



Guidelines for Confronting Your Muslim Friend With The Claims of Christ, Part 1

We've been working up to this section for some time, looking first at stereotypes we as Christians commonly hold against Muslims and those that Muslims hold against Christians. This is necessary in order to clear the air between us, moving beyond generalities and misunderstandings into true knowledge of one another.

I'm reminded of the summer I spent in the West Bank with Palestinian Muslim university students. We were all in the same ages and stages of life – university studies, early 20's, single, idealistic and not very realistic about the wide world around us. Meeting this group of guys, being introduced and engaging in introductory conversation, I was surprised by the questions and assertions I was assailed with. Reagan was President at the time and, being a North American, was verbally attacked as the personification of everything American – including everything they didn't like about American political agendas, whether they were true or skewed by what the Imams had been preaching in the local mosques. *It took the first three whole days to get past all that stuff in their heads!* Yet, once past all the stereotypes and into actual personal relationship, I don't ever recall them bringing any of those political things up again all summer.



Your friendship with your Muslim friend is the key that opens the door to their heart. When they see you embody the character of Christ, they will ask you to enter the courtyard of their inner self where you can sit and discuss matters of the heart and Biblical truth. You are their bridge into the Kingdom of God!

Could we have gotten into the personal realm without going through the thick veneer of assumptions and stereotypes? I seriously doubt it.

Be ready to wade through that stuff with grace, humility as you seek to understand your Muslim friend's point of view, and – when necessary – asking them forgiveness for Western arrogance and ignorance. No, you and I don't set the government's political agendas nor enact them. Yet we are to our Muslim friends the personal representative of the West. So, be humble and ask their forgiveness. *A soft answer turns away wrath*, said Solomon, and your softness in response to their pain and offense will soften their walls and open the doors to their hearts.

Goldmann shares 17 points in his Guidelines. We will cover a few at a time as space allows. I believe these will strengthen your witness greatly:

Even though a Muslims' theology differs from that of a Christian in many areas, beginning with his or her view of God as remote and impersonal and Jesus as being a mere prophet, a Christian can effectively proclaim the Gospel to a Muslim friend. We cannot overlook God's sovereign plan and the Holy Spirit's enabling power in using you and me to communicate. Here are seventeen guidelines for presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. **Be constantly in prayer.** "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is essential to winning Muslims to Christ. They are in the grip of Islamic teaching, which necessitates spiritual warfare.

God works as we pray. Jesus says in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." God, by the Holy Spirit, does the urging toward Jesus. He must also give faith and courage to trust only in the work of Jesus Christ for their salvation. Pray that God will give you good opportunities to present the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly, that it will be clear to the listener, that Muslims will recognize their sin and need of a savior and have the courage to trust Him for their salvation. God has even used dreams to bring many Muslims to faith in Jesus Christ. You may pray that God reveals truth about Himself to Muslims even as they sleep.

2. **Be a genuine friend.** Relationships are very important. How one relates is sometimes more important than what one says! The key is one's attitude. Spending time together in various contexts will help establish warm relationships. Consider establishing a close relationship with one or two Muslims. Muslims value and will cherish friendships.

Genuine friendships take time and effort, of course. Invite your friend to your home, go on an outing, eat meals together, and help him or her with their problems. Immigrants don't always understand our cultural patterns. One presents oneself, not just the Gospel, to a Muslim friend.¹

Guidelines for Confronting Your Muslim Friend With The Claims of Christ, Part 2

Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shares this powerful thought with us:

“...God...reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

~ 2 Corinthians 5:19-21

We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us! When we grasp the implications of this verse, then we grasp how necessary it is to go to another people as ambassadors and represent our Sender! And we also grasp that God is making his appeal to our Muslim friends through our daily witness and friendship.

So, it is for these reasons I am compelled to share these guidelines with you, to strengthen your witness as Christ's ambassador to your Muslim friend! Here are Goldmann's next guidelines:

3. **Ask thought provoking questions.** Asking questions about your friend's faith and attitudes will help you know where the person is coming from in their religious beliefs. They may be a Muslim in name only, being secularist at heart. Or they may be Muslim at heart but strongly opposed to violent acts that are sometimes carried out by Muslim fundamentalists

Some good questions are “Do you have assurance that you will go to paradise?” or “What does the Qur'an say about forgiveness?” or “How do you find strength and victory against Satan?” Questions like these prove that you have an interest in spiritual things and in them. By exploring the Bible together, sharing what you believe about these questions, you let your Muslim friend discover the truths and answers.

