

**What Christians
Need
to Know
About Muslims**

by David K. Irwin

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This booklet, written by the late David Irwin, has been revised to update the statistics he originally used. Though Dr. Irwin was killed in an automobile accident in 1984, his God-given burden for reaching out in love to Muslims with the gospel has been carried on through the Center for Ministry to Muslims.

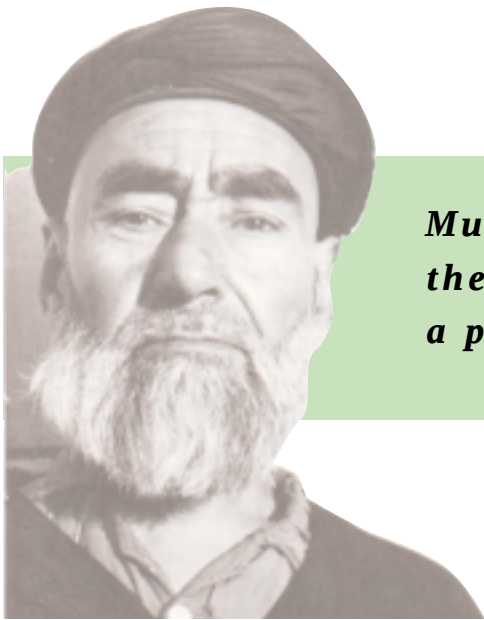
Our prayer is that those reading this booklet will begin to understand the vastness of the harvest field of Muslims, and that God will open their spiritual eyes to the great needs of these 1 billion souls. May many become burdened and reach out to Muslims who live in their communities and around the world.

Additional information can be obtained by writing to:

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Four thousand years ago Abraham cried out to God, “*If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!*” This heart-rending plea of a father for his son touched God’s heart, and He replied, “*And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him.... I will make him into a great nation*” (Genesis 17:20,21).

Today the spiritual sons of Ishmael are called Muslims—the people of Islam. Over 1 billion Muslims are scattered around the world, and they are still outside the Covenant. They have been blessed in a material sense, but they have not been saved. They have submitted to God, but not to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.



*Muslims accept
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a prophet only.*

In 1959, the Lord sent me to Egypt to work with Lillian Trasher in the orphanage she had founded in Assiout. In that city I met Muslims, lived among them, and was exposed to their culture. Since that time, I have carefully nurtured a spiritual burden for the people of Islam, wherever they live, work, suffer, and pray.

My heart became increasingly burdened not only by the enormous spiritual need of the 1 billion Muslims, but also by the apathy of the missionary movement toward them. Little more than 4 percent of the missionary force is endeavoring to reach this vast multitude which comprises 35 percent of all unevangelized peoples of the world. Unplanted fields bear no harvest. Islam is an unplanted field!

Instead of being evangelized, Muslims are evangelizing. They are sending out thousands of missionaries to preach the message of their prophet, Muhammad. Saudi Arabia has given millions of dollars to promote Islam in America. Mosques, such as the one in Chicago which cost \$15 million, are being built in many major cities.

New Mexico is the site of America's first all-Muslim community, called *Dar al Islam*. Situated on 1,280 acres, the orthodox Sunni Muslims intend to evangelize America from this center.

The soaring growth rate of Islam has been highlighted by *Al-Islam*, the "magazine of Muslims in Germany." It reported that Muslims are counting on Europe, the birthplace of the Reformation and the modern missionary movement, to become completely Islamic within the next few decades.

In England more than 300 closed churches have been converted into mosques. Muslims expect their religion to have the highest number of adherents worldwide because, they say, Islam is “best suited to solve the problems of all areas...if human civilization is to be preserved from destruction, then Islam is the only religion for the world tomorrow...Islam is the universal message of peace in this world and the next.”

The number of Muslims has passed the 50 million mark in each of these six countries: Bangladesh, Turkey, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and China. Muslims are now in a majority in 44 countries of the world. We must ask ourselves: *Why has the church of Jesus Christ not gone into this neglected field?*

How Islam Began

Muhammad, the originator of Islam, was born into the pagan Quraish tribe about 570 A.D. in the city of Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia. The Quraish claimed direct descent from Abraham through Ishmael. Many of them were traders whose caravans made journeys to Syria and Palestine.

