

REACHING YOUTH IN A MUSLIM WORLD

INTRODUCTION:

It is a thing of great joy and a real privilege to present this paper on the above subject at the “Global Youth Initiative” Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2003.

Reaching the youth of the Muslim World is a “specialized” field of ministry unlike the conventional way of reaching “normal” Christian youth. To effectively share the gospel with Muslim youths, will require at least two basic things i.e. “a good general knowledge” on Islam and Muslims and some practical knowledge on how to approach” Muslim youths and share the gospel with them in a “winning way”. This is necessary in order to avoid creating unpleasant situations that could bring tension and ill feeling between you and those you will want to reach.

Time and space will not allow me to go into much details but I will endeavour to be very explicit as much as possible.

I hope that this paper will provide you with the basic knowledge on Islam and Muslims, how they view Christianity, challenges of reaching the Muslim youth, opportunity of ministry etc.

My prayer is that God through this paper will move your heart to see the possibilities for you to equally respond appropriately.

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Islam means “submission” of body and soul to God. The followers of Islam are called “Muslims” i.e. those who submit to Allah’s will whatever it will be. Muslims generally, are controlled by the system of Islam; this system is not just a religion but also a complete way of life, which governs their entire life. To a staunch Muslim there is no aspect of his individual or corporate life that is excepted from Islam. In summary, the reasoning of an average Muslim is: “I am born a Muslim, I will die a Muslim, nothing will change this”. A Muslim views himself as a slave of Allah and what Allah demands has to be obeyed, not analyzed, considered or tested.

The Qur’an is the “word of God” and the fundamental source of faith for Muslims. It is from it that they got their Laws, as well as guidance on what to do in the various situation of life. They become intimately acquainted with its contents from early childhood. Non- Arab Muslims are required to read it in its original Arabic, aloud if at all possible. Being familiar with the original Qur’an, which is in Arabic, create in the Muslim a sense of brotherhood and fraternity worldwide. This fraternity is known as “Ummah” which is the “community of Muslims” worldwide.

Islam is a system, which controls and governs Muslims entire way of life. Faith, culture, language and worldwide views.

Culturally, Islam is governed on a system made up of: “Sharia” (Islamic laws), “the Qur’an and Hadith” and “the five pillars of Islam”

(A) Sharia: is a religious law that is held to reflect the “Divine will” for individuals and society. It is believed to be the wisdom and insight of the creator into the reality of human nature and of the world as a whole. It means that activities, which are a matter of conscience in the west, are specifically religious obligations in Islam. It also means that ones relationship with others is not just an issue of morality but a religious activity just as worship is usually considered to be.

(B) (i) The significance of the Qur’an lies in the uses it can be put into, the treasure found in it, its dealing in history, literacy, and administration along with legislation and religion. The Qur’an has successfully created a new phase of human thought and greatly affected the religious, social and political history of the Muslim world.

It directs the course of one-fifth of the world population from cradle to grave, by prescribing a complete way of life. One of the principal aims of the Qur’an is to establish a close relationship between man and God by instilling in man, faith in the oneness of God and making him conscious of discharging his duties effectively to God and to fellow creatures. It prohibits intoxicants, interest, gambling, adultery and fornication, stealing e.t.c. The Qur’an categorically lays it down that all human beings are born innocent and with their actions they can shape their destinies and they are accountable for their worldly deeds in the eternal life for hereafter.

(ii) The Hadith literally means a piece of news, a tale, as story or a report. Hadith in sharia means the sayings, deeds and silent approvals of the prophet Muhammad. Sunnah is the concrete implementation of the Hadith. It is an action of the prophet, a direct method for the performance of certain actions. The practice without any verbal pronouncement from the prophet is regarded as a valid source of Law. The Hadith literature serves the purpose of the commentary of the Qur’an. It is not merely a historical account of the earliest Muslims traditions but it is the perfect portrait of implementation of the Qur’anic teachings.

The Qur’an clearly commands the Muslims (believers) to follow the life of the prophet, which is the model for them in all aspects of their life. (Surah 33:21) in obedience of the prophet, God’s obedience and love is confirmed. (Surah 14:11; 3:13)

[C] The Muslims’ belief in oneness of God (i.e. monotheism) motivates them to observe their duties (known as Islamic practice) to Allah as prescribed in the “five pillars” of Islam

- (i) The open confession of Islam and the profession of faith are both referred to as (Shahada meaning “Testimony”) this has to be done in the presence of an eyewitness which is what makes one a Muslim. The interesting thing is that, one who makes this profession is called a “shahid”, a word meaning both “witness” and “Martyr” the profession is very short:

“La illa illa Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah”

The interpretation is: “*There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah*”

This profession is what distinguishes Muslims from Pagans, Jews and Christians who do not believe in the prophet hood of Muhammad.

- (ii) The five daily prayers (“Salat” {pronounced Sallah}.
- (iii) The observance of the fast during the full month of Ramadan.
- (iv) Giving of Alms (“Zakat” (pronounced “Zakah).
- (v) The pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a life time, provided one has the means for that (“Hajj”)

Globally, there is about 1.2 – 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide with Indonesia having the largest number. Today, there are many Muslim sects and organizations, which are according to statistics over 150.

According to Muslim traditions, Muhammad predicted that his followers would be divided into seventy-three sects and every one of them except one sect will go to hell i.e. the religion professed by himself and his companions. However the number of Islamic sects has far exceeded Muhammad’s prediction.

There are two major sects, which are the oldest, that I will want to mention here vizly: “ the Sunni” and “ the shiah” or “ Shiites”

A. The Sunni

They are the first important Muslim sect. The literal meaning of the word *Sunni* in Arabic is “ one on the path”. The Sunnis form the largest sect in the Muslim world. Many of them take the title of the *Najiyah*, meaning those who are “ being saved”. They acknowledge the first four *Khalifs* as the rightful successors of Muhammad. According to their names, they believe they are “ the people of the path”. They believed strongly in the tradition of the prophet and are not ready to depart from it. They form one-over-nine of the world Muslim population.

B. The Shiah (Shiites)

Literal meaning of the Shiah in Arabic is “ followers,” they are the followers of Ali the first cousin of Muhammad and the husband of his daughter Fatimah. They maintained that Ali was the true Khalkifa and Imam, the successor of the prophet. They believe in the divine right of the successors of Ali. His rightful successor is now concealed, they say will appear at the end of the world as the Mahdi, the one rightly guided by Allah, thus able to guide others. They have split into many smaller sects.

