

Evangelizing Muslims: Take the First Step

Has it ever occurred to you that Muslims might be as afraid of *you* as you are of *them*?

An Arab Muslim woman studying in the United States confided in me that her family was worried about her living in America. “They tried to stop me,” Najma said. “My aunt visited me and warned me, ‘Don’t you know America is full of violence? They will kill you on the street!’”

Together, we laughed at her aunt’s fears, knowing how far it was from the truth of the sleepy town in which Najma lived. Her aunt had based her impression of America and **Americans** on violent films she had seen. But Najma’s reservations evaporated once she began meeting average Americans—store clerks, teachers, her host family. They were nothing like the Americans she had seen on TV.

When people ask me, “What do **Muslims** think of **Christians**?” a simple answer eludes me. First, which Muslims? To lump all Muslims—the Western convert, the uneducated Bosnian woman, and the Syrian engineer—into one pile and ask what “they think” is presumptuous at best. And second, which Christians? Although you might define Christian as “evangelical” or “practicing Christians,” Muslims don’t define it that way. Most will categorize an entire nation as Christian, so we have to recognize and work with the Muslim’s definition.

“What do Muslims think of Christians?” is a loaded question, with no way around approximations and generalizations. But in a phrase, they are respectful, yet wary.

- **Muslims consider Christians “People of the Book” and respect their faith in one God.** While still seeing themselves as superior for practicing the best religion,

Muslims respect those who worship one God, pray, and treat others kindly. A Muslim recently told me, “Your prophet (Jesus) was the Prophet of Love, that is why Christians are so loving.”

- **Muslims are in a love/hate relationship with the West.** They love healthcare, technology and some ideas from the West but regret its deteriorating effect on their **cultures**. Some blame television programs and government policies from the “Christian West” as the reason for problems and sin in their own countries.
- **Muslims tend to be wary of Christians.** Stories circulate about argumentative, in-your-face polemicists that defame Islam, and most Muslims want to steer clear of a fight. They may be concerned that by befriending a non-Muslim they will be criticized by other Muslims, or even worse, influenced to sin.

These **misconceptions** run deep, but something stronger can disarm a Muslim’s watertight wariness: initiative on our part. Just as average Americans helped alleviate Najma’s **fears**, the same holds true when authentic Jesus-followers take the first step with wary Muslims. One perspective shift, coming right up!

Meeting a follower of Jesus should be like a refreshing breeze blowing or an attractive scent alluring. It piques the interest and leaves the other wanting more. As a believer I am instructed to “let [my] conversation be gracious and attractive” in interactions with outsiders see (Col. 4:6, NLT). Gracious. Attractive. That will blow the mind of Muslims ... or anyone, for that matter.

Muslims may be hesitant to initiate a relationship, which leaves the ball in our court. I’d hate to have Hollywood do all the talking, wouldn’t you?

YOUR TURN: How much of your opinion of Muslims is based on films and other media? Have you met a Muslim who blew apart

your preconceptions?

This post appeared originally on The Voice of the Martyrs' Persecution Blog. The Persecution Blog is updated daily with original content from The Voice of the Martyrs.

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