Muhammad's father Abdullah died before Muhammad was born. His mother Amina died when he was 6. His grandfather, who was the chief of Mecca and the keeper of a pagan shrine, cared for him.

During his early teens, Muhammad accompanied relatives on trading journeys to Syria. He may have also gone to Palestine.

When Muhammad was 25 years old, he married a wealthy widow named Khadija. He worked for Khadija as a caravan manager. When Muhammad began receiving “revelations,” Khadija used her wealth to help him spread his doctrines.

Through contacts with Christians and Jews in his native area and on trading journeys, Muhammad learned about the Jewish and Christian faiths. It seems that the paganism of his tribe and the many deities they worshipped increasingly repulsed him. Perhaps he was seeking for something to satisfy his heart’s desire and was trying to understand the Jewish and Christian doctrines. He incorporated some Jewish and Christian practices, such as fasting and regular hours for prayer, into his version of Islam.

At about the age of 40, while meditating in a cave, Muhammad received his first revelation. A spiritual being (some say the angel Gabriel) came to him and commanded him to “recite.” Almost all scholars believe that this first revelation is chapter 96 of the Qur’an, the sacred scriptures of the Muslims. It says, *“Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created—created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! and thy Lord is Most Bountiful—He who taught (the use of) the Pen—taught man that which he knew not.”* At later dates other revelations provided the material for the rest of the Qur’an. Today, Islamic teachers in mosques and schools all over the world read and recite the Qur’an.

What Muslims Believe

The Muslim creed has six articles. They are about (1) God, (2) the angels of God, (3) the books of God, (4) the prophets of

God, (5) the day of resurrection and judgment, and (6) the predestination to do good and evil. We will explain each of these briefly.

1. What Muslims Believe About God

There are several parts to the Muslim belief about God. The first involves His name. The name Allah refers to God's essential being and is known as the great name of God. All of His other names are qualities of His divine being.

Muslims assign seven principle attributes to God. They are:

- a. Life.* His existence has neither beginning nor ending.
- b. Knowledge.* He knows all things, visible or invisible, past or future. He never forgets, is never negligent, and never makes an error.
- c. Power.* Allah is almighty. If He wills, He can make stones and trees talk.
- d. Will.* He is able to do what He wills. Good and evil exist by His will. If a man is pious, it is because of the will of Allah. If a man is an unbeliever, it is due to the will of Allah.
- e. Hearing.* He can hear every sound, whether high or low. He hears without ears.
- f. Seeing.* He sees all things, even the steps of a black cat on a black stone at midnight. He is able to see without eyes.
- g. Speech.* He speaks, but without a tongue.

The second belief about God that Muslims emphasize is His unity. The Qur'an 112:1-4 says, "*Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like Him.*" Muslims often quote these verses to Christians. The Muslim creed, "There is no god but God," expresses their belief in God's unity.

To a Muslim, the association of other gods with Allah is the greatest sin possible.

The third aspect of the Muslim belief in God is His greatness. The Arabic expression *Allahu akbar*, which means “God is greatest,” is recited almost constantly. To the Muslim it means that no matter what a man can think of, God is greater than that.

The fourth part of the Muslim belief about God is His revelation of His divine will or law. It is important for those who want to witness to Muslims to understand this. Muslims use the expression *tanzil* (sending down) to mean the revelation or sending down of God’s message in the Qur’an. Christians say that Christ is the greatest of God’s revelations, but Muslims say the greatest revelation is His message or the Qur’an.

The last Muslim belief about God is His transcendence. Muslims believe that God is unknowable. He holds himself aloof from man, and His real self can never be known by man.

2. What Muslims Believe About Angels

According to the Qur’an, the devil was created from fire, men from clay, and angels from light. Angels have life, speech, and reason. They have no carnal desire or anger. It is said that their food is celebrating God’s glory; their drink is proclaiming God’s holiness; their conversation is commemorating God; their pleasure is worshipping God.

Angels are thought to be inferior to human prophets because they were commanded to prostrate themselves before Adam. *“And behold, We said to the angels: ‘Bow down to*

Adam,' and they bowed down. Not so Iblis. He refused and was haughty" (Qur'an 2:34).

Muslims believe that angels intercede for man and act as his guardians. Each Muslim assumes that two recording angels tend him, one to record his good actions and the other his evil actions. ***"They know (and understand) all that ye do"*** (Qur'an 82:12).

