims believe that performing Islamic ordinances, such as ablution, fasting, praying five times a day, tithing, taking a pilgrimage, and a confession of faith are conducive to salvation. They do these things in an attempt to please God and attain His favor. Muslims think that observing Islamic ordinances combined with performing good deeds provides atonement for their sins. There is no place for the cross in Islam.

4. *Salvation is a present possession.*

When Jesus talked to Nicodemus about possessing salvation, He used the present tense. It is something guaranteed. There is no uncertainty. The Gospels are full of Jesus' promises concerning the assurance of salvation. He died for us and paid the price to secure salvation to whoever believes in Him and trusts His promises.

There is no assurance of salvation in Islam. When the founder of Islam was asked if he was sure that all his sins were forgiven, he said that he would ask for forgiveness 70 times a day.

As Christians, we are assured, now and in the future, that salvation is ours by the merits of Jesus Christ.

Levels of communication

The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus reveals that they communicated at several levels.

1. *Face-to-Face* (see John 3:2-3).

Why did Jesus agree to meet with Nicodemus? Because Jesus was concerned about individuals, as well as nations. Jesus stated: "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, *NKJV*). Jesus saw Nicodemus as a man seeking the truth. He knew Nicodemus wanted to understand how to be saved before Nicodemus even asked. Nicodemus' perception of Jesus was correct, but incomplete. When Nicodemus met Jesus privately, he saw Jesus as "a teacher who has come from God" (John 3:2, *NIV*). This conversation helped them get acquainted with each other.

When witnessing to Muslims, face-to-face dialogue or one-to-one conversation is essential. When there is more than one Muslim involved in the conversation, there is always an attitude of caution. Muslims are afraid to admit their convictions in front of other Muslims. A one-on-one approach allows for a better opportunity to share and it helps us listen and understand the Muslim without being interrupted by his antagonistic friends. In addition, the one-on-one approach allows the Muslim to freely express his opinion, whether it is negative or positive, without fear. Remember, debating with someone is often counterproductive. When talking with a Muslim, you should consider their perception of Jesus. To them, He is just a prophet, like Moses. This perception about Jesus is incomplete. Look for opportunities in your conversation to explain who Jesus is.

2. *Mind-to-Mind* (see John 3:4-13).

Nicodemus did not reject or dismiss the idea of new birth. He was confused, yet that confusion motivated him to ask some serious questions. Jesus took the time to answer Nicodemus' questions. Jesus explained that He was talking about a spiritual birth. "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7, NIV).

Every Muslim becomes confused when a Christian talks about the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, and the fatherhood of God. Some of them are antagonistic, others are open-minded, but all of them have serious questions to be answered. We must be patient, loving, and ready to quote the Word of God.

3. *Heart-to-Heart* (see John 3:14-18).

Jesus communicated with Nicodemus at the heart-to-heart level. He told Nicodemus about the love of God, and about death. But, Jesus also told Nicodemus that those who believe in Him will have everlasting life. In this dialogue, Jesus emphasized three points: (1) spiritual birth; (2) physical death; and (3) everlasting life. Jesus communicated to Nicodemus what was closest to His heart.

As we witness to Muslims, they need to see the sincerity of our faith, hope, and love. They are concerned about their eternal life. We have to open our hearts to them and share with them the good news. Communicate to them that you are not afraid of death because you are sure of eternal life.

Application:

It is important that we ask ourselves, "At what level are we communicating the gospel with Muslims?" Before we share, we have to learn something about their educational background, religious zeal, openness, and how much they know about Christ and Christianity. Each person must also consider how far he or she is willing to go to express friendship and to build relationships with Muslims. Are you willing to be patient, loving, and communicate at the heart-to-heart level?

The dialogue

1. The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus reveals much about Nicodemus. He had heard about Jesus and he knew Jesus had performed miracles. Most likely, Nicodemus had searched the Scriptures to see if Jesus was the prophesied Messiah. It seems that Nicodemus was a calculating person. He was very cautious, yet deep in his heart Nicodemus had a positive view of Jesus Christ.

The majority of Muslims have heard about Jesus from their holy book, the Qur'an, where Jesus' name is "Isa;" or from their Muslim Imams (religious teachers). The Qur'an has much to say about Jesus as a prophet, and they have a positive view of Jesus. They know Jesus as the son of Mary, a son born without a father, and a man who performed miracles. Muslims believe in Jesus' second coming. They believe Jesus is the one who is going to kill the Antichrist, but they do not believe in His deity.

2. Nicodemus' positive view led him to defend Jesus (see John 7:50-51). Though he was never identified publicly with Jesus (see John 7:48-49), it was evident that Nicodemus was a secret follower of Jesus (see John 19:38-39). His secrecy stemmed from fear of being ostracized by society if he admitted that he believed Jesus was the Messiah.

Many Muslims are afraid to be identified publicly with Christianity. Even if they are convinced of the truthfulness of the Christian faith, they follow Jesus secretly out of fear. They fear the Islamic law of apostasy. This law demands the death of apostates.

3. In his third stage, Nicodemus publicly displayed his love for Jesus (see John 19: 36-40). He invested in ointment, helped prepare Christ's body, and violated the law that prohibited people from touching a dead body. He was willing to pay any price in order to express his love for Jesus.

If a converted Muslim publicly admits he believes in Christ, he is confronted with cultural pressure, as well as life-threatening Islamic laws. The entire Islamic society will attempt to construct an iron curtain to prevent a person from stepping out of the boundaries of the Islamic faith to join Christianity. Under such pressure, only those devoted to Christianity are ready to pay the price. Nicodemus' step toward Christ was not an easy one, nor is it for a Muslim.

Group Reflection

Levels of communication

As you attempt to communicate the gospel to Muslim friends, ask yourself:

- a. At what level am I communicating with him or her? Is it at the level of face-to-face, mind-to-mind, or heart-to-heart?
- b. What strategy should I use to help someone move to the next level?
- c. Once you have a strategy, share it with your group. Spend time in prayer asking the Lord to help you improve your communication skills with prospects.

Degrees of understanding

What is the Muslim view of Christ? Muslims agree that Jesus is one of the major prophets. The Qur'an lists the major prophets as: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, with Muhammad being the greatest among them and the final messenger. They also believe that the gospel was revealed to Jesus, just as the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad. The Qur'anic message is not the same as the gospel message in the New Testament. According to the Qur'an, Muslims claim that the original gospel was not preserved, or that it was taken up to heaven when God lifted Jesus up, before His enemies could arrest and crucify Him.

As you determine the level of understanding held by your Muslim friend, ask yourself:

- a. How can I introduce this person to the Son of God? What strategy should I employ?
- b. What terminology should I use? You must use language that is acceptable to both Christians and Muslims without compromising your faith.
- c. Raise these questions and answers with your group, and spend time praying for one another.

Muslims who immigrate to the Western world believe that they are going to reside in a Christian country. In the perception of Muslims, the West is always associated with Christianity. These steps should be taken from the beginning of your relationships with Muslims:

- (1) Explain to the Muslim that not everyone living in Western countries is a Christian. Christianity is a personal relationship with God.
- (2) Explain the difference between born-again Christians (or "practicing" Christians) and "cultural" or nominal Christians.
- (3) Clarify the concept of separation between state and church.
- (4) Emphasize, at this stage, the moral aspect of Christianity. Numerous Islamic values are similar in their content and purpose to Christian values. This is common ground that could open doors for further communication.