4. **Listen attentively.** Courtesy and respect for the other person requires that you listen carefully. One should have a learning attitude. Respond in such a way that the person realizes that you understand what they are saying. Making eye contact is considered good manners in Arab culture. However, when one speaks to someone of the opposite gender, one minimizes eye contact.

Respect for your friend's point of view is important, even if you don't agree with it. If we want our Muslim friends to listen to our testimony, the first step is to listen to theirs.

5. **Share your personal testimony.** As you patiently listen to your friend's viewpoint, you can ask for permission to share with them what the Lord means to you personally. Don't press ahead when you friend has lost interest. The Lord will give future opportunities.

Instead of trying to prove that God can be One and yet exist in three persons, we can share what each person of the Trinity means in our salvation, e.g., the Father, who planned to bring us into a vital relationship with Himself; the Son, who provided forgiveness for sin by dying on the cross; and the Holy Spirit, who gives us victory over the devil and helps us surrender our life to God so He can act through us.

Your personal testimony will show that your faith is relational rather than a system of religious doctrine.¹

God bless you today as you pray for, ask thought-provoking questions of, listen attentively to and share your personal testimony with your Muslim friend! You are Christ's ambassador to them!



Guidelines for Confronting Your Muslim Friend With The Claims of Christ, Part 3

As we continue looking at these Guidelines, last week we began with God's word wherein Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shared that *"we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."*¹

This powerful biblical truth really comes into direct application with the following Guidelines:

6. **Use the Word of God.** Even though Muslims believe the Bible has been corrupted, they still respect the sacred books, i.e., the Law of Moses, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Qur'an. Let the Word of God speak for itself. Matthew and Luke are the best gospels to use. Read from and quote the Bible aloud. It has tremendous power to convict the hearer. The Holy Spirit will use the written word to *"convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment"* (John 16:8).

Read accounts of Jesus' healing and teaching. The parables give insights into truths of God. And as you have opportunity to study together, correct any misunderstanding your Muslim friend may have of your faith.

7. **Give a portion of Scripture.** If possible, give your Muslim friends a portion of Scripture, the New Testament, in their own language. Give a modern language version. Some may prefer to have a bilingual version, with English and their native language in parallel columns.
8. **Proclaim Jesus Christ.** A common mistake Christians make when they present the gospel of Jesus Christ is to declare that "Jesus is God" during the beginning of the discussion. Jesus is God, yet saying so right away may create obstacles to further witness among those who have been taught "There is one God and He is Allah," and believe Christians believe in many gods. It is better to begin with a Muslim's understanding of Allah from Qur'anic teaching, which acknowledges God's creation (Genesis 1), Adam's sin (Genesis 3), Abraham's offering up his son (Genesis 22:1-14) – remember, Muslim Scriptures teach that Abraham offered up *Ishmael* – and Moses' deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12:31-42). It should be noted that the Qur'an's account of events often varies from biblical teaching.

In many of its accounts, however, the Qur'an agrees with Scripture regarding Jesus' supernatural miracles, and this can be used as a point of common ground. The Qur'an states that Jesus healed the blind and lepers and raised the dead (Sura 5:110). One can show where in the Bible Jesus raised the dead, healed the lepers, and cast out demons (Luke 7:11-16; 17:11-19; 8:26-37). Then one can show Scriptures that describe how Jesus Himself rose from the dead, is with God in heaven, and will come again (John 20:1-8; Hebrews 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Muslims generally believe Jesus is alive in heaven with God. One could ask where Muhammad is (his bones are in Medina) and make the comparison with Jesus, who is alive in heaven. Significantly, Jesus spoke of Himself as "the way and the truth and the life," "the good Shepherd," and "the bread of life" (John 14:6; 10:11; 6:35). We can mention those titles in Scripture, as well as His calling Himself our Judge and the Son of Man. In so doing, we may show that Christians are not trying to deify a man but that in Jesus Christ God became man.¹¹

