

## Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, part 1

Having covered the 17 Guidelines for sharing the claims of Christ with your Muslim friends,\* today we start looking at Goldmann's 10 cautions to be aware of when presenting the Gospel to your Muslim friend:

1. **Reason, don't argue.** One cannot change a Muslim's heart (or anyone else's) with logic. Arguing may win points in a debate, but it can lose a hearing. There are some points on which one can argue forever, yet not achieve very much except closing a mind against you.

One suggestion in discussing various issues with Muslims: One lobs the ball back – as in a tennis match – rather than driving it back. Still, you can show passion or emotion in what you believe. Muslims may interpret a lack of emotion as lack of conviction.

2. **Don't attack Muslim's beliefs.** One shouldn't speak negatively about a Muslim's religion, his holy book – the Qur'an, or the prophet Muhammad. Even nominal Muslims are emotionally tied to their religious systems, which are often observed by family members. If a Muslim asks a Christian what he thinks about Muhammad, it's best to say, "I respect Muhammad as your prophet, who led the Arab people from paganism to belief in Allah. But as a Christian, I've found peace, contentment and eternal life in Jesus Christ."
3. **Avoid some terms such as the Son of God and Trinity.** Because the Muslim will confuse "the Son of God" and "the Trinity" as belief in three Gods, Christians should avoid these terms during early visits with Muslims. There are other terms that show Jesus' deity and unique mission. For instance, Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Also, He is referred to as the Word.

Be aware that such terms as *faith*, *grace* and *salvation* may mean one thing to us and another to a Muslim. Explain what these mean to you and show Scriptures that support these teachings.<sup>1</sup>

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. Pp. 136-138

## Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 2

### Consider Carefully Before Bringing Your Muslim Friend to Church

What is the most common way North American believers “witness” to their friends?

From my experience with believers, I’d have to say it’s inviting their friends to come to church with them.

We love church. We love the worship. We love the preaching, the fellowship with believers and the atmosphere of joy and unity. So we naturally believe others should love this environment, too.

Have you ever taken one of your North American friends to church with you, your heart full of anticipation at how they’d enjoy it with you ... but then they didn’t? Maybe they didn’t react negatively, but maybe they didn’t react with great enthusiasm either. Not what you’d expected or hoped for.

It might be hard to understand, yet we have to put ourselves in their shoes – to understand their background, their church *in*experience, and how they view “church,” spirituality and religion in general. Perhaps their background in each of these areas hadn’t prepared them for what to expect, how to interpret what was going on, and – lacking these things plus the sense of belonging we have – their reaction may have been sorely lagging behind what you anticipated.

Now just imagining taking someone from an entirely non-Christian social and religious background into your church. Do you think they will respond better than your North American friend? Almost definitely not. Only a Muslim in whom the Holy Spirit has already been *long* at work, moving them out of their Islamic mindset and being already well familiarized with Western church culture would come into a church with an open heart and mind. In fact, many of our customs in church would be interpreted offensively in their eyes.

This intro will help you better understand Goldmann’s next caution in how you share Christ with your Muslim friend:\*

4. ***Use caution before inviting a Muslim to a church.*** If you bring a male Muslim to church, don’t seat him next to a female; men and women worship separately at the mosque. There is no singing in the mosque and no pictures on the walls. Muslims take off their shoes when they enter a mosque, and they must perform ablutions before praying.

In churches, many Christians hug each other – even men and women! Some women wear clothing with short skirts and low necklines, men and women sit together, and some Christians put their Bible on the floor! All this may so offend your Muslim friends that they won’t be able to hear the truth in church.

Explain why we pray with our eyes closed. Before going to church together, explain the service first. Some sermons are better than others for Muslims. Ask your pastor which Sunday would be the best time to bring your Muslim friend to church.<sup>1</sup>

After experiencing a church service for the first time your Muslim friend – even if you’ve “prepared” them prior to it – may come away with and start asking many questions, such as:

- Why do you wear your shoes in a place of worship...isn’t that disrespectful to God?
- Why do you sit on pews rather than on the floor? Why do you not kneel and bow before God, showing your humility and submission to him?
- Why do you sing and clap and use musical instruments in worship ... aren’t these secular things that are displeasing and disrespectful to God?
- Why do you not wash yourself before entering into the place of prayer...do you not want to show yourself clean before entering into worship of the Almighty?
- Why do your women not clothe themselves modestly in church and in society? Instead they look like the women of the world who do not honor God and flaunt their bodies in shameful ways.
- How can you hold the revelations of God to your prophets in so low esteem (your Bible) as to put it on the floor where everyone has walked with their dirty shoes? Why do you not respect God’s revelation by putting it in the place of honor?

These and other questions you may be faced with after taking your friend to church. I trust this will help you be prepared, as well as to prepare your friend.

I would also challenge you to notice how very biblical many of their practices are! Perhaps we are the ones who should consider more carefully how we approach God and show Him our devotion and respect. I’m not denying the freedom we have in Christ, but rather asking that we not use our freedoms to offend those who do not understand. This, too, is biblical!

So, as you walk down the road of growing relationship and witness with your Muslim friend, may you both be better prepared for what you will experience together. And through it all, may Christ be glorified in you and in them!

# Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 3

## Avoid Getting To the Main Point of Your Message Too Quickly

How were you taught to “witness” – either through formal instruction or informally by watching others?

Was it through a “Steps to Peace with God,” “Romans Road,” “Four Spiritual Laws,” “Evangelism Explosion” or other similar program? Most of these have an emphasis on being able to share the Good News of a new life and faith in Jesus Christ in the most succinct, time-efficient manner.

Have you ever stopped to ask why we teach ourselves and others to share the Gospel in the shortest time frame possible?

It’s because one of our highest values in Western society is on the use of our time. We value time so highly we’ll pay money to save time. We buy all sorts of gadgets that we believe will save time (though they usually don’t). We pay others to do time consuming, tedious, mundane tasks for us – mowing our lawn, cleaning our house, laundering our clothes, etc. It’s gone to such an extreme that some even contract personal shopping services to do their Christmas shopping for them. Or, have you heard about the lady who called 911 from a fast food drive through line because they weren’t moving fast enough with her order!! It’s hilarious! (Search for it on the web– I don’t have a copy of it.)

Just consider how upset people get when the check-out line is too long in the store, or someone in line in front of them seems to be moving too slowly. Wow! Do people ever get steamed quick! I know I’ve even been guilty of this, too.

All of these examples demonstrate how much we value our time. It is a primary characteristic of our culture. But it’s not the character of the vast majority of Muslims. If your Muslim friend didn’t grow up in North America, then they probably don’t have this inordinate value on doing everything as fast as possible.

**Yet, consider the other side of this cultural coin:** If your time is so precious, then it is also one of the most precious gifts and investments we can make in someone else!

This intro will help you better understand Goldmann’s next caution in how you share Christ with your Muslim friend:\*

5. **Avoid getting to the main point of your message too quickly.** As previously encouraged to “proclaim Jesus Christ,” we must [as a counterbalance] be wary of saying something like “Jesus is God” at the beginning of the discussion. This may throw up obstacles to further discussion. A Muslim would think that we are associated others with Allah, which is an unpardonable sin.<sup>1</sup>

When you share Christ with your Muslim friend, you’re doing more than just sharing some facts. While you are sharing truths about Jesus, you are sharing across cultural boundaries. These boundaries are not visible like lines on a map that show us where one country ends and other begins. The cultural boundaries are the differences in how you see, interpret and respond to your world versus how your Muslim friend sees, interprets and responds to the world.

Their cultural experience and training has taught them to view Jesus, Christians, the Cross, Churches, etc. in a totally different way than we have. It is because of the cultural difference between your and my thoughts about Jesus from their thoughts about Jesus that prevent us from sharing too quickly.