Practical Instruction

Islamic concept of salvation

Islam does not present a clear concept of salvation, as it is seen in the Bible. To examine this concept, we must allude to some fundamental elements in Islam:

- A) A Muslim submits himself to the will of God and utters the confession of faith, "there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." Such a confession sets Muslims apart from polytheists. Polytheism in Islam is the unforgivable sin, and the destiny of the polytheist is eternal hell. Christians are regarded as heretics and infidels since they believe in the Trinity. Therefore, Muslims believe Christians are destined for hell.
- B) In Islam, repentance is to change one's ways and follow the teachings of Islam. It is a pure human effort to relinquish what is regarded in Islamic faith as unacceptable to God. This is why the Qur'an indicated that after Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they repented and God accepted their repentance (Surah 2:36-37). Repentance combined with the mercy of God are enough in Islam to set the person in the course of salvation. There is no need for a redeemer or a savior.
- C) In the day of judgment, every person since the time of Adam, including all the prophets, will be resurrected and they will stand in the presence of the throne. God will weigh the good deeds and the bad deeds of each person. Those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds may go to heaven, if that is the will of God. Those whose bad deeds outweigh their good deeds will go to hell.

On the authority of some authentic Islamic traditions, any Muslim who, irrespective of his or her sins and wickedness, makes the confession of faith will eventually go to heaven after paying the penalty in hell.

- D) Performing the five pillars of Islam and believing in God, angels, prophets, scriptures, and the day of judgment offer the Muslim the hope to go to heaven, if that is the will of God.
- E) For a Muslim, the only way to acquire the assurance of salvation and heaven is to die as a martyr for the cause of Allah. Thus, the concept of Jihad (striving) has become an essential part of their theology.
- F) In Islam, the concept of Christ's atonement is not accepted. However, there is room in Islam to redeem or to atone for bad deeds by feeding a number of poor people, or by freeing a slave (a practice performed during the time of Muhammad and later centuries). This atonement takes the form of compensation to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

Christian concept of salvation

Salvation in Christianity is based on a relationship with God. The Bible makes it clear that man is born with a sinful nature. Whatever he does, he cannot save himself. He must therefore rely on someone else to save him. That person is Jesus Christ. To be saved, one must:

- A) Acknowledge his sinful nature. We are all under the curse of sin. The concept of the fallen nature of man is rejected in Islam, but it is fundamental in Christianity. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, NIV). "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5, NKJV). Jesus is the only Person who never sinned.
- B) Acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves. We are enslaved to sin and are unable to free ourselves. We need someone, a free person, to break the shackles and set us free. As we admit that we are incapable to save ourselves, we seek after the only One who has the

power to deliver us from the bondage of sin into freedom from our sin. Jesus said, "Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36, NKJV).

- C) Acknowledge the power of the cross. We have all sinned against God, and the wages of our sin is death (see Rom. 3:23; 6:23). There is no way that we can be saved through any human effort. Good deeds, prayers, going to church, reading the Bible, supporting charities, having gentle manners, and social involvement, all fail to redeem us. No one can meet God's standard of perfection. This should make us wonder how we can achieve our salvation. As we read the Bible, we recognize that salvation is centered around the power of the cross. "And without shedding blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22, NIV). The cross is where the price for our salvation was paid.
- D) Acknowledge Jesus as Savior. Believing and accepting the redemptive act of Jesus on the cross is essential in receiving salvation. We must totally surrender ourselves to Christ and pledge to live a Christlike life. This means that we are acknowledging Christ as Lord. Salvation is a gift. We have the choice to accept it or reject it. When we acknowledge Jesus as our Savior, we attest to His sacrificial atonement as the only way for our deliverance from sin. When Jesus said, in John 14:6 (NIV), "I am the way and the truth and the life," He summed up God's plan for the salvation of the human race. We also read in Acts 4:12 (NASB), "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved:'
- E) Acknowledge the assurance of salvation. As Christians, we are certain that we are saved and granted eternal life. The Bible is full of promises such as:
- 1) "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24, NIV).
 - 2) "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13, NIV).
- F) Salvation comes through a personal experience with Christ. Good deeds and religious rituals fail to provide salvation. We are only able to secure our salvation through a personal experience with Christ. The Bible says:
- "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9, NKJV).
 - "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name" (John 1:12, KJV).
 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, NKJV).

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SHARING OUR FAITH-PART 1

Bible 5tud1j: Jesus and Nicodemus (see John 3)

In the previous chapter, we examined the things Jesus taught regarding salvation and the levels on which Jesus communicated with Nicodemus.

This chapter focuses on Nicodemus' experience and how it applies to a Muslim who comes face to face with Christ. The similarities are striking because Nicodemus belonged to a legalistic religion, j_ust as Muslims do today. Nicodemus' experience may be divided into five phases.

Discovery

Nicodemus discovered that Jesus came from God. He was convinced that no one could perform the miraculous signs Jesus did unless God was with Him (see John 3:2). Likewise, a Muslim cannot accept Jesus as his personal Savior until he discovers who Jesus is. He must discover that Jesus is more than a prophet. That discovery comes from two sources: the Bible and believers' lives.

Nicodemus discovered that in order to see and enter the kingdom of God he must be born again (see John 3:3-5). A Muslim must also discover that unless he submits his life to Christ, he cannot be saved. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. It is important here, as we help Muslims discover this truth, to avoid using unfamiliar terms they cannot understand such as "born again."

Deliberation

Nicodemus was convinced that Jesus came from God, but he could not comprehend Jesus' teaching. He asked Jesus two logical questions:

- 1) "How can a man be born again when he is already old" (John 3:4, NIV)?
- 2) "How can this be" (John 3:9, NIV)?

The concept of being "born again" is not a familiar concept in Islam. Muslims believe that performing rituals and legalistic obligation stakes a person to paradise. For Christians, however, new birth is the result of the inner change that takes place when a person accepts Jesus Christ. We have to remember that even as a new convert to Christianity, it will take some time to grasp the spiritual meaning. He may "feel" it, but he may not understand it.

As long as people limit their thinking to the physical, rather than the spiritual, as Nicodemus and many Muslims do, they will have a difficult time understanding the Christian means of salvation. As a Jew, Nicodemus believed that salvation was attained by observing the Law. Likewise, Muslims believe that salvation may be attained through the performance of the Islamic obligations and traditions. But Jesus' message to Nicodemus about salvation through faith in the Son of God is the same message we need to carry to Muslims today. This message will spawn a multitude of questions, but we must be faithful to carry the message to them and we must be patient as they seek to understand the message of Christ (see John 3:16).

Decision

When did Nicodemus decide to accept Jesus as his personal Savior? We do not know. The Bible is silent concerning this matter. However, we know that this Jewish religious leader made a decision to become a follower of Christ. His faith is displayed in John 7:48-49 and in John 19:38-39.

We may never know when or if a Muslim to whom we have witnessed submits his or her life to Christ. Some may accept Christ within a short period of time, others may take a long time, even years. Many of them may never accept Jesus in spite of the long time of labor and prayer. It is our responsibility to show them that Jesus Christ is the Son of God through various Scripture passages.

Dissonance

Submitting one's life to Christ does not mean that his or her life will suddenly become easier. In many cases, submitting one's life to Christ alienates the person from society. John 7:10-52 records that Nicodemus' colleagues were hostile to Jesus and ready to harass His followers. The same attitude is conveyed by Muslims. And when a Muslim accepts Jesus as his or her Savior, he or she will likely face persecution, hatred, alienation, and even death. The whole community might denounce them and they could be cast out of Islamic society, if they are lucky enough to stay alive. Many converted Muslims follow Christ secretly for a long time. Others try to carefully defend Christianity without subjecting themselves to the threat of death. They know that a gap exists between them and the rest of the Islamic community, but they cannot admit it publicly. In times of frustration and discouragement, they may question their new beliefs and to doubt themselves.

Discipleship

In John 19:39-40, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea removed Jesus' body from the cross and prepared it for burial (see John 19:39-40). They placed Jesus in the tomb which Joseph had prepared for himself. When Nicodemus saw Jesus crucified on the cross, he might have thought of the Master's words in John 3:14.

