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Caring for Muslim Neighbours

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, neighbours 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 friendships with Muslim neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances, often far

فَإِنِّي الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ:
إِنَّ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَأَبْرَارًا كَثِيرِينَ
أَشْتَهَوْا أَنْ يَرَوْا مَا أَنْتُمْ تَرَوْنَ وَلَمْ يَرَوْا
وَأَنْ يَسْمَعُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ وَلَمْ يَسْمَعُوا.
(عيسى المسيح)



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

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 Saviour.

Christ is highly regarded as a unique prophet in the Koran. It even recognizes 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 Saviour. This too creates openness to the gospel.

Good Works

Muslims are unaware of the deep pervasiveness of human sin. Without the

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 الْآثَانِيُّونَ ذَلِكَ؟
إِنْ سَأَلْتُمْ فَقَطِ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكُمْ، فَأَيُّ فَضْلِ لَكُمْ؟
أَلَا يَفْعَلُ الْحَاقِدُونَ ذَلِكَ؟
كُونُوا كَامِلِينَ كَمَا أَنَّ آبَائِكُمُ السَّمَاوِيِّ هُوَ كَامِلٌ.
(عيسى المسيح)**

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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 favour 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 Saviour. 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 Saviour. 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 relevantly reach out to the mission field that He has brought to our doorstep.



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