The closer you are culturally to someone, the faster you can communicate because there isn’t a huge cultural distance to cover. And vice versa, the farther you are culturally from someone, the longer it takes for our thoughts and concepts to travel back and forth. It’s like those thoughts have to go through a language translation process, then checkpoints at the border, followed by immigration control and customs inspections before they are allowed in. The process can be fraught with misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misdirection.



So, knowing we come from a fast paced culture that is used to communicating at ninety miles an hour, realize that when you sit down to communicate Christ with your Muslim friend you’ve exited the superhighway, regional road, main thoroughfares and have entered a “go slow” area. Get out of your cultural high speed vehicle, pull in to your friend’s driveway, sit down and be prepared to enjoy slowly sipping Turkish coffee or delicious Afghan tea over unhurried conversation. This pace will allow you to go further than stepping on your conversational gas pedal.

The slow journey will prepare their hearts to hear and receive the main points of our message!

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.141 – excluding my contextual comments in the brackets.



## Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 4

### Don't Spend Time in Cul-de-sacs or Box Canyons

Goldmann's caution number 6 is *Don't spend time discussing minor points like the treatment of women or the importance of democracy.*\* Under this heading he simply shares, "The main difference between Islam and Christianity is not the treatment of women or its citizens; it's the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Focus on Jesus, who gives eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

It's definitely not that the treatment of women, the importance of democracy or a host of other issues are not important. These are important issues. Yet they are not the crucial issue.

The crucial issue in our sharing with our Muslim friends is "Who is Jesus?" All the time we spend running down the philosophical cul-de-sacs or box canyon of other issues is time away from the crucial issue.

So, am I saying you cannot talk about anything but Jesus?

No. If you're going to have a genuine friendship with your Muslim neighbor, co-worker or fellow student, then you will inevitably talk about all kinds of topics. Just realize that all the discussions on other topics might be of some peripheral benefit for your friend in understanding Christ-like values, world view, motives, etc., but they won't directly help them understand the key decisive issue that is imperative for them to wrestle with: Is Jesus who He said He is, or is He who someone else – be it Muhammad or another – said He is?

This caution is calling for us to keep the "bigger picture" view in mind while conversing.

Have you ever been sharing with a friend – even another believer in Jesus – and gotten off onto one of these topics? Maybe you were even impassioned in trying to explain your position on that topic to the point of raising your blood pressure and your voice to match? Has such a "discussion" ever put a chill – maybe even ended – your friendship? This is the dynamic Goldmann is cautioning us about.

As said in past issues of *Jumuah*, you might win a "discussion" with your Muslim friend, but lose their friendship. In the big picture our validation and victory on the issue is not as important as the person, our friend, sitting across from us. I'm not saying to concede the issue to a point of error; rather I'm saying watch your own motivations and how you handle such situations. Their eternity hangs in the balance.

May the Holy Spirit give you great wisdom and discretion in your conversations with your Muslim friends! May He embolden your prayer for and witness to your Muslim friend as well.

God's blessings be upon you as you pray and proclaim the grace and truth of Jesus.

\* You can find past issues with all the previous Cautions on our ministry webpage: [www.cmocanada.org](http://www.cmocanada.org)

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.141.



# Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 5

## Is Your Bible “Squeaky Clean”?

As a child in church I have a vivid memory of seeing for the first time someone use a highlighter in their Bible. My little eyeballs must have been as big as saucers. I also recall notes in the margins of my parent’s Bibles. My Dad’s was my favorite to look at, because I admired his artistically quirky handwriting. And I recall when as a teen I started to highlight and underline passages in my own Bible. It wasn’t until university – where we were taught to question virtually everything including the “sanctity” of books – that I began to write in my own Bible. Yet, as a “missions” major with a minor in Islamic studies, I was also exposed to a different cultural perspective: The sanctity of the Holy Writ.