At this point, Nicodemus had reached the point of no return. He was willing to purchase the expensive ointment and linen to prepare his Master's body. He did not hesitate to touch the dead body of Jesus even though, according to the Jewish law, that would make him impure. At a moment when some of Jesus' disciples deserted Him, Nicodemus was willing to be publicly associated with Jesus. Such boldness was evidence that Nicodemus had become a faithful follower of Christ and that he was not concerned about others discovering his new faith.

The progress in the spiritual life of Nicodemus resembles the spiritual growth in the life of many former Muslims. In spite of persecution and denunciation many of them are ready to sacrifice their future, and in some cases their lives, to follow Christ. As this manual was being written, an ex-Muslim from Kuwait was willing to profess publicly that Jesus was his Lord and Savior. Because of his faith in Christ, he was expelled from his own country, his properties were confiscated, his wife divorced him, and his children were taken away from him. His willingness to follow Christ cost him everything, but his steadfastness is living proof of his faithfulness to Christ.

Conclusion

Much is to be learned from the experience of Nicodemus and from the experience of former Muslims who have sacrificed all their earthly means and who have been disowned by their families. They, like Nicodemus, go through similar stages in their pilgrimages toward discipleship. We must learn from their experiences. We must learn how to care for them and how to strengthen them in their new faith.

Group Activity 11

Prepare a testimony

One of the most effective tools in witnessing is to share your testimony. Generally, people are willing to listen to testimonies. For Christians, a testimony is a cause of praise and encouragement. For non-Christians, it has a great impact on their lives and decisions because they can see the difference Jesus has made in the life of the convert.

We can learn how to share our testimony by studying the apostle Paul's testimony in Acts 26.

1. Describe what your life was like before you met Jesus.
2. Tell how you came to know Jesus.
3. Relate how Jesus helps you face life today.
4. Explain how someone may come to know Jesus.

Like Paul, all Christians have their own personal experiences as to how they came to know Christ. As we share our testimonies, we have to take into consideration different cultures and the contexts in which we share our testimonies. As we share our testimonies, we share our lives, our inner feelings, and our thoughts. Our testimonies should reveal to others that being a follower of Christ does not mean that our lives are easy. We still experience doubts, persecutions, and even alienation. However, living for Him provides us with hope, peace, and love. This message is sometimes best conveyed through the testimony of a converted Muslim. The converted Muslim's testimony is powerful because his decision to follow Christ could cause him to lose his family, his possessions, and even his life.

Application

What is your testimony? Using the outline that is most appropriate to your experience, within the context of the culture of your target group, write out your testimony. Under each major heading, write a brief paragraph. Explain how you came to know Jesus as your personal Savior. After you have prepared your testimony, share it with someone in your group.

Practical Instruction

Guidelines to sharing with your Muslim friends

1. Do not try to convert him to Christianity. Your main purpose is to lead him to the Person of Christ.
2. Present the gospel to him with simplicity and sound logic.
3. Show him the difference between cultural Christianity and biblical Christianity, based on the Word of God.
4. Read the Bible together. Encourage the prospect to read the verses, to think about the meaning of the verses, and to ask questions about what he has read. Let the Word of God speak to him.

5. Use terminology that he can understand.
6. Concentrate only on issues essential to salvation. Do not discuss unrelated issues.
 - *Do not pressure him to accept Christ as his Savior. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict and draw him to Christ.*

Marketing the Bible

In general, Muslims do not believe in the current Bible. They claim that Christians perverted the original text and that the original has been lost. Moreover, they allege that there is no longer a need for the Bible because the Qur'an has abrogated all previous scriptures. They believe that all truth is contained within the revelation of the Qur'an.

As Christians, we believe that the Bible is the true Word of God. We also believe that the plan of salvation is clearly explained in the Bible. The Qur'an itself refers to the Bible in many verses. It tells Muhammad and Muslims to refer to the Bible and to consult with the People of the Book (Christians and Jews) if they are in doubt of any revelation from God (see Surah 5:68; 10:94; and 16:43). Thus, it is important to help Muslims trust the Bible and accept it as the only Word of God. This is the most important step a Muslim can take.

When a Muslim is ready to accept the Bible as the true Word of God, help him discover its beauty. The Sermon on the Mount is a perfect place to start when introducing someone to the gospel. It is documented that most of the ancient Islamic quotations from the gospel are cited from Matthew and, in particular, from the Sermon on the Mount. There are three reasons for this:

1. The Gospel of Matthew records the genealogy of Jesus. Muslims are proud of their lineage and they respect the account of genealogy found in Matthew's gospel.
2. The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon of morals and ethics, and Muslims have great respect for moral values.
3. The Sermon on the Mount does not discuss the deity of Jesus; therefore they do not feel threatened by it.

When Muslims become familiar with the Sermon on the Mount, you may ask them the following questions:

1. Is it possible for you to live up to these moral standards? If not, why?
2. How can we live and enjoy this moral life?
3. What are the consequences of our failure to live a perfect moral life?

When a Muslim admits that he cannot live according to the moral standards of the Sermon on the Mount, which is the problem of all mankind, the plan of salvation should be explained to him. Show him, step by step, God's love (see John 3:16), the sinful nature of man (see Rom. 3:23), the need for salvation (see Rom. 6:23), the redemptive act of Christ (see Rom. 3:24-25), His death and resurrection (see Matt. 27:35-28:7), and the assurance of salvation (see Rom. 10:13; 1 John 5:13).

Gospel presentation

The following questions are helpful in presenting the plan of salvation:

1. Why did Christ come? (See John 10:10.)
2. Why don't we have this gift? (See Rom. 6:23.)
3. What is the result of sin? (See Rom. 6:23a.)
4. What is God's gift? (See Rom. 6:23b.)

5. How did God make this possible? (See Rom. 5:8.)
 6. Can we earn this gift? (See Eph. 2:8-9.)
 7. If we could earn this gift, would Christ have died? (See Gal. 2:21; 3:1-5.)
 8. How does this gift become ours? (See John 1:12.)
 9. How did the dying thief receive this gift? (See Luke 23:39-43.)
 10. Can we be sure we have this gift? (See John 5:24.)
 11. Will you open the door of your life to Christ? (See Rev. 3:20.)
- (Before asking these questions of your Muslim friend, read each reference and explain it to him.)*

As you explain the plan of salvation to a Muslim, he will bombard you with questions. He may become skeptical or furious, and he may object to many Christian doctrines. This is not unusual. Remember where he came from and be patient. Love, patience, and perseverance are vital tools when witnessing to a Muslim. Always refer to the gospel when answering his questions. The gospel is your most valuable source of information.

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SHARING OUR FAITH-PART 2

Bible Stud1):

How Jesus dealt with sincere questions

As we share our faith, we will encounter some Muslims who fail to grasp the full meaning of the plan of salvation. They will have sincere questions. We should take the time to answer these questions so that the person has a better understanding of salvation. The Bible teaches us that we must be prepared to answer sincere questions. It says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV).

However, sometimes people ask questions just to argue a point. The Bible teaches us to avoid vain arguments. These are always counterproductive. First Timothy 6:20-21 (NIV) states, "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith."

When answering sincere questions, we should follow Christ's example, which is found in the Bible. Both the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus raised sincere questions as they talked with Jesus. The Samaritan woman could not understand, at first, what Jesus meant when He said that He was the water of life. Her first question was, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink" (John 4:9, NIV)? Essentially, she was asking, "Why are talking to me?" Jesus answered her in a compassionate voice, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10, NIV). When she noticed that He did not have anything to draw water with, she asked, "Are you greater than our father Jacob" (John 4:12, NIV)? Instead of answering her question which was unrelated to the message He intended to convey to this woman, Jesus returned the conversation to that of the living water (see John 4:14). Next, she asked Him a controversial question about where people should worship (see John 4:19-20). Once again, Jesus avoided an argument by not answering her question. His response focused on the type of relationship people should have with the Father: "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, NIV). Jesus did not emphasize religious rituals, but a personal relationship.

