



## Handling Questions Encountered in Dialogue with Muslims, part 1

### Why aren't you a Muslim?

As I write this today I'm in a South East Asian Muslim country. It's been a very great ministry trip. God is doing great things here, yet there are teeming numbers who have yet to hear the Good News of *Isa al Masih*.

One of those who needs to hear is Salim. He and I were sitting next to each other on the train platform in the capital city three days ago. Salim is 65, happily married to one wife, and they have one daughter who is 17, so I guess they got a late start. He is a talkative little fellow. I say that without prejudice. He said to me at one point in the conversation, "You big. My people small." And he was small. Probably just over 5 foot. Big in personality though. And very enjoyable. He knew a bit of broken English, which was good since my vocabulary in his language was almost non-existent. Like most from his country, they'd prefer to engage in conversation – even with foreign strangers – than read a paper or magazine.

The encounter demonstrated to me again how easy it is to begin a relationship with most Muslims and that it takes patient open friendship to win them.

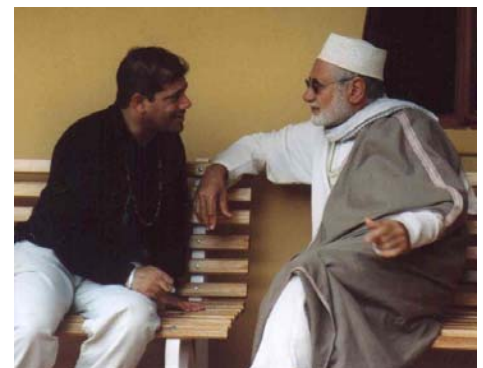
As you move into friendship and deeper into meaningful conversation with your Muslim friend you can expect to run into several common questions that are not necessarily or primarily theological questions. Peripherally your answers, like today's, may involve the Bible and the Qur'an. These questions are about life and faith and show they are grappling with the reality of your friendship and the truths you've been sharing with them. Here's one that, if not prepared, might be a bit of a "stumper" to you:

#### "Why aren't you a Muslim?"

When Muslims see your interest in them and that you have taken time to learn about Islam, they ponder why anyone wouldn't want to submit to the truth of Islam! One can say, "I respect Islam as your religion, but I have submitted my life to the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus alone, according to the Bible and the Quran, has the power to raise the dead. [Recall that Sura 5:110 acknowledges that Jesus raised the dead (with Allah's permission)]. All who have submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ will share in His resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

At first glance it might be quite puzzling to hear your Muslim friend ask you this question. We need to consider it from their view, since that's where the question orients out of – their worldview. They are taught and do indeed see Islam as the best religion, society, way of life and only true path to being pleasing to the Almighty. Then, when they encounter your righteous Christ-imitating lifestyle and interest in Godly things, they can only wonder why you don't become a Muslim like them! To them, it's a compliment to make the comment to you. Take it as one!

As you answer this question, continuing to love and share with them the Good News of *Isa al Masih*, pray the Holy Spirit will open their spiritual understanding. Pray they have the Holy Spirit's ability to see their religion for what it is – man's



**As you move deeper in genuine friendship, your Muslim friend is going to ask you some interesting questions. Are you ready for them? We're here to help you!**

attempt to be pleasing to God in our own ability, but without real power to change our lives from the inside out. God's not interested in what we can do for Him. He's interested in us having a true and genuine relationship with him in the way He provided – Jesus, the Way, Truth and Life. Join me in praying today our witness to Muslims as followers of Jesus, for Muslim's spiritual eyes to be opened to the truth of Jesus, and for new workers to live among and be incarnational witnesses to Jesus' living within His people. Thank you for praying!!

\* 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.143.

## Handling Questions Encountered in Dialogue with Muslims, part 2

### What about the Unholy Lifestyle of Christians?

Now before you go getting all hot under the collar over the title, please hear me out – and hear out your Muslim friend who might say this to you. Instead of using untold calories in jumping to conclusions as to what they mean, make sure you first understand their question!

What do our Muslim friends mean when they refer to the “unholy lifestyle of Christians?”