Shiites are numerous in Iran, where they have deposed the shah and in his place installed the Ayatollah Khomeini and enforced Islamic laws as the rule of the government. Khomeini has gone beyond that by declaring that his command is as good as that of the prophet Muhammad.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAM

Muhammad is the Prophet of Islam. He was born in Arabia where most of the people then were pagans. They believed in many gods and worshipped usually in a holy shrine, which is called “Ka’aba”. Ka’aba is the Arabic word for cube. In the shrine was a “god” call Hubal. According to history Muhammad’s grandfather had no sons. He went to Ka’aba to pray for sons and there laid his hands on the statue of hubal and said: “please, Allah, give me sons”. He promised that if he would have ten (10) sons he would offer one of them as a sacrifice to Hubal i.e Allah. He got the ten (10) sons!

(Hubal was an idol known as the “lord of the city”). When Muhammad’s grandfather went to Hubal for the sacrifice, the choice fell on his son Abdallah (which means “the servant of Allah”), who later became the father of Muhammad. By the guidance and advice of a witch, Hubal was asked to accept 100 camels in exchange for Abdallah, and he accepted. So Abdallah lived.

This is an indication that Muhammad was born into a world dominated by idolatry and witchcraft. This obviously affected him. In the Qur’an, Muhammad claims that, “I have been commanded to serve the lord of this city” (Surah 27:91).

Of course, all Muslims will say that this means Allah. They are probably right! But Hubal was the lord of Mecca at that time. Besides, Allah was the name used for all the other “gods” and he was also called the father of the female deities i.e. Lat, Uzza and Manat, who were generally worshipped in Arabia then. Muhammad “was of highly string and nervous temperament (which became particularly apparent after the Hijrah). He was so afraid of darkness that, on entering a room at night, he would not sit down till a lamp was lighted for him. According to Al-vaqqidi (a Muslim biographer of Mohammad and a historian of Islam) assents that Mohammad has such a repugnance to the form of the cross that he broke

everything brought into the house with that figure upon it". (*The life of Muhammad* by Sir William Muir, page 200).

He was born in Mecca around AD 570. History has it that his father (Abdullah) died before his birth, and his mother, Amina, died when he was six. His uncle Abu Talib, a travelling Merchant, raised him. Muhammad often accompanied his uncle to Syria and very possibly to other regions. On a trip with his uncle Abu Talib to Syria, a Christian Monk, Bohira, foresaw his potential and warned his uncle to protect him from the Jews.

At the age of 25 he married Khadijah, a wealthy widow who was forty years old. He had to work as her caravan agent in trade with Syria. She provided him with economic security and psychological support. They had two sons who died in infancy and four daughter daughters.

His increase in economic security allowed him more time for leisure and visits to a popular cave at mount Hira, three miles from Mecca. There he would spend one month each year. At the cave he would wrap himself in a garment, keep night vigils, and repeat the name Allah. Often his family would join him.

It was there at the age of 40 that he started hearing voices, as a result of spending days in meditation. That was where he first received revelation of what later became the "holy book" of Islam i.e. the Qur'an. He claimed this came through the angel "Jibril" (i.e. Gabriel). Thereafter, he received messages over a period of 22 or 23 years until he died.

After the death of Khadijah, Muhammad left Mecca to Yathrib, which is about 250km north of Mecca. Yathrib later became known as Medinah (i.e. the city of the prophet). This is called Hijrah and was the beginning of the calendar of Islam (AD 622).

The population of yathrib included Jewish tribes who had settled among Arab tribes. Medina lacked central authority, and there was strife among the tribes.

Due to the turmoil between the Jewish and Arab tribes, there was distrust that makes Muhammad to attempt to attract the Jews to his leadership. Some accepted him as a prophet, but most became hostile to him.

In order to appease the Jews, Muhammad offered Friday as a beginning of the Sabbath and the city of Jerusalem as the direction for prayer. When this effort failed, Muhammad selected Mecca toward which to pray and changed the Day of Atonement observance month- long fasting season of Ramadan. He adopted Abraham as the patriarch. (Abraham was considered the father of the Arabs, as the father of Ishmael through whose lineage Muslim claim descents back to Adam, and as the first and most prominent hanif, the obedient one or Muslim)

Muhammad considered Abraham as neither a Jew nor a Christian nor an Idolater, but as the model Muslim surrendered to Allah consequently, Jews were considered idolaters, and were attacked by Muhammad's warriors, subdued, and required to pay taxes. Muhammad profited from Jewish wealth captured or controlled.

Muhammad later at about 52 years old was so powerful and had 13 wives, under the guise of providing shelter and protection for destitute widows, as Muslims like to think today.

At a point Muhammad in order to provide for himself, his family and his nearly 100 companions and their families who came with him to Medina, ambushed one of the camel caravans of the Meccans. All the goods were taken and the prisoners were sold for a ransom back to their families in Mecca. That was the beginning of the "Holy war" (i.e Jihaad).

In Islamic tradition we read:

"This is the best method of earning both spiritual and temporal rewards. If victory is won, there is enormous booty of a country, which cannot equalled to any other source of income. If there is defeat or death, there is everlasting paradise..." (Mishkat II, page 253).

As a result of the attack on the traders of Mecca, the Meccan's hit back and that resulted to a battle. Because the Muslims occupied a more favourable position, they won the battle with only 300 men over 1000 men of Mecca, which was interpreted as being the intervention of Allah. The Muslims fought a number of battles in which all but one were won by their growing number. It was at this time that Muhammad had the following revelation on Jihaad:

"...fight and kill the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleague them and lie in wait for them... Therefore, when you meet the unbelievers, smite their necks (off) ...fight those who believe not in Allah or the last day, nor hold that forbidden which had been forbidden by Allah and his Apostle (that is Muhammad!)Until they pay the Jizya (a special tax for non-Muslims) with willing submission...fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression and they prevail justice and faith in Allah all together and everywhere..."
(Surah 9:5, Surah 47:4, surah 9:2, Surah 8:29)

Islam has decided to divide the world into two parts based on this principle: the "Dhar-ul Islam" and the "Dhar-ul Harb", meaning the "territory of Islam" and the "territory of war" respectively. Note that the aim of this is absolute domination, and wherever there is no Islamic state governed by Islamic law (i.e. Sharia), every effort must be made to bring this territory under the rule of Islam.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

Muhammad left a reasonably well-established Arab empire with a strong motivated army. But after his departure there was the so called

"Ridda", a rebellion against this, and there was much ugly strife, jealousy and dissension between his closest followers which culminated in the assassination of Uthman and Ali, two of the successors of

Muhammad and his closest companions. The troops of Islam soon began to conquer the whole of the Middle East, North Africa, part of India and Spain.