Nicodemus failed to comprehend the concept of new birth. He asked Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old" (John 3:4, NIV)? Jesus patiently responded that He was talking about a spiritual birth, not a physical birth: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (John 3:6, NIV). To illustrate this concept, Jesus used the example of the wind, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8, NIV). The same thing is true of the spiritual birth. Nicodemus asked, "How can this be" (John 3:9, NIV), because he still did not fully understand what Jesus was talking about.

Jesus then alluded to the story of the serpent in the desert from the Old Testament (see Num. 21). Nicodemus, as a teacher of Israel, was well acquainted with the story and the meaning of the incident. The story relates how God punished the Israelites by sending serpents that stung them and caused many of them to die because they complained against God. When Moses pleaded for the people before God, He instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on top of a pole. Those who trusted God and looked upon the serpent would be healed. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15, NIV).

What can we infer from these two incidents?

1. Jesus took time to answer the Samaritan woman's questions. He did the same with Nicodemus.
2. Jesus met them where they were. He started with what they knew and proceeded to explain what they did not know.
3. In responding to the questions of both the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus, Jesus was sincere and He presented the truth (see John 4: 22).
4. Jesus inspired the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus to continue in their search for the truth.
5. Jesus did not use ambiguous terminology. He used illustrations from their daily life.
6. Jesus avoided fruitless arguments and focused on what was important.
7. Jesus made the application very clear.
8. Jesus focused on a relationship, not a religion.

Group Activity 11

After reviewing the concept of salvation in Islam, divide the group into pairs and ask everyone to share the plan of salvation they prepared to their partner. Allow each person 15 minutes to share the plan of salvation. This activity provides each person with the opportunity to practice presenting the plan of salvation.

Practical Instruction

When Jesus responded to questions, He focused on sharing the good news. He did not allow anything to distract Him from His principal objective. He was courteous, yet prudent and firm.

We too should keep the focus of our conversation on salvation. Muslims will ask questions when we try to share the gospel message with them. When they ask questions, such as the ones discussed below, remember that the main objective is to share some perspectives and ideas on how to acknowledge these questions and relate the questions to salvation.

How can you prove that the Bible is not corrupted?

This is a crucial question for both Christians and Muslims. Many Muslims believe that Christians and Jews have corrupted the Bible. For this reason, they consider the Qur'an to be the true word of God. If it is proven that the Bible is not corrupted, then which book is the word of God, the Qur'an or the Bible? The contradictions between the two books force us to accept one book and reject the other.

Suggested responses:

- a. The fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the ancient nations of the time, as well as the prophecies related to Jesus, are the most conclusive proof about the authenticity of the Bible.
- b. There is no significant difference between the thousands of biblical manuscripts from the first three centuries and the current printed Bibles.
- c. When was the Bible corrupted, before Muhammad or after Muhammad? If the answer is before Muhammad, then why does the Qur'an, in tens of verses, urge Muhammad and Muslims to refer to the Bible when they are in doubt of the truth? If the answer is after Muhammad, then there are ancient manuscripts to prove that the Bible has not been corrupted.
- d. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls proved beyond any doubt the authenticity of the Old Testament.
- e. Current archaeological discoveries attest to the validity of the Bible.
- f. The Bible warns that anyone who changes or adds to the Word of God will be severely punished (see Rev. 22:18-19).

How can you prove the fallen nature of man?

It is difficult for Muslims to accept the biblical concept of the fallen nature of man because they believe that man is born innocent. Muslims believe that sin is the outcome of man's weakness, and that we simply need teachers or prophets to guide us to the true path, Islam. In Islam, there is no need for redemption or a savior to pay the ransom for our sins.

Suggested response:

The story of Adam and Eve's rebellion is recorded in both the Bible and the Qur'an (see Gen. 3; Surah 2:30-37). Both books tell of the cause and the result of Adam and Eve's rebellion. However, the Qur'an does not tell what the ultimate result of sin is, as the Bible does. We are told in Romans 6:23 that the "wages of sin is death." "Death" in this context refers to both our physical death as well as our spiritual death.

The Qur'an agrees with the Bible that Adam was the master of the Garden of Eden. He was the ruler over all of God's creation (see Surah 2:31). The Qur'an and the Bible also agree that when Adam sinned, he was thrown out of the Garden of Eden forever. Though Adam repented, and though God accepted Adam's confession, Adam and Eve were still thrown out of the paradise God had given them (see Surah 7:22-25). Not only did Adam lose the paradise that God had given him, but he also lost the peace that reigned on the earth before he sinned. After Adam disobeyed God, a state of hostility, hatred, menace, and wickedness reigned over the earth (see Surah 2:36).

Herein lies a contradiction with the Muslim's argument of man's innate goodness. If Adam and Eve's human nature had not changed, and if they repented of their sin, why did they have to leave the Garden of Eden? Why did the perfect world they lived in suddenly become a world filled with hostility and wickedness?

In fact, a change had occurred. Sin entered God's perfect world. If there had been no change in Adam's human nature, the disastrous state we have experienced since Adam's fall would not have happened. And, since a change did take place, since it was, and still is, human nature to sin, we need a Savior. We need someone to set us free from our sin and our sinful nature.

How can you prove that Jesus was the Son of God?

Muslims reject Christ's deity because, based on Qur'anic teaching, it is blasphemous to associate any being with God. They do not believe in the Trinity. They believe God is one. Since Christians believe in the Trinity, Muslims claim that Christians are polytheistic.

Suggested response:

It is important to emphasize that Christians believe in one God. Direct your friend's attention to the fact that both the Qur'an and the Bible call Jesus the Word of God (see John 1:1; Surah 3:45). Muslims often interpret this terminology as a command, "be and it was;" but it is clear that the Qur'an is not talking about a command in this passage.

When Gabriel gave the glad tidings about Jesus to Mary, he said, "a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, .." (Surah 3:45). It is impossible for a command to be a being. In Surah 4:171 of the Qur'an, it is said, "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah [God], and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him." This passage from the Qur'an supports the concept of the Trinity and the deity of Jesus. Key words in the passage relate to the Trinity: the Word (Christ) of God (the Father), and of His Spirit (the Holy Spirit). If Jesus is the Word of God, then He is eternal because the Word of God is eternal.

Muslims question how the Trinity can be $1+1+1=1$. They think of the Trinity as $1+1+1=3$, whereas Christians do not see the Trinity as $1+1+1=1$, but as $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$.

If Jesus is God, how could He die on the cross?

Muslims do not believe that Jesus was crucified. They claim that someone else who looked like Jesus was crucified (see Surah 4:156-157).

Suggested response:

Jesus has two natures: His divine nature as the Word of God born of the Holy Spirit (see John 1:1,14; Matt. 1:20), and His human nature born of Mary (see Matt. 1:21). On the cross, His righteous human nature was crucified. As God, He did not die, but as the Son of Man, He drank the cup of death.

How can Christians prove that Jesus was really crucified?

This question is related to the previous Islamic point of view about the crucifixion.

Suggested response:

In addition to the biblical record, there are many Roman documents concerning the crucifixion (refer to al-Qayrawani's book *Was Christ Really Crucified?*). The Talmud, Josephus, and many Jewish documents refer to the crucifixion of Jesus. The crucifixion story was stressed in early Gnostic manuscripts. The writings of early church fathers also focused on Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. And, fifty days after the ascension of Christ, the apostle Peter confronted the Jewish people and their leaders and accused them of crucifying the Righteous One (see Acts 2:23). They did not dare to deny or refute his accusation. In addition to these written records of Jesus' crucifixion, consider those who were killed because of their faith in Christ. If Jesus was not really crucified, would Jesus' disciples, who are highly praised in the Qur'an (see Surah 61:14)

have sacrificed their lives for a lie? If the story of the crucifixion was a fabrication of the first century, none of the martyrs would have died for a myth, knowing that it was a myth.

Why do you say unless you believe in Jesus as your personal Savior you cannot be saved?

