



Stereotypes or Realities? What Muslims and Christians Think of Each Other, part 1

Everywhere I go and talk, people are interested in Muslims and the world of Islam. Yet I've been struck by the seemingly universal misunderstanding about Muslims and what it's like to work with them.

"Isn't it dangerous to live among and share your faith with Muslims?"

"Aren't they hostile?"

"Have you ever felt threatened?"

These are typical questions and it is understandable that so many wonder such things. Many North Americans don't know a Muslim personally...or they've not taken time to get to know personally the Muslims in their life. Thus the only information they get about Muslims is from the mainstream media, and I think it's quite apparent what impression that leaves. This is why they have such fear and concerns.

Yet as I share I typically always ask those in the crowd to raise their hands that know Muslims personally. There are always a few, and often quite a few. Then I ask this question: Are your Muslim friends *anything like* the image portrayed of Muslims in mainstream media?

NEVER have I had a single person say "Yes..." their Muslim friend was like the extreme / fundamentalist / terrorist / radical image portrayed on TV.

These stereotypes we hold are some of the **greatest obstacles** for us as Christians in fulfilling God's heart by loving and reaching out to Muslims with His love, mercy and truth. These stereotypical misunderstandings build barriers between Christians and Muslims, making it more difficult to reach Muslims with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Here are the most popular stereotypes Christians have of Muslims:ⁱ

1. All Muslims are terrorists.
2. Islam is morally bankrupt.
3. Muslims are all sinister and dangerous.
4. Muslims are all Arabs.
5. Many Muslims are rich oil sheikhs.
6. Muslims cannot be reached with the Gospel.

Do any of these reflect what you have been thinking or feeling? If so, I urge you to prayerfully reconsider. Take a moment with a piece of paper and pen. Reflect and write down the thoughts and feelings you've had about Muslims. Then look at the list and ask yourself: From where did I get these thoughts and feelings – from actual experiences with Muslims, or are these the result of impressions left by the media? If the latter, then take one more moment and pray: Repent of thoughts and feelings harbored against a people you don't even know, and repent of thinking and feeling about Muslims other than how our Father thinks and feels about them. He would *"that none should perish, but everyone come to repentance."*ⁱⁱ Have you desired, prayed and acted for Muslims' repentance? This is what He wants of us.

God bless you (and I know He will) as you reflect, repent, and pray His will today! God bless you as you pray for the salvation of Muslims in your life, throughout our country and around the world today. God bless you as you pray for the Lord of the Harvest to thrust forth more harvest workers among Muslims, because the fields are ripe unto harvest right now!ⁱⁱⁱ



Believing stereotypes is like sticking your head in the sand – being willfully ignorant of changing realities around you. The vast majority of Muslims are *nothing* like how they are portrayed on TV. So which would you prefer...a head full of sand, or for the truth to set you free?!

The TRUTH about these stereotypes:

1. NO! The vast majority are peace loving people like us.
2. Just as all "Christians" are not perfect, neither are all Muslims.
3. Most are sincere and concerned for their safety as we are.
4. Most Muslims are Asian (69%)!
5. 80% of the world's poor are Muslim.
6. Muslims *can* and *are* being reached with the Gospel!
More Muslims have come to faith in Jesus in the past 25 years than in the previous 1,400 years combined!

References: i. *Islam and the Bible*, David Goldmann. Moody Publishers, Chicago © 2004, p.128

ii. 2 Peter 3:9

iii. John 4:35

Stereotypes or Realities?

What Muslims and Christians Think of Each Other, part 2

Do you remember the TV show “Dallas”? I never got into watching it, but some people really did. And not just Americans. People around the world were mesmerized by weekly episodes filled with their lying, scheming, boozing, fighting and sleeping around.

This show sticks in my mind because of how it shaped people’s perception of what life in America was like. During the show’s heyday I read an article that said most Australians thought the average person in the U.S. lives in huge houses on ranches, were “filthy rich” and drove huge gas guzzling cars. Aussies would come to visit the States and were very disappointed when they saw that Americans live, by and large, very similar in style to them!

This was an awakening moment for me, realizing the power of media to shape – rightly or wrongly – people’s impressions.

Most people living outside North America think that the U.S. and Canada are Christian nations, and they assume most people here are Christians. This is not a stereotype, but the reality of what almost all Muslims believe about Western countries and all Westerners like us.

So, when they see our North American culture with loose morality, such as premarital and extramarital sex, the gay lifestyle, frequent divorce, rampant alcohol and drug use, they think, *Who would want to convert to a religion that has such moral standards?!*

Here are the most common stereotypes Muslims have of Christians: ¹

1. Christians are permissive. Drugs, sex, pornography and alcohol are widely used and practiced by Christians.
2. America is a decadent colonial power that practices economic control.
3. North Americans are blind supporters of Israel against her Arab Muslim neighbors.
4. Western (Christian) women are out of control, as evidenced by the way they dress.
5. Westerners don’t value life, as seen in their support of abortion and euthanasia.
6. Families in the West are broken up and fragmented by divorce and children who lack respect for parents.
7. North Americans are irreligious, as seen in the absence of public prayer.

Do these surprise you? Shock you? Were you aware that is how Muslims see Christians? I think this will help you understand Muslims better. Knowing this, we can understand why Muslims reject Christianity and Westernism since in their eyes they are the same thing.

You can also see what a hurdle this is. Until they actually learn that Western culture *is not* synonymous with Christianity, they will never even consider believing in Jesus as the only One who can forgive their sin.

One of the top two reason Muslims do come to faith in Jesus is: They entered into a relationship with a dynamic follower of Jesus. That believer’s life changed their whole view of Jesus, the Bible and Christian faith. The other top reason Muslims come to faith in Jesus is Jesus Himself. They fall in love with the Jesus they also see in Scripture.

The answer to the problem is, in one sense, very simple: Live out your faith in Jesus before your Muslim friend. In another sense, however, it is seemingly overwhelming: Out of 1.3+ BILLION Muslims MOST don’t know a Christian.

Will you go, live among them, shining Jesus’ life through yours so they will have the chance to come to faith in Jesus? Or, if you cannot go, will you send someone else in your place? These are our Biblical calling: To go and to send. What is God calling you to do today as you pray for Muslims and for new workers among them?

References: 1. *Islam and the Bible*, David Goldmann. Moody Publishers, Chicago © 2004, p.73 & 128



Do you live like they lived in “Dallas”...the popular 80’s TV show? Muslims think we live like the fictional characters portrayed on TV – and they think that those people are “Christians”! No wonder they’re not interested in our faith. Most Muslims have NEVER met a real Christian. The only way these grossly misleading stereo-types will be dispelled is to live among them and let our light shine!

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