It's really a question of worldview – how they view and interpret the world. We as “sent ones” – literally what the word “apostle” means in Scripture and from which we derive the crude English word “missionary” – are the ones who are supposed to go the extra mile in understanding what makes our Muslim friends classify Christians as people with unholy lifestyles. So as yourself first, “What makes my friend think we behave in a manner that is displeasing to God?” And *then* ask your Muslim friend that question!

Let's look at what Goldmann shares under this heading:

#### **"What about the unholy lifestyle of Christians?"**

Many people call themselves Christians because they attend church, but they keep on doing ungodly and rebellious things. They have never asked Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. They lack God's help in living a godly lifestyle. A Muslim observing these self-described Christians may wonder if Christianity really makes a difference in one's lifestyle.

One can say, "To become a Christian is a personal matter. It isn't a decision of a community or nation. There may be many individual Christians living in a nation, but there is no such thing as a 'Christian Nation.' Individuals within a community make personal commitments to Jesus Christ. ".<sup>1</sup>

Ahhh! Now we understand...and may actually agree with them. Don't you just cringe when some people wear the label “Christian” but then act in ways that are very UN-Christ-like! I know I cringe, especially the more well known they are.

Now, understanding where they're coming from, this question becomes a bridge to grow closer with your Muslim friend rather than a wedge of misunderstanding driving you apart.

Goldmann's answer to their question is good, too, sharing important belief and worldview stuff with a Muslim. They perceive a Muslim “nation” or community, and assume Christians must have something like that. And while their community is not nearly as neither homogeneous nor cohesive as they'd like to think (and like us to think), we must admit that there really isn't any homogeneous or cohesive Christian community either. We're divided into large groupings of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Coptic, Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical, “main line”, Pentecostal, Charismatic, etc., etc. And even each of those groupings has sub groupings!

The deeper belief issue is the matter of personal faith decisions and practice. This, too, is drastically different from the vast majority of Muslims. They didn't choose to become a Muslim, but were born into it. It's a part of their entire personal identity. As such, they take their worldview and use it to try and understand us...but of course the problem is that doesn't work. They think that all Westerners are born into Christianity as a society, and therefore all Westerners are representatives of Christianity. Yikes! No wonder they hate Christianity! From their view, Christianity is the purveyor of 80% of the world's pornography, same-sex marriage, abortion, euthanasia, breakdown of the family, etc. From their view, everything the Canadian, U.S. and other Western governments do is an expression of Christianity. Yikes again!

So what do you do when they say this?

In addition to the above things, I've asked them something along this line of thinking: “Aren't there individual Muslims who act immorally?” Of course there are. Once they admit this, then I ask, “So shall I look at them and ask about the



**High profile pop icons like Madonna are most always misunderstood and misinterpreted by Muslims. They see a woman taking on Jesus' mother's title, but then parading around scantily clad and acting promiscuously in her acts and lyrics. This is just one small example of how Muslims come to view the “Christian West” as immoral.**

unholy lifestyle of Muslims?" The point is to get them to see that just as they're painting Christianity with a broad brush, judging all Christians by the behavior of some, so they don't want us to do the same to them as Muslims.

We need to seriously pray about this issue. Pray that:

- Muslim's misunderstandings about the West and our faith are torn down so they will see our faith in a new light
- Muslim's have honest insight into the troubled nature of their own societies, and that Islam – even after hundreds or more than a thousand years has still not solved them.
- Our Muslim friends will begin to reassess their faith experience and search for true spiritual fulfillment that is available only in relationship with Isa al-Masih.
- And that Muslims will come into relationship with real Jesus-imitating Christians who can share His love and truth with them. This means we must also pray for *new workers to go and live among Muslims*, who are the most unreached of all peoples in the world!

THANK YOU for your prayer support! You're awesome, and are making a difference through your prayer support!

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## Handling Questions Encountered in Dialogue with Muslims, part 3

### What do you think about the Prophet Muhammad?

Wow! This could be like stepping on a landmine or it could be a stepping stone – how you respond makes all the difference.