Muslims claim that God does not accept any religion other than Al-Islam into heaven. The Islamic faith contradicts all of the major Christian doctrines, especially the concept of salvation. Christians believe that all those who reject the cross of Christ will be condemned when they die. This belief is not tolerated by Muslims, for such a belief disregards piety and religious position and insinuates that many Muslims, including the founder of Islam, are condemned.

Suggested response:

Christians believe that Jesus came to earth to save people from the bondage of sin. Everyone has sinned against God, including all of the prophets. The Bible has recorded the sins of the prophets to prove that no one can live up to God's standard. Jesus, and only Jesus, lived a righteous life without sin which proves that He was more than a prophet. He came to earth to redeem us from our iniquities and pay the ransom to satisfy God's justice. No one else died for the sake of sinful humanity by his own choice. Jesus' love for us was so great that He did not hesitate to relinquish His glory in heaven and come to earth to deliver us from eternal death. If we do not believe in Him as our personal Savior, and if we do not accept His redemptive act on the cross, we disclaim all that He has done for us. Jesus made it clear that no one can go to the Father except through Him. He is "the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6, NKJV). Without Jesus, there is no salvation.

Conclusion

After explaining biblical concepts regarding the above-mentioned issues, You may add the following observations:

- The Qur'an has great regard for Jesus as a prophet. In the Qur'an, Jesus is referred to as the "Word from God" (see Surah 3:45), a "Spirit from God" (see Surah 4:171), a "sign for all peoples" (see Surah 21:91), and the "Messiah" (see Surah 4:171).
- In many verses, the Qur'an refers Muhammad and Muslims to the Bible whenever they doubt any part of the revelation.
- The Qur'an addresses the fallen nature of man in the story of Adam and Eve.
- A symbol of the act of redemption on the cross is portrayed in the story of Abraham and his son (the Qur'an does not mention the name of Abraham's son).
- The Qur'an indirectly mentions the Persons of the Trinity when it talks about the Word, the Spirit of God, and God.

We must acknowledge the importance of the above-mentioned questions and try to answer these biblically. Remember that it is not easy for a Muslim to accept biblical teachings that contradict the Qur'anic tenets. Prayer, love, perseverance, and faith are essential elements in reaching out to Muslims.



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Chapter five

DISCIPLING NEW BELIEVERS

There are two groups of Muslims who may attend a Bible study: those who want to learn more about Christianity and those who want to debate the Bible with Christians to prove the superiority of the Islamic faith. Regardless of why people attend a Bible study, they will be exposed to God's truth. It takes courage for Muslims to attend a Bible study, even if their intentions are to defend their faith. Before a Muslim will attend a Bible study, he or she will go through these phases:

1. **Loyalty-During** this phase, a Muslim tries to show loyalty to his or her faith, culture, and tradition. He or she will likely be very argumentative, aggressive, and intolerant in response to your invitation.
2. **Inquiry-During** this phase, a Muslim who is impacted by the life, love, and faithfulness of Christians will attempt to discover the teaching and changing power of Christ as reflected in the life of his or her Christian friends.
3. **Discipleship-Once** a Muslim becomes a Christian, he or she enters the discipleship phase. During this phase, the new convert seeks to learn more about this new faith and how to grow in relationship with God.

The inquiry and discipleship phases can be difficult for both the prospect and the Christian sharing with his or her friend.

Bible Studj: The Pilgrimage of Saul as a New Believer

When someone places his or her faith in Christ, he or she begins a pilgrimage. There are many models of people on a pilgrimage in the Bible: Abraham's pilgrimage to the Promised Land, the pilgrimage of the disciples during the last three years of Jesus' earthly ministry, and the pilgrimage of Saul (Paul).

Paul's conversion is inspiring. The Bible details not only Paul's conversion, but also his fruitful ministry, a ministry that was sealed with his martyrdom. In this chapter, Paul's preparation period, which took place between his conversion and ministry, will be examined.

Paul was a devout person

1. Paul's background

Paul referred to himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (see Phil. 3: 5). His parents were Hebrews from the tribe of Benjamin. This tribe was part of Judah in the Southern Kingdom.

Many Muslims, unless they are converted from other religions, are born to Muslim parents and are proud of their heritage. According to Islamic law, any child born to a Muslim father or mother is considered a Muslim. The religion of a non-Muslim mother is insignificant.

2. Paul's training

Paul was a Pharisee. As any Jewish family, Paul's parents must have sent him to the synagogue for his early religious education and exposed him to the Jewish culture, though he lived in Tarsus outside Palestine. The biblical account records that Paul studied in the school of Gamaliel, one of the leading Jewish scholars of his day. In that school, Paul learned the rabbinical interpretation of the Jewish law and the Jewish perspective of the Messiah.

In many Islamic countries and Muslim communities, children must learn to perform the five pillars of Islam, memorize portions of the Qur'an by heart, practice the teaching of Islam, and stay away from the influence of other religions, such as Christianity. They are also exposed to the Islamic culture and tradition. Many Islamic children pursue their religious studies, as Paul did, in institutes of higher religious education, such as al-Azhar in Cairo.

3. Paul's dedication

As a devout Jew, Paul manifested all the qualities of a good religious person. He made every effort to apply the literal meaning of the law. Paul dedicated himself to promoting Judaism and protecting it from "dangerous cults." He intended, with the help of the religious authorities in Palestine and Syria, to eradicate the followers of this newest cult: the Christians.

Most Muslims are devout believers in Islam. They believe that Islam is the true religion of God and all other religions are either the product of paganism or have been corrupted. To Muslims, Islam is the only religion that has retained the purity of the original inspiration. Muslims strive to promote Islam, and they take measures to annihilate apostates from the community, an action that is supported by the Islamic law.

Paul had an encounter with Jesus

1. A contributing factor

From Paul's epistles, we understand that he did not have the privilege to hear Jesus speak while He was on earth. However, through the witness of Stephen, Paul visualized the Person he determined to persecute by persecuting Jesus' followers. It is possible that Paul was touched by the way Stephen prayed for his oppressors, even as he died. Stephen's witness likely planted the seed of the gospel in Paul's heart.

The way we react to unpleasant situations undoubtedly leaves an impression on Muslims about Christians. There is no witness more effective to Muslims than living a Christlike life. A Muslim has to see that Christians are different and that the power of Christ in us causes that difference.

2. The conversion of Paul

For a period of time, Paul continued to persecute Christians. He became more zealous in his persecution of Christians, as if he was trying to prove to himself that he was still a faithful Jew. He even broadened his area of authority and traveled to Syria, armed by letters of recommendation to apprehend Christian Jews and extradite them for trial in Jerusalem. While traveling to Syria, Paul encountered the Jesus he was persecuting. That encounter shattered Paul's previous convictions.

When a Muslim confronts a situation like Paul's, he or she has doubts. It is difficult for a Muslim to accept that all of his or her Muslim ancestors were wrong. When I told a Muslim that only Jesus could save us from our sins, my friend was irritated and he bombarded me with questions. He asked, "Do you want to tell me that Muhammad needed Christ to be saved? Do you want to tell me that the Qur'an does not relate to us the true way of salvation? What about my ancestors, my father, my mother, and my uncle who are very devout Muslims, are they all going to go to hell?" These questions, and many more, become obstacles that hinder Muslims from accepting Christ. Unless the Holy Spirit touches a Muslim's heart, as He did with Paul, a Muslim will resist the redemptive act of Christ on the cross.

Paul began his discipleship

1. His earliest instruction by Ananias

In Acts 9:6 (NIV), Christ instructed Paul to enter the city of Damascus where he would be told what to do: "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." Acts 9: 10-18 relates the story of Ananias. He lived in Damascus and was instructed by Christ to communicate the Lord's message to Paul. When Ananias met Paul, he offered Paul warm fellowship, was used by God to heal Paul's blindness, and baptized Paul. Ananias also helped Paul understand his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus.