Later, Islam was spread less by violence and more by traders. They penetrated the Sahara and came with their ships down the east coast of Africa and settled on many of the islands (Mombasa, Zanzibar, the Comoros, and also Ibo and other islands of Mozambique) from which they influenced the coastal regions.

Today, one out of every five people living on the earth is a Muslim. by that we see it is the second biggest religion in the world. Only the Christian community is larger.

UNDERSTANDING MUSLIM YOUTH

In order to understand Muslim youth, we have to understand Islam, because an average Muslim youth is taught from childhood to perceive life and the “world views” from an Islamic perspective.

When you meet a Muslim youth you will soon discover that he or she strongly believes that they are following the right religion and whatever he believes and does is essentially part of his way to God.

Muslim youths are different all over the world depending on their social grouping character, education, temperament, cultural background, doctrinal position etc. Although, rituals and forms may be quite uniform.

A Muslim youth doesn't live his life in isolation. He is an integrated member of his family, clan, tribe or community. And this determines his decision or heightens his fear and oppression for change significantly. (It will be well worth to take this “group factor” in close consideration when we witness to a Muslim youth). Because it serves as a cultural barrier to Muslim youth accepting Christianity.

An average Muslim youth is indoctrinated from childhood in the Islamic system, which comprises: faith, culture, politics and language, all of which are intertwined around the religion. Attending Qur'an school is a discipline that Muslims strictly ensure that their children do from childhood of about three (3) years, in order to thoroughly impact the religion and its views to them from a tender age. There is an element of compulsion and indoctrination in initiating Muslim children into Islam, which is done in obedience to the Qur'an. For example, Muslims, especially in Northern Nigeria, take their children for Qur'anic studies to distant places away from the towns or cities where they live in order for them to be thoroughly disciplined by Qur'anic teachers from about the age of six (6) years. While they are away from home at the Qur'anic school, they are taught to fend for themselves through either begging or through doing menial labour for which they receive payment. The essence of this, apart from learning the Qur'an is for them to equally learn to endure suffering. They are called “Almajiri” meaning a “disciple”.

Many of these almajiris, because they lack parental care and guidance they usually end up being exposed to drugs, promiscuity, stealing and all kinds of vices. In fact, one of the main reasons for sending them to these distant places for the Qur'anic studies is to expose them to poverty so that they will in future learn to appreciate wealth and to equally sympathise with the less privilege.

Muslims Faith And Teachings:

Islam is a strict religion that requires a thorough and dutiful adherence to its tenet by the followers. For example, “to recite the Qur'an is considered a good deed” by Muslims. Many even memorize whole chapters of the Qur'an in Arabic, which entitles them to proudly bear the title ‘Hafiz’ even though they may not understand its message. (Understanding what is been recited in Arabic is considered to be of secondary importance). Spiritual benefit is merely derived from the recitation of the “Holy book”, not so much from its understanding.

Faith: There are five fundamentals, which every Muslim must believe in:

- (a) One God i.e. Allah (Monotheism) the unity or singleness of Allah, called “tawhid” is strongly stressed.
- (b) The existence of Angels.
- (c) All revealed Books. These are named to be:
 - The Taurat (the 5 books of Moses or perhaps the whole of the Old Testament).
 - The Zabur (the Psalms of David)
 - The Injil (the Gospel of the New Testament).
 - The Qur'an
- (d) All prophets sent by God. Muslims believe that 124,000 prophets have been sent to all nations but only a few are mentioned by name. Among these are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad. (Surah 4:163-164).
- (e) **“Predestination”** i.e life after death and the judgement coming on the last day, which determine whether a Muslim will go to paradise or hell.

Islamic Teaching

Muslim regard Allah with the greatest awe and respect. He is “tawhid” which means a unity in himself, absolutely single.

Allah is the altogether different one, unlike any other being. He is detached and absolute in his being, his will, his power or knowledge. He is the creator of all good and evil. Nothing that happens does so without his will and that includes Sin! Allah is beyond a human standard of good or bad, right or wrong: He is totally justified in whatever he does, even if human beings would consider this improper. He is to be worshipped and obeyed.

Allah is called (in the Qur’an) “al-Rahman” and “al-Rahim” the compassionate and merciful one, although this is really in contrast to his nature as derived from the Qur’an. There are ninety nine (99) most beautiful names altogether that have been attributed to him i.e Allah from the Qur’an, and it is considered a merit to recite these names in prayer. The “Tasbih” the string of beads not unlike the rosary, normally consists of 99 beads and each one is drop from. When praying a Muslim will mention each of the “most beautiful names” the drop shaped one stands for “Allah”.

It is indeed an awful sin to attribute any partner to Allah (like Jesus Christ). Perhaps the most obvious way to demonstrate Allah’s nature is found in the Islamic doctrine of predestination.

Predestination

The Islamic concept of predestination has given a headache to many Muslims. When the Bible speaks of predestination or election, it does not mean blind fate, but implies happenings “according to the knowledge of God” (I Peter 1:2, Romans 8:29). Because God knows that we will repent and turn to Him for salvation, He elects or chooses us, He predestines us to “be conformed to the likeness of His Son”. The Islamic view is very different from this. In Islam, the meaning is the execution of Allah’s sovereign and arbitrary or capricious will.

“Nothing will happen to us except Allah has decreed for us” (Surah 9:15).

This would be fine, if God loves us and seeks our best. But this does not seem to be the case:

This is an admonition: *“ whosoever will, let him take path to his lord. But you will not, except Allah wills...” (Surah 76:29-30).*

“Allah leads astray whom he pleases and guides whom he pleases..” (Surah 14:4)

Regarding unbelievers the Qur’an says:

“Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil” (Surah 2:7).

This reminds us about the Bible’s teaching that Satan has blinded the eyes of the unbelievers, (II Cor. 4:4), But in the Qur’an it is said Allah (God) is the one who blinds the unbeliever.

Predestination One of the most shocking passages we find in the Qur’an regarding is:

“Allah has willed, he could make you all one people (or religious group).

But he leads astray whom he pleases and guides whom he pleases: but you shall certainly be called to account for all your actions” (Surah 16:93).

If you read a translation, which reads that Allah ‘leaves straying’ instead of “leads astray” that is simply a falsification of what it actually says, an attempt to cover up an embarrassment about this text. Speaking of the reaction to prophets sent to a people we read: *“Then some of them Allah guided and some were decreed (ordered) to err.” (Surah 16:36).* Again, most modern translations changed the text.

