

5 Reasons to Care About Muslims

In case you didn't know, it's Ramadan right now.

If you asked ten Americans their opinion of Islam, depending on who you talk to, you may get two or three formulaic responses.

If you asked 10 Americans their opinion of *Muslim people*, you might get 10 different answers.

Islam is one of the most talked-about religions in media right now. Reports of genuine spiritual revival are springing out of the Middle East, but meanwhile Western nations are wholesale incorporating little-understood aspects of Islam into culture.

And then there's us Christians. Other than the talking points we may have memorized from watching the news, what do we truly know about the Muslims who live around us? Are we afraid to try to understand them? Are we angry at them because of what we associate them with? Are we even remotely prepared to give sound Gospel witness to them?

Normally I would say "I'm no missionary," but in all honesty, I believe every Christian is supposed to be a missionary in their context, so I'll say this instead: I'm a terrible missionary. But by God's grace, I can testify that the Holy Spirit has overwhelmed my heart over the last few years with a conviction to share the Gospel, and a particular desire to speak with Muslims.

There are endless reasons we should take the Good News to our Muslim friends, neighbors, coworkers and fellow grocery market shoppers. Here are five that I've picked up along the way.

Reason No. 1: Jesus

It bothers me that there are about 1.5 billion people in the world who believe there was a man named Jesus (whom they call Isa), believe he was a prophet, believe he was virgin-born, believe he was the Messiah (al Massih) and believe he had some form of something called the “gospel” (a book called the Injil), yet deny the most critical points of the gospel: Jesus’ sin-atoning death and resurrection, His deity and His total lordship.

It saddens me that 2,000 years after the Apostle Paul warned the Galatians not to depart from these facts about Jesus’ life, “even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you” (1:8), that these same billion-and-a-half people believe that very thing happened—an angel came from heaven preaching, among other things, a new “gospel.”

It offends me that 600 years after Jesus specifically said “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27), the writer of the Qur’an shoved these words in Jesus’s mouth: “You [God] know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within yourself” (Surat 5:116).

Now, Paul wrote regarding the Jews in Romans 9:1-5:

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.

If Paul burned in such a way for the people who had God's truth—Jesus Christ in the flesh, walking among them—and knowingly rejected it, how much *more* should we burn for those who only have a distorted version of the truth?

For the glory and fame of our Lord Jesus Christ, should we not lovingly correct the lies told to Muslims about the Savior?

Reason No. 2: The Bible

If you've ever shared Christ with a Muslim, they probably told you at some point that the Bible has been corrupted and that the Qur'an is the final, supreme revelation of God.

But that's not quite what the Qur'an teaches.

Speaking of the Gospel (the "Injil," the book which Muslims believe contains Jesus' message revealed to him by Allah), the Surat Al-Maida says that it contains "guidance and light" and confirms the message of the Torah (Surat 5:46).

The author of the Qur'an, in fact, was so confident that the ideas of Islam lined up with the Bible that he made note that Muhammad could put the new revelations by comparing them to the people of the book (Ahlul Kitab) before him (Surat 10:94)—that book being the Bible, which has remained unchanged since Muhammad's day.

The problem is that, objectively speaking, the author of the Qur'an doesn't seem to have ever had any idea of what the Bible actually teaches.

Consider this one example, straight from Surat Al-Mai'da (chapter 5 in the Qur'an). It's the final day of judgment. God asks Jesus, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?'" to which Jesus replies, in essence, of course not (Surat 5:116, Sahih International).

The clear implication in this passage is that God is supposedly setting the record straight about who the Muslim prophet Jesus really was. The problems, of course, are many:

- No true Christian, neither before nor after the writing of the Qur'an, has ever believed that Jesus told his followers to worship Mary as a god.
- No true Christian has ever believed that Jesus is a "deity besides Allah." This is implying that Christians believe in three gods, among which Allah is the first—a conclusion one could only reach in complete ignorance of actual Christian teaching.

Earlier in that same chapter, the Qur'an again attempts to discredit Christian belief, but itself demonstrates no understanding of Christian doctrine. Verse (ayat) 73 says: "Certainly they disbelieve who say: Allah is the third of the three"—assuming that Christians believe in three gods, when in fact orthodox Christianity has always insisted upon one monotheistic, triune God.

Another critical example comes from Surat 112, possibly the most creedal chapter in Qur'an: the idea that God is one, therefore he "neither begets nor is born."

This definitely is meant as a bold-faced refutation of the idea that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But what does the Qur'an really mean in terms of God begetting a son, anyway? Surat 6:101 gives the answer: "How could he have a son when he has no consort[?]" In other words, the Qur'an assumes that God having a son requires God having a wife—which he obviously does not. But the Bible, of course, never claims that Jesus Christ is the literal product of any kind of sexual union, nor that God ever had a "consort," nor that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not together still "one" God!