Most cultures and religions would not hold any holy writ in so low esteem as to write their personal notes and thoughts into them. Why? Their perspective is that, if these are the words of God, why would I desecrate it with my personal scribbling? It’s holy, just as we call it the *Holy Bible*. Do I practice graffiti on church, temple or mosque walls? No? Then why would I practice graffiti on the inside – including the inside of the Scriptures?

From my exposure to other faiths and cultures I have restored my Bible to its previously highly held position: I don’t write in it. Oh, I still write in other books, but not in my Bible. I mean, really... does highlighting a passage make me remember it better? And if I want to take notes I have plenty of other things to write them on – not on my Bible.

It was and is for the thought of opening my Bible to a passage with a non-Believer - especially from another cultural background - that I hold off from doing this.

Goldmann’s caution number 7 is *Don’t share Scripture from a Bible that has personal notes in it.*\* He shares a great additional point, too: “If you have your Muslim friend look with you as you read from a Bible, be sure it has clean margins. A Muslim who sees personal notes may think that you have added to the Scriptures.”

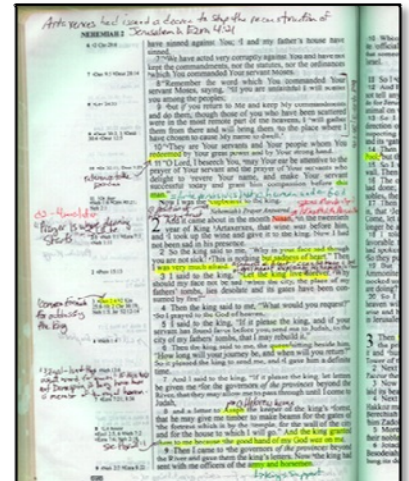
That Muslims already contend we have corrupted our Bibles is an argument that doesn’t need more fodder from seeing and misunderstanding the notes in our Bibles.

Is it okay for you to highlight and write in your Bible? I don’t and won’t condemn you for doing so. But I do ask you to consider something else... to consider someone else’s point of view. What would your Muslim or other non-Western friend think?

So, if you’ve got a much loved, well worn and marked Bible, what should you do? Keep it! But also get yourself a nice clean copy, too. Use that one when sharing with your Muslim friend. The Gospel has enough “stumbling blocks” already in it that challenge our limited human thinking: We don’t need to add any more unnecessary stumbling blocks!

God’s blessings be upon you as you pray and share your “clean” Bible with your Muslim friends!

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.141.



**Does your Bible look like this... well “loved”?! If so, don’t show it to your Muslim friend... they won’t understand why you’ve written in God’s Holy Writ and may think you’re trying to add to His Word.**

# Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 6

## Mono-gender Ministry

By now I think you will have already realized that Muslim culture is very different from Western culture. Goldmann's caution no. 8 reminds us of this again:

*Men should not visit women in their home when they are alone.* \* Remember that in Islamic culture, men and women do not mingle and they sit separately for meetings and most gatherings. Therefore, a woman should not be with a man by herself and vice versa.

In a way I'm surprised that he would say a man should visit a woman at all! Unlike our liberal Western society that puts no restrictions on the relationships between men and women, Islamic culture is almost the opposite extreme. The custom in most Muslim countries is that men and women don't look each other in the eye nor even shake hands when introduced!

I made this mistake on a trip last year in Asia. It's such an automatic thing for us Westerners to thrust forth our hand when meeting someone new. Fortunately it was okay as the woman, who worked in the airport, was used to foreigners and was not an "orthodox" Muslim. My host simply reminded me of this after we were not longer with her. Whew!

Have you ever attended an old fashioned church event, men and women sit segregated? Many churches in Newfoundland still do!

Why? To minimize distractions, I suppose.

But all this is not foreign to Christian faith, either. The New Testament indication that the believers sat segregated in their worship services. This custom carried over from Judaism where it is also commonly practiced. And there are many Christian churches in the Middle East that continue this custom as well.

So, just because our overall Western culture has moved far from its Biblical moorings, don't think that Muslims' segregation of the sexes is some strange thing. They're simply still practicing what they inherited from us, which we have since abandoned.