How would Muhammad interpret this doctrine? Let us ask the Hadith:

“The holy prophet said: Allah created Adam. Then He stroke his right shoulder and took out a white race as if they were Seeds and he stroke his left shoulder and took out a black Race as if they were coals. Then he said to those who were on his right side: Towards paradise and I don’t care, he said to those who were on his left shoulder: Towards hell and I don’t care (Mishkat III, p.117)

Muhammad said something, which should worry every Muslim intensely. When a companion of Muhammad asked him:

“O prophet of Allah! I believe in you and what you have come with (faith in Allah and the Qur’an). Do you still fear for us?”

Muhammad’s answer was:

“Yes! The hearts (of men) are between the two fingers of Allah. He changes them as he likes” (Mishkat III, p. 111).

This even made Muhammad unsure of his eternal future:

“Verily the Almighty and Glorious Allah took hold of one with his right hand and another with the other hand, and said: this is for this and this is for this, and I don’t care. I don’t know in which of the two (hands) I am”. (Mishkat III, p.103).

This statement is not very clear, but obviously means that no Muslim, not even the prophet of Islam can know what Allah is planning to do with him or her. For Allah may have decreed for him to commit adultery:

“The Apostle of Allah said: verily Allah pre-ordained for the sons of Adam (i.e mankind) his share of fornication. That will overcome him without doubt” (Mishkat III, p.103).

Let us close this subject with one more statement:

“The Holy prophet said: When you hear about a mountain that it has shifted itself from its place, believe it. But when you hear about a man that has changed his nature, don’t believe it. It will return to what was created upon” (Mishkat III, p. 121).

This is the last Mishkat (i.e. Muhammad traditions) makes it difficult for the Muslim to believe in the new birth.

Judgement

Muslims believe in the coming day of judgement. This is considered as life after death in Islam.

According to Islam, there is firstly the “punishment of the Grave”. At the time of death”

“the eyes are taken out, the veins are snatched away, the backbone is crushed and the whole physical frame is put to agonies which no human language can express. If there is a wound in the body, the wholly body suffers pain. Imagine the condition of the body when the entire bodily limbs will be snatched away one by one. This is the turning hour of a man from one stage to another, from a life of flesh to a life of spirit” (Mishkat IV, p. 83).

About the torment in the grave we read:

“Firstly, the grave contracts around him (the dead) so that his breast bones break and pierce into each other. Secondly, a fire is lit up in his grave. Thirdly, a snake is sent to over power him. The appearance of the snake is such that its eyes are like fire balls.. this snake says: “I have been appointed over you by my lord in order to bite you till sunrise having missed your morning prayers till afternoon for missing the noon prayer...etc in the same manner he will continue to suffer this torment till doomsday”.

This is the punishment for a person having missed prayers. In Islam a Muslim must recite ritual prayers five times a day at set prayer times. In the book “What happens After Death?” various causes for punishment in the grave are given:

- Carelessness in urinating
- Performing the prescribed prayers like unburdening a load or treating these prayers as a burden.
- Those whose actions differed from their words the corners of their mouth ripped open.
- Nails are thrust into the eyes and ears of those who tried to see and hear illegitimate things.
- For refusing to suckle their babies, women’s breasts are bitten by snakes.
- For those who broke the fast too early, hanging upside down and licking mud.
- Those who used to play chess suffer the beating with pillars of fire.

All this ends at Resurrection Day, which is followed by the day of judgement. The Hadith’s stories about this are equally terrifying. Even more so the larger proportion of the doomed is shocking:

“Allah will say: take out those who be sent to the fire (hell). He (Adam) will ask: How many are those who will be sent to the fire? He (Allah) will say: 999 out of every 1000!

Salvation

Muslims have a different understanding of the nature and character of god. They believe that man is born good and is capable of staying that way, that he can outweigh bad deeds with good ones. They completely have a false understanding of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work for mankind.

Salvation as we know it from the Bible is unknown to Muslim! Let me give you a classic illustration of this: Just imagine a powerful evangelist or preacher, preaching about salvation from the Bible to a Muslim! he suggests to the Muslim that he must “accept” Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour. He now tells him that “salvation is only by grace alone” and that only the Bible is the word of God and by that, that it is trust worthy.

Scripturally speaking from the Bible point of view, this is true! But the problem is how does a Muslim relate to this or how does it sound to his hearing? To a Muslim, what he hears are mere words: God, Lord Jesus, and Saviour, grace, word of God etc. But do these words mean the same thing to the Muslim as it is to the Christian? Definitely not!

Let us consider the phrase:

“We are saved by grace”

What Is Salvation To A Muslim?

The Qur’an explains this (in a foot note)!

“it consists, not being saved from the consequences of our sins by the achievements, the attainment of all desires. This is our idea of salvation: the negative avoidance of all the consequences of evil, and the positive attainment of all and more than all that our hearts could possible desire”.

And What Is Grace:

In the Qur’an we find it is the grace or mercy of Allah that the winds blows to let ship go from shore to shore, that there are seasons, that it rains and the sun shines, that people have camels to ride on and men have women etc.

Therefore, “saved by grace” means that god gave camels, women, seasons, winds and sunshine so that we attain to all that our hearts could possible desire. Do you think the evangelist or preacher mean

to say that when he preaches that salvation is by grace? Of course not! But unfortunately, that is what the Muslim may well understand.

To speak in such a way that a Muslim is able not only to understand it, we have to go into the trouble of understanding the believe and culture of Muslims.

All this appears strange to us because it certainly is unbiblical. Can it be true? Or is all this written to terrorize Muslims not to leave Islam or live a life of indifference?

Believing the creed and doing what the five pillars of Islam demand plus good deeds constitute their hope. Of course, every Muslim expects Allah to be merciful to him or her. God is merciful! But his mercy is expressed on the cross, which every Muslim rejects. Based on the word of mercy, the Bible, no Muslim will ever be able to go to heaven unless he comes to Jesus for salvation. What an obligation for every Christian to be a witness to Muslim, who do not know and understand the gospel because Islam has brainwashed them against it!

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF REACHING MUSLIM YOUTH:

I will like to view the challenges of reaching Muslim youth from two perspectives i.e.

- (a) “The challenges the discipler (i.e. the witness) has to overcome in order to win the Muslim youth to Christ” and
- (b) “The challenges the Muslim will have to overcome to be a Christian:

(a) Challenges Of The Discipler

- (i) The need for “Practical knowledge on how to approach” Muslim youth with the gospel: Not knowing how to effectively approach a Muslim youth with the gospel can serve as a great hindrance in winning him to the Lord. You will need to understand his viewpoint and objections and avoid causing offense.