These errors regarding Christian belief are especially egregious when one considers the prevailing Islamic belief

that the Qur'an is incorruptible, uncreated, existing in eternity past with Allah—in Arabic, no less.

Yet any Muslim who knows what the Qur'an has already been told in their scripture exactly why the gospel message you're sharing with them is wrong.

Unfortunately, that means devout Muslims relying the Qur'an receive only straw man arguments against Christianity, or arguments that depend fully on the presupposition that the Qur'an is true (backwards reasoning).

It makes my heart ache to think that well-meaning Muslims across the globe learn, recite, and believe in "signs" (the literal meaning of the word "ayat," a verse in the Qur'an) against Christianity that only make sense if one has never let the Bible speak for itself.

Reason No. 3: The Cross

I once heard third-hand that a Muslim debater told him that the idea that Jesus died for his sins was the equivalent of him standing by the shoreline when, suddenly, a man runs and jumps into the ocean and drowns himself needlessly.

Every Muslim is different, but this point could be fairly broadly applied to many Muslims. When they hear "Jesus died for you," the default reaction is: Why would he do such a silly thing?

Such is the reaction of anyone taught to believe that God accepts people if they do the right works.

We wield an incredible power: the message of a self-sacrificing Christ who willingly endured death out of his unconditional love for us.

Yet many Christians waste their time with other detours—the Allah "moon god" theory, or Muhammad's wives, etc.—when the

idea of the substitutionary atonement of Christ has the power to be so radically transforming to the Muslim ear.

Evangelistically, why would we bring a fleshly argument to a God-fight? We are, quite frankly, sitting upon the most earth-shattering message of human history: the cross and resurrection of God's own Son.

You *don't* need to read the Qur'an or speak Arabic to witness to a Muslim. These things help, certainly. But if you understand the focal point of the gospel—the cross—you can share Christ with anyone with love and power.

Reason No. 4: God's Love

It might go without saying that most Christians don't understand Islam, and that there is more than one kind of mistake believers can make in assessing the religion.

The issue of Islamic fundamentalism aside, we must remember that no people group is excluded from the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

In Heaven, a chosen people from among all races and backgrounds will gather at the throne of God, and innumerable multitudes will cry out to Jesus Christ: worthy are you of worship, because "by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9)!

Just like in Corinth (Acts 18), God has selected people from among the Muslims of the world who will hear the Gospel, believe, and be saved, in spite of all the odds against them. How incredible is the love of God for all peoples?

That same God commanded us to make disciples from among Muslim peoples—because of his love for them!

I once had a very unpleasant encounter with a person who

claimed to be a “Christian” yet was seeking to stir up violent action against Muslims. Christ *himself* refused to call down ten legions of angels to rescue himself from the Romans and Jews crucifying him; why would his messengers take any other approach?

Reason No. 5: God’s Glory

A friend of mine, a missionary whose identity I won’t reveal, recently shared with me his conviction that the current surge in radicalism in the Arab world right now is a *counter-reaction* to the revival that’s unfolding—not vice-versa.

He believes that the seeds of the current revival really began once the Bible started to become available in the Arabic language, and that the enemy has attempted to quench this revival unsuccessfully through terrorism.

How counter is that to those of us watching from the West—whose first exposure to Islam was on 9/11 and who only now have heard about the dreams and visions awakening the Muslim world.

The Spirit of Jesus was on the ground *first*!

But as we look at the Middle East, it’s hard to believe that a land of such spiritual darkness can be home to such an incredible work. That’s because we forget two things: (1) God’s plan to get all the glory, and (2) our *own* darkness before Christ.

God is a God of love who is eagerly planning ways to reveal his power in the sight of all kinds of peoples and nations, so that everyone would acknowledge him (read Psalm 67). The Great Commission is the culmination of that vision—proclaiming the excellences of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light to the ends of the earth!

And though witnessing to Muslims may be daunting to us, were

we not equally trapped in darkness before the Holy Spirit began drawing us to the cross? Were we any better off, spiritually speaking, amid the lies the American cultural religion told us? Did we come to God by some grant act of the intellect that only we were capable of?

No. We did not.

God is glorified in pouring out his love on stony hearts. He is glorified in making the seed take root and bear fruit on the thorniest of ground.

He is glorified in doing the impossible.

This is the God we serve. He sent Jesus Christ to the world, and now he has sent us to the world too—including to Muslims. Will we go?

For anyone seeking to support the work of reaching Muslims overseas and here at home, I strongly encourage you take a look at the work of Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry, as well as Frontiers and Gospel for Asia's Muslim outreach. I also highly recommend Answering Islam and What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur'an as resources.

Though the nature of Muslim ministry is often sensitive due to security matters, let the Holy Spirit lead you to pray, give and go however he desires—and by all means, reach out to Muslims where you already live in the power, love and truth of the Spirit.

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