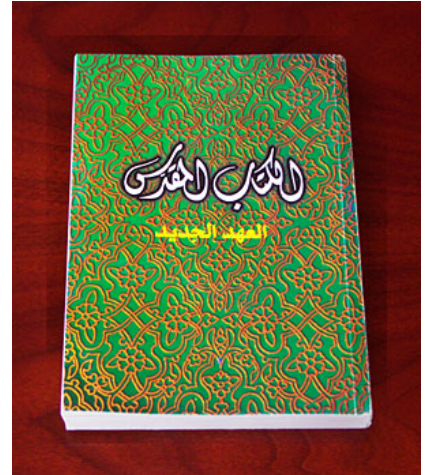
Each of these Guidelines demonstrates the importance of the Word of God in our witness with our Muslim friends. These will perhaps bring up a topic you may have either not yet discussed, or have discussed before but need to review again: The authenticity of the Bible. We have covered this topic in past *Jum'ah* issues. If you missed that one, or didn't retain your copy to refer to – just ask! We'll be happy to send it to you.

As you demonstrate your knowledge of and reverence for our own Holy Scriptures, this too has a positive effect upon your Muslim friend. They will see your honest devotion to God and sincerity of faith. These characteristics are attractive to Muslims and ones which, unfortunately, are ones they don't often find in non-Muslims. Your character will stand out to them, putting contrast between you as a true believer and follower of *Isa al-Masih* vs. the rest of Western culture. This contrast will help them to dispel one of the myths they hold that keep them from faith in Isa: That Western culture is the same and "Christian" culture!

God bless you today as you pray for, use and share the Word of God with your Muslim friend! You are Christ's ambassador to them!

References: I. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21

II. *Islam and the Bible*, David Goldmann. Moody Publishers, Chicago © 2004, p.132-134



Give your friend a Bible in their national language – the language of their home, heart and dreams. Your friend may NEVER have opened or read a Bible ever! Help them learn how to navigate it, too. Explain the many books held within, and where best for them to start reading. You are giving them the One Book that can change their life!

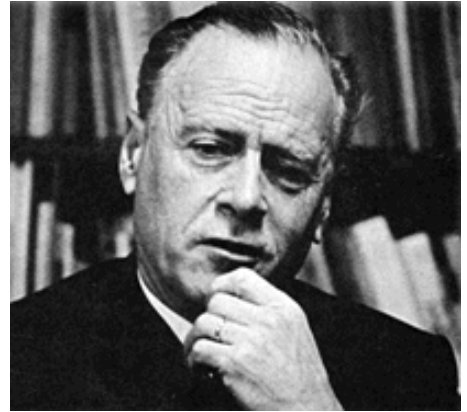
Guidelines for Confronting Your Muslim Friend With The Claims of Christ, Part 4

Have you ever heard the phrase, “The medium is the message”? Now famous Canadian educator, philosopher and scholar Marshall McLuhan expressed this in a book published in 1964. What does he mean by it? “McLuhan’s theory was that a medium (the means by which something is communicated, e.g. TV, newspaper, radio, face-to-face speech) affects the society in which it plays a role, not by the content delivered over the medium, but by the characteristics of the medium itself.”¹

While he was focusing on what is now regarded as “media theory,” I think he hit upon a Biblical truth and applied it to secular media. (His mother was a Baptist schoolteacher and, in adult life, McLuhan became a devout Believer after reading the works of G. K. Chesterton).

What Biblical truth is this? That we are Christ’s ambassadors – the very personal representatives of Jesus – for the purpose of God’s making his appeal through us to the world (see 2 Corinthians 5:19-21)!

We embody this Biblical truth in our relationship with our Muslim friends, so that through us Jesus is making his appeal to them. Just as Jesus came personally to represent God the Father to us, so He sends us to personally represent Him to our Muslim friends. Thus the importance of these guidelines and my fervent hope they help you represent Christ even better!



Ever seen this guy’s picture before? Probably not. Could he help you in your witness to the world and to your Muslim friends? Probably yes!

9. **Give God time to work.** Be willing to allow God much time to draw Muslims to Himself through you and His Word. Muslims are often quite open to discussing spiritual matters. Some Christians think that an interest in spiritual matters means that a Muslim is responding positively to the Truth. This may not be the case! It takes time for Muslims to agree that Jesus is more than a prophet. After they make that huge shift in understanding, it may take even more time for them to believe that He died on the cross, taking the penalty for our sins.

The last crucial step is having the courage as well as the faith to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord. Islam focuses on what we must do to gain Allah’s favor and mercy. The free gift of salvation by God’s grace is foreign to their thinking. Be aware that when a Muslim does believe, opposition will come from family, friends, and Satan.