“Giving no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed: (II Cor. 6:3). Generally, Muslims are particularly sensitive to others’ attitudes toward their prophet i.e. Muhammad. In Iran, it is customary to refer to him as “Hazret-I-Muhammad”. The term Hazret is a title of courtesy.

The Shah was called “Aala Hazret”, and a person of distinction is addressed as “Hazret” Aah.

We must be very careful in using the word prophet, since this, to a Muslim’s mind, means an authentic messenger of God sent to bring God’s true revelation. According to R.A. Nicholson, *“More than any other man who has ever lived, Muhammad, shaped the destinies of his people, and though they had left him far behind as they moved along the path of civilization, they still looked to him for guidance and authority at each step”*.

When one missionary referred to Muhammad as “a prophet who had gone astray”, the meaning was incomprehensible to a Muslim convert who heard him. “if the missionary considered Muhammad indeed a prophet, how then could he possibly go astray?” reasons the Muslim.

To call Muhammad a “false prophet is to offend the deepest religious convictions of a Muslim inquirer. Any attack on the character of Muhammad, justified, as it may seem from the record in the Qur’an, will offend and alienate the inquirer.

When the Christian youth worker is asked for his frank opinion of Muhammad, it is best to say simply, “If I believe him as you do, I would not be a Christian”. You should be wise to point out that your interest is in Jesus Christ and to testify of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do when He returns. This, of course, includes what Christ has done for the witness and all others who trust Him.

In every land, there are courtesies and customs that all should observe who desire to be accepted..

Muslims, for example, respect one who removes his shoes upon entering a house, shakes hands upon coming and going, and never sits cross-legged in a chair. Muslims consider dogs as unclean, and the thought of shaking hands with a man who has just petted a dog is repulsive.

There is the story of a Muslim teacher, who when a Christian pupil left the room, he would look into the cupboard and smell the bottles to see whether his student drank alcoholic

liquors, as he understood all Christians did. Only after he was sure his pupil did not, was he willing to consider the Christian witness. Eventually that teacher became a Christian.

Just as one would not serve beefsteak to an orthodox Hindu, he should not serve a ham sandwich (or any pork) or a cocktail to an orthodox Muslim.

Before entering into conversation with a Muslim youth to present the gospel, we should consider our position in some potential danger areas like, using the Qur'an, because they might perceived it as a threat and might refer you to their "specialist" i.e. their local Imam or Sheikh. Carrying a Qur'an with you will surely be met with suspicion if not hostility and may most destroy chances of friendly talk. When communicating be careful not to appear confrontational. It's really difficult in my opinion to sometimes avoid argument while communicating the gospel with a Muslim but wisdom, tact and love are need in such situations.

A Christian brother was sharing the gospel with a Muslim friend, an argument arose and he needed to say something that he suspected could stir up the emotions of his Muslim friend and he told him that what he needed to say might likely hurt his friend. The Muslim friend replied that he should go ahead and say it, if he considers it important. Before the Christian Brother went on to say what he wanted to say, he touched him and said, "I would like you to know that it hurts me deeply to want to hurt you. I only have to do it because the truth must be made apparent". At the end of the day he said what appeared to have hurt his Muslim fiend deeply, but because of the brother's attitude, he listen well and this truth did not have adverse effect on their relationship.

I believe that there is room for arguing healthily in spiritual matters.

"He talked and debated" with the Greeks and Jews (Acts 9:29)

"He reasoned with them for scriptures, explaining and proving..." (Acts 17:2)

"He reasoned in the Synagogue with the Jews... day by day with those who happened to be there" (Acts 17:17).

"Every Sabbath he reasoned in the Synagogue trying to persuade...." (Acts 18:4)

"Paul... spoke boldly... for three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God..."(Acts 19:8).

The word "reasoning" (Greek "dialegomai") means to dispute with others, to look at other view points and discusses them.

Please be sensitive to note when your argument begins to create tension and avoid it.

(ii) **Caring For Muslim Convert**

The process of winning Muslim youth to Christianity and aiding them to grow and be established in the knowledge of Christ is difficult in any context. It is exceptionally hard in a Muslim environment, it is harder to win them and harder to care for them after they are won, because the position of the convert is nearly always that of hardship and sometimes dangerous. (As we will see in the challenges that the Muslim convert stand to face later), he is usually alienated from his own community, and the penalties are usually prompt and painful. Because he is considered as an apostate, he stands the chance of being killed either by his immediate family or being disowned where after several persuasions of trying to get him to turn to Islam fails.

Caring for the Muslim youth convert should not only be limited to "Spiritual" care" but should include both physical and psychological care, considering the fact that once it comes to the knowledge of his former associates, their reaction is usually vigorous and unsparing. He is often thrown out of employment or denies any means of livelihood. Time and again he becomes financially dependant and lonely. Therefore, the economic and social care of the convert is the problem of the youth worker. This needs to be done with care in order not to hurt the convert. It is obvious, that to refuse any kind assistance to the convert is to deny every principle of Christian brotherhood. It is equally plain that indiscriminate giving could injure the sincere believers and attract large numbers of insincere ones.

There is wisdom in counseling a young Muslim convert not to confess his new faith immediately and enthusiastically. In cases where an attempt on his life is real, and he is the first convert in a family or village setting, one might well consider the possibility of low key witnessing until such a time when two or three converts provide enough moral support to do so more openly.

Witnessing among Muslims is non-negotiable for Christians, for we have a divine mandate. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus commanded us to go and make disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And to teach them whatsoever he has commanded us.

(b) **Challenges Of The Muslim Youth In Becoming A Christian.**

There are enormous challenges a Muslim Youth has to overcome if he wants to become a Christian. A careful reflection on the following issues will greatly improve the effectiveness of the Christian youth worker:

- (i) **The Religious Barrier:** Muslims are often proud of their strong religious heritage. They feel far superior to any other religion. That is why a Muslim youth will tell you: "I was born a Muslim, I will die a Muslim, nothing will ever change that".

Islam has basically a threefold objection to the Christian faith, which are:

- (a) Christ's incarnation,
- (b) His atonement and
- (c) His death and resurrection

Muslims are instilled with a false concept of Christianity from childhood, which makes them to have a considerable amount of prejudice against the Christian faith. A Muslim youth will not want to become a Christian because he has been taught that Jesus is just a prophet to the Jews, and that He brought a message, which has been corrupted and was replaced by an un-altered edition through Muhammad.

The Qur'an does not deny the Bible is the word of God neither does Muhammad, but Muhammad believed that Islam was a continuation or extension of the existing "book of religions" i.e. Judaism and Christianity.

