

Engaging with Muslims - a 10 Point Guide

“We need to begin by saying *‘I Sincerely Love All Muslims (ISLAM)*. Then we should prove that statement by our presence...” Brother Andrew

Islam is the second largest religion worldwide and claims to be the fastest growing. What we’re learning may help you and your Church be clear Gospel witnesses to the Muslims you meet.

1 Pray

As we pray, we lay a spiritual foundation and engage in the underlying spiritual battle. Muslims may assume Christians don’t pray because we pray secretly or privately. Jesus’ warns us (Matthew 6:5-15), but in conversation we can make it clear that we pray, what we pray and what answers we get. Christian prayer reveals an intimate relationship with God.

1 Timothy 2:1-7

pray in all kinds of ways for everyone
pray specially for authorities and leaders

peaceful, godly lives please God
God wants all to be saved and know the truth

there is one mediator, Christ Jesus
Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all

2 Know your faith

Muslims expect Christian neighbours, colleagues and friends both to know their faith and to be able and willing to explain it. We should not disappoint them. Increasingly they are asking questions, directly and through the internet. Can we recover Bible reading and use Sunday and midweek meetings more deliberately to learn our faith?

3 Get to know Islam

Halfway through his public ministry Jesus sat down with his disciples to ask what people were saying about him and what they believed themselves (Mark 8:27-30). He expects us to know the options and make an informed choice. Which means we need to know what Muslims believe and begin to understand the range of Muslim cultures across the world.

Resources abound: Colin Chapman’s *Cross and Crescent* (IVP, 2003); Tony Payne’s *Islam in our Backyard* (The Good Book Company, 2002);

Friendship First

(www.friendshipfirst.org); and

Answering Islam (www.answering-islam.org) are good places to start. The BBC’s web pages also have comprehensive introductions.

4 Practise Hospitality

Simple (Romans 12:13) - but we often don’t get beyond our church communities. Be willing both to receive and to give hospitality. This is a major piece of bridge building with family-based cultures and is a significant step in overcoming fear.

5 Build Community

Islam claims to be a worldwide, connected movement; Church is more so as it grows dramatically in most parts of the world today. In the West we have confused personal response to Christ with private faith. Most New Testament “you’s” are plural, as “God’s New Society” shows the character and priorities of God himself.

6 Demonstrate Discipleship

Show that following Jesus touches every area of life, each forgiven and transformed by Christ. We have this “whole-life” perspective, but our Muslim friends still think we’re part-timers. We are called to “declare God’s

praises” and “live good lives” which are attractive (1 Peter 2:9-12).

7 Invest Deliberately

Give, support, sponsor, invest in those who work amongst Muslims. The biggest challenge Churches face in Muslim majority countries is emigration; we are seeking with others to reverse the flow. Mission partners and church members need regular visits at work. Why not take holidays somewhere nearby and visit?

8 Consider Co-belligerency

It's easy to speak about God with Muslims and we share many common concerns about society: support for families, security in neighbourhoods, respect for the generations, education and sexual health. Our moral frameworks are similar - no surprise as Islam relies on Christianity and Judaism for its foundations. We start and finish in different places in what we say about God's character, fallen humanity, knowing God personally, eternity and heaven, yet there is much room for co-operation and for deepening relationships.

9 Engage in Apologetics

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15). Express, explain, explore. Not everyone is called to “Muslim-Christian dialogue,” but there are false perceptions to deal with. To become a Christian you do not have to eat pork and drink wine, nor will you be provided with work and wealth. Muslims do not believe Jesus died on a cross, nor that he was Son of God; they assume the Trinity means God the Father, Mary, and Jesus their biological son; they believe our Holy Book to have been corrupted. They respect Jesus as a prophet sent by God, like Abraham, Moses and David, but

his words (like theirs) were misunderstood and misrepresented by his followers. A final prophet, Muhammad, received and conveyed God's last words to us. We point to Jesus, the full revelation of God, whom all earlier prophets anticipated and to whom all believers testify; his death alone opens the way back to relationship with God.

10 Evangelise

God is very much at work amongst our Muslim friends, opening avenues of communication and opportunities to question. We can be part of what he is doing as we build relationships. Make the Bible available to them, sow the seed of the Gospel, and be unashamed and unafraid as Christian people..

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