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Caring for Muslim Neighbors

In the past, the vast majority of Muslims lived in closed societies with almost no opportunity to hear the Gospel. Air travel and technological advances, especially the internet, have made the world a smaller place. In the providence of God, this along with educational opportunity, oil wealth and regional conflicts, causing large population movement, have increasingly brought the mission field to the doorstep of Christians around the world. How do we fulfill our calling to point them to Christ? Are there helpful bridges for our efforts?

Cultural Bridges

Despite the corruption of the image of God in all Adam's descendants, Muslim cultures still have many praiseworthy features: generally marriage is esteemed, children are treasured, and the elderly are honored. Hospitality is a prized virtue.

Families are generally close-knit, usually with strong communal ties. Family, neighbors and friends spend much of their free time visiting back and forth, socializing and sharing meals and celebrating special occasions together. Friend and stranger are graciously received with a hearty, generous welcome. This cultural trait provides many opportunities for gradually building



For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Matthew 13:17

friendships with Muslim neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances, often far from their home communities and lonely.

Cultural Blocks

At the same time, one must be sensitive to Muslim fear of incurring family wrath by taking interest in another faith. So, it is best to begin by praying for the ones with whom we can make friendly connection, as we openly

live out our faith. This could rapidly bring the opportunity to graciously gift them with a Gospel or New Testament. Also, in conversation there are always opportunities to throw in a word about human sin and the need for God's grace. Yet, it is wise to wait patiently for Muslim friends to show serious interest in spiritual matters at their own pace. Most likely, they will only feel safe to do so when no other Muslim is around.

Listening

To share the gospel with Muslims, it is NOT necessary to read or understand the Koran. Translating or even modernizing its archaic medieval Arabic is not authorized, so most Muslims only know a few fragments. It is sufficient for Christians to just be aware of major themes.

The Koran and its prophet, Mohamed are highly revered in Islam. Thus, it is best to avoid creating obstacles by commenting on either. Sometimes that means just listening without response. Our calling is to respectfully listen and prayerfully ponder what is being said. We should patiently waiting to be invited to share the hope that is within (1 Peter 3:15).

Bible Stories

Islam recognizes major Old Testament figures as prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses and David. This opens doors to relevantly share how Bible figures received God's promise of the Messiah and prepared for His saving grace for sinners. With Muslims, as with religious Jews, it is vital to press the fact that the Old Testament prophets had one central message -- the coming of the promised Savior.

Christ is highly regarded as a unique prophet in the Koran. It even recognizes

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? ...

Matthew 5:46-47



**إِنْ أَحْبَبْتُمْ فَقَطِ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَكُمْ، فَأَيُّ أَجْرِ لَكُمْ؟
أَلَا يَفْعَلُ الْآثَانِيُونَ ذَلِكَ؟
إِنْ سَلَّمْتُمْ فَقَطِ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكُمْ، فَأَيُّ فَضْلِ لَكُمْ؟
أَلَا يَفْعَلُ الْحَاقِدُونَ ذَلِكَ؟
كُونُوا كَامِلِينَ كَمَا أَنَّ آبَاءَكُمْ السَّمَاوِي هُوَ كَامِلٌ.
(عيسى المسيح)**

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His virgin birth and sinless life. Although his divinity is vehemently denied, Jesus Christ is still revered higher than all other prophets. Most thoughtful Muslims are impressed by the life and teachings our Savior. This too creates openness to the gospel.

Good Works

Muslims are unaware of the deep pervasiveness of human sin. Without the light of the true gospel all religions deceive their followers into believing that it is possible to appease God by "good" works.

In the Koran, Almighty God remains distant and unfathomable. He calls on people to submit to his law and earn his favor by good deeds. Tragically, the church back in Mohamed's day had drifted away from proclaiming the true gospel of God's grace in Christ. Without conviction of sin, humans do not sense their need for the Savior. Until the hopelessness of sin is recognized, religious people vainly look for a prophet

or a saint to guide them to God. They are blind to their real need -- divine rescue by the one and only qualified Savior. Muslims need to be expose to God's self-giving, saving initiative in Christ.

Right With God

Although Muslims desire to be made right with God, they have no assurance that their good works will outweigh the bad at the final judgment. Muslims realize

God's wrath against man's disobedience, but do not know His love in taking that wrath upon Himself in the place of sinners. Jesus commissioned His people to diligently share this good news with all. It is the Holy Spirit who provides us with the opportunities and guides us to wisely use them. He also prepares the ears, minds and hearts to hear, understand, embrace and follow the true Messiah of Scriptures. Let us confidently and relevant-

ly reach out to the mission field that He has brought to our doorstep.

T.A. of Damascus, Syria follows ISSA-ALMASIH.COM daily announcements of sayings of Jesus (Issa). He says, "I no longer believe that Jesus(Issa) is a mere prophet.... What he did and said reflect unquestionable divinity.... Now I am fully convinced that he represented God's personal visit to our humanity...."



(بعدهما سمع الحواريون أنه يعسر دخول الأغنياء إلى ملكوت الله بهتوا وسألوا عيسى المسيح "إذا من يستطيع أن يخلص؟" فأجابهم:)

«هَذَا عِنْدَ النَّاسِ غَيْرُ مُسْتَطَاعٍ وَلَكِنْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مُسْتَطَاعٌ.»

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"Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven..."

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:23-26