

Basic Religious Beliefs of Worldwide Muslims – Part 2

More Cultural Research from Steve Cable

As we will see below, most Muslims do not believe and understand the religion of Islam but they self-identify as Muslims. Earlier I reported on [the stated religious beliefs of worldwide Muslims](#) using a set of survey questions which could be considered to reflect a Qur'anic worldview. We saw that across the Eastern hemisphere less than 25% of professed Muslims held to a Qur'anic worldview. The percentage was much less in Eastern European countries (12%) and in the 'Stans (5%).

In this post, we will look at a less stringent criterion than a full Qur'anic worldview to see the differences in viewpoint across different geographic regions and different levels of educational achievement.

Once again, we are using a 2012 Pew Research Center survey of Muslims involving more than 30,000 face-to-face interviews in 26 countries across North Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In looking at the data, we will consider educational achievement and geographic regions: North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Russia, and Turkey), the 'Stans (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

For this evaluation, we will use the following three questions.

- 1. I believe in one God, **Allah**, and his prophet Muhammad.*
- 2. I believe Islam is the **one, true faith** leading to eternal life in heaven.*

3. *I know a great deal about the Muslim religion and its practices.*

The data looks like this:

	North Africa	Middle East	Europe	The 'Stans	South Asia	Total
Allah plus True Faith	85.8%	89.5%	57.0%	63.3%	88.0%	78.3%
Add Knowledge	45.7%	47.7%	24.3%	20.4%	43.2%	38.0%

As you can see, Muslims in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans are much less likely to believe that Islam is the one true faith, with only about six out of ten versus almost nine out of ten for the other geographic regions. When we add in those who believe they know a great deal about their religion, the number drops to around two out of ten as compared to about five out of ten for the other geographic regions.

Let this sink in a minute. Two out of three Muslims worldwide^{[1](#)} do not believe that Islam is the one, true faith and that they know a great deal about it. Even in the Middle East and North Africa, less than 50% fall into this category of I

believe and I know what I believe. If you don't know a great deal about your religion, for most it must mean that your religious beliefs are not very important to you. After all, you are not even sure what they are. Note that this does not mean that your religious culture is not important to you.

Now let's consider the impact of education on the beliefs held in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans. In these two geographic regions, we see a significant difference based on the level of education completed.

	Eastern Europe			The 'Stans		
	Limited Education {2}	High School and Beyond	All	Limited Education	High School and Beyond	All
Allah plus True Faith	65.4%	44.9%	57.0%	75.9%	48.8%	63.3%
Add Knowledge	30.1%	19.8%	24.3%	30.3%	16.2%	20.4%

Those with only a limited education are 50% more likely than those with at least a high school diploma to indicate a belief in Islam as the one true faith and know a great deal about their religion. Thus in these two regions, people with at least a high school education are very unlikely to have a basic belief in Islam and know what Islam teaches. One would suspect that the high school education is at least somewhat secular in nature (following the example set when under the Soviet Union) and thus does not promote the teachings of Islam.

In conclusion, the survey data is very clear. Most people who self-identify as Muslims do not fully understand the teachings of Islam and believe that it is the one true faith leading to eternal life.

Notes

1. Even though the survey only covers the Eastern Hemisphere, we can relate the data to Muslims worldwide since over 98% of the Muslims in the world live in the Eastern Hemisphere.

2. Middle school education or less.

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interpretations of the data presented here. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by James Bell, Director of International Survey Research, Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.

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Comparing Religious Practices of Worldwide Muslims and American Christians

More Cultural Research from Steve Cable

In a prior [blog post](#), we looked at how Muslims in the Eastern Hemisphere reported their adherence to the five pillars of Islamic religious practice. We saw that the percentage who reported faithfully applying four of the five pillars was low, especially given the importance of these pillars in enhancing one's chance of entering paradise.

In this post, let us consider some basic practices that someone who is concerned about following the teaching of any religion should follow.

Once again, for Muslims we are using a 2012 Pew Research Center survey of Muslims involving more than 30,000 face-to-face interviews in 26 countries across North Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In looking at the data, we will consider age and geographic regions of North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, the 'Stans (e.g. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

For this comparison of faiths and regions, we selected the following questions used in the Pew survey:

1. *How important is religion in your life? Very important*
2. *On average, how often do you attend the mosque for Salah and Jum'ah Prayer? Once a month or more*
3. *Outside of attending religious services, how often do you pray? Once a day or more*
4. *How often do you read or listen to the Qur'an? At least once a week*
5. *Do you give zakat, that is, give a set percentage of your wealth to charity or the mosque? Yes*
6. *How much does the way you live your life reflect the Hadith and Sunna, that is, the sayings and actions of the Prophet? A lot {1}*

For someone serious about practicing their faith, this list should be critical to understanding and applying one's faith and also fairly easy to apply. The results from the survey are as follows:

Serious About Basic Religious Practice					
Age	North Africa	Middle East	Eastern Europe	The 'Stans	South Asia
18 – 29	9%	14%	3%	1%	19%
30 plus	15%	20%	6%	2%	27%

The most obvious result is that the percentages are very low. Across all the respondents, only 12% of them practice these six activities. So, the vast majority of Muslims are at best nominal practitioners of a religious life. We also see a significant difference between geographic regions. In Eastern Europe and the 'Stans, we see that virtually no one is committed to these six practices. Those surveyed in South Asia, i.e. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, are most likely to be serious about these basic religious

practices, where one in four report following all six of the practices above.

We also see a difference based on age in all geographic regions. Across all five geographic regions, those who are 30 years old and beyond report levels of religious practice from 40% to over 100% greater than for those 18 to 29 years old.

