

Breaching the Barriers of Islam: Sharing Christ with Muslims

Steve Cable writes that Christ-followers can use some intriguing verses in the Koran as a way to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslims.

Barriers to Islamic Evangelism

Even in these tense times, we can be confident that God loves the followers of Islam and desires for them to receive redemption through Jesus Christ. Paul writes in First Timothy, “[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3). However, many Christians feel like the gulf is too wide and the walls are too high to share the truth with Muslims. Yet, our God is a “rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6), working in providential ways to make truth known.

In this article, we will discuss one way God is breaching the barriers of Islam. Let’s begin by looking at the very real barriers to Islamic evangelism.

The first decade of the twenty-first century is becoming known for the greatest clash between the Western world and Islam since the Crusades. The recent furor over cartoons showing caricatures of Mohammed is a violent example of the chasm. This radical fanaticism is an extreme expression of the barriers that have existed for centuries as Christians have tried to share their faith with followers of Islam. Around the globe, missionaries have typically seen fewer converts from Islam than from other religions. Let’s consider a few of the bricks from which this barrier is constructed:

- The higher way syndrome—According to Islam, earlier prophets such as Moses and Jesus brought truth from God, but over time their followers corrupted God’s true intent. Mohammed came to correct those perversions. Therefore, the Bible has been corrupted and is no longer reliable
- The final word—Mohammed is the last of the prophets; there can be no further revelation. Questioning the meaning of the Koran as held by the local Imam is strictly prohibited
- The greater reward—Zeal and strict adherence to the tenets of Islam will result in great rewards in paradise. A zealous Muslim will be proselytizing others, not allowing someone to try to convert him.

These first three bricks share much in common with reasons why it should be hard to convert a devout Christian to another world religion. But Islam adds a fourth brick that is distinctly different:

- The ultimate penalty—As reported by Ibn Warraq, “It is quite clear that under Islamic law, an apostate must be put to death. . . . If [even] a pubescent boy apostatizes, he is

imprisoned until he comes of age, when if he persists in rejecting Islam, he must be put to death.”{1} The death penalty for conversion certainly puts a damper on openness to considering the claims of other religions.

These bricks and others build a solid fortress making it difficult for evangelism among Muslims.

Once More into the Breach

Even though certain aspects of Islam create a formidable wall for those desiring to share Christ, God has equipped us for “the destruction of fortresses . . . and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:4). As David Garrison reports, “More Muslims have come to Christ in the past two decades than at any other time in history.”{2}

Before modern artillery, a high, thick wall was an effective fortress. If the fortress was well supplied or time was a critical factor for the attacking army, a breach had to be created in the wall through artillery or siege works. The first group of troops to enter the breach would take on the brunt of the fortress’s defenses and suffer extremely heavy casualties. During the Napoleonic wars, the British army called the first attackers the Forlorn Hope, offering promotions to any survivors. Shakespeare honored the Forlorn Hope in “King Henry V” as Henry rallied his troops shouting “*once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more, or close the wall up with our English dead!*”{3}

Is it possible that a Forlorn Hope entering a God-given breach in the barriers of Islam could spread the light of the gospel in an Islamic country?

In a South Asian country, Abdul, a teenager, was expelled from his Islamic school for asking too many questions about the Koran. Because of Islamic law, he was held as a captive by his family and condemned to death upon coming of age. Secretly freed by his mother, he fled from his home. A chance encounter with a Christian missionary as he walked a country road dramatically changed his life. The missionary showed such love and concern that Abdul had to touch him to assure himself that this was a man and not an angel. Abdul gave his life to Christ and was baptized. Abdul was one of a handful of converts from Islam witnessed by this missionary over a period of thirty years.

Banished from his home, Abdul spent several years studying and growing in his faith in another part of the country. Led by God to return to his village, Abdul took up residence in the home of a childhood friend as he was still banished by his family. After a few months of studying the Koran and the Bible, his friend was ready to be baptized. When his family learned about it, they rounded up the villagers, took Abdul to the local soccer field and proceeded to beat him. Left for dead, his friend came to his aid and Abdul survived. When Abdul baptized his friend, he prayed “Thank you, God for my friend. Yesterday, I was the only believer in this village. Today there are two. Tomorrow, there can be two hundred if it is your will.”

Within a few years, all 1,800 people in Abdul’s village became Christians including those who left him for dead. These new believers were discipled and more villages were touched. Since that time, over 500,000 Muslim background believers have joined in following Jesus Christ. This unprecedented response also resulted in the murder of Abdul’s friend by Islamic radicals. Their willingness to act as the Forlorn Hope, entering the breach with no regard for their own lives, was a central part of this wonderful awakening.

The Breach in the Barrier

What was the breach in the fortress of Islam allowing the message of Christ to be heard? Remember Abdul used the Koran and the Bible to bring his friend to faith. The breach in the barrier is the Koran itself. According to others working in Abdul's country, "Good Muslims have been taught from childhood that the Koran is the only true word of God. They may not know the meaning of the Koran's text, but nonetheless, they believe it is true. When approached with the Bible, Muslims immediately become defensive, but they cannot and will not deny the Koran. Relating to a Muslim from the Koran guarantees a listening ear." {4}

Many Muslims do not know that the following assertions appear in the Koran:

- If you are in doubt about the truth, ask those who read the Scripture that came before you. {5}
- To be a proper Muslim, one must read the Before Books (the Old and New Testaments). {6}
- Christians are humble and compassionate and know the truth when they hear it. {7}
- Those who observe the teaching of the Torah and the Gospels will go to heaven. {8}
- Mohammed states he is not the greatest prophet, he does not know what will happen to his followers (after death) and he is only a Warner. {9}
- Jesus knows the way to Allah. {10}

The strongest passage to foster a discussion about Jesus is Surah Al-Imran 3:42-55. This passage states:

- Mary was chosen by God,
- Jesus was born of a virgin,
- Jesus is the Messiah,
- Jesus has power over death, and
- Jesus knows the way to heaven.