Four archangels are part of the Muslim belief: Gabriel, the angel of revelation; Michael, the patron of the Israelites; Israfil, who must sound the trumpet at the last day; and Azra'il, the angel of death. The chief angel in charge of hell is Malik (king), and he has 19 sub-angels or guards.



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3. What Muslims Believe About the Books of God

Muslims believe that God gave 104 sacred books to mankind. He gave 100 of these to Adam, Seth, Enoch, and Abraham, but they have been lost. The four remaining books are the books of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospels of Christ, and the Qur'an which Allah gave to Muhammad. It is critical for Christians to realize that Muslims claim that we have altered the books in the Bible. By this, they are attempting to justify the statements in the Qur'an that differ from the Bible. They say the Qur'an corrects previous mistakes in revelation because it was revealed last! *"We (also) sent (Our prophets) to peoples before thee...and We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose, that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ"* (Qur'an 16:63,64).

4. What Muslims Believe About the Prophets of God

Muslims generally speak of two classes of prophets of God. *Nabi* is any prophet who God inspires, and *Rasul* is a prophet to whom God has entrusted a special message. Muslims accept the Lord Jesus as a prophet only.

Tradition states that Muhammad claimed there were 124,000 prophets and 315 apostles or messengers. It is said that nine of these are "possessors of power or constancy." They are Noah, Abraham, David, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Six of these have special titles. Christ's title is *Ruh Allah* which means the Spirit of God.

5. What Muslims Believe About the Day of Judgment and Resurrection

The last day has several names in the Qur'an. Among them are the day of uprising, the day of separation, the day of reckoning, the day of awakening and sending forth, the day of judgment, the last day, the encompassing day, and the hour.

Muslim teaching about the last day states that it will be preceded by three blasts of a trumpet. The first blast will terrify all creatures in heaven and earth. At the second blast, all creatures in heaven and earth will die. And at the last blast, 40 years later, all the dead will be raised again for the judgment. It will be a general resurrection of men, angels, *jinn* (spirits), and animals.

The length of the day of judgment will be 1,000 years. Some Islamic scholars say it will be 50,000 years. To support their point they cite "*A day the measure whereof is as 50,000 years*" (Qur'an 70:4).

When all the people have been assembled for judgment, the angels will keep them waiting for 40 years (or 50,000 years depending on the commentator). After this, God will appear to judge them, and Muhammad will intercede on their behalf. Muhammad will be the one to intercede because Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus will decline as they feel unworthy to do it.

Each person will be examined from his own book of deeds in which all his words and actions are recorded. God will weigh all his deeds and words on a balance scale. "*We shall set up scales of justice for the day of Judgment so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no*

more than) the weight of a mustard seed, we will bring it (to account), and enough are We to take account” (Qur’an 21:47).

6. What Muslims Believe About Predestination

Muslims believe that God is absolute in His decrees of good and evil. According to what God had engraved on a preserved tablet by His pen of fate, nothing comes to pass, whether good or bad, except by the divine will. A Muslim believes that God is not limited by any consideration whatsoever, moral or otherwise. He chooses whether He will forgive or damn a person.

From this teaching, we see that man is a mere puppet without free will, a mechanical being. This means that no person is responsible for what he does. All responsibility for his actions is laid on God. It follows then that God is unjust to judge a man by his deeds for which he is not responsible! This is utterly foreign to the teaching of both the Old and New Testaments.

What Muslims Should Practice

All Muslims are required to perform certain religious practices. They are listed as the five pillars of Islam.

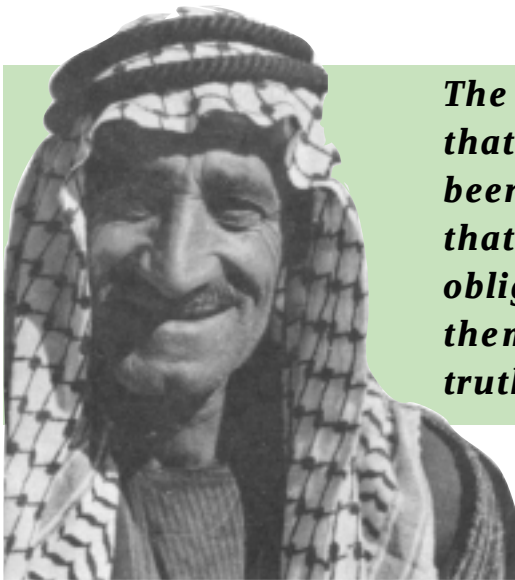
1. The first pillar is the witness (*shahadah*), the shortest creed in the world. Muslims repeat this creed more than any other. It consists of eight Arabic words which translate as “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the apostle of God.”