For a similar look at Christians in the United States, we are using the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS) from 2012. From that study, we utilize a similar set of questions to define a basic religious practice:

- 1. How important is religion or religious faith to you personally? Extremely important*
- 2. How often do you attend worship services, not including weddings or funerals? At least twice a month*
- 3. How often have you typically prayed, not including before meals and at religious services? At least once a day*
- 4. How often have you typically read the Bible in the past 12 months? At least once a week*
- 5. During the year 2011, what was the total dollar value of all donation made to your local congregation? Age 30+ value > \$999, Age 20 – 29 value > \$399*
- 6. I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.*

As you can see, these questions are very similar to those asked in the Pew survey of Muslims. The results from this survey are as follows:

Serious About Basic Religious Practice			
Age	Evangelical	All Christian	
20 – 29	7.3%	4.8%	
30 plus	16.7%	10.1%	

These results are very close to the results for

Muslims—somewhat less than North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, and somewhat more than the 'Stans. Similar to the results for the Muslims, emerging adults are significantly less likely than those over 30 to be serious about their religious practice. Nine out of ten Christians in America are not serious enough about their walk with God to practice the basics needed for an active Christian life.

It is safe to say that most American Christians and Muslims in the Eastern hemisphere are identified with a religion which they don't really understand and don't spend the time and effort necessary to gain understanding and live according to its principles.

Note

1. The next possible answer was “a little” which seems way too weak to reflect a serious practice of Islam.

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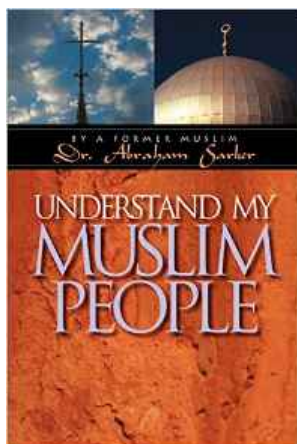
Acknowledgement: Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. Portraits of American Life Study, 2nd Wave, 2012. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com.

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Basic Religious Practices of Worldwide Muslims

More Cultural Research from Steve Cable

Between October 2011 and November 2012, Pew Research Center conducted a major survey of Muslims involving more than 30,000 face-to-face interviews in 26 countries across North Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Since Probe has been evaluating similar surveys about the beliefs and practices of Christians and other faiths in America, we wanted to analyze the data in this large survey to see how the beliefs and practices of Muslims in the eastern hemisphere relate to Christians in America. We also wanted to see how Muslim beliefs and practices varied across different regions. To do this, we divided the data into five geographic regions: North Africa, Middle East, Europe, the 'Stans (e.g. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.



To evaluate the religious practices of Muslims, a reasonable place to start would be the Five Pillars of Islam. “Muslims hope that by completing these duties of Islam, Allah will favor them and grant them entrance into heaven.”[\[1\]](#) In other words, performing these duties are necessary but not sufficient to gain the reward of eternal life in heaven. These five pillars are:

1. Declaring “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet.”
2. Praying five times each day in Arabic quoting from the Qur'an
3. Fasting during daylight hours of the month of Ramadan
4. Giving 2.5% of their income for the poor and for the cause of Islam

5. Completing the hajj, a ritual pilgrimage to Mecca

Because the hajj is a once in a lifetime event and according to the survey data is most likely to occur after the age of 60 (if at all), only the first four pillars are considered in our analysis. The results divided into age groups and regions of the world are as follows:

% Practicing Four of the Pillars of Islam					
Age	North Africa	Middle East	Eastern Europe	The 'Stans	South Asia
18 – 29	49%	41%	10%	11%	49%
30 plus	58%	57%	16%	17%	60%

As shown, the geographical groups vary significantly. The composite of all those surveyed is 40% of the respondents claim to practice these four pillars. While not miniscule, this does indicate that the vast majority of those who claim to be Muslim are not seriously attempting to gain favor with Allah by adhering to these four key pillars of the faith.

One startling thing we note from this table is that the Eastern European (e.g. Russia, Bosnia, Turkey) Muslims and those from the 'Stans do not practice the four pillars to the same degree as other areas surveyed. In those areas, less than 1 in 7 practice the four pillars, while in the other areas it is more than half of the people. In general, Eastern European Muslims and those in the 'Stans do not practice the four pillars, much less the five pillars, of Islam. Given this, one may argue that the Islam practiced in these parts of the world is not Islam at all, but rather another religion with a historical name, Islam, which may at some point in the past been the dominant religion.

The second fact that stands out in the table is the difference in practice versus age. From our earlier blog post on religious beliefs, the results showed very little difference

between those ages 18 – 29 and the rest of the respondents, but this is not the case for religious practice. In Eastern Europe and the 'Stans those over the age of 30 are more than 50% more likely to practice the four pillars than are those aged 18 to 29. In the other areas of North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, the older adults are 18% to 37% more likely to practice the key pillars of Islam. In fact, if we compare those ages 18 to 29 with those 60 and older these ratios grow to more than 150% and 31% to 50% respectively.

It appears that the younger adults are not as committed to carrying out these practices as their elders. We can only speculate on whether this difference will diminish as they get older. This difference may in fact shrink over time because, as noted earlier, there is virtually no difference in the percent of young adults and the percent of older adults who profess a Muslim worldview.

The results found for this aspect of religious practice are generally consistent with those reported for [religious beliefs](#) (i.e., a Muslim worldview). We find the majority of those who claim to be Muslim to NOT hold a Muslim worldview and do not practice the five pillars of Islam. In our next post, we will compare Muslim religious practice with Christian religious practice in the United States.

Note

1. Dr. Abraham Sarkar, *Understand My Muslim People*, page 169, Barclay Press, 2004.

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Basic Religious Beliefs of Worldwide Muslims

More Cultural Research from Steve Cable

Between October 2011 and November 2012, Pew Research Center conducted a major survey of Muslims involving more than 30,000 face-to-face interviews in 26 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. The survey asked people to describe their religious beliefs and practices, and sought to gauge respondents' knowledge of and attitudes toward other faiths, as well as some of their attitudes concerning cultural issues.