Let's look at what Goldmann shares under this heading:

#### "What do you think about the Prophet Muhammad?"

Muslims have an unusual reverence for the prophet Muhammad, whom they consider the "seal of the prophets." Many regard him as an intercessor between God and man. Because of this adoration of Muhammad, it is unwise to make critical remarks about him, even if your criticism is supported by history.

The best answer to this question is "I respect Muhammad as your prophet who led the Arab people from paganism to belief in Allah. But as a Christian, I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to be the Lamb of God by dying for my sins. Now I have assurance that I'm going to heaven."<sup>1</sup>

In some Church circles talk has been circulating for some time about Muhammad being a child molester, a womanizer and of being possessed. I guarantee you that if you share these ill formed thoughts with your Muslim friend it will damage your relationship with them. I challenge you to go beyond parroting something someone else has said and study the historical Muhammad – you might be surprised by what you find.

What you or I think about Muhammad, however, isn't really the key issue. What you, I and our Muslim friends think about Jesus is the more important issue. And that's exactly where Goldmann's response takes us with our friend who posed this question. And with an answer about Jesus becoming the Lamb (sacrifice) of God and dying for our sins the conversation will definitely move in a new direction away from their question!

A good conversational follow up to this is about the need for sacrifice. Muslims will say that Allah is sovereign and can forgive whomever He wills without the need for a sacrifice. Engage that indirectly by asking why the prophets, such as Musa (Moses) practiced animal sacrifices to Allah and Muslims to this day still honor this annually in the month of the Hajj (Pilgrimage)? Discuss together the need for sacrifice and all its implications.

Even the final statement, "...I have assurance that I'm going to heaven" will prompt new thoughts within and conversation from your Muslim friend, too. Muslims have NO assurance of salvation. Muhammad himself, according to the Qur'an, didn't know what would happen to him after death [Quran 46:9 and Hadith 5:266]. This is a *powerful* motivator for almost everyone – the need for assurance in the next life. This is the root of the fear of death. And it is the fear and reality that Jesus, Lamb of God, came to free us from through faith in Him.



**As with many historical figures, no actual pictorial representations of Muhammad exist, mainly because very traditional Muslims do not allow them. More important than the accuracy of this image is how you respond to your Muslim friend's question, "So, what do you think of the Prophet Muhammad?" Are you ready to answer?!**

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## Handling Questions Encountered in Dialogue with Muslims, part 4

### Do you believe the Qur'an?

Two friends this week has told me about their growing relationships with Muslims. Each of these men are reaching out to Muslim men who are leaders in their local mosques. I pray each of you will have the opportunities these two brothers are having! And when you do, you'll encounter question like this:

**"Do you believe the Qur'an?"**

If you have never read the Qur'an, it's best to say so. If you have read the Qur'an, then you can say, "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ and I believe the Bible is the Word of God. I believe the Qur'an in every place it agrees with the Bible."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever read the Qur'an? Many Christ-followers I speak with have never even read all the way through their own Bible, let alone picked up and read the scriptures of another religion. Yet how can you, with respect in their eyes, say to a Muslim you reject their book even without having ever read it?

Some Christ-followers I've spoken with have also acted as if to read the Qur'an will somehow give them a spiritual infection. Nonsense. The only book in the world that is alive and powerful is the Bible, though Muslims wouldn't agree with you on that point. But from our perspective, we need to think rationally. Don't be afraid to read the Qur'an. Go check one out from your local library. The book might look large, though, due to the fact that it's prose [like poetry] and the text is given lots of space on the page. In terms of actual text it is perhaps about the same size as the New Testament.

You can also read the Qur'an online for free. Here are some sites for you:

- <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/> \*
- <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/HolKora.html>

\* Please be aware that some of these are Islamic sites.

As you get into reading it, I'm sure you'll have questions. The following sites will help you find answers (and make you aware of even more question?!):

- <http://www.answering-islam.org/Quran/index.html>
- <http://answering-islam.org.uk/Gilchrist/Jam/>

I could go on into further aspects of this question but due to space limitations I'll limit it to this for today. The links above will help you greatly in just dipping your toes or diving in headlong. Happy swimming!