Muslims repeat this creed in their ritual prayers and many

other times during the day. They use it as a cry in battle, in celebrating the birth of a baby, and as a chant or dirge at a funeral.

2. The second Muslim pillar is ritual prayer (*salat*) five times a day: at dawn, soon after midday, two hours before sunset, just after sunset, and two hours after sunset. Before praying a Muslim must remove his shoes, wash his feet, hands, and part of his face, and turn toward Mecca. When he cannot go to a mosque, he can pray wherever he happens to be.

3. The third pillar is almsgiving (*zakat*). Each free and sane Muslim adult must give alms if he possesses property. He is taxed at the rate of 2 1/2 percent of his gross income. These taxes are given to help the poor. Each person can distribute his own alms if he is considered trustworthy. Many Muslims now consider *zakat* a ritual devoid of spiritual meaning. They often bestow it without compassion and the poor receive it without gratitude.



The Muslim feels that Christians have been deceived, and that he has an obligation to lead them into the truth of Islam.

4. The fourth pillar is fasting (*saum*). Of several Muslim fasts, the most important is the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. This fast is a requirement for Muslims, “*Oh ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint*” (Qur’an 2:183). Based on a reported saying of Muhammad, Muslims believe that the gates of paradise are opened and the gates of hell closed during Ramadan. All people who keep the fast will be pardoned for their excusable sins.

5. The fifth pillar is the pilgrimage (*hadj*). Every Muslim adult should make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his lifetime if he is free, sane, healthy, and has sufficient money to provide for his journey and support his families while he is away.

6. Many Muslims add a sixth pillar, the holy war (*jihad*). All male, free, adult Muslims who are sane in mind and well in body, and who have means enough to reach the Muslim army, must become involved in holy war. They regard holy war as a divine institution, and use it to advance Islam and repel evil from Muslims. (*Jihad* can also mean “holy exertion on behalf of Islam.”)

People against whom the *jihad* is directed are invited to accept Islam. Those who accept Islam will be given the full citizenship rights of the Muslim country. Those who refuse will have to pay additional taxes. If they do not embrace Islam or pay the tax, they may have all their wealth and property taken from them, and they and their families will become slaves. Muslims who die fighting in a holy war are assured of a place in paradise and special privileges there.

Muslim Beliefs About Christ and Christianity

Several basic issues dominate a Muslim's attitude about Christianity. First, he believes that Jews and Christians have deliberately distorted the Old and New Testaments to hide the predictions of the coming of Muhammad.

Second, the Muslim assumes that the Christian believes in three gods. The Qur'an teaches that the Christian Trinity is composed of God, Mary, and Jesus. Also, it rejects Jesus as the Son of God.

Third, the Muslim believes that Jesus did not die on the cross, but another, such as Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene, was crucified in His place. The Qur'an says, *"That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge; that they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah'—but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not—nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise"* (Qur'an 4:156-158).

The Muslim believes that God saved Jesus from the cross in order to spare God's honor. In other words, it would have greatly shamed the name of God if He had allowed Jesus to die on the cross. Therefore, God took Jesus from the cross and made it appear that He died, but someone else took His place. Obviously, if the Muslim believes this, he can have no true salvation because he has no Savior.

The Muslim's concept of sin and salvation is radically different from that of the New Testament. In fact, a great deal of confusion exists in Islam about what constitutes sin, and the Qur'an is alternately severe and lenient in its attitude toward the punishment of sin. The only exception is the sin of associating another god with Allah (*shirk*). This sin cannot be forgiven.

To the average Muslim, sin is failure to live up to the Islamic moral code and failure to perform the requirements of the five pillars of Islam. He feels that he is not a sinner if he abides by these ritual standards. He merits salvation if his good works outweigh his failures.