Since Probe has been commissioning and evaluating similar surveys about the beliefs and practices of Christians and other faiths in America, we wanted to analyze the data in this large survey to see how the beliefs of Muslims in the eastern hemisphere relate to Christians in America. We also wanted to see how Muslim beliefs varied across different regions. To do this, we divided the data into five geographic regions: North Africa, Middle East, Europe, the 'Stans (e.g. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

If you have read [Cultural Captives](#) or been following [my blog posts](#), you know that one of the metrics we have been following is the percentage of Americans with a Christian worldview. One survey we analyzed recently is the Portraits of American Life Study (PALS) 2012. That survey shows that American Christians holding a biblical worldview were 33% of 18- to 29-year-old self-professed evangelicals, [{1}](#) and 46% of those over 30. When we consider all professing Christians (i.e. evangelical,

mainline and Catholic), we find 20% of 18- to 29-year-olds and 32% of those over 30 hold a biblical worldview. For the PALS, the definition used for a biblical worldview is:

- 1. I definitely believe in God*
- 2. Jesus is the Son of God and physically rose from the dead*
- 3. The Bible is fully inspired by God*
- 4. Heaven exists where people live with God forever*
- 5. There is a Hell where people experience pain as punishment for their sin*
- 6. The Devil, demons, or evil spirits exist*
- 7. What is morally right or wrong should be determined by God's law*

For Muslims, using questions asked in the Pew survey, we defined a Qur'anic worldview to include the following responses:

- 1. I believe in one God, Allah, and his prophet Muhammad*
- 2. I know a great deal about the Muslim religion and its practices*
- 3. In Heaven, people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded*
- 4. In Hell, people who have led bad lives and die without being sorry are eternally punished*
- 5. I believe in angels and in jinns (spirit beings similar to demons)*
- 6. I believe Islam is the one, true faith leading to eternal life in heaven*

The results of the survey showing those Muslims who agreed to all the above points are as shown in the table below.

	North Africa	Middle East	Europe	The 'Stans	South Asia
18 – 29	33.2%	24.1%	12.3%	4.0%	28.2%

30 plus	35.3%	30.4%	11.8%	4.8%	27.5%
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What do we see in this data? First, the vast majority of Muslims living in the Eastern Hemisphere do not hold to a strong Qur'anic worldview. North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia all show about one third with a Qur'anic worldview. These numbers are much like those for a Christian worldview in the U.S. In Europe and the 'Stans, we see only about one in ten and one in twenty, respectively, hold a strong Qur'anic worldview. One might speculate that the European downturn is due to the general decline in religious interest in Europe, and the low percentage in the 'Stans is due to a lack of teaching in their heart language.[{2}](#)

In understanding these low responses, one should consider that on the whole, only about 40% of Muslims claim to know a great deal about their religion and its practices. This lack of knowledge is probably a major factor in why only about 20% of them hold a strong Qur'anic worldview. This view is consistent with my personal experience in South Asia where I found that most of the people in a Muslim country were born into their faith culture and had never considered in any depth what it really meant.

One other interesting note is that in all areas other than the Middle East, the percentage of those aged 18 to 29 with a strong Qur'anic worldview is almost identical to those over 30 years of age. In contrast, among Christians in America, only one in five of those aged 18 to 29 have a biblical worldview while one in three of those age 30 and over have a biblical worldview.

It should also be noted that among Muslims, over three out of four of them believe that Islam is the one true faith leading to eternal life. But among American Christians, only one out of five believe Jesus is the only way to receive eternal life. Even though a minority of Muslims claim to know what their religion teaches, the vast majority believe that what it

teaches is the only way to eternal life. Even though they believe it is the only way, only about one in five believe that members of their religion “have a duty to try and convert others to their religious faith.”

I imagine that many Americans think that Muslims hold to a common set of beliefs throughout the world. As we have seen from this survey, that is not the case. The majority of Muslims do not understand the basic tenets of Islam as taught in the Qur'an. Surprisingly, most of them admit it, saying that they do not know a great deal about the Muslim religion. Next week, we will look at their religious practices which tend to be more consistent than their religious beliefs.

Notes

1. Evangelicals include those associated with an evangelical denomination including historically Black Protestant churches.
2. Please note that this is only speculation on my part; there is no information in the Pew survey to enlighten us on this question.

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Crossing the Worldview Divide: Sharing Christ with Other Faiths

Christians need to introduce the gospel differently to people with different worldviews. Steve Cable provides ways to talk to Muslims, Hindus, Mormons and postmoderns.

Changing Worldview Landscape

Growing up in the sixties and seventies, I had very limited exposure to other worldviews significantly different from my own. Raised in a small town in New Mexico, I was exposed to a number of Hispanic Catholics, and I knew at least two families that were Mormons. Frankly, I never had either of those groups share their worldview with me. But, by and large, most people appeared to have a pretty conventional Christian worldview, answering the basic worldview questions as follows:

- *What about God? God is the creator and sustainer of this universe.*
- *What about man? Mankind is separated from God's provision by our sin nature.*
- *What about salvation? Jesus Christ is God's answer to our desperate need, offering redemption through faith in Him. When people die, those who have put their faith in Jesus will go to heaven while those who refuse will be relegated to hell.*
- *What about history? History is a linear progression culminating in the creation of a new heavens and new earth.*

Since leaving the college campus in 1977, I have lived in suburbs of major metropolitan cities. Over the last thirty-five years, the makeup of those suburbs has changed significantly. I worked as an electrical engineer with several Indian Hindus and Jains. I teach English as a Second Language to a group of Muslims, Hindus, Baha'is, atheists and Latin American Catholics. From 2000 to 2010, the Muslim population of my area grew by 220%. All of these groups have a worldview significantly different from my own. In sharing Christ with them, I cannot appeal to the Bible stories they learned in vacation Bible school as a child. I need to be aware that what I say is being processed through their worldview filter. So that what they hear may not be what I meant to say.