As you pray today, please join me in praying that our friends and Muslims everywhere will be confronted by God's Word whether that be through relationships with Believers, via the internet, radio, TV or print media. Pray that Muslims will realize their spiritual hunger for something more than Islam and the Qur'an has thus given them (something many who come to faith in Isa share with us). Pray these Muslims come into dynamic relationship with a Believer who will patiently and lovingly walk with them through all their questions. And – as always – pray for more workers to live among and lovingly share Jesus with them.

THANK YOU for your prayer support and partnership! You're awesome!

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Muslims treat their Qur'an with the *utmost* respect, never placing it on the floor or other books and objects on top of it, never writing in it, keeping it on a stand and in the highest place in the room. What would they think of how you treat your Bible? Would they see and think you revere your Holy Scriptures?



# Handling Questions Encountered in Dialogue with Muslims, part 5

## Doesn't the Bible predict the coming of the prophet Muhammad?

You might be shocked when your Muslim friend asks this question. Some of your Muslim friends might even assert that the Bible did predict the coming of Muhammad, but that we have changed/corrupted the Bible so that it wouldn't point to him any longer. How do you respond?

### Doesn't the Bible predict the coming of the prophet Muhammad?

Some Muslims will quote the word of God to Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like unto me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him." Muslims say that Muhammad is that prophet. We say that Jesus Christ was the longed-for prophet promised through Moses. The apostle Peter in his second message after Pentecost summarized the Gospel in Acts 3:18-25, referring to Jesus as the long-awaited prophet:

"But this is how God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. ... [He sent] the Christ, who has been appointed for you - even Jesus. ... For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people. ... ' He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed. '"

You may also refer to Galatians 3:16, which says, "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed ... meaning one person, who is Christ."

Clearly Deuteronomy 18: 15 refers to Jesus, the Messiah who was a Jew "from among your own people." This verse doesn't refer to Muhammad because he was an Arab and a descendant of Ishmael.<sup>1</sup>

I was reading yesterday the testimony of Abdul Saleeb, a Muslim background Believer. What he shares provides us with a perspective on our Muslim friends' mindsets: "I had lived in a world that presupposed that the Qur'an [was true] and no one ever questioned that assumption." This is a great observation. Muslims presuppose that all they have been told is true, unassailable, and can't understand why we don't see things their way.

Muslims, having been taught that the Bible is corrupted and that Muhammad was originally prophesied of in the Bible, never think to stop and consider if what they have been taught is true. They just believe it is and believe that we're wrong.

This can be a challenging mindset to encounter, but this situation can also be turned into a great time of sharing. In response I encourage you to do the following: Ask them if they've read the prophecies of the Messiah in the Taurat (OT) and Injil (NT). As we've discussed in the past, Muslims are instructed in the Qur'an to read all the Holy books. When they say, "No" they haven't read them, invite them to look at the Scriptures with you that say who the Messiah will be. There are well over 100 of them and, when taken collectively, point only to Jesus – no other person could have fulfilled them.

Want a list of these Scripture references? Check out this resource on our website: [http://www.cmocanada.org/resources/documents/Prophecies\\_of\\_the\\_Messiah.pdf](http://www.cmocanada.org/resources/documents/Prophecies_of_the_Messiah.pdf)

As you pray today, we encourage you to ask God for the opportunity to befriend a Muslims [if you haven't already] and that you will be led of the Holy Spirit in conversations leading to topics like these. You are the light of the world!

Too many Muslims don't have a Christian friend to share the truth with them. Please join us in praying that Muslims everywhere will come into dynamic relationship with a Believer who will patiently and lovingly walk with them through all their questions.

And – as always – pray for more workers to live among and lovingly share Jesus with them.

THANK YOU for your prayer support and partnership! You're awesome!

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Was Muhammad like Moses? Or the greater question is did Muhammad fill ALL the prophecies of the one "like unto me" to follow Moses?