As the Holy Spirit begins to talk to a Muslim's heart, the Muslim may feel confused. He or she needs warm fellowship, encouragement, love, and patience. He or she seeks to understand this new faith and what is involved in it. Prayer becomes the most important aspect in this phase. Spiritual support by Christians is essential for a newly converted Muslim's growth.

2. Paul spent time soul-searching

Acts 9 does not provide many details about what Paul did after meeting with Ananias. At first it seems that Paul began preaching immediately after his conversion. Acts 9:19-20 (NIV) states that Paul, "At once . . . began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God." But, Galatians 1:17 (NIV), states that after Paul's encounter with Christ he "went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus." Many biblical scholars believe that Luke, who recorded Paul's experience years later, did not include the period Paul spent in Arabia. In the opinion of some scholars, Paul spent at least two years in Arabia, probably under the very shadow of Sinai, studying the Scripture in the light of Jesus' resurrection.

Paul's account teaches us two things. First, it is necessary for a new convert to fellowship with other Christians. This fellowship strengthens the relationship among the members of the body of Christ and it renders support to the new believer. Secondly, a new convert needs to study the Word of God to nourish his or her soul and to gain a deeper knowledge of the Scripture. This understanding will enable the new Christian to witness to others, answer questions about his or her faith, and will enable him or her to encourage the weak. For a former Muslim, studying God's Word is also preparation for persecution and death.

Lessons to learn from the conversion and discipleship of Paul

- A person can be very *religious*, but very *wrong*. Paul had the finest teaching and intention, yet he was wrong. He was fighting against Christ. Many Muslims are very religious and they have received the best education available, but they take a hostile attitude against the deity of Christ and His redemptive act on the cross.

- It often takes time for the seed of the Word of God to germinate. We do not know how long after Stephen's death that his testimony began to convict Paul of his sins. The same thing could be said about Muslims. Because of a Muslim's religious education, culture, and laws, it may take a Muslim weeks, months, or even years to be convicted of his or her sins. Do not allow this to frustrate you. The seeds need time to germinate.
- A conversion experience does not mean that someone has an immediate understanding of all the Christian doctrines. Understanding Christian doctrines is a process of studying and meditating on God's Word. Paul had to spend time pondering the meaning of his experience on the road to Damascus. He had to revise and re-think all the interpretations he had learned about the Messiah. Paul had to examine the religious tradition he had inherited from his parents and teachers. He must have realized that persecution, oppression, and even death might be awaiting him. This situation always confronts a convert from Islam.
- The new convert not only needs time, but he also needs the encouragement and fellowship of mature Christians. This is an important ministry. Both Ananias and Barnabas were sources of encouragement to Paul. From the beginning, Ananias called Paul "Brother Saul;" and Ananias delivered a message from the Lord Jesus to Paul (see Acts 9:17).

Paul was also warmly received by the disciples in Damascus. Later, Barnabas joined Paul in his journeys and was a great encouragement to him. Undoubtedly, Paul appreciated this Christian fellowship because he needed it. As a convert from Judaism, Paul was alienated from his sect. He became an outcast. He severed his relationship with the Jewish religious leadership, and soon he would face persecution.

A converted Muslim would be exposed to the same hostile environment Paul faced. As soon as a Muslim becomes a Christian, the law of apostasy will be applied to him or her. The new convert will be denounced by his or her family, friends, country, and government. A man's wife may be forced to divorce him. His children will be taken from him and his property will be confiscated. He would be fortunate if he is not sentenced to death (see *The Right of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State*, by Samuel Shahid). The same consequences would happen to a woman convert as well. Such a person is eagerly seeking the indispensable friendly touch of a Christian brother or sister. The church should become his or her new family. Converts from Islam need spiritual, psychological, emotional, and even financial support to survive. A great ministry of the church is to stand by those who are persecuted for the sake of Christ.

Group Activity]

Activity 1

Ask the group to pair off. Have each person take five minutes to share his or her experience in discipleship with the partner. Who disciplined them? What were the strong points of the discipleship effort? What were the weak points?

Activity 2

Ask each person to take five minutes to share with another person what he or she would do in discipling a new Christian from a Muslim background. What topics (issues, doctrines, and practices) would they discuss? What should be explained about a biblical church? What efforts would he or she make to fellowship with the new convert?

Conclusion of group activity

Reconvene the group and ask for volunteers to share some insights from the discussions. List these insights on a marker board. Ask the group to take notes for future use in discipling new converts.

Practical Instruction

The following approaches are divided into two categories: approaches to relate to Muslims who have not yet made a decision to receive Christ, and approaches to help former Muslims who have received Christ as their personal Savior.

1. A Muslim is hesitant to accept the Bible as an authority. Encourage your Muslim friend to search the Qur'an for Christ's attributes. Some of Jesus' titles in the Qur'an are: The Word from God (see Surah 3:45), Spirit from God (see Surah 4:171), a Sign to all peoples (see Surah 21:91), Messiah (see Surah 4:171), and Jesus (see Surah 4:171).
2. Ask your Muslim friend to interpret these titles of Jesus to you. What does the Qur'an mean when it calls Jesus the Word of God, Spirit of God, and righteous?
3. Compare Jesus' titles or attributes in the Qur'an with the biblical attributes of Jesus. Explain that Jesus' titles are active titles. Saying, "Jesus is the Word of God;" indicates that He is an intelligent being, active in our life and in human history.
4. Ask your Muslim friend if he or she made every possible effort to be good, would he or she be able to please God and live up to His standard? (Muslims believe that no one can fulfill God's requirements for holiness.) Then, ask your friend if he or she is sure that when he or she dies he or she will go to heaven, and if so, on what basis.
5. Try to explain the meaning of God's holiness and justice. Show your friend that God's holiness and justice condemn sin, and since no one can please God through good deeds, everyone is doomed to go to hell. This is God's law and God would not act against His holy nature.
6. Ask your Muslim friend, "If this is the case (that everyone is doomed for hell), how can we be saved and go to heaven? How can we meet God's requirements for salvation?" Based on his or her answers, you can explain the plan of salvation to your friend as it is discussed in previous sessions. You may also share your testimony with him or her.
7. At this point, reading some verses from the Sermon on the Mount may reveal the high ethical level of the Christian life to your Muslim friend. Ask what he or she thinks about the moral aspect of these verses. Is it possible for any person to implement such values by his or her own power? Why not?
8. Lastly, talk about the love of Christ, who is the Word of God. Talk about His sacrifice to save and empower us to live a holy life in accordance to the Sermon on the Mount. Pray with your friend if you feel led by the Holy Spirit to do so. Otherwise, allow him or her some time to think about what you have shared.

As we disciple the convert from Islam, we must remember a few important facts:

- We are discipling a convert whose knowledge of the Bible is limited. He or she is not yet well acquainted with biblical terminology.
- He or she is not yet trained to grasp complicated theological issues.
- In many ways, a new convert is still attached to his or her heritage. His or her relationship with the past is still present in the practices of daily life.

- A Muslim's cultural and social life, which may seem strange or even unacceptable to you, reflects his or her upbringing.
- In fellowship with Western Christians, he or she is facing a different way of life, a different culture, and a different way of thinking. This may create a gap of misunderstanding for a period of time.
- As a convert, he or she is alienated from family, friends, country, and government. He or she needs the spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and even financial support that his or her new family, the church, can provide.

How can we start discipling this new convert?

It is important to help a new convert become acquainted with the books of the New Testament first, and then the books of the Old Testament. Help him or her to memorize the names of the books of the Bible. Explain the general structure of the Bible. There is a great difference between the way the Bible is constructed and the way the Qur'an is constructed. Once the new Christian has established this foundation, consider using the plan that follows.

