



Spring 2005 *GOstudents.net* Bible Study

Reaching Out to Muslims

Materials:

- *GOstudents.net* Download Video: *Islam*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *GOstudents.net* Group Activity for “Reaching Out to Muslims” for each student
- A chalkboard, whiteboard, overhead projector or large sheet of paper on which to write
- Optional: Printouts of the *GOstudents.net* article about Islam. You’ll find it through the Beliefs section of *GOstudents.net* by clicking on “World Religions” on the left side of the page. (Or click this link in your PDF document: <http://www.gostudents.net/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=ejINI5PNKpG&b=317034&ct=366822>)

Group Activity:

Hand out copies of the Group Activity to each student. Explain that today’s study will focus on reaching out to Muslims, followers of the religion called Islam. To begin, ask your group to work individually to answer True or False for each of the eight questions on the quiz about Muslims. They won’t be required to show their answers to anyone and the page is theirs to keep.

After they’ve finished, ask how confident they are about their answers. Do they feel like they know much about Islam? Would they be comfortable talking to someone who followed Islam about their own faith in Jesus Christ? Walk through each of the True/False questions to help your students gain some basic knowledge about Muslims.

1. *All followers of Islam, called Muslims, are Arabs.*

False. Like Christians, Muslims can be of any ethnic background and from any country on earth. It’s true that many Arabs are Muslims, and Arabic is the language of the Muslim Scriptures, called the Qur’an. However, the largest Muslim country in the world is actually Indonesia.

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2. *All Muslims are terrorists—or sympathetic to terrorists.*

False. Many Muslims are totally opposed to the use of violence and terrorism and deeply saddened about what



has been done in the name of their god and religion. The Qur'an teaches peaceful tolerance of those who don't follow Islam. In fact, many Muslims suffer unfair treatment because they are falsely associated with terrorists.

3. All Muslims are radical fundamentalists.

False. It is true that many Muslims hold firmly to their convictions, but it would be unfair to call most Muslims "radical fundamentalists." In the same way, evangelical Christians are sometimes labeled "extremists" or "right wing fundamentalists." Those labels aren't helpful to us or to mainstream, nonviolent Muslims.

4. All Muslims hate Jews and Christians.

False. Again, many Muslims hold to the teaching of their holy book, the Qur'an, that Christians and Jews should be allowed to worship as they wish. In this country and other nations of the world, many Muslims enjoy friendships with Jews, Christians and people of other faiths.

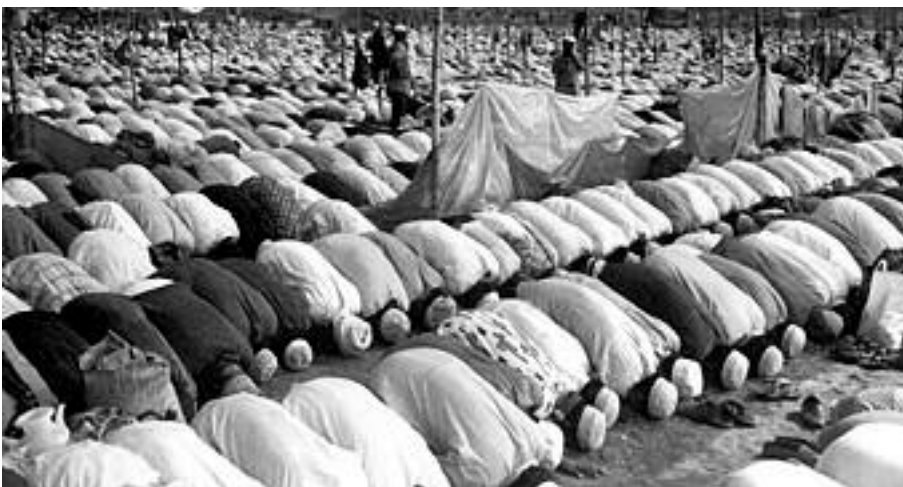
5. Islam is just another valid way to get to heaven and be with God forever.

False. We do need to be careful not to treat Muslims unfairly or falsely label them. Especially in a time of war in which many Muslims are shown on the news opposing the West, we need to remember that we're called to love people of all religions. However, as Christians, we're absolutely convinced of Jesus' teaching in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (HCSB). Muslims don't follow Jesus, and they can't get to God without Him.

6. Muslims never become Christians, and Christians shouldn't try to lead them to Christ.

False. Many Muslims have converted to Christianity, and many Christian missionaries focus their work on reaching out to Muslims in North America and around the world.

7. Followers of Islam are created in God's image, are loved by God, and need to trust in Jesus to experience salvation.



True. Of course. But some people forget these facts when they become blinded by hatred toward people of a certain race or belief system.

8. Muslims who convert to Christianity often pay a high price for making that choice.

True. Some Muslim families totally reject members that convert to Christianity. In fact, Muslims sometimes receive

harsