

When Muslims Attack ... the Faith

Christians are woefully unprepared to defend their beliefs when confronted by devout Muslims. Here's how to prepare for talking with followers of Islam.

Devout Muslims attacked my faith when I was 18 years of age. In rapid-fire succession I was asked these questions and challenged with these statements: "Your Bible is corrupted and your New Testament can't be trusted. The Gospel of Barnabas is a more truthful gospel. How Can God have a Son? Jesus never died on the cross.

"Where in the Bible does Jesus ever say: 'I am God, worship me?' Did God have sex to generate Jesus? Does God go to the bathroom? How can God be three and one? Why does someone else have to die for your sins? Why can't God just forgive you? If Jesus was God why did he pray to himself? Why did Moses die in the Pentateuch if he wrote it? Why are the prophets of the Bible committing big sins (adultery)? Why do you have seven fewer books in your Bible than the Catholics?

"Islam is the straight path. Muhammad is the final prophet to mankind. Muhammad is prophesied hundreds of times in the Bible. Every Quran is the same, not a letter, dot or vowel is different from east to west, a matchless miracle preserved by

Allah. Islam is a whole way of life. The Quran is a scientific miracle. Islam is simple and not complicated, unlike all these contradictions of Christianity and the failed, immoral Western society it has produced.”

I was challenged by these questions. I wanted to be ready. My attackers were pushing me back to my foundations—was what I believed actually true? I was put on the defensive by a seemingly endless list of questions and polemical attacks, while Islam was presented in glowing, idyllic terms. I was surprised at the intensity and level of the questions. They were *trained* and equipped for this discussion, but I had no preparation.

This is typical of so many interactions between Muslims and Christians. Since those days, I have extensively studied Islam at six universities. I’m not afraid of Islam, but feel compassion for the Muslim people. We have taught thousands of Christian students and missionaries globally to confront Islam, and we’ve learned there are three main fears that debilitate Christians in these situations: 1) fear of persecution at the hands of Muslims; 2) not knowing enough about Christianity; and 3) not knowing enough about Islam. There are four steps you can take to be ready:

1. Prepare for Spiritual

Warfare. Make no mistake, dealing with Islam puts us in the center of a fierce spiritual battle. The biggest demons in the world are in Islam, holding captive more souls than any other religion, false god or ideology. Paul tells us, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down *arguments* and every high thing that exalts itself against the *knowledge of God*, bringing every *thought* [idea] into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5, emphasis added). Islam raises arguments and exalts itself against the knowledge of the true God. Our job as Christians is to war against Islam with spiritual weapons. These weapons are in the realm of love and learning, knowledge, ideas, thoughts and arguments. Make Jesus Lord of your life (see 1 Pet. 3:15) and learn the answers to the questions Muslims ask.

2. Don't Fear Suffering. The New Testament was written *by* suffering Christians, *to* suffering Christians, *for* suffering Christians. The Bible explains: "All who wish to live godly lives in Christ will suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12); and "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28); and finally, "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

On the other hand, the Quran says: "I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them" (Sura 8:12). Jesus prophesies about this: "In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God [Allah]" (see John 16:2). Jesus said of the devil: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

The *good news* is, God has prepared for every believer involved a reward that "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived" (1 Cor 2:9). Therefore, don't fear! Be more concerned about the witness you are giving to Muslims by exalting Jesus than your own life! Otherwise you will never be effective with Muslims—being more concerned with your comfort, and constantly measuring your safety rather than expanding His Kingdom. Do what Jesus told us to do.

3.
Learn the Foundations of Your Christian Faith. How do people learn to recognize counterfeit money? By studying the real thing. In the same way, "Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Ask your pastor to have courses offered in your local church on the subjects of Islam and

Christianity. There is no other way to learn about our faith than to study, study, study. Sorry!

We must know God, and know his Son, Jesus. In Christianity, the entire Bible is about God making Himself known and desiring to be known by man in *covenant relationship*.

The Bible is clear that God walked in the Garden desiring to know Adam, calling to him by name (Gen 3:15); led Israel as a cloud by day and fire by night (Ex. 13:21); spoke to Moses face to face (Ex. 33:11); came as the eternal *Son of God* incarnated in the man Jesus of Nazareth (John1:1, 14); suffered and sacrificed out of love for us on the cross (Matt. 27:35,50); and continues to lead His people by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5,8). God made continual covenants with men—from Adam to Abraham to Moses to David to Jesus, and so on. In fact, the entire Bible is about God's empowering presence among us.^[1] God is knowable!

Consider your own experiences with God. Is He not a God who is knowable? Does He not speak to His disciples (John 10:27), lead them by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14), bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25) and manifest His presence in signs that follow those who believe (Mark 16:17; 1 Cor. 12, 14; Acts of the Apostles)? Millions of Christians experience this around the world every day. Be sure to share your

testimony with the
Muslims you share the gospel with.

However, this is simple blasphemy
in Islam to speak about Allah as knowable in a personal
relationship with man.

In Islam, Allah is “unknowable” (Sura 2:30-39; 7:19-25;
20:116-123). Muhammad never met Allah, nor
did Allah speak directly to him; revelations reportedly came
through an angel
(cf. Gal. 1:8) that contradicts the historical first century
witness in the
Bible.

This separates Christianity and
Islam forever. Is God knowable? In Islam—impossible! For
Christians—absolutely!

Why perform all the religious acts when at the end of your
religion you don't
know your god (Allah)?

We must know who Jesus *really* is (see John 1:1,14; 5:18; 8:24;
8:58; 10:30-33; 20:28; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:8; Matt.
4:10; 2:2; 2:11;

14:33; 28:9; 9:35-38; Heb. 1:6; Is. 44:6; Rev. 1:17).[2]

Was Peter right when he said, “You are the Messiah, the *Son* of
the living God” (Matt. 16:16; emphasis added)? Consider the
importance of this belief: “He who has the *Son* has life; he
who does not have the *Son of God* does not have life” (1 John
5:12, emphasis added); “Whoever believes in the *Son* has
eternal life, but

whoever rejects the *Son* will not see
life, for God's wrath remains on him” (John 3:36, emphasis
added). Jesus

is called the “Son” or the “Son of God” 77 times in the *first*
century New Testament.[3]

Jesus was crucified (see Matt.

27:31-28:10; Mark 15; Luke 23:13-24:12; John 19-20). Salvation can be known (John 3:16). Salvation is by faith and not by works (Rom 3:21, 4:5; Gal 3:21) and is a free gift (Rom 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). There is only one God (see Deut 6:4; Is. 44:6,8; 45:6,14,18,21,22). God is a Trinity of persons, revealed as Father (Phil. 1:2), Son (John 1:1,14; Col. 2:9) and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). Jesus showed His disciples what it really means to be a human being in covenant relationship (see Matthew 5-7).

Or should we wait 600 years after Jesus' earthly life—believing one man, Muhammad—to learn that Jesus is *not* the Son of God,[4] that he was *neither* crucified nor killed,[5] that God is *not* a Trinity[6] and that there is *no* salvation through Jesus?[7] These are a few reasons that Christians consider Muhammad demonstratively a *false* prophet (see Is. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21).

Sura 4:171 of the Quran says: "Say not, 'Three.' Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God; far be it from His glory that He should have a son."

No historian would accept information coming 600 years after an event as more valid than what was written during the lifetime of eyewitnesses. All historians agree that Matthew, Mark, Luke and the other New Testament witnesses wrote the earliest

first-century

writings available for Jesus Christ. No historical Jesus scholar uses the Quran

for information about the life of Jesus because the Quran comes at least 632

years *after* the life of Jesus. The

more you study the Scriptures, the more you will be anchored in the truth.

4. Deepen Your Study and

Knowledge of Islam. Study the early origins of Islam so you can counter the

idyllic way Muslims present it. Is Islam actually the straight path, the simple

pure way, in contrast to the contradictions of Christianity and a failed,

immoral Western society?

To answer that, here is its actual

early history: In A.D. 622 Muhammad had a mere 100

Muslim converts to Islam when he migrated from Mecca to Medina and was

instructed by Allah to warfare in the way of Islam. By the time of Muhammad's

death 10 years later in A.D. 632, Arabia was entirely Muslim.

The majority of

pagans, Jews and Christians had been killed, converted or chased out of the *hijaz*

(western Arabia, Mecca and Medina).

These were not defensive battles,

as some Muslims present; two-thirds of them were offensive battles for

plundering pagan tribes.[8]

The earliest surviving recorded biographies of Muhammad record 86 battles[9]

led by the Muslim false prophet and are replete with a history of killings,[10]

assassinations,[11]

beheadings,[12]

mutilations,[13]

thefts,[14]

kidnappings of wives and concubines,[15]

as well as lying,[16]

slavery,[17]

torture,[18]

forced conversions[19]

and rape.[20]

Indeed, nearly 75 percent of the 813-page *Life of Muhammad* covers the

Muslim battles.[21]

Muslim armies killed 1 million Christians (Jews, pagans and Zoroastrians) in

the first 10 years of the Islamic Conquests.[22]

Within 100 years, 50 percent of global Christianity was under Islamic rule,

including the Middle East and north Africa.[23]

We are told commonly by Muslim

scholars, such as Maulana Maududi, that the Quran “contains the word of

Allah.”

“In it is preserved the divine

revelation, unalloyed by human interpolation of any kind, unaffected by any

change or loss to the original,” he states.[24] Later

in the same work he writes, “The Qur’an—the book he gave to mankind—exists in

its original text, without a *word*, *syllable* nor even *letter* having been changed.”[25]

Is this true? Let’s look at just

one of those—the “missing vowel” and “dot.” Dr. Arthur Jeffery shows us

thousands of textual variants from Islamic traditions between

Quranic

manuscripts in his book.[26]

Early Quranic manuscripts do not use many vowel points (dots) compared with the

modern manuscripts (today's Quran is based off of a 1924 text from Cairo!). If

these dots were added later, then how is it they come down from Allah,

preserved by a matchless miracle? In other manuscripts there are missing words,

multiple word variances and entire chapters missing.[27]

Their holy book does not hold up to their own standards, yet they apply the

same standard to our Bible. [28]

(image

courtesy of Dr. Gerd-R Puin)

Among the more interesting variants are the two that come from the same page of an ancient Qur'an and are shown below:

This first example (above) shows a spot at which the scribe forgot to put the word "Allah" in the text.

At some later point in time, most likely after the initial completion of

the manuscript, that scribe or another came back and, having realized their error,

corrected the verse by adding in the word, "Allah."^[29]

... and this one ends sura 67, skips 68-70, and goes directly to the start of 71

(photo courtesy of

Gerd-R. Puin, used by permission)



If there is even the smallest discrepancy between our biblical manuscripts they call them corrupted. "the claim of

the Qur'an and
Islam in general is 'perfection and preservation by Divine
decree.' In a text
which is only valid if it is preserved for all time, a
multitude of divergences
is unforgivable." [30]
As for the Biblical Manuscripts, we have a substantial,
reliable text preserving
the life, works and words of Jesus.

Muslims are doing a good job of
attacking and reaching Christians. With 1.6 billion Muslims [1]
in 97 nations, you can be
certain that the challenge of Islam is coming your way.
Prepare yourself so you
will be ready to hold out the Word of life to Muslims who so
desperately need
the Savior. The biggest problem in the world is not radical
Islam; it is nominal
Christianity! God is calling pastors to train their young and
old to evangelize
the Muslims.

Once, while out sharing
the gospel on a Friday night, my evangelism partner was
approached by a Saudi
Muslim who said to him: "Do you remember me? I am Muhammad. I
became a Christian
after the night you shared the gospel with me." It had been
one year since that
night.

From his back
pocket Muhammad proudly pulled out a baptism certificate given
to him by a local
baptist church. Muhammad told my friend, "Thank you so much
for sharing
with me!" Then he whispered, "And thank your friend with all

the book

knowledge.” That was one year after I had shared the gospel with him.”

Over the past

30 years, more Muslims came to Christ than in the other 1370 years of Islam.

[1] Pew Research Center’s Froom
on Religion & Public Life * *Future of
the Global Muslim Population*, January 2011

The biggest problem in the world is
not radical Islam; it is nominal Christianity! Let us answer
God’s call to
evangelize Muslims.

[1]
Fee, Gordon D., *God’s Empowering
Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Hendrickson
Publishers,
1994.

[2] Of note, extant manuscripts,
p66 (Bodmer II), was thought to be written 125-150 A.D.
containing John
1:1-6:11; 6:35b-7:53; 8:11-14:26,29-30; 15:2-26; 16:2-4;
16:5-7; 16:10-20:20;
20:22-23; 20:25-21:9; 21:12,17, 19:16.

[3] Thanks to Miriam Casiano Alves for this detail.

[4] S. 4:171

[5] S. 4:157

[6] S. 2: 4:171

[7] Salvation through works,
Sura 5:9, 42:26

[8] Thanks to Dr. David Cook,
Rice University, for this comment and observation.

[9] . Jones, "The
Chronology of the *Maghazi*—A Textual
Survey," *Bulletin of the School of
Oriental and African Studies* 19 (1957), pp. 245-80 (who
details a total of
86).

[10] Guillaume, A., *The Life of
Muhammad*, (London; Oxford University Press, 1955, 2002), p.
303, 308, 310, 369,
407, 447, 464-466, 550-1, 554-5, 560-562 577, 589, 597,
618-620, 643, 647, 661,
665-6, 669, 674-6

[11] *Life of Muhammad*, p. 316,
368, 482-3, 586, 666, 671-2, 673, 675, 676

[12] *Life of Muhammad*, p. 303,
304, 464-466, 515, 545, 547, 550, 564, 574, 646, 649, 661,
671-2

[13] *Life of Muhammad*, p. 322,
387, 588

[14] *Life of Muhammad*, p. 281,
287-8, 307, 321, 490, 548-9, 561, 572, 576, 577, 584, 588,
590, 592-3, 643,
559-560, 671-672

[15] *Life of Muhammad*, p. 99,
169, 309, 464-6, 490, 493-9, 511, 531, 593, 651, 653, 665

[16] Life of Muhammad, p. 294,
367, 368-9, 458, 482-483, 519-520, 543,

[17] Life of Muhammad, p. 144,
493-499, 551, 572, 576, 590, 648, 653,

[18] Life of Muhammad, p. 515,
665, 674-5, 677-8

[19] Life of Muhammad, p. 213,
241, 478, 587-8, 593, 598, 614-5, 618, 628, 629, 645-6, 669,
672, 676

[20] Life of Muhammad, p. 490,
590, 594

[21] Guillaume, A., The Life of
Muhammad, (London; Oxford University Press, 1955, 2002): a
translation of the work by Ibn Ishaq (d. 763) This is by far
the most
important body of material on Muhammad's life;
it forms the basis of every biography written after that time.
A

slightly later rendition of Muhammad's life, that by al-Tabari
(d. 923), is
also available in English in the translation series *The
History of al-Tabari*, published by the State University of New
York Press: volume 6, *Muhammad at Mecca*;
volume 7, *The Foundation of the Community*;
volume 8, *The Victory of Islam*;
volume 9, *The Last Years of the Prophet*.

Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat* provides another
source; the two volumes on Muhammad are translated into
English: *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir: English
translation*, by S. Moinul Haq (1967, 1972)

[22] Waqidi, al-. *The Islamic Conquest of Syria*.
Translated by Mawlana Sulayman al-Kindi. London: Ta-Ha
Publishers Ltd., 2005.

In
the early period, if one rejects Islam, slaughter or
enslavement awaits: "I
ordered him [Khalid] not to fight anyone or to kill anyone
until he has called
him to the cause of God; so that those who respond to him and
acknowledge [Him]
and renounce [unbelief] and do good works, [my envoy] shall
accept him and help
him to [do right], but **I have ordered**
him to fight those who deny [Him] for that reason. So he will
not spare any one
of them he can gain mastery over, [but may] burn them with
fire, slaughter them
by any means, and take women and children captive; nor shall
he accept from
anyone anything except Islam" (Al-Tabari, *The History of al-*
Tabari, vol. 10, 57. Bold emphasis added.).
Again, "**Whoever does not respond to the**
cause of God shall be killed and fought wherever he may be and
wherever he may
have come to, as an enemy. [God] shall not accept from [such
a] one
anything that he may give, except Islam; but whoever responds
to Him and
acknowledges [Him], He shall accept [it] from him and instruct
him. **(The Muslim) should fight whoever denies**
[God]; so, if God lets him prevail over (the unbeliever), he
should make
slaughter among them by any means, with weapons and fire; then
he should divide
that which God bestowed as spoil upon him..." (Al-Tabari, *The*
History of al-Tabari, vol. 10, 59.
Bold emphasis added.).

[23] Ye'or, Bat. *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under*
Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude. London: Associated University

Press, 1996.

[24] Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi. *Towards Understanding Islam* (Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1993), 11.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Jeffery, Arthur. *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an*. New York, AMS Press, 1975. (1937). Lingel, Joshua. "History of Qur'anic Textual Variants," SOAS, University of London, Thesis Submitted to Dr. GR Hawting.

[27] There are also a number of "facts" that need to be considered. One is that the earliest datable Quran verses are on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Of course, this only attests to part of the Quran. Another is that the earliest dated, complete Quran is dated to 394 A.H., that is the end of the fourth Islamic century (sometime during the eleventh century AD). Also, there are a number of manuscripts that have been only partially studied in Yemen and other places that attest to variants in early Quran codices. There are rock inscriptions from the Hijaz and southern Palestine that also appear to be variants on Quran verses. What does seem to be clear is that the "final" form of the Quran text took some time to develop, and it may be that some of the earliest extant Quran commentaries provide the earliest evidence for a canonical text of the Quran.

[28] This page shows some of these typical variations, compared with the 1924 Cairo edition pasted in for comparison. All four of the highlighted words on this page show that today's version includes alifs that are not in the words within this particular manuscript. Other manuscripts show missing words, multiple word variance, and chapters that are missing. See, Prof. Lingel, Joshua, *Christian Apologetics to Islam, Mission Muslim World University: Session #11: Textual Criticism of the Qur'an*. Church-based DVD training program: Course #2 of 35.

. Altikulac, Dr. Tayyar (ed.), *Al-Mushaf al-Sharif, Attributed to 'Uthman bin 'Affan*, Istanbul: IRCICA, 2007. Such variants can be found in 2270 such examples comparing the Topkapi MS compared to the 1924 (1984) edition. The early manuscripts are filled with variations involving the long vowels, especially the alif. Also see: Mark, Brother, *A 'Perfect' Qur'an*, Privately published, 2000.

[29]

See Daniel Brubaker, "Asking Forgiveness Seventy Times", 2010). Thanks to Dan Brubaker for permissions to use this variant.

[30] Brother Mark, *A Perfect Qur'an*, 168

[31] Pew Research Center's Froom on Religion & Public Life * *Future of the Global Muslim Population*, January 2011

Joshua Lingel attended six universities for Islamic studies, including University of Washington, University of London, Harvard and Talbot School of Theology. You may contact him at info@.