10. **Be an example.** A consistent lifestyle of love will earn you the right to share the Truth. Building trust is critical for what you say to be accepted. In northern Africa, some Muslims would tell my family, “We have the truth, but you live as we should.”

Our patterns of life can be powerful witness. The joy of the Lord should be evident in us. Muslims lack assurance of salvation. There is obligation to worship, but little joy. Though Muslims generally believe that good Muslims will make it to paradise, they can’t be sure. Even Muhammad didn’t know what Allah would do with him. The Prophet said, “By Allah, though I am the Apostle of Allah, yet I do not know what Allah will do with me” (Hadith 5:266). We should be able to show others what Christianity is all about by demonstrating Jesus’ presence, power, and joy in our lives.

11. **Respect Muslims’ customs and sensitivities.** Muslims infer honor (or dishonor) based on how they are greeted. It is essential to be polite and greet Muslims respectfully before speaking of other matters. Using the appropriate name or title for the person you’re addressing is important.

In many other countries, especially where Islam is predominant, there is some distance between man and woman. Men should be friendly and warm with men but cool toward women. In most Islamic countries, one man will not ask another man how his wife is, for the second man might wonder why the first is interested in his wife! One asks about the family, and the wife is included.

Whenever possible, be aware of appropriate behavior inside and outside the home. For instance, in many countries, Muslims take off their shoes at the door. Why should the dirt from the street be brought into one’s house? Allow a Muslim to remove his or her shoes in your home, and offer to remove your shoes when visiting the home of your Muslim friend.

Modesty should be observed in public. A woman should be properly clothed. Men should not show their legs. Exposing one’s body in the presence of men for swimming is often not allowed for women.

Remember, we all make some cultural mistakes. A warm, loving relationship can cover all these mistakes.^{II}

Yes, God has used the medium of his written Word. Yet from the beginning He has used personal relationship with people to lead and affect His will. Even the written Word is an expression of his personal living Word, Jesus Christ (see John 1). God’s method of sending people in relationship with Him to appeal to others is still his primary method. Other forms of media such as TV, radio, print and the electronic, while useful, will never replace people. You and I are the ones needed, chosen, gifted and anointed to go and live out our relationship with God before the World and our Muslim friends. You, my friend, are vital and cannot be replaced!

God bless you today as you be the medium of communication between God and your Muslim friend!

References: I. Wikipedia.com: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_McLuhan

II. *Islam and the Bible*, David Goldmann. Moody Publishers, Chicago © 2004, p.134-136

Guidelines, Part 5

Continuing with our series on “Guidelines for Confronting your Muslim Friend with the Claims of Christ,”:

12. **Be informed.** Many North Americans are ignorant of world geography. Morocco is not in Asia. Pakistan is not in Africa. As we get to know Muslims, we can learn a few basic facts about their country in the library. *Operation World* (Zondervan) gives excellent facts about other countries and their peoples.

It's good to know some basic facts about Muslims and their faith. Read part of the Qur'an. Visit a mosque; its best to go in pairs. With a basic understanding of a Muslim friend's religious system and his or her country of origin, you can have more meaningful discussions. You can ask such questions as: “What's the biggest difference between our countries?” “Tell me about your educational system.” “How does a family take care of its seniors?” “What's the biggest surprise that you had in our country?” etc.

13. **Go slowly.** Be content to communicate one small aspect of the Gospel. Don't feel that you have to present “the whole Gospel” all at once. We must not think that one technique is bound to produce certain results every time.
14. **Show hospitality.** Remember the injunctions of the New Testament, “Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13); “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2), etc. When inviting students or immigrants into your home, be sensitive to cultural patterns. At times in our home, we have had men and women eat in separate rooms. Immigrants may feel uncomfortable eating with a fork and knife; they may prefer to eat out of a large, common dish! Muslims should not be served pork or alcohol. Some Muslims will only eat meat that is *halal* - that was killed in the Islamic way in the name of Allah. Explain what kind of meat is being served and whether it is halal. If you are not comfortable purchasing halal meat, you could choose to exclude meat completely from the meal. Muslims pray with their eyes open. Therefore, when we have Muslim guests, I usually give thanks with my eyes open. Also, it's good to explain what you are doing before you do it. One could read a short portion of the Bible after the meal. You might show the *Jesus* film on a subsequent visit.