Muhammad views the New Testament teaching on Jesus as the Son of God in the trinity and his substitutionary death on the cross as utter blasphemy and that this was not Biblical, but an excess and heresy. This is evident in the Qur'an

"...the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. This is a saying of their mouths. In this they imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them! How they are deluded away from the truth (Surah 9:30)

Note that these are strong words, yet every Muslim feels that strongly about Christian faith.

Muslims feel much the same way about Christianity as we feel when the Mormons and Jehovah's witnesses approach us with the intention to share their religious views with us. Muslims believe that our Bible is not the original book made up of the Taurat (i.e. the laws), Zabur (Psalms) and Injil (Gospel).

They strongly maintain that the Jews and Christians have corrupted and changed the original and added the teachings of Jesus' divinity and Sonship, the concepts of the trinity, and also crucifixion and doctrine of atonement. Most of their anti-Christian literatures are violently attacking the very foundation of faith.

How can we respond? This obviously poses a great challenge to any one that will evangelize a Muslim youth.

- (ii) **Social Barrier:** Islam provides its adherents with a close knitted society. A Muslim do not worship and practice his faith as an individual but usually lives within an extended family. Religious practices, such as praying, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca and many of their feast are all performed in a communal way.

These shared experience and actions strengthen the identity and self-worth of a Muslim. They also provide a certain norm and even uniformity among them and give them a sense of belonging.

Therefore, it becomes extremely difficult for any Muslim to think differently or even act independently from the Islamic community i.e. Ummah. Added to the fear of being completely cut off from ones' family and friends, along with an intense feeling of guilt and betrayal in contemplating to leave the religion one is born into, he will start perceiving how this is a great hindrance to him or any Muslim to become a Christian. Islam is not just a religion, but a way of life, which does not allow its adherents freedom of choice.

- (iii) **Economical Barrier:** To leave Islam and become a Christian will often mean that the convert will loose his means of livelihood or work, loose the support of his family (like school fees or care when sick), loose support for food and clothing. The persons will be driven from home. Where he is a married man, the family of the wife will come and take their daughter back and give her in marriage to another man. Their children will be taken away from hi.
- (iv) **Psychological Barrier:** The brotherhood of Islam is often proudly exhibited in Muslim publications, however, as one gets into closer contact with Muslims the reality of interpersonal relationships among them are marked by:
 - (i) Fear,
 - (ii) Distrust and suspicion of gossip or even an impending curse through ones envier
 - (iii) An exaggerated urge to "save face",
 - (iv) A strong sense of isolation and loneliness.

Interpersonal relations among Muslims lack true love and trust. Therefore, in discipling a Muslim convert, you will have to battle with these psychological problems of distrust or mistrust, suspicion, fear, seeking to "save face"

- (v) **Spiritual Barrier:** The Islamic community as a whole is bound by Satan and kept under a "blanket" which effectively keeps Muslims from questioning their beliefs and seeing the light of the truth.
- (vi) **Cultural Barrier:** In a Muslim society, contact between male and female are organized in a very strict fashion than in Christianity. In Islam laws, even in social contacts particularly between sexes, regulate all things. It is therefore not recommended to seek even in religious conversation between male and a female, except in company. In many Muslim countries women are kept away from the public altogether unless they are veiled.

Dressing also can be a cultural barrier: Muslims consider western forms of dressing, particularly that of ladies, as immodest or immoral. Another cultural barrier is "Manners". This varies in different cultures. In Islam the right hand is used for "clean" purposes and that includes eating. The left hand is for "unclean" tasks and is regarded as such. One ought to be careful not to offend. In some Muslims societies sitting cross-legged is considered rude. Dogs are considered unclean animals and should not be fondled. The considerate witness will, perhaps by asking, find out what manners would be considered offensive.

Hospitality is one of the Eastern (Islamic) cultures, which can hardly be overlooked. To refuse an offered hospitality may be very offensive. On the other hand, we ought to know Muslims are often reluctant to accept hospitality. There is a reason for that. They are afraid to be offered something "haraam" (ritually unclean or forbidden). Muslims must be careful to eat "halaai" for only. In modern countries all kinds of foods show a "halaai" sign to signify ritual purity. As a rule, however, it is mainly meat, which needs to be "clean", and that must be from a "clean" animal and must be slaughtered by a Muslim, no pork is allowed to Muslims. The animal must be killed accompanied by a certain prayer in Islamic fashion by cutting the throat. Therefore, when inviting Muslim guests, it will be a matter of decency to serve only halaal food, and this should be made known to the prospective guests.

- (vii) **Age Barrier:** Leading a Muslim youth that is considered as an under-age could be considered as abduction, which could lead to Legal prosecution of the discipler by the parents of the Muslim youth convert.
- (viii) **The Western Life Style:** Muslims usually assess the Christian faith by looking at the lifestyle of the Christians. They conclude that the western lifestyle with its loose Morality, alcohol abuse, imperialism, broken up family etc is the result of Christianity.

OPPORTUNITIES OF MINISTRY TO FOLLOWERS OF ISLAM

(Strategies, Models for Muslim Evangelism)

1. **Friendship Evangelism:** Evangelizing Muslims as a general rule should be through personal contact. Most Muslims will not want to come to Christian meeting. Also, Muslims in a crowd are in most instances unapproachable and hostile. In a one on one evangelism, preferably in a relaxed atmosphere of their familiar environment, the witness or discipler needs to lead a conversation as naturally as possible to a spiritual plane.

Starting up a conversation or approaching a Muslim with the aim of sharing the Gospel is best when it comes naturally, and the opportunities are many. Once we have overcome the inhibitions to befriend them. After all, Muslims are also people with all the needs one happens to have, and these includes a need for unreserved acceptance step by step level sharing.

You could start up by using a specialized literature for Muslims, or invite Muslims to a suitable Christian video show, for example, there is a "Back Pack" which a youth worker can have as a material for film show. The backpack is a solar powered compact disk player with Video CD's, which could enhance the youth workers, desire to reach Muslim youth privately. With this you can use the "God's story" or "Jesus story" films or any other film that convey the Gospel of salvation anywhere regardless of the presence or absence of electricity in the day and night. This has been found to be a very important tool in Muslim evangelism.

2. **Tent Making:** Many Islamic countries are hostile to regular field Missionaries, even in communities that are largely dominated by Muslims in a secular state, they could be hostile to Christians coming into their environment to share Jesus. Several Nigerian cities are filled with many tent-making pastors. People who are fully employed in their trade or profession and are still involved in disciple making. An example is: Pastor Billie who is the "regional Co-co-ordinator of Sonlife Nigeria". He is a senior bank official and is pasturing a church.