The apostle Paul was very much aware of the issue of worldview filters. While on his missionary journeys, he preached the gospel

- *in synagogues established by Jews living away from Israel, [{1}](#)*
- *in market places containing Gentiles with a common Greek worldview, [{2}](#) and*
- *in front of Greek philosophers at the forefront of creating new worldviews. [{3}](#)*

In each of these environments, he preached the same truth: Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected from the dead for our sins. But he entered that subject from a verbal starting point that made sense to the audience he was speaking to. For example, in Athens he began by drawing their attention to an idol dedicated to the unknown god and he quoted some of their poets. Was he doing this because the idol was really a Christian idol or because their poets were speaking a Christian message? Of course not. He was bridging the worldview divide between their thought patterns and those of

Judaism. Having done that, he finished by saying, "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." [\[4\]](#)

In the same way, if we want to share effectively with those from different worldviews, we need to make the effort to know how to share in a way that makes sense from their worldview perspective. We want to shake up their worldview, but we have to be able to communicate first. In the remainder of this article, we will consider the differences with and ways to share the gospel with people from four different worldview perspectives: Islam, Hindu, Mormon, and popular postmodernism.

Bridging Across to a Muslim Worldview

Islam is the second largest religion in the world with about 1.5 billion adherents or over 20% of the world population. In America, there are over 2.6 million Muslims with most of them located in major metropolitan areas accounting for 3-4% of the population in those areas. If you live in a metropolitan area, you are probably aware of several mosques in your area.

How can I share Christ with my Muslim acquaintances in a way they can understand? To answer this question, we need to understand how their worldview differs from our own and what communication issues may come into play. Let's begin by considering the four worldview questions introduced earlier:

- *What about God? Christians believe that a transcendent, loving God created the universe and mankind. Muslims believe that a transcendent, unknowable Allah created the universe and mankind.*
- *What about man? A Christian believes man is created in the image of God, but mankind is now fallen and separated from God by our sin nature. Muslims believe that, although weak*

and prone to error, man is basically good and is fully capable of obeying Allah.

- *What about salvation? For a Christian, the answer to our problem is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who provided a way for us to reunite with God through grace. Muslims must focus on good works to earn their way into heaven. They have no instruction as to what level of goodness is required. Certainly, they must pay attention to the five pillars of Islam: reciting the creed (the shahada), daily prayers, giving 2.5% of one's income to the poor or to the spread of Islam, a pilgrimage to Mecca, and fasting during Ramadan.*

- *What about history? For a Christian, the world is moving through time, not repeating itself, to reach the end God has prepared for it. For a Muslim time is a linear progression as well and it is moving forward exactly as Allah has willed.*

The key difference between our worldviews lies in the way to redemption: by faith through God's grace or as a reward for our good works.

How can you share effectively with Muslim friends and acquaintances? First, there are some important issues and confusing terms that will sidetrack your discussion in their minds. These include:

- ***The high cost:*** *in most Muslim families and societies, converting from Islam is a terrible offense, resulting in expulsion and sometimes death. Most Muslims will not enter into a conversation if they know the intent of it is to convert them to another faith.*

- ***The Trinity,*** *including Jesus as God's Son: Muslims are told that Christians worship three gods when there is only one. This area is especially problematic in thinking that God could be born to a woman and be crucified.*

- ***Belittling Mohammed** will offend most Muslims, causing them to cease listening to you.*
- ***Using corrupt Scripture** by quoting from the New Testament which they have been taught has been changed and corrupted. An interesting note on this argument for Islam and against Christianity: a study of recently discovered early copies of the Quran show that current Aramaic copies of the Quran are only consistent with the early copies 88% of the time; while similar studies of the New Testament show a 98% reliability between current translations and the earliest documents.*

Let's be clear. We are not saying that you don't need at some time to address the Trinity, the role of Mohammed as a false prophet, and veracity of Scripture. But first, you need to be able to communicate the gospel to them in a way that they will hear it.

To share with a Muslim, you must begin with prayer for your Muslim acquaintances who are captive to powerful social ties and equally powerful demonic lies. Pray that God will work to prepare their hearts. God has been working in powerful ways preparing Muslims to listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ.[\[5\]](#)

Start your conversation with their most important need. Ask them, "How can you be sure that you have done enough to get into heaven?" Listen to their thoughts on this important question. Point out that the gospels say, "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."[\[6\]](#) Are they that good? God loves us and knows that we cannot do it on our own. For this reason Jesus came to pay our penalty through His death and bring us into God's household through His resurrection.

In some Islamic countries, a good way to begin the discussion is to look at what the Koran says about Jesus to draw their attention to the specialness of Jesus. If they show an interest, you move quickly to the Bible as the true source of information on Jesus and eternal life. For more information on

this approach, check out *The Camel Training Manual* by Kevin Greeson.

Bridging Across to a Hindu Worldview

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world with about 900 million adherents. However, there are only about 1.2 million Hindus in the United States, about 0.4% of the population. Since they are mostly located in high tech, urban and suburban areas, the percentages are much higher in those areas, closer to 2% and growing. If you live in a major metropolitan area, you have probably seen one or more temples in your area.

How does the Hindu worldview compare with a Christian worldview on the four worldview questions introduced earlier?

- *What about God? The Hindu believes that the universe is eternal and the concept of an impersonal god is contained in the universe.*
- *What about man? Hindus believe that our current state is a temporary illusion and our goal is to merge into the Brahman, the god nature of the universe.*
- *What about salvation? For a Christian the answer to our problem is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who provided a way for us to become reunited with God. This salvation can begin now and will be fully realized in heaven. For a Hindu, the answer to our problem is to live a life in such a way as to merge with Brahman at death. Unfortunately, the vast majority will be reincarnated to suffer again as another living creature.*
- *What about history? For a Hindu, the universe is eternal and history repeats itself cyclically.*

As you can see, the worldview of a Hindu varies significantly

from that of a Christian on almost every point. Salvation for a Hindu is to reach a state where they no longer exist. They are integrated into the universal god. Both Hindus and Christians believe that mankind faces the problem of being born into a world full of suffering and hardship. For Hindus, there are three paths that could lead one out of this situation into oneness: 1) performing appropriate good works, 2) reaching a state of knowledge that pierces through the deception of this existence, and 3) devoting oneself to service of one of the many gods.