Consider the little details that can make your first-time guest comfortable (yours might be the first Western home they've ever been in!). An invited guest may not understand spoken directions for getting to your house. Provide your guest with a note that includes directions and your telephone number.¹

In conclusion, let me comment on these last two. **Go slowly!** Compared to most of the world's people, we live fast paced lives. As such, we often share, consider, accept or discard and make decisions on new information very quickly. Other cultures are not like this and in fact we will benefit by slowing down and considering things and relishing our relationships more deeply. Our Muslim friends are typically very far from the knowledge of the Gospel. Therefore they are not going “jump” from where they are all the way to accepting the Gospel of Jesus the first time we share it! Give them time and give God time to work.

And second, **show hospitality!** The practice of hospitality has taken a beating in our fast paced society. Most prefer to “go out” rather than go through all the world of having someone over. But think of the impact! Our Muslim friends are from hospitality oriented cultures. As such, our lack of hospitality is often an affront to them and they come away feeling cold and distant from us. To reach your Muslim friend, exercise this Biblical admonition, be considerate of their cultural (social and dietary) needs, relax and enjoy the relationship with them. This will naturally lead to opportunities to share Biblical truth in conversational nuggets as they are ready.

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

Guidelines, Part 6

Today we conclude our series of installments on “Guidelines For Confronting Your Muslim Friend With the Claims of Christ.” It occurs to me that perhaps you’ve wondered...what do these guidelines for confronting Muslims have to do with our Friday reminders to pray for them?

Prayer is always to be coupled with action. We see this numerous times directly in the New Testament alone:

- Acts 6:4 – the Apostles were to give themselves to prayer *and* the ministry of the Word.
- Acts 10:32 – God paid attention to Cornelius’ prayer *and* giving to the poor
- Mark 9:29 & Acts 14:23 – Prayer is coupled with fasting as being a kind of “dynamic duo”
- 1 Timothy 4:5 – All God’s good creation is to be consecrated by prayer and the Word of God

Thus, even as we pray for Muslims to come to the Lord, we ought pray also for Muslims to engage with Believers who can and will share the Good News of Jesus with them *and* we who know Muslims ought to be those very people, too! So my desire and aim is to inspire and equip you to prayer and action on behalf of Muslims.

15. **Help with practical needs.** Meeting felt needs of newly arrived Muslims can be a vital witness. I’ve helped men learn English, obtain a driver’s license, apply for a job, and have given counsel on the job market. My wife has helped women find jobs. Also, she has taken women with their children to the doctors and to schools for education helps.



illustration: Imagine moving to a foreign country...you don't know anyone, don't speak the language well, don't know the customs nor how things work. Wouldn't you need help? Wouldn't you appreciate help? Your practical help to a Muslim immigrant demonstrates the Gospel of Jesus more powerfully than words, and opens the door to their heart for Jesus' Words.

16. **Point out the differences between true Christianity and North American cultural patterns.** All Westerners are not Christians, contrary to popular Muslim belief. Point out that committed Christians living here disagree with nude dancing, gambling, drunkenness and other evils.

17. **Persevere.** Continue your friendship even if your friend may not seem to be interested in Christianity. It often takes a long time for a Muslim to come to Christ. Real friendship should not be dependent on that person becoming a Christian. However, if there is no response to the Gospel after repeated attempts, you may ask God to lead to you to someone who is hungry for spiritual truth. The first friendship should continue, but you may be able to make better use of your time and effort with another Muslim. Note: *Muslims and Christians at the Table*, by Bruce A. McDowell and Ahees Zaka, has an excellent section on methods for reaching Muslims (pages 173-186).¹

Last week I concluded Goldmann’s points with a comment about our fast paced Western society, and it bears repeating and application to this final guideline – persevere. We live in such an “instant gratification,” fast and instant everything society that we are often conditioned to *not* be patient, not wait nor persevere through things. The nature of friendships has suffered in our society, too. It has long been noted by others that Western travelers are quick to start relationships, but often miserable at keeping them up. We start and discard them like playing cards, but fail to recognize that we’re picking up and discarding people. Our Muslim friends are not like this! Persevere with your friendships with Muslims in spite of apparent “progress” toward them becoming a Believer. This, too, is part of our Christian witness! Just as Christ did and doesn’t give up on us, don’t give up on them!

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