And this issue has greater import than we might give it. If a man were to visit a Muslim women while she were alone in her home, she would likely be accused of adultery and divorced, or maybe worse.

This situation does have a positive side to it: It demonstrates the absolute necessity of both men and women sharing your with your Muslim friends. And it shows the value of married couples acting together to reach Muslim couples.

And besides, Believing couples can certainly also be united in praying for their Muslim friends...and Jesus says praying in unity has great power: *"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."* [Matt. 18:19-20]

God's blessings be upon you as you "mono-gender" visit with your Muslim friends and pray in agreement for them!

\* You can find past issues with all the previous Cautions on our ministry webpage: [www.cmocanada.org](http://www.cmocanada.org)

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.142.

## Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 7

### Be Careful In the Use of Your Time

Time is probably Westerner's most precious resource. Therefore when we invest our time in helping a newcomer to our nation we're paying them the highest of compliments.

We must be careful in the giving of our time though. Have you ever given what you thought was a compliment, only for it to be misunderstood and received badly on the other end? And, have you ever had someone who in trying to be nice smothered you? While they were trying to be helpful, they really interfered with you accomplishing your goal. While experiencing that did you get the feeling that they thought you were incapable of doing it yourself? Not a good feeling nor a relationship building exercise at all. Goldmann's next caution warns us of these kinds of mistakes:

***Be careful in your use of time.***\* Immigrants need help in many areas as they adjust to living in the West. They may be able to do something themselves or with the help of another family member. Keep in mind your goal is to help immigrants to function by themselves rather than in a codependent relationship.

If your friend is a newcomer here, they may need help understanding many things that need to get done and why we do things the way we do. But friends don't just "barge in" upon each other. We offer our help. Give them dignity and respect by offering and waiting for their acceptance and/or request for help. It might not come right away. They don't want to look stupid or ignorant and they suffer plenty of that without our extra help!

I grin as I write this, thinking of times when people meet someone learning English and, unwittingly, start speaking loudly. They're not deaf! Likewise we simply need to be natural and not make our own host of ignorant – uninformed and ill considered – assumptions.

How does all this relate to the Gospel? Very directly: It's a practical application of all the "one another" statements of the New Testament (a fascinating word study I encourage you to do!). Be kind. Be hospitable. Be helpful. Give. Bless. These are essential attributes of Christ-likeness we all need in greater doses. I'm convicted of my shortcomings just writing this! And it is this kind of witness without words that breaks down superstitions and myths they've believed about Christians and opens the eyes of their heart to the Good News of Jesus.

God's blessings be upon you as you pray for and help your Muslim immigrant friend!

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.142.



**Give help when needed without overwhelming, doing it all for them or creating a dependence upon yourself. Help them learn, gain experience and self-confidence to move naturally in their new host culture.**

## Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, Part 8

### Look Out for Relational Landmines

We shared about some of this two weeks ago, but there are additional worthwhile cautions here. Goldmann warns us to “look out for relational landmines” by highlighting these three points:

A man should be slow in offering to shake a woman’s hand. Let her take the initiative. Because the left hand is used for personal hygiene, it should not be used in greeting. A Christian man may call a Muslim “my friend” but not “my brother.” Brotherhood assumes theological agreement.<sup>1</sup>

I shared how I’ve make the “cultural blooper” of immediately thrusting out my hand to shake a Muslim woman’s hand upon being introduced to her. In reply a friend shared: *I had a similar experience a few weeks ago at a nearby college. I had been invited to participate in a panel with an atheist, a Catholic priest, a Bahai, and a Muslim (who happened to be a woman.) It turns out she was the best friend of my cousin (who married a Muslim and converted...) She was quite bubbly and enthusiastic about this realization and said she would immediately tell my cousin she had met me! I tried to shake her hand and she pulled back and said, “You should know better than that!” I told her I didn’t and had her explain it to me. Fortunately she was very gracious and we laughed. I said, “What should I do when I meet my cousin? Should I salute her?!”* As in these two experiences, Muslims are often quite gracious with our ignorance. Let us always purpose to be as or even more gracious toward them.