However, fear permeates Islam. The Muslim mystic fears hell fire, or purgatory. He knows that he has not lived up to all the requirements of his faith. He believes that no man can pay for another's sins. Therefore, he must suffer for his own sins, but he will eventually be rescued from purgatory because Muhammad intercedes for him. However, the unbeliever who has associated any other god with God will suffer eternal punishment.

The biblical concept of sin and salvation is contrary to that of Islam. The New Testament clearly teaches that all men are sinners and that Jesus Christ alone has the power to intercede on the behalf of sinners. He has this power because of His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Salvation is by faith in Christ, a gift of God's love and grace, and is not merited by any work that man can do.

The Muslim's attitude toward the Christian's belief about Christ is deeply ingrained in his subconscious and preconditions his attitude toward Christians and what they share with

him. He feels that Christians have been deceived, and that he has an obligation to lead them into the truth of Islam.

How to Witness to Muslims

Those who anticipate dialogue with Muslims must consider a method of approach. No other faith, not even Judaism, is so resistant to the “soul winning” or “plan of salvation” approach to witnessing. Even if the Muslim agrees to listen to this approach, which is highly unlikely, his “confession of faith” may only be a polite way to please. The motivation of his confession is very difficult to determine. Is he sincere? Or, does he expect to receive financial gain or possibly a new wife as a result of his conversion? Either of these would be considered as legitimate reasons to convert by some insincere Christians and Muslims in the Middle East.

However, the real disadvantage of the “plan of salvation” approach is that the terminology which the Christian uses creates confusion in the mind of the Muslim. Terms such as *sin*, *salvation*, *cross*, and *Son of God* have an entirely different meaning for the Muslim. The Muslim cannot understand the meaning of our salvation terminology as long as he denies that Jesus died on the cross.

When you are discussing the Bible with a Muslim, it is important that you read the Bible verses in context. The Muslim has developed an intricate system of “abrogation” or substitution of one verse for another, due to the random way the Qur’an is written. He will have a tendency to try to find verses in the Bible that “contradict” each other. Anyone witnessing to a Muslim must know the Scriptures thoroughly and be able to

lead the Muslim to understand the meaning of passages in relation to the setting in which they are found.

The Muslim will be impressed with a Christian's words only if he experiences genuine friendship from the Christian and sees him living a consistent moral life. A Christian's lifestyle must match his testimony. The Muslim will be sensitive to the love and quality of life that Christ gives to Christians. He will respect a Christian who gives God glory by his lifestyle because the Muslim sees a life that has been dedicated to God as a sign of piety.

It is better to win the Muslim as a friend than to win an argument and lose his friendship. The history of Christian-Muslim encounter is full of argument, anger, and bloodshed. It is possible for the Christian to prove his case so well that he humiliates and inflames the Muslim. He can break down communication and defeat the purpose of dialogue by his behavior. Therefore, avoid critical remarks about Muhammad, the Qur'an, and Islam, even if the Muslim attacks your faith. Allow your patience and friendship to cause him to draw his own conclusions about the Bible and the Christian faith.

A Christian must also use discretion when having a dialogue with a Muslim of the opposite sex. In most Muslim countries, physical contact with persons of the opposite sex is forbidden until after engagement and marriage. Even engaged couples are chaperoned by family members. A strict, orthodox Muslim man will not shake hands with a woman or look her in the eyes for fear that he might be tempted. Therefore, it is preferable that Christians relate to Muslims of their own sex unless other persons are present.

If you sincerely desire to witness to Muslims, you should make a point of learning the acceptable social norms of the Muslim lest he or she misunderstand your intentions. Pray for discernment, love, and patience when you try to understand a Muslim friend and his culture. Your willingness to learn about his customs and to discuss his faith openly with him will offer him an incentive to expose himself to your beliefs and to the Bible. Christians who witness to Muslims have discovered that friendship, accompanied by a study of the Gospels, constitutes the most powerful witness.

Today, Muslims are traveling to the West for work and study. They are curious about the prosperity and the influence of the many churches they see. Americans are finding that the “mission field” has been brought to their neighborhood. For example, there are more than twice as many Muslims in the

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United States as there are Assemblies of God church members and adherents! Many of these Muslims will return to their countries at some point. If they have come to know and accept Jesus as their personal Savior, they can witness in lands that forbid missionaries and the preaching of the gospel.

Opportunities for faithful witnessing to Muslims now exist in many of our own hometowns. Christians can trust God to make them “ministers of reconciliation.” The Holy Spirit will empower us, and through our lives, the Muslim can be drawn to Jesus Christ who “enlightens every man” (John 1:9).

When a Muslim Decides to Follow Jesus Christ

A growing number of Muslims, after exposure to the Bible and Christian witnesses, are indicating a desire to become followers of Christ. They are discovering that Christ alone fills the void in their hearts and brings them into relationship with God as a loving heavenly Father.

Unfortunately, the Church is not always ready to receive and nurture them. The fear of false motives and the open hostility and persecution of the Muslim community are two reasons Christian churches have not welcomed Muslim converts. However, in many areas the Holy Spirit is renewing the Church and causing many congregations to become vital fellowships of believers. The Muslim is easily attracted to this spiritual vitality.

When a Muslim begins to seriously consider following Christ, a period of testing motives is usual. If he finds that the Christian will yield to using money or any other enticement to

get him to convert, the Muslim will lose respect for him. If the Muslim finds the Christian to be sincere in his trust in Christ, he will have more confidence in trusting the Christian with his spiritual nurture.

Suspicion is an integral part of the fear motive that governs Islamic society, and the Muslim will need to be sure he can trust Christians. Information he shares in private should not be repeated unless he gives permission to do so. Let him be the one to voluntarily give his testimony of faith in Christ.

Conversion to Christianity has very grave consequences for most Muslims. In an Islamic society, there is no separation of church and state. In other words, the law of the Qur'an is the rule of all citizens; to convert is an act of treason. Therefore, for a Muslim to become a Christian may cause a life-threatening situation. Christians must be aware of the price many Muslims pay to identify with Jesus Christ and find their place in His church.

The Muslim who accepts Christ will have a need for personal Bible study. A Bible in his own language often helps. Contact the nearest Bible society office for information concerning Bible translations.

As he begins his study, he will need a resource person to help him find scriptural answers for his many questions. Christians should share their personal religious experiences with him as they study meaningful chapters together. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Luke, and the Epistle to the Hebrews are all excellent books to study together. The Muslim will also be impressed by the apocalyptic literature in Ezekiel, Daniel, Matthew 24, and

the Book of Revelation. These are similar in content and style to the Qur'an. The Epistle of James will attract him by its admonitions. The Parables of the Kingdom found in the Gospels, will impress him by their Middle Eastern motif.

The empowering of the Church for witness in the Acts of the Apostles will give him encouragement as he begins to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in his own life. He will identify with the Psalms as he endures persecution and hostility.

As a friend, you will want to know the convert's family situation. Encourage him to witness discreetly to his family by sharing his new discoveries in the Bible. If he feels it would be wise, visit in his home and make friends with his family. He will need to be united with his family in newfound faith so isolation can be avoided.

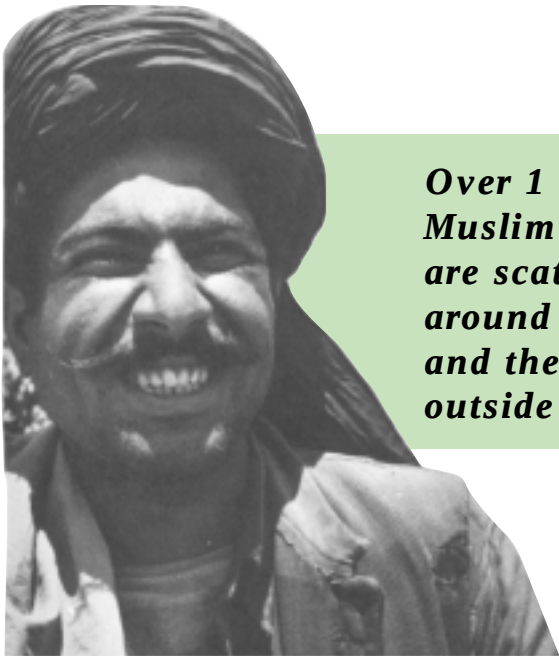
At every opportunity, pray with and for the new convert. Teach him to pray, using the Lord's prayer as a model. Be sensitive to his moods. Muslims often receive insights through dreams and visions. You will need to help him understand these. Use Scripture as the basis for your interpretation.