An honest, open reading raises "Jesus from 'Prophet' status closer to 'Savior' status." {11} For example verse 3:45 reads, "O Maryam! Allah gives you the good news . . . that you will be given a son; his name will be Messiah, Isa the son of Maryam." {12} And 3:49 reads, "[Jesus] will heal the blind and the lepers, and raise the dead to life, by Allah's leave." {13} This passage clearly ascribes to Jesus a position and power that Mohammed does not ascribe to himself.

Don't Misuse the Koran

We rightfully accuse some cults of using proof texts from the Bible to promote distorted religions. Do the verses introduced above relate the overwhelming message of the Koran? Absolutely not. There are other passages which are critical of Christianity and particularly the idea that Jesus is "another God" apart from Allah. Lest we be guilty of "proof-texting," someone approaching a Muslim with passages from the Koran must be clear on their objective. We should keep in mind four points:

- Be humble. Freely admit that you are not an expert in the Koran. You want to understand how they view these passages.
- Be simple. Do not expound on the doctrine of the Koran or attribute inspiration to its teaching. Simply point out that the Koran seems to encourage Muslims to study our Bible and understand more about Jesus.

- Be sensitive. Don't think that you are going to use the Koran to lead someone to Christ. You are discussing the Koran to see if they are open to further exploration of Jesus' teaching.
- Be positive. People who have grown up studying the Koran have used this approach to bring hundreds of thousands of Muslims to faith in Christ over the last decade.

In his book *Camel Training Manual*, Kevin Greeson points out that Paul's custom when entering a new area was to begin teaching Christ in the synagogue from their Scripture, the Old Testament. In a similar fashion, we can approach a Muslim with the question, "I have discovered an amazing truth in the Koran that gives hope of eternal life in heaven. Would you read this passage with me so that we can talk about it?" [{14}](#)

The purpose of this discussion is not to show how much you know about the Koran or how little they may know. In humility, the purpose is to ask them to consider the implications of this passage stating Jesus had authority over death and Jesus knows the way to heaven. They know these statements are true because they are in the Koran. If they are concerned about death and want to know the way to heaven, they may want to learn more about Jesus to follow the Koran's injunction to obey Jesus.

This teaching about Jesus is especially important in the light of Surah The Chambers 46:9 which reads, "I [Mohammed] am no prodigy among the prophets; nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am no more than a plain Warner." So, the Koran teaches Mohammed is a warner (calling people to fully obey God) while Jesus is the Messiah (knowing the way to God). A serious Muslim should have a desire to learn about Jesus.

A Person of Peace

Please note that the purpose of discussing the Koran is not to teach someone how to receive God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The purpose is to identify people who are open to learning more about Jesus. People whose hearts are prepared through diligently seeking to know God. In his book *Church Planting Movements*, Kevin Greeson refers to this as "finding a Person of Peace."

This term refers to Jesus sending seventy of the disciples ahead of Him to witness in every city and place where He was going. Jesus commanded the seventy, "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you" (Luke 10:5-7). Jesus was telling them to use a non-threatening, culturally appropriate way to determine whether a person is open to learning more about Jesus. An open, interested person is a "person of peace" and you should invest your time in them. If they are not interested, then shake the dust from your feet and move on. It will only antagonize them and their community if you insist on forcing yourself upon them. Once an interest in knowing more about Jesus is confirmed, you set the Koran aside and turn to the Bible (the "Before Book" in Koran terminology) to teach them about Jesus and redemption.

One concern about sharing in this manner is the danger of producing a group of pseudo-believers who add a distorted view of Christ to their religious practice without truly putting their faith in Christ. This danger is why the Koran must be viewed only as the breach getting you into the fortress. The Bible in the power of the Holy Spirit supplies the words that lead to salvation. Discipleship must be strictly based on the Bible.

In addition to the large numbers of conversions in Abdul's country, the level of commitment by these new believers is encouraging. In 2002, a team from a U.S. mission organization conducted an investigation of the churches resulting from this movement. They found that

- over 2/3 of the new converts had been active followers of Islam,
- less than 25% were mingling old Islamic beliefs with their new Christian ones, and
- less than 10% of the people know of any Christian returning to Islam.[{15}](#)

When Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), He did not add a caveat excluding those hostile cultures with strong barriers to the truth. Instead, He promised to be with us and equip us with divinely powerful weapons to breach those fortresses. Hopefully, you are encouraged to reach out in love to Muslims as God brings them into your life. To learn more, take a look at the *Camel Training Manual* from WIGTake Resources.[{16}](#)

Notes

1. Ibn Warraq, "Apostasy and Human Rights", *Free Inquiry*, February/March 2006, vol 26 No. 2.
2. *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, David Garrison, WIGTake Resources, 2004.
3. *King Henry V*, William Shakespeare.
4. Kevin Greeson, *Camel Training Manual* (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004).
5. Koran Surah Jonah 10:94.
6. Koran Surah The Woman 4:136.
7. Koran Surah The Table Spread 5:82-83.
8. Koran Surah The Table Spread 5:65-66.
9. Koran Surah The Sandhills 46:9.
10. Koran Surah Al-Imran 3:42-55.
11. Greeson.
12. English translation of Muhammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik, *Al-Qur'an, The Guidance for Mankind* (Institute of Islamic Knowledge, 1997).
13. Ibid.
14. Greeson.
15. Garrison.
16. Available online at the Church Planting Movement's Web site at www.churchplantingmovements.com/camel_training_manual.htm.