- Begin with the Gospel of Matthew. This Gospel appeals to both converts and Muslims because of the Sermon on the Mount and the genealogical record. Study the book of Matthew chapter by chapter. Make sure that your friend understands the terminology. Help him or her apply to life the lessons taught in this book.
- After you finish studying the Gospel of Matthew, study the Gospel of John. Explain the historical, theological, and cultural background of the Gospel. Help your friend to grasp the objective(s) of each chapter. The focal point of this Gospel is the deity of Jesus. Help him or her discover this dimension in the Person of Christ.
- As the convert finishes exploring the Gospel of John, study the book of Acts. The establishment of the church in the first century was the result of the effective witness of the first generation of Christians. Their boldness and faithfulness cost many of them their lives. Let the convert realize the importance of witnessing for his or her own personal growth and the growth of the church of Christ.
- Next, you should study the letter to the Romans. Be sure to emphasize the four concepts discussed in this book: law, works, grace, and faith. Help him or her to understand the difference between the concept of the law and the concept of grace. Also, help the new convert to see the relationship between grace and faith and the role of works as the fruits of faith, not as a means for salvation. The study of the letter to the Galatians would be helpful in explaining the role of works.

As you study these books with your friend, your method should correlate with the nature of each book. Teachings, miracles, characters, and events are stressed in the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John, and the book of Acts. The letters to the Romans and Galatians deal primarily with teachings and instructions. It is important to prepare an outline for each chapter of each book, highlighting the most significant points.

Suggested questions for the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John, and the book of Acts

1. Who are the (key) people in this chapter?
2. How did Jesus deal with their situations?
3. What does the chapter teach about Christ?
4. What was the reaction of the crowd and the religious leaders who witnessed the event?
5. What does the chapter teach about salvation?
6. What did Jesus intend to relate to the people?
7. Is there something in this chapter that applies to our lives today?

The study of the biblical characters whose lives were changed after encountering Jesus presents a picture of God's grace to the convert. The people in the Bible stories were sinners, but Jesus saved them. These people did not just know something about Christ or hold Him in high regard; they received Him as their personal Savior. The change that took place in their lives was not a ceremonial change, but rather a genuine change that no power but the power of Christ can incur.

Use the following list of New Testament characters to study the lives of people who became new creatures through a relationship with Jesus:


Zacchaeus	Luke 19: 1-10
Dying thief	Luke 23:39-43
Nicodemus	John 3:1-21
Samaritan woman	John 4:1-42
The blind man	John 9
The Ethiopian	Acts 8:26-40
Saul of Tarsus	Acts 9: 1-22
Cornelius	Acts 10: 1-48
Lydia	Acts 16:11-15, 40
The jailer	Acts 16:23-34

These characters reflect the changing power of Christ. As you examine the life of each character, ask your new Christian friend to answer the following questions:

1. What was the person's life like before he or she encountered Christ?
2. How did he or she come to know Christ and have a personal relationship with Him?
3. How was his or her life changed after meeting Christ?
4. What can I learn from his or her experience?

The letters to the Romans and the Galatians require a different approach. The following outline of Romans, Chapter 5, may serve as a sample in outlining each chapter in Romans and Galatians.

- a. How are we justified (vv. 1-2)?
- b. What is faith?
- c. Why do we experience tribulation (vv. 3-5)?
- d. Define perseverance and hope.
- e. As Christians, how can we be filled with the love of God (v. 5)?
- f. How did God demonstrate His love toward us (vv. 6-8)?

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- g. How are we saved and reconciled with God (vv. 9-10)?
 - h. How did sin and death enter into the world (vv. 12-14)?
 - i. How did Jesus' death and His righteousness counter the consequences of Adam's disobedience (vv. 15-19)?
 - j. How can we overcome spiritual death and receive eternal life (vv. 20-21)?

Outlining each chapter will help the new Christian to better understand the Scripture. It forces him or her to become an active student of the Bible. When your friend does not understand the meaning of a passage, he or she will ask questions rather than skimming over the text.

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF ISLAMIC BELIEFS

- Do you know that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today? Do you know that a significant number of immigrants who come to the United States are Muslims? And do you know that these immigrants come from many Islamic countries or countries with large communities of Muslims? Do you know that an estimated 4 to 6 million Muslims reside in the United States?³ Do you know that there are more than 1 billion Muslims worldwide⁴ and very few missionaries compared to the number of Muslims? Do you know that Muslims are mission-minded and intend to convert the West to Islam?⁵ Do you realize that Jesus not only died for you, but He died for Muslims, too, and they need to accept Him as their personal Savior? When Muslims visit or move to Christian countries, we as Christians are given an incredible opportunity to share the gospel with this group of people. This opportunity is not made available while Muslims are living in Islamic countries. Those who share the gospel, and those who accept Christ as their Savior, are persecuted in Islamic countries. God has brought them to our backyard so that they may hear the Word of God without fear or persecution.
- Islam is the faith of over 1 billion Muslims worldwide. Islam is a monotheistic religion. Its followers believe in one god, the god who created the world from nothing. But the god of Islam, who is called Allah, is not the same God of Christianity. The main difference between the god of Islam and the Christian God is the concept of the Trinity. The Trinity is regarded as blasphemy by Muslims because they believe that the Trinity represents three separate gods, and associating any god with the god of Islam is the unforgivable sin. Though Christians are called the "People of the Book" in the Qur'an (see Surah 5:69; 10:94; 16:43), they are destined to go to hell because of their belief in the Trinity. Muslims view Christians as polytheistic, but the Qur'an recognizes Jesus as, "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him" (Chapter 4: 171). In this Qur'anic text, the concept of the Trinity is supported: "Allah," who is the Father in Christianity, "His Word," who is Jesus the Logos, and the "Spirit of God," who is the Holy Spirit.
- Islam objects to the fatherhood of God. They do not believe that someone can have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Within the Islamic context, man is the slave of God: "The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah [God] (Surah 4:172). In Christianity, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and our faith in Him entitles us to be called the children of God, in a spiritual sense. Muslims often interpret the fatherhood of God as a physical relationship. Be sure to clarify why Christians view God as their Father. Explain that Christians call God "Father" because we are created in His image, and, more importantly, because Jesus taught us to call God our Heavenly Father (see Matt. 6:9).

- Muslims do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. They believe Jesus was one of the five major prophets: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, and as a prophet, He is the slave of God. Muslims do not view Jesus as the Son of God. The Qur'an states, "How could He have a son when He has no consort, .." (Surah 6:101). Also, "He-exalted be the majesty of the Lord-has not taken a consort, nor a son" (Surah 72:3). We read also in Surah 4:171, "far be It from His glory that He should have a son, ..." It is evident from these verses that neither the Qur'an nor Muslims understand what Christians mean when we call Jesus Son of God. They do not understand that Jesus is the Son of God because He was born of the Holy Spirit. No one else was born of the Holy Spirit. Though Muslims do not recognize Jesus as the Son of God, one of Jesus' titles in Islamic literature is the spirit from God, and in some cases the Word from God (see Surah 4:171; 3:45). These titles, which indicate a relationship between Jesus and God, have never been bestowed on any other prophet in Islam.

Muslims also claim that Jesus did not perform miracles by His own power, but by the leave of God (see Surah 5:110).

- The concept of the Holy Spirit in Islam is not the same as in Christianity. Muslims believe that the Holy Spirit is the archangel Gabriel, the bearer of the revelation (see Surah 2:97-98). In the Qur'an, it was Gabriel who conveyed the Qur'anic text to Muhammad as it was recorded in Arabic in the Reserved Tablet, or the Mother of the Book, from eternity. Gabriel also carried messages from God to Muhammad, either to correct a verdict Muhammad had issued or to encourage him in times of stress.

Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is one of the Trinity and that He is active in the life of Christians, as well as in the life of the church, today. The Holy Spirit reveals the will of the Father to us. He guides, encourages, rebukes, empowers, and teaches us. He is the Comforter promised by Jesus (see John 14:16-17). He is a Person, divine and eternal. He is not the archangel Gabriel.

- Muslims do believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, but their interpretation of His birth differs from Christians' interpretation. While the Qur'an acknowledges the virgin birth of Christ, His birth is not viewed as being "divine." Muslims argue that the creation of Adam was more miraculous than the birth of Jesus because Adam was created without a father or a mother. However, Jesus was not divine because of His virgin birth. He was divine because he was born of the Holy Spirit and He was the eternal Word of God. Additionally, the birth of Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. The Qur'anic account lacks this documentation.
- Muslims believe that one of the signs of the end of time is the second coming of Christ. Though the Qur'an does not provide any details about the events of Christ's second coming, the Islamic Tradition provides information about this event. Muslims affirm that Jesus is going to come back at a certain time to fill the earth with goodness and righteousness. He is going to kill the Antichrist, supported by His faithful followers, the Muslims. He will proclaim that Islam is the true religion of God and He will command Christians and Jews to embrace the Islamic faith. Muslims also believe that Jesus will get married and have children when He is 40 years old, and that He is going to visit the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia to greet His "brother Muhammad." When He dies, they believe Jesus will be buried in a tomb beside Muhammad. Muslims will conduct Jesus' funeral and bid Him their respect. They

believe that Jesus will be resurrected on Judgment Day, like the rest of mankind. Muslims do not believe that Jesus is coming to judge the dead and the living. They do not believe that every knee shall bow down in front of Him and crown Him Lord of Lords. To them, Jesus is only a prophet.


- Muslims believe that man is born innocent. The Qur'an records the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience. It is similar to the biblical account, but the consequences of their actions differ from the Bible. The Qur'anic text indicates that God expelled Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden because of their disobedience, but they repented and God accepted their repentance. Muslims do not believe that Adam and Eve's sin corrupted human nature. They do not believe that Adam's sin was passed on to others, causing everyone to sin and fall short of the glory of God.
- Islam denies the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The basis of their denial is an undocumented verse in the Qur'an: "They did not kill him [Jesus] nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so" (Surah 4:157). Though this verse is subject to various interpretations, Muslims assert that the crucifixion of Jesus did not take place and that the story of Christ's death and crucifixion was an innovation of the early Christians. Muslims believe that God performed two miracles to save Jesus from being crucified by His enemies. First, God lifted Jesus up to Heaven and saved Him from His adversaries, and secondly, God cast Jesus' image onto one of Jesus' attackers, who was then mistakenly crucified instead of Jesus (many believe that Judas the Iscariot was mistaken for Jesus). Therefore, it was not Jesus who was crucified, but someone who looked like Jesus. There are also Muslim scholars who believe that Jesus was not crucified, but that He died a natural death. Unfortunately, Muslims do not go to the genuine source of the crucifixion and do not see the need for the Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
- The concept of inspiration in Islam differs drastically from the Christian concept. Muslims believe that the archangel Gabriel revealed the Qur'an word for word in Arabic (see Surah 2:97-98; 43:3-4; cf. 13:39). Ten verses in the Qur'an stress that it was revealed in Arabic for the people of Mecca. They also believe that the Qur'an existed from eternity in what they called the Preserved Tablet, or the Mother of the Book. Such a declaration implies that the Arabic version is the only true Qur'an. Versions in other languages are not truly the Qur'an, but are simply interpretations of the Qur'an.

Muslims also believe that:

1. The Qur'anic text and style are not Muhammad's, but God's.
2. Muhammad was only relating what it was revealed to him, word for word.
3. The Qur'an is the only true word of God. All other scriptures are corrupted.

However, Muslims accept anything from the Bible as long as it does not contradict the Qur'an.

- Islam is legalistic in its nature. In order to obtain God's favor and forgiveness, Muslims must perform certain duties and rituals. The five pillars and good deeds are essential in Islam. These are not the fruits of faith, but these are the means for salvation. This contradicts Christianity which emphasizes that salvation is not the result of works, but comes through the blood of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift from God. It is an act of love. Without the blood



of Jesus, salvation is not possible. Without Jesus' blood, repentance is nothing more than a commitment to do better in the future; it does not bring salvation without the blood of Jesus.

If a criminal repented of his or her crime, he or she would not be allowed to go free. He or she would still have to bear the consequences of his or her crime. Sin is a crime against God and it has consequences: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV). In this context, "death" refers to spiritual death. God and sin cannot coexist. Therefore, if you sin, your sin comes between you and God, creating a chasm that must be bridged in order for you to receive salvation. This is why Jesus came to earth. He came to "bridge the gap" between man and God that our sin created.

Appendix B

GLOSSARY

- Ablution:** The ceremonial washing of hands, feet, face, and head before the five times of prayer daily and the congregational prayer on Friday.
- Abrogation:** The replacing of a Qur'anic verse with a new verse.
- Al-Fatihah:** The first chapter of the Qur'an.
- Allah:** The Arabic name for God.
- Apostate:** The person who is converted from Islam to any other religion.
- Apostasy:** The act of conversion from Islam to any other religion.
- Attributes of God:** They are called also the Ninety-Nine Most Beautiful Names of God; among them: the Creator, the Mighty, the Provider, etc.
- Black Stone:** It is a black stone (a meteorite) installed in the corner of the Ka'ba in Mecca that Muslims believe was descended from heaven.
- Caliph:** The official title of the successor(s) of Muhammad who assumed both religious and political status.
- Companions:** The members of the inner circle of Muhammad's followers.
- Confession of faith:** The testimony which a Muslim utters when he testifies that "there is no god but Allah (none has the right to be worshiped but Allah), and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."
- Feast of Al-'Adha:** Greater Bairam in commemoration of sacrificing Abraham's son.
- Feast of Al-Fitr:** It is the feast by which Muslims conclude their fasting month of Ramadan.
- Five Pillars of Islam:** These are the five preordained Islamic duties every true Muslim has to perform to obtain God's favor. The five pillars of Islam are: the confession of faith, five times of prayer and the Friday congregational prayer, fasting of Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, and almsgiving.
- Holy Spirit:** The archangel Gabriel in Islam.
- Imam:** The person who leads Muslims in their congregational prayer.
- (Isa):** The Islamic name for Jesus.
- Islam:** The religion of the faith whose prophet is Muhammad.
- Islamic Tradition (Hadith):** The sayings and deeds of Muhammad and some of his companions.
- Jihad:** a) To fight for the sake of God; b) to strive against the mundane desires.
- Ka'bah:** The most sacred Islamic shrine in Islam located in Mecca.
- Mosque:** The meeting place of Muslim believers.
- Muhammad:** The prophet of the Islamic faith, born A.D. 570, and died in A.D. 632 or 633.
- Muslims:** The followers of the Islamic faith.
- Night of the Power:** It is the night in which Muslims believe the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad.
- Night of the Ascension:** The night of the ascension of Muhammad to the seven heavens.
- Polytheism:** The belief in several gods.
- Qur'an:** The sacred book of the Islamic faith that Muslims believe was revealed to Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel. It is composed of 114 chapters or surahs.

Shari'ah: The Arabic name for the Islamic law. The sources of the Islamic law are: the Qur'an, the Islamic Tradition, the consensus of the Muslim scholars, and the analogy.

Shi'ism: It is an Islamic movement which departed from Sunni sect for political reasons.

· They believe that the Caliph should be from the line of Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law.

Shi'ah: The followers of Ali Bin Abu-Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law. They are also called Shi'ites (the minority).

· **Surah:** This term is related to the 114 Qur'anic chapters. Each chapter is called a Surah.

Sunnites/Sunnis: The major Islamic sect. They form the mainstream of Islam. They regard themselves as the true followers of the faith.

For further information, see *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* by Cyril Glasse (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989).

appendix C

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Notes

¹ Wendy Murray Zoba, "Islam, U.S.A.;" *Christianity Today*, April 2000: 40.

² Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), p. 293. Also available from isgkc.org/shahadah.htm or shahadah.tripod.com.

³ Zoba, 40.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 42.