The “left hand” thing is always of some interest. If you haven’t figured it out, they don’t have many trees in the middle east to make toilet paper from, so historically they’ve had to use other means. When you eat with your hands, as many cultures do, it makes the left hand versus the right hand thing very important! Given this, you can understand why using the left hand for serving most anything is an insult.

And I think the “my friend” versus “my brother” is quite self evident.

Are these the only relational landmines? Certainly not! If you’ve ever traveled outside North America, or have spent time in a cultural community here, you’ll have already experienced plenty of these. There are linguistic ones, such as mispronunciations that change the entire meaning of words in unexpected and often embarrassing ways. I recall taking Russian in University, and in that language where you place the stress in pronouncing a word can change it’s meaning completely. Instead of saying “I am writing on the paper,” if stressed wrongly the sentence becomes “I am [releasing myself] on the wall”! And there are the nonverbal, social landmines like shaking hands, and much much more. Even in relationships between two men or between two women these can happen. Our cultures train us to behave or not behave in certain ways so well that we just don’t even think about our actions. But when we unconsciously enact these behaviors cross culturally in our friendships with Muslims, yikes!

How all these things fulfill Colossians 4:5-6, *“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”* God’s blessings be upon you as you pray for and help your Muslim immigrant friend!

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.142.

## Cautions when Presenting the Gospel, concluding comments

### Secure Communication Needed

Goldmann concludes this section with the following:

In addition to these ten cautions, be careful in presenting information in public on Christian activities. The governments of some countries have informants who spy on others' religious activities, so be careful about giving out information on such Christian activities as church gatherings, conferences, retreats, or outreaches, especially in Muslim countries. If names of missionaries are printed in church bulletins, don't indicate the country where they serve.<sup>1</sup>

A friend who serves in a R.A.N. (Restricted Access Nation) was sharing with me last year how a church in South Africa listed a couple who were ministering in their country on their website. The church even thought they were doing everything right: Not listing their last names, listing them as working in a different region of the world, etc. Yet still they were listed on the church's "mission" web page and, with all the other stuff the government agents had collected, it was enough to tip the scale against them.

Their ship was sunk. And not only were the couple evicted from the country but also their entire team – the crew of the entire ship was sunk!

Can you imagine praying and working for years to get into a R.A.N. in order to fulfill God's call and passion in your heart to share His love with a people, only to be evicted because another believer - albeit well meaning yet still naïve and damaging - exposed your presence there?!

Westerners live immersed in a context of hyper-freedom. We think all information ought to be freely available without restriction. Yet the rest of the world isn't that way and it's horribly ethnocentric of us to expect they should value what we value and behave as we behave.

As Western churches we want to promote everything we're doing in order to attract seekers into coming. To accomplish this we use all means possible these days. We've moved beyond newspaper and radio ads to email alerts, web page listings, broadcasting announcements via social networking sites, etc. We want everyone to know what we're doing, who we're supporting, where we're sending them, etc. etc.

Yet, as we begin shifting our focus to reach those who are most unreached in the world today by sending Christian workers into R.A.N. situations (the majority of people who yet need to hear the Gospel are in R.A.N.s!), we CANNOT broadcast their presence to the public.

**Are you willing to accept these restrictions upon your lips (and fingers as you communicate *electronically!*) for the sake of those who most need to hear the Gospel and those who are serving among them?**

**Do you know and/or support someone working in a R.A.N? If so, *please ask them* for the secure communication guidelines they need you to follow.** These guidelines can be different from country to country, so it's best for you to get their list from them.

Join me in praying today for those serving in R.A.N. situations, for those living in R.A.Nations who need to hear the Gospel, and for the Lord to raise up new workers willing to be His witnesses among Muslims in Restricted Access Nations. Thank you for praying!!

References: <sup>1</sup> Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible*; Moody Publishers, Chicago. p.142.