"Nigeria Missions" is a Publication of "Nigeria Evangelism Missions Association" (NEMA). In their news line Publication of November 2002, vol.1 No.2. They state that, "Many people see "full time" services for God as being the ideal for any Christian, and "working in a secular job" as being a second rate past-time" But that, "the Bible makes no such dichotomy, but sees all honest work as God given.

The idea behind Tent-Making as an opportunity for Ministry amongst Muslim youth goes beyond just earning a living but with the soul aim of using ones' profession or skill to gain an in road into the world of the Muslim and equally earn a living while tactically evangelizing the Muslim. The tent-maker will have to have a passion for souls. He will not forget the prime reason for his coming into the Muslim community, and will not be content unless he is regularly making contact with the youths of that community and progressively influencing them with the Gospel.

Another example of those taking advantage of the profession as opportunity for ministry are Christian "Doctors and Nurses" who get employed in Saudi-Arabia. There are Missionaries in some isolated part of Muslim communities in Nigeria who are making tents in the form of trading but deep down in their hearts their sole aim is winning Muslims to Christ.

3. **Social Functions Or Special Occasion:** Another very important period for effective evangelism among Muslims is the special occasion. Moments such as funeral, marriages, birth ceremonies, Christians, New Year and Easter seasons. Because of religious interactions in Africa, periods such as these could be effectively used for evangelism. It is not a period to condemn Muslims to hell but a period to explain the Gospel message in such a way that they will fully understand it.
4. **Community Development:** community development is a powerful approach that has provided great opportunities of Ministry amongst Muslim youth. Even though, Muslims have criticized it as

a means of exploiting Muslim youth and poor Muslims to be converted to Christianity, the approach has been an authentic Christian witness in the Muslim context in that it addresses the issues of power, paternalism and “Christiandom”

According to the “Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity” speaking on: “Community Development in Islam and Christianity, with special reference to Africa”. It says, in a recent conference sponsored by a number of leading Christian agencies, a new initiative aimed at strengthening Christian involvement in Muslim world through community development has been suggested. According to the concept paper: “There is a need for creative attempts in living the Christian faith as salt and light in an Islamic context. One possible approach is through community development programmers and projects. Community development provides a unique opportunity to enter in partnership alongside poor and disadvantage Muslim communities. Currently, around the world there are positive expressions of this approach, which displays the love, and justice of God. There is therefore a need to strengthen Christian involvement in Islamic countries alongside marginalized communities.”

Jens Christensen in his book “The practical Approach to Muslims” puts a question mark against Christians attempt to use Community development as an instrument to convert Muslims. He said that, “Today there seems to be a growing awareness that very often our (Christian) use of such instruments has been interpreted by Muslims as an exploitation of their economic, medical and educational difficulties”. Christensen stresses, “in my opinion rightly, that God himself is the subject in Evangelism and the only instrument He uses is the Evangelist who proclaims the gospel.” If you read further in Jen Christensen’s book you will find that he took a hard line against community development as a means for creating in-roads amongst Muslims. I feel he is right to an extent! Especially the case where the Christian community developer forgets his main motive for going into community development which to win lost souls. But, I don’t agree with him where he felt it should not be used at all.

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus into good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them

Also, I Peter 2:12 “having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation”.

In the city where I live here in Nigeria i.e. Jos, Plateau State. There are Christian Youth Ministry known as “Gidan Bege” i.e. “Home of Hope”. The focus of this ministry is to Muslim youth on the streets. And they are carrying out this ministry through social services and it is making a great impact.

5. **Western Acculturation:** Contact with western civilization has stimulated a willingness amongst Muslim youth to learn more about Christianity, notwithstanding the reluctance to re-think long held Islamic beliefs.

In some Muslim countries, western social ideas have been widely introduced. There are serious changes that have taken place due to western influence. In many places the veil for women, strictly required by Muhammad himself, is being abolished. In some Muslim lands polygamy (i.e having more than one wife at a time) is questioned, becoming restricted or even forbidden. The law of apostasy, decreeing the death of an apostate from Islam, is no longer enforced in most Muslim lands, and religious liberty is increasingly permitted in some others.

Western inventions, such as radios, televisions, refrigerators, cars etc are being sought as social or economic status symbols. Western advisers are employed in their large numbers. Muslims who can afford it are eager for their children to attend universities in western countries.

Many Muslim youth are daily being influence by western culture such as dressing, music and language. To them, that is a more civilize way of life.

Evangelistic meeting in a Muslim community will seldom attract many Muslim youth but the use of the mass media will penetrate into distant villages and towns where missionaries have never gone especially where Islamic laws strictly prohibit the preaching of the gospel. There have been testimonies of Christian converts in remote places who have attributed their faith in Christ to listening to a radio message or television and reading a Christian literature. There are instances that reading a page of a tract used to wrap a small purchased item from a village shop aroused the first interest in Christianity.

Someone said that literatures have the power of delayed action. "A five year old boy attended a lantern lecture and was given a track. Unable to read, he threw it into a cupboard. Six years later he found it and was much interested in its message. Even though his father told him that the track was misleading and forbade him from reading it. However, the boy was determined to learn more about Christianity whenever he gets the chance. One-day, by chance after several years, he passed a literature- display- window featuring the Bible and other Christian books, he then stopped to inquire and became convince and received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. He later became a full-time Minister of the Gospel.

"Western acculturation" through radio, video, television and the printed pages is a proven matured key tool that has given a penetrating impact and a great opportunity for ministry to Muslims anywhere in the world.

WHAT IS WORKING

- (i) What is working in an environments that are predominately Islamic: "Personal contacts" i.e friendship evangelism and the use of he 'Mass media'.

Personal contact with Muslim youth with the aim of developing a relationship with them that will lead to intelligently sharing the gospel with them has proven to be a powerful strategy.

To be able to even make this personal contact with the Muslim youth, one will have to go into their environment. That will require that one will have to go into predominately Islamic environment either as a tent-maker or a community developer.

The use of 'mass media' is a broad based effort to penetrate the Islamic world with the gospel in an informative and sensitive way. The object is to lessen the inner fears and opposition to the gospel. This is done by the use of literatures, TV, radio, magazines, advertisement etc.

The mass media is a powerful tool that could aid in the quick spreading of the gospel. Through the mass media what one person can do in ten years, can be done by ten people in a year.

- (ii) What is working in environments where either Muslims are on the minority or where there is a balance between Christians and Muslims. That is in a situation where both communities live in the same territory without either dominating the other and where freedom of religion is a reality.

