

# Mistakes Christians Make When Trying to Reach a Muslim

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For many years American Missiologists have known that culture plays an important part in Christian Witness. It is often taught that there are three different methods of evangelism based upon culture. They can be identified as follows:

E-1 Evangelism with people of the same culture, language and background for example: an American witnessing to another American.

E-2 Evangelism with people of a similar culture, for example: an American witnessing to a Frenchman.

E-3 Evangelism with people from a completely different culture, language and background for example: an American witnessing to an animist from the jungles of Africa.

Different methods are required in the three different categories. It is no wonder that many Americans make some mistakes when trying to witness to Muslims since generally this form of witness fits within the third group. Islam is not only a religion but it is also a culture and a way of life. Americans who have learned western methods will often make mistakes in their witness to those of the Islamic faith. Here are three mistakes commonly made when attempting to be a witness to a Muslim.

## **1. Not understanding the seriousness of religion in an Islamic context**

For most in the western world a decision to follow Jesus Christ is very serious indeed, but if the person says yes it will have an only a limited effect on the persons immediate circumstances. Not so with a Muslim. The Koran teaches very strongly that any Muslim who converts to another religion, whether it is Christianity or some other belief system is guilty of apostasy and must be put to death. This is carried out in all Islamic Republics but since those living in the west cannot kill a person for switching religions the friends and family will use other very harsh means to keep the person a Muslim. This will include kidnapping and imprisonment, beatings, and total exclusion from the family.

Even approaching a person with the gospel puts the person into a very difficult position. They fear what others will say if they speak with a Christian and they also fear for their soul since they have been taught from birth that to become a Christian will send them to the sixth level of hell. (The seventh being the worst)

The Christian who witnesses must realize how serious a matter this is for the Muslim and their family. In witnessing to a Muslim you must be aware that the person you are working with, if they accept Christ, will probably be persecuted and could even be killed. Many Americans simply do not realize how serious a change in religion can be in a Muslim context.

## **2. Not being willing to take on the responsibility of discipling a convert from Islam**

Once in Germany I spoke to a young man from the Middle East who lived in Nuremberg, Germany, about his newfound faith in Jesus. He told me of his decision but was disappointed with the care and love given to him by the church. I invited him to come to Salzburg, Austria where I lived and I would get him a job, an automobile, an apartment and offer him great fellowship in our youth center. He came and I provided what

I had promised. I was proud of my effort and felt that I was finished. I told him to come to the youth center on Friday and Saturday nights and the church on Sundays. In about two months he came and told me how disappointed he was in me. I was shocked because I had done much for him but he said that he came expecting me to be his Guru (teacher). He wanted to follow me around everywhere I went. I was not willing for him to do this.

For a Muslim his family and community provides each member with their health insurance, their job, their food, their fellowship, their mate, and practically everything else of importance in life. When we win a Muslim to Christianity then we need to be prepared to make the necessary sacrifice in the disciplining process. They need much more of our time and love because we have torn them from their support system and we must find a way to make this up. Many Americans are not willing to make the necessary sacrifices that are called for.

In 1990 I went to a very important conference for the top people working in Muslim Evangelism in the world. One of the discussions was about the number of Muslims who converted to Christianity that stayed true to Jesus Christ. The consensus was that 80% of those who converted reconverted to Islam, the reason being that we did not take the necessary time to help disciple them so as to give them a good foundation in the faith. I am glad to say however that recently we have seen some dynamic changes and many more are now remaining in their new faith and they are even forming churches made up mostly of those who have come out of Islam.

### **3. Not knowing anything about Islam**

A typical Muslim will know more about Christianity than a Christian will know about Islam. Just as Christians are taught how to witness to others, many Muslims are being taught how to refute the Christians arguments thus making our witness ineffective. Once there was a well-publicized open debate between the American evangelist Jimmy Swaggart and a famous Muslim scholar Dr. Ahmed Deedat. Swaggart apparently did not see the need to learn about Islam and just came with numerous quotes from the Bible. Deedat then replied by listing a large number of very important liberal Christian scholars that stated that the Bible could not be trusted and that most of it was not historical. Swaggart lost the debate and the Muslims still sell the videotape of the debate in their bookstores to show Muslims how to be ready for Christians who want to witness to them.

The more one builds up their knowledge of Islam the better the Christian can build good ideological bridges so as to find a good way to approach the Muslim. One very successful method is called the "Camel Method". In Islam the Muslims believe that there are 99 names of God known to man but in heaven there are 100, but the only creature on earth that knows the last name of God is the camel thus the upturned lips of the camel that resembles a smile. This method of witness helps with the building of a bridge by saying to a Muslim. "We know the 100th Name of God, it is Jesus Christ". It builds upon what they know but takes them further on their road to belief in Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Christians should not be afraid of witnessing to Muslims but rather should aggressively search out Muslims to talk with. The most important part of witness to Muslims is being led by the Holy Spirit. He will show you how best to approach the Muslim. I might add that the most effective means of helping a Muslim find Jesus Christ is still love. One Islamic leader stated at a large conference of Muslim clerics recently "Do not allow your people to have close contact with Christians because if you do the Christians will love your people into their faith." This is still true today.