Being aware of these worldview differences can sensitize us to some of the communication problems in sharing with a Hindu. First, when you share with them that Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth in the flesh, they will probably agree with you wholeheartedly. This is exactly the response I received when sharing with a Hindu couple at a Starbucks in an exclusive shopping area. After all, there are many forms of god in the Hindu pantheon. Just because someone is a god, doesn't mean I should leave off worshipping my current gods to worship this new god exclusively.

How can I share with a Hindu in a way that helps be clearly explain the gospel in the context of their worldview? I would suggest two important aspects.

First, you can begin by asking this question: What if there were only one God who transcended His creation? We are not created to be subsumed back into God, but rather we were created in His image to be able to exist with and to worship our Creator. Our Creator does not want us to worship other gods which we have made up to satisfy our desire to understand our world. If you cannot get a Hindu to understand this basic premise, then other things you tell them about the gospel will be misinterpreted because of their existing worldview filter.

Second, you can tell them that you agree that the problems of this world can be seen in the pain and suffering of life on

this planet. Man has tried for thousands of years and yet the pain and suffering continue. This state of despair is the direct result of man's rejection of the love of God. We can never do enough in this life through good works, special knowledge, or serving false gods to bridge the gap back to God. God was the only one who could fix this problem and it cost Him great anguish to achieve it through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[\[7\]](#)

Bridging Across to a Mormon Worldview

There are only about 15 million Mormons worldwide, but almost 45% of them live in the United States. They make up about 2% of the population of the United States. Compared to Muslims and Hindus, their U.S. population has remained fairly constant as a percentage basis over the last few decades. Because of their young adult missionary teams, many Americans have had some exposure to the evangelistic message of Mormonism.

How do Mormons compare with Christians in answering the four worldview questions introduced on day one? First, we need to understand that not all Mormons believe the same things. The president of the Mormons can introduce new doctrine which may contradict prior doctrine. One prominent example is the Mormon doctrine on blacks which was changed in 1978. The statements below represent my understanding as to the current orthodox Mormon position:

- *What about God? Where a Christian believes that God is eternal and transcendent, Mormons believe God was once a man like us and ascended to godhood*
- *What about man? Where a Christian believes that man is born in sin and separated from God, Mormons believe men are born in sin, but have the potential to become gods in their own right*
- *What about salvation? Where Christians believe in*

salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, Mormons believe salvation comes from putting our faith in Jesus and performing good works. The good works are intended to pay back Jesus for the price He paid for us. In addition, Jesus is not eternal but was born to God and one of His spirit wives.

- What about history? Both Christians and Mormons believe that history is linear, but Mormons believe it is leading to a day when they could be gods ruling their own planets.*

Even though some would like to consider Mormonism as a branch of Christianity, one can see there are significant differences between the beliefs of Mormons and Christians.

In sharing your faith with a Mormon, there are terms and concepts you need to watch out for as they will be misinterpreted. First, you are relying on the Bible as the complete and only direct revelation from God. When you do that, you need to be aware that they will assume anything you say that they don't agree with is countered in the Book of Mormon or the Pearl of Great Price. Point out to them that the clear meanings of the Bible don't need reinterpretation. Also, you can tell them that the Bible written between 2,000 and 4,000 years ago has been consistently supported by archaeological findings while the Book of Mormon written 175 years ago has no historical or archaeological support.

When talking about God the Father, Jesus, Satan, and man, be sure to make it clear that God and Jesus are one kind of being, the transcendent God of the universe, that Satan is a created angelic being, and that men are created different from the angels. A Mormon will use those terms, but will normally group all four of those beings as made basically the same.

Be leery of expecting to win over Mormon missionaries on mission. If they are sharing with you, of course, you should try to share with them. However, normally they are too focused

on fulfilling their mission to really listen to someone else. It is best to share with them when you introduce the topic.

In sharing with a Mormon, you may want to consider how good one would have to be to earn their way to eternal life. After all, Jesus said, "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." If you can admit you are not perfect, then the only way to redemption is through God's grace.

Some of them may feel that in the matters of the church, they are keeping the faith in a sinless manner. What if a future president changes some criteria of behavior and you find out that you have now been sinning for years? Does it make sense to you that God's criteria for righteousness should change?[\[8\]](#)

Bridging Across to a Postmodern Worldview

Postmoderns may not seem as exotic as some of the world religions we have considered to this point. But they have a distinctly different worldview than do Christians and are the largest segment of non-Christians in today's America. An actual postmodern believes that absolute truth, if it does exist at all, is impossible to find. A Christian believes that Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth and the life" and that "truth comes through Jesus Christ."[\[9\]](#) Jesus is truth applicable to every man in every situation. What do we need to understand about postmodernism to be better equipped to share the truth with them?

Popular postmodernity has a broadly defined identity, but they should resonate with this definition: postmodernity is "incredulity toward metanarratives."[\[10\]](#) In other words, they reject the possibility of anyone knowing truth about the basic questions of life; e.g., our worldview questions.

As before, we will begin with our four worldview questions. Keep in mind that we just said they don't think anyone can know the truth about these types of questions.

- *What about God?* Postmoderns believe that we can't really know where we came from but we probably evolved from nothing over millions of years.
- *What about man?* Postmoderns believe that humans are neither good nor bad and are shaped by the society around them which defines what is good and bad for them.
- *What about salvation?* For a Christian, the answer to our dilemma and hope for eternal life is the death and resurrection of Jesus, God's Son. For a postmodern, each group has their own answer that helps them get through the hard times of life, but none of the answers can be counted on as true. What is important is not their truth, but their helpfulness in coping with life's challenges.
- *What about history?* For a postmodern, history is linear moving forward to whatever happens next. Hopefully, the future will be better than the past, but there is not grand plan or purpose for mankind. In any case, if there is a grand plan, we can't know it with any certainty.

It is hard to present Jesus Christ as the source of all grace and truth to someone who denies the existence of truth or at least our ability to know it. As Dave Kinnaman writes in his book *UnChristian*, "Even if you are able to weave a compelling logical argument, young people will nod, smile, and ignore you."[\[11\]](#) Constructing a rational argument for Christ may not be the place to start. As Drew Dyck reported hearing from one postmodern, "I don't really believe in all that rationality. Reason and logic come from the Western philosophical tradition. I don't think that's the only way to find truth." Dyck concluded, "They're not interested in philosophical proofs for God's existence or in the case for the resurrection."[\[12\]](#)

To begin the process, we need to develop their trust; be their friend. Possibly, invite them to serve alongside you in

ministering to the needs of others, exposing them to the ministry of Christ to the world around them.