In a mixed environment as stated above, the Muslim youth is likely to be quite acquainted with some Christian ideals and is easily open to discussion on religious matters in the public. Interaction with Christians and the free use of the mass media has equally served as a great influence in reaching Muslim youth in this environment too.

Training of Christian youth on how to reach Muslim youth has been quite resourceful. For example a Christian Organisation life Challenge Africa in Jos, Nigeria is actively involve in training Christians to reach Muslims with the gospel. Recently, they had a training seminar for about a week i.e. from 31st March to 5th of April 2003. Participants were drawn from across the Nigeria and some West African countries. The participants were people already working amongst Muslims within and outside Nigeria. About ninety percent (90%) of the participants in this training in my observation were youths.

The Co-ordinator of the training; Rev. Shaba Adams who himself is a Muslim convert to Christianity has been quite resourceful in helping me prepare this paper. You cannot meet Rev. Shaba without noticing his deep conviction about Christianity and the Bible despite his deep knowledge of the Qur'an.

This kind of training prepares and exposes anyone with the desire to reach Muslims and it is really working.

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Rev. Shaba Adams said that, "the possibilities are as bright as the promises of God. The Holy Spirit indeed is strong and able to save Muslims despite all the barriers.

The possibilities of reaching Muslims lie in the power of the gospel. It is not the word of men that will save Muslim youth but the preaching of the gospel.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16).

The possibilities also lie in the power of the Holy Spirit to convince and convert the Muslim youth of the truth of the gospel. Also, the Holy Spirit who is the principal teacher, helper and comforter of the new convert is able to strengthen him to stand and even grow even without the support of other Christians and where Radio, TV and Churches exist. Wherever possible we should focus on person-to-person discipleship model.

HOW THE CHURCH SHOULD RESPOND

1. The church must realize that Evangelising Muslims is not an option and must take it very serious; we are challenged to obey the great commission and not to be indifferent to those that are lost. Also, despite the fact that reaching Muslims can be so difficult, the church must realize that it is not impossible. Instead, we should start directing our faith for the salvation of Muslims.

Stephen Neil wrote that it is not the case that Muslim has seen Jesus of Nazareth and has rejected him: “he had never seen him, and the veil of misunderstanding and prejudice is all over his face” Most Muslims that have heard of Jesus, have heard incomplete or distorted versions of Jesus’ life and Ministry. How will Muslims believe in whom they have not heard clearly? And how will they hear clearly? Unless those who love Jesus, witness of Him to them (Romans 10:14).

Witnessing among Muslims is non-negotiable for Christians, for we have a divine mandate. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus commanded us to go and make disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And to teach them whatsoever he has commanded us.

J. R. Mcquikin told of an evening when his nine year old son looked at him and said, “Daddy, its not fair” when asked about his strange comment, the little boy explained that he thought it was not fair that people who had never heard of Jesus should go to hell. The family members discussed the difficult issue for a while, then the eleven-year-old daughter presented her perspective on the matter. “Well, I’ll tell you what I think”, she said, “I think life is too short to figure everything out. I think our job is to get on with it and do what God told us to do...tell people about Jesus”.

The daughter was right, we cannot figure out everything. We all have theological questions for which there are no satisfactory answers. Also, many of us struggle with fears and reservations about witnessing to Muslims. The fears and reservations (or unbelief) Christians have towards witnessing to Muslims is based on “IGNORANCE”. Once we have a general knowledge on Islam and Muslims i.e. what they believe, how they feel and think, that will help us to know how to relate with them. Muslims will only understand what we say to them in proportion to how we understand them. A Christian, who is ignorant of Islam and Muslims, when confronted with some typical Islamic anti-Christian propaganda, cannot just deal with that, the fear of that alone can suppress the desire to evangelize.

There is an adage that says that, “people and things will respond to you according to how you think of them”. This adage in my opinion agrees with the scripture that says, “All things are possible to him that believes”. Many Christians have come to the conclusion that, it is impossible to win Muslims to Christ, this belief is formed, I think, out of a negative experience of either a one-time attempt or several attempts to evangelize Muslims, which did not yield any positive result.

I believe that Muslims like any other person bound by the devil can come to know Jesus and be saved if the church can pay the prize of reaching the intelligently.

2. The church especially in environments where there is freedom of worship, should promote prayers for Muslims to come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (There is no distance in the spirit). Our prayers can influence Muslims anywhere on earth to open up to the preaching of the gospel. Also, we must constantly pray for those who have sacrificed their lives and are living in Muslim dominated environments just for the preaching of the gospel.
3. While every effort of reaching Muslims with the gospel is important, a united action of many Christians and churches or groups I infinitely better.

Reaching Muslims should be co-ordinated and consolidated by all committed Christian groups who have the aim of reaching Muslims in a given area for a well-prepared outreach. It is necessary that Muslim evangelism becomes a “peoples movement”, otherwise, it will not be quite successful.

4. The church needs to be up and doing in supporting those in difficult areas of Ministry like reaching Muslims financially and otherwise in order to encourage them. There are many missionaries with the heart of reaching Muslims who have been discouraged for lack of financial, moral and material support from the church.

CONCLUSION

If we are to put Jesus in His place in reaching out to Muslim youths then we must take witnessing to Muslims very important because Jesus Himself is our example.

*“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”.
(I Peter 2:21).*

Jesus recognized the value of the Jewish faith and the commitment of many of its adherents. Nonetheless, He proclaimed without reservation to them that He alone is the way, the Truth and the life. He wept over Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism, because its people refused to heed his message of salvation (Luke 13:34; 19:41, 44. John 6::36-47).

Nicodemus represented the best that the Jewish faith had to offer. Yet Jesus said to him “You must be born again”. An admirable religion was not enough. There are lots of things to admire about Islam. In it are found many truths and insights into God for the world. Devout Muslims offer worthy examples to the world by emphasizing such important moral issues as; abstinence from alcohol and harmful drugs, sexual purity, and abhorrence of pornography. Even such admirable qualities, however, do not overcome the need for salvation through Jesus, the only Saviour.

During the ministry of Jesus on earth he confronted the religious people (Pharisees and Sadducees) of his time with the truth of God’s word pointing to them that He is the Messiah and that there is a new order of worship that is acceptable to God apart from their deadly religious rituals.

Today, the Church cannot afford to do any less because God has given us all the equipment we need to affect the earth with His truth through the power of the Holy Spirit. We have His word, His anointing and His backing. We can make it happen in our day!

*“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.
Amen!*

If He did it for the early Apostles, He will do it for today’s church. He is the same yesterday, today and forever! (Hebrews 13:8.)

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