Islam has incorporated elements of the occult from pre-Islamic paganism in Arabia. You will learn to take seriously what the Bible says about the spirit world as you share the thoughts of the Muslim. Encourage him to accept the victory of Christ over the demonic forces that oppress his life. This can be accomplished through prayer, confession, and the fellowship of understanding Christians.

Encourage the new convert to become part of a fellowship that will nurture his spiritual growth. You may have to encour-

age fellow Christians to receive the Muslim. He will be sensitive to their acceptance or their suspicions. It may be better to begin with a small prayer or Bible study group where he can find acceptance. If there are other Muslims nearby who desire to follow Christ, they can be encouraged to band together for study and prayer.

Finally, let the convert make his own decision about believer's baptism. He will discover Christ's teaching about baptism as he studies the Scriptures. Because of the threatened loss of family, job, and even his life, he may request private baptism. This usually means that only those he trusts, those who have had an influence on his spiritual pilgrimage, would be present.



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If the Muslim has a genuine experience of trust in Christ and his life gives evidence of the change that Christ brings, his request for baptism should be honored. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in a foreign country with Philip as the only witness so far as we know (Acts 8:26-40).

Baptism is only the first decisive step in Christian growth. The Muslim needs Christian fellowship even more after baptism as he adjusts to the changes in his lifestyle. He also needs continued instruction in the Scriptures. Equally important, he needs the daily presence of the Holy Spirit operating in his life—teaching him the meaning of the Scriptures, making Christ real in his daily walk, and enabling him to live a victorious life of witness to his friends.

It is of utmost importance that the new believer sense the unity of the Holy Spirit between various churches. Denominationalism is not our message. Whatever our differences, they should never be presented in our witness to an inquiring Muslim. The fellowship that issues from Christian unity will provide an atmosphere for continuing spiritual growth in his life.

The Challenge Before Us

Following Muhammad's death, Islam became an evangelistic movement. It quickly conquered North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Islam is the only world religion that has ever taken large populations and territories from the church of Jesus Christ. Several areas where the apostle Paul preached and planted churches are under the crescent of Islam today.

The Muslim world has been difficult to penetrate with the gospel, but it can be done by witnesses who have four important qualifications. The first of these is love, one test of which is intercessory prayer. The apostle Paul had this divine love (Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-3). The primary emphasis of the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions in starting the Center for Ministry to Muslims was to generate intercessory prayer for the Muslim world. We are asking Christians to pledge to pray on Fridays (the Islamic holy day) for Muslims to be saved. While more than 1 billion Muslims are facing Mecca and calling out to Allah, thousands of Spirit-filled, Pentecostal believers are interceding before the throne of grace, asking that the Holy Spirit will reach deep into the hearts of Muslims and reveal Christ to them.

The second requirement for an effective witness to Muslims is knowledge. This includes a personal knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, biblical knowledge, and some familiarity with church history. An acquaintance with the Qur'an and Islamic beliefs and practices is also required.

In addition, some knowledge of extra-Islamic influences on local culture and beliefs is needed. For example, workers among students and other educated people in North Africa need to be familiar with European secular philosophy.

The third requirement for an effective witness is an ability to communicate. This involves knowing people's cultural settings and what questions they are asking. In this we can follow Christ's example in His discussion with the woman at the well in Sychar (John 4:7-26), and Paul's dialogue with the Greek philosophers (Acts 17:22-43).

The fourth qualification for reaching Muslims is a Pentecostal empowerment to demonstrate the power gifts of healing, miracles, and signs and wonders. The Muslim is receptive to the sovereign power of God and this can be most effective in making the journey from Islam to Jesus easier.

Because the Muslim believes in almighty God, he can say nothing against the demonstration of God's power. Pentecost offers a viable, experiential alternative not offered by intellectualism or ritual.

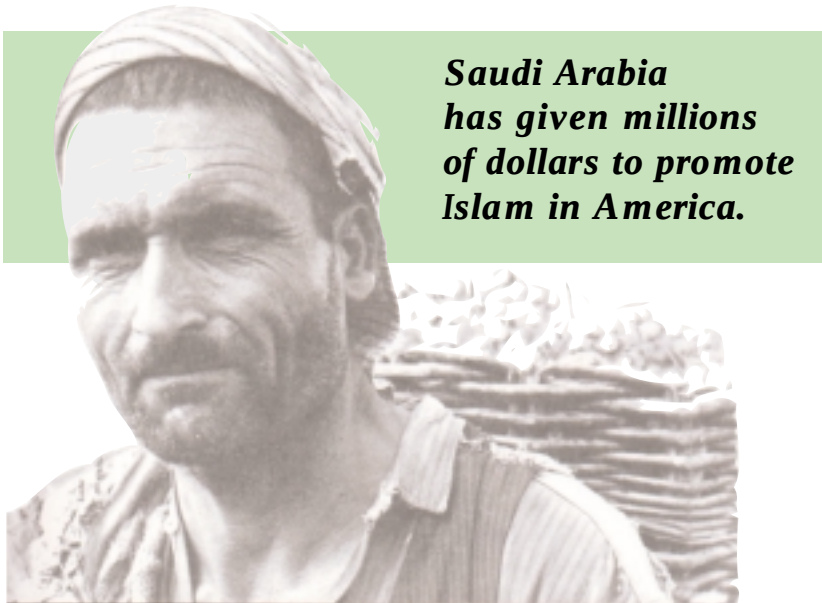
What We Are Doing to Reach Muslims

The Center for Ministry to Muslims is an effort by the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions to use Pentecostal evangelism to touch Muslim people in a confrontation that does not suggest a separation from their culture. The Muslim has his religion, but he also lives in a Muslim social structure with Muslim laws. We have to recognize that culturally one can be a Muslim and at the same time a true follower of Jesus Christ.

At the Center for Ministry to Muslims, we conduct research to determine where we have missionaries, churches, national evangelists, or Bible schools located among Muslim people. Through these contacts, we collect information about the receptivity of Muslims and about efforts being made to reach them. We also conduct seminars that aid missionaries, national pastors, and teachers in our overseas Bible schools and national churches in understanding Islam so that they can effectively reach Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another priority is to find Assemblies of God pastors and laypeople who will become friends of Muslims living in the United States. Many of these Muslims are business people or students from abroad who will later return to their home countries. While they're here, a ministry of love and friendship could give them an opportunity to accept the gospel.

The Center for Ministry to Muslims encourages Christians to reach out to their Muslim neighbors and acquaintances. Churches are being challenged to become aware of the openness of the Muslim community and to support those who are ministering to Muslims. One out of every five people in the world is a Muslim, yet there are only two North American missionaries to approximately every *million* Muslims! The Holy



***Saudi Arabia
has given millions
of dollars to promote
Islam in America.***

Spirit has created a readiness in the hearts of many Muslims and they are not resistant to God's love, merely neglected and uninformed.

When I was teaching a seminar on Islam at the East Africa School of Theology in Nairobi, Kenya, one of my students, a lawyer, arranged for a meeting in his home with several of his Muslim clients and friends. After several hours of listening to a famous Muslim practitioner explain the power of *jinn* (the Arabic term for spirits, whether evil or good), my lawyer friend and host asked me to close the evening's talk with prayer.

I had been praying all evening in my spirit that the Holy Spirit would make Christ real to these Muslims. My prayer was interpreted into their language, and I mentioned everything I knew about Christ. Then I asked the Holy Spirit to come down upon us.

When I said that, the Holy Spirit suddenly filled the house. I began groaning and praying in the Spirit. The interpreter stepped back and stood silent. To my amazement, several Muslims began to weep and one Muslim evangelist began to groan and cry as if he were in an agony of spirit.

When I stopped praying, a Muslim scholar and teacher said, "Tonight we have felt the Spirit of God, and it is like a cleansing to our souls."

That little house meeting, so like those of the first generation church, is a microcosm of the spiritual breakthroughs that are occurring throughout the world of Islam.

Four thousand years after Abraham cried to God for Ishmael's blessing, the more than 1 billion Muslims in our world today still wait for Abraham's heir, Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into this neglected field. Ask the Christ of Gethsemane to give the ministry of intercession to the burden bearers who will agonize for the lost souls of Islam. Four thousand years of waiting is long enough.

Editor's Note

To those Muslims who have read this book, we thank you for your interest in what Christians are thinking and doing.

Our great desire is to bring all men of all faiths into a true understanding of who God is, and to help people be free from the guilt and penalty of sin.

God made this miraculous provision through Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

If you would like more information or help, please write us. We want to be your friend as we journey together through life.