The postmodern should be interested in your personal story, the things you have found that work for you. But don't fall into the traditional testimony rut (i.e., I was bad, I was saved, now I am wonderful); make it real by sharing real issues you have dealt with. Then convey the gospel story in a winsome way, emphasizing Jesus concern for the marginalized around Him, realizing the gospel is a metanarrative providing a universal answer to a universal problem.

Share with them why you are compelled to commit to a universal truth. I cannot live my life without making a commitment to what I believe to be the Truth. Saying "it doesn't matter" is basically giving up on eternity. Admit that claiming to know the truth about God, creation, and eternity is crazy from man's perspective. It can only be true if it is truly revealed by God. From my perspective, Jesus is the Truth.[{13}](#)

We've taken a very brief look at four distinct worldviews, different from a Christian worldview and different from each other. A simple understanding of those worldviews helps us avoid confusing terminology. We can focus on bridging the gap from their fundamental misunderstanding to faith in Christ. Only God working through the Holy Spirit can bring them to true faith, but we can play an important role in making the gospel understandable when filtered through their worldview.[{14}](#)

Notes

1. Acts 17:1-2, 17 for example
2. Acts 17:17, 19:9ff for example.
3. Acts 17:18-32
4. Acts 17:30-31
5. See the web articles "[Breaching the Barriers to Islam](#)" by Steve Cable and "[Islam in the Modern World](#)" by Kerby Anderson.

Both can be found at www.probe.org.

6. Matthew 5:48

7. For more information on Hinduism, you can access the article "[Hinduism](#)" by Rick Rood at www.probe.org.

8. For more information on Mormonism, please access "[Understanding Our Mormon Neighbors](#)" by Don Closson and "[Examining the Book of Mormon](#)" by Patrick Zukeran. Both can be found at www.probe.org.

9. John 1:17

10. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans., Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

11. Dave Kinnaman, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan), 2007.

12. Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith . . . And How to Bring Them Back*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2010

13. See the article "[The Answer is the Resurrection](#)" by Steve Cable at www.probe.org

14. For more information on postmodernism, you can access "[Truth Decay](#)" by Kerby Anderson and "[Worldviews Part 2](#)" by Rick Wade at www.probe.org.

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“Why Do Muslims and Christians Fight and Kill Each Other?”

Dear Mr. Closson,

Thank you for your information about Islam and Christianity. But I want to know, why have Muslims and Christians always fought and killed each other? What factors are involved?

The easy answer is sin. As Paul says in the book of Romans, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." A more complex answer is that the two world religions have mutually exclusive truth claims about the nature of God and the person of Jesus Christ. For one to be true the other must be false. However, individual Christians who encounter opposing truth claims should heed the words of Peter and share the hope we have in Christ with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). The New Testament gives no justification for doing violence to any human being because of his or her beliefs. Our example is Christ, who humbled Himself even to the point of dying on the cross rather than to strike back at his enemies.

The example of Muhammad is quite different. He was a military leader and was actively engaged in having his enemies assassinated. The Koran teaches that those who leave the faith are to be killed, as are those of other faiths who reject the authority of Islamic rule. The aggressiveness with which Islam conquered previously Christian territory in the eighth century pretty much guaranteed a difficult relationship between the two people.

Please don't take this as an excuse for unjust violence done in the name of Christ. Nor does what is written here take into account the possible right of nations or governments to protect their people from outside invasion or violence. What I am mainly talking about is the response of individuals to the existence of opposing truth claims.

Thanks for the thoughtful question!

Sincerely,

Don Closson

Christians to Muslims and Jews: “Crusades Were Wrong”

Written by Rusty Wright

Why would modern Christians retrace the steps of the eleventh-century Crusaders? To apologize for the atrocities of their ancestors.

Their “Reconciliation Walk,” which ends this summer in Jerusalem on the 900th anniversary of the Crusaders’ storming of the city, has garnered intriguing response across Europe and the Middle East. Representatives of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Judaism, Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy will attend the July 15 Jerusalem event.

The Crusades’ outrages have long seemed one of history’s ugly abscesses. The thought of killing to reclaim a “holy land” in “the name of Christ” seems a sick farce.

The Crusaders’ committed horrible atrocities, raping, murdering and plundering Jews, Muslims and other Christians en route to Palestine. When they reached Jerusalem in 1099, blood flowed freely. Jews fled to a synagogue and Muslims to a mosque. Crusaders burned the synagogue, killing about 6,000 Jews, and stormed the mosque, butchering an estimated 30,000 Muslims. They left a legacy of fear and contempt in the Muslim world.

That’s why when Reconciliation Walk leader Lynn Green entered a Muslim gathering at a Turkish mosque in Cologne, Germany on Easter 1996, he didn’t know what to expect. He was in the city

where the medieval Crusades began in 1096 with other Christians determined to retrace the steps of the eleventh-century Crusaders and apologize to Muslims and Jews for the horrors committed against their forebears in the name of Christ.

The Imam's (leading teacher's) public response was startling. "When I heard the nature of your message," he told the crowd, "I was astonished and filled with hope. I thought to myself, 'Whoever had this idea must have had an epiphany.'" In further conversation, the Imam told Green that many Muslims were starting to examine their sins against Christians and Jews but haven't known what to do, and that the Christians' apology was a good example for Muslims to follow.

125 Christians formally presented the "Reconciliation Walk" statement of apology in Turkish, German and English to about 200 Muslim disciples at the Cologne mosque. Loud, sustained applause followed. The Imam, the most senior imam in Europe, sent copies of the statement to 600 mosques throughout Europe. The Walk was off to a promising start.

The 2000-mile, three-year walk across Europe, through the Balkans and Turkey and south to Jerusalem has sought to build bridges of understanding and to turn back over 900 years of animosity among the world's three major religions. Response has been surprisingly warm. Audiences at synagogues and mosques have lauded the gesture, often in tears, and encouraged its proclamation. Nationwide press coverage and government protective escorts in Turkey brought crowds into the village streets to receive the walkers enthusiastically.

The Reconciliation Walk Message says the Crusaders "betrayed the name of Christ by conducting themselves in a manner contrary to His wishes and character. ...(By lifting up the Cross) they corrupted its true meaning of reconciliation, forgiveness and selfless love." The messengers "deeply regret the atrocities committed in the name of Christ by our

predecessors. We are simple followers of Jesus Christ who have found forgiveness from sin and life in Him," they explain. "We renounce greed, hatred and fear, and condemn all violence done in the name of Jesus Christ."

The walkers cite Jesus' biblical affirmation that He came to "proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed."

Observers have found the Walk absorbing. International School of Theology church history professor Dr. J. Raymond Albrektson called it "a commendable and necessary venture, and better late than never."

Duke University Professor of Religion Eric Meyers, who is Jewish, commented, "Reconciliation between Christianity and the Jewish people or Christianity and the Islamic world is certainly a laudable and noble aim." Meyers hoped that what he called "God's universalistic vision" would not be overlooked.

George Washington University Professor of Islamic Studies Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a Muslim, remarked, "Every effort by both sides to bring Christians and Muslims closer together and to unify them before the formidable forces of irreligion and secularism which wield inordinate power today must be supported by people of faith in both worlds."

Apologizing for 900-year-old sins won't restore the lives lost. But in a modern world where religious differences can prompt turf wars and ethnic cleansing, maybe it can provide an inspiring example to emulate.

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What is Islam? – And a Christian Response

The history, current status, basic beliefs and practices of Islam are surveyed; as well, a Christian response to Islam is offered.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

It's not every day that religion appears as a front page story in today's newspapers, particularly on a regular basis. But over the past 20 years one religion has made the front page perhaps more than any other . . . the religion of Islam. Islam claims up to one billion followers worldwide. It is not only the fastest growing religion in the world, but its influence touches virtually every area of life—not only the spiritual, but the political and economic as well. What is more, its influence is being felt closer and closer to home. There are now up to 5 million Muslims in the U.S., and over 1,100 mosques or Islamic centers.

What does Islam teach? How are the teachings of Islam similar to those of Christianity? How are they different? What should our attitude be toward Islam, and toward those who follow this powerful religion? These are some of the questions we want to address in this essay.

The History of Islam

First, we want to take a look back at the history of Islam. Islam was founded in the early seventh century by Muhammed. When he was 40 years of age, in A.D. 610, Muhammed claimed to be receiving messages from God. These messages were later compiled and recorded in the Koran—Islam's holy book.

About this same time, Muhammed began preaching against the

greed, economic oppression, and idolatry that plagued the Arab peoples. He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities. Though his message was initially rejected, by the year 630 he had succeeded in gaining control of Mecca, the economic and religious center of the Arabian peninsula.

Though Muhammed died two years later, the religious/political movement he founded rapidly spread throughout the Arab world, and far beyond. By A.D. 750, the Muslim empire spanned from Spain in the west to India in the east. In the centuries that followed, Islam penetrated deeper into Africa and Asia, extending as far as the Philippines. During its "golden era" Islam claimed some of the world's finest philosophers and mathematicians. It was during this time also that Islam and Christianity clashed as a result of the Crusades to reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims.

Beginning around 1500, and accelerating after the industrial revolution of the 1700-1800s, Islam felt the increasing influence of the European powers. Eventually, large portions of the Muslim world were colonized by European countries. This political and economic domination by Europe continued until the end of WWII, after which Muslim countries began to attain political independence. With the discovery and development of the vast oil reserves in many Muslim lands, economic independence suddenly came within reach also. At last, Islam had in its grasp both the opportunity and the resources to reassert itself as a powerful force in the world. After being on the defensive for many centuries, Islam was now on the offensive!

The Current Status of Islam

At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it's important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. Though all Muslims draw their inspiration

from Muhammed and the Koran, there are many identifiable groups and movements within Islam.

The most obvious division is that between Sunni and Shia Islam. The Sunnis (who compose about 90% of all Muslims) draw their name from the fact that they look both to the Koran and to the "sunna" in establishing proper Muslim conduct. The "sunna" is the behavior or example of Muhammed and of the early Muslim community. Of course, there are many subdivisions among the Sunnis, but they all identify themselves as Sunni.

The other major group of Muslims are the Shi'ites (who compose about 10% of all Muslims and reside mainly in Iraq and Iran). The word Shi'ite means "partisan," and refers to the fact that Shi'ites are "partisans of Ali." Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammed and one of the early Caliphs or successors to Muhammed as leader of the Muslim people. Shi'ites believe that the leader of Islam should be among the descendants of Ali, whom they believe possess a special divine anointing for this task. The last of these divinely appointed leaders, or "imams" most Shi'ites believe to be in "hiding" in another realm of existence. The Ayatollah Khomeini was believed to have been a spokesman for this "hidden imam."

A third group that should be mentioned are the Sufis—those Muslims (among both Sunni and Shia) who seek a mystical experience of God, rather than a merely intellectual knowledge of Him, and who also are given to a number of superstitious practices.

In addition to these divisions within Islam, mention must also be made of attitudes among Muslims toward their contact with the Western world in modern times. Though the situation is much more complex than we are capable of dealing with in this pamphlet, two broad trends have been evident within Islam.

One trend is toward some degree of accommodation and

adjustment to the West and to modern ways of life. This has manifested itself most obviously in countries like Turkey, which have instituted largely secular forms of government and Western ways of life, while maintaining Islamic religious practices.

The opposite trend is toward a return to a more traditional approach to Islamic life and a rejection of Western and modern ways. The most extreme expression of this trend is manifest in the various forms of Islamic fundamentalism, which insist on the implementation of Muslim law (called the Sharia) in every area of life. Fundamentalists have been most successful in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan; but they are active in virtually every Muslim country, at times resorting to violence and terrorism in attempting to implement their agenda.

In understanding this potent religious and political movement, it is important to understand the various divisions and attitudes within Islam and the basic beliefs at Islam's core.

The Basic Beliefs of Islam

Though the beliefs of Muslims worldwide are about as diverse as those among Christians, there are six basic articles of faith common to nearly all Muslims.

The first of these is that there is no God but Allah. The pre-Islamic Arabs were polytheists. But Muhammed succeeded in leading them to devote themselves solely to the chief God of the pantheon whom they called Allah (which simply means God). To worship or attribute deity to any other being is considered *shirk* or blasphemy. The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power.

The second article of faith is belief in angels and jinn. Jinn

are spirit beings capable of both good and evil actions and of possessing human beings. Above the jinn in rank are the angels of God. Two of them are believed to accompany every Muslim, one on the right to record his good deeds, and one on the left to record his evil deeds.

The third article is belief in God's holy books, 104 of which are referred to in the Koran. Chief among these are the Law given to Moses, the Psalms given to David, the Gospel (or Injil) given to Jesus, and the Koran given to Muhammed. Each of these is conceived to have communicated the same basic message of God's will to man. Obvious discrepancies between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and the Koran (particularly with reference to Jesus and Muhammed) were accounted for by Muhammed in his suggestion that the Bible had been tampered with by Jews and Christians.

The fourth article of faith is belief in God's prophets, through whom Allah appealed to man to follow His will as revealed in His holy books. There is no agreement as to how many prophets there have been—some say hundreds of thousands. Among them were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. But all agree that Muhammed was God's final and supreme prophet—the “seal” of the prophets. Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshiping him.

The fifth article of faith is belief in the absolute predestinating will of Allah. Though some Muslims have modified this doctrine somewhat, the Koran seems to support the idea that all things (both good and evil) are the direct result of God's will. Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so.

The sixth and final article of faith is belief in the resurrection and final judgment. At the end of history, God will judge the works of all men. Those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will enter into paradise (pictured in

rather sensual terms). The rest will be consigned to hell. The paramount feature of Islamic belief, aside from its strong monotheism, is that it is a religion of human works. One's position with regard to Allah is determined by his success in keeping His laws.

The Basic Practices of Islam

Now we want to focus on the most important of those works. These are summarized in what are usually called the "Five Pillars of Islam."

The first pillar is recitation of the creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet." It is commonly held that to recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses is to constitute oneself a Muslim—one in submission to God. Of course, the word Islam simply means "submission."

The second pillar is the regular practice of prayers. Sunni Muslims are required to recite specific prayers accompanied by prescribed motions five times daily. (Shi'ites do so only three times a day.) All male Muslims are also enjoined to meet for community prayer (and sermon) each Friday at noon.

The third pillar is almsgiving. Born an orphan himself, Muhammed was deeply concerned for the needy. The Koran requires that 2.5% of one's income be given to the poor or to the spread of Islam.

The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast during the month of Ramadan (the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar, during which Muhammed is said to have received the first of his revelations from God, and during which he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina). During this month, Muslims in good health are required to forego all food and liquid during daylight hours. This fast promotes the Muslim's self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.

The fifth pillar is the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. If possible, every Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life. It can be made properly only on a few days during the last month of the Muslim year. The Hajj promotes the ideas of worldwide unity and equality among Muslims. But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin.

A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means “exertion” or “struggle” in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or “holy war.” The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!

Muslims around the world look to these pillars for guidance in shaping their religious practice. But in addition to these pillars, there are numerous laws and traditions contained in the Hadith—literature that was compiled after the completion of the Koran, that reportedly contains the example and statements of Muhammed on many topics. Because the laws of the Hadith and Koran cover virtually every area of life, Islam has well been referred to as an all-encompassing way of life, as well as a religion.

A Christian Perspective on Islam

At this point it is appropriate to offer a brief evaluation of Islam from a Christian perspective.

At the outset, it must be stated that there is much in Islam that the Christian can affirm. Among the most significant Islamic doctrines that can be genuinely affirmed by the Christian are its belief in one God, its recognition of Jesus as the virgin born, sinless prophet and messiah of God, and its expectation of a future resurrection and judgment.

There are, however, some very significant areas of difference. We will mention just a few. First, the Muslim perception of God is by no means the same as that revealed in the Bible. Islam portrays God as ultimately unknowable. In fact, in the Koran, Allah reveals His will, but He never reveals Himself. Neither is He ever portrayed as a Father to His people, as He is in the Bible.

Second, though Jesus is presented as a miracle working prophet and messiah, and even without sin, Islam denies that He is the Son of God or Savior of the world. Indeed, it is denied that Jesus ever died at all, least of all for the sins of the world.

Third, though mankind is depicted as weak and prone to error, Islam denies that man is a sinner by nature and in need of a Savior, as the Bible so clearly teaches. People are capable of submitting to God's laws and meriting his ultimate approval. According to Islam, man's spiritual need is not for a savior but for guidance.

This leads to the fact that since in Islam, acceptance by God is something we must earn by our works, it cannot possibly provide the sense of security that can be found in the grace of God as taught in the Bible.

Many of us will find opportunities to befriend Muslim neighbors, co-workers, or friends. As we do, we should be aware of some of the barriers that exist between Muslims and Christians, due to past and current animosities.

The attitude of many Muslims toward Christianity and toward the West is colored by the history of conflict that has found expression in the Crusades of Medieval times, European domination and colonialism, as well as Western support for Zionism in most recent times. We must allow the love of God to overcome our own fear and defensiveness and to penetrate these barriers.

In the past several years many Muslims have been deeply impressed by the compassion shown by Westerners (and particularly the United States) toward Muslim countries that have endured severe hardship. This kind of compassion can be shown on an individual level as well. As we do, we can then invite our Muslim friends to join us in a study of the New Testament, which reveals the only source of acceptance before God in His love and grace, expressed through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ and His gift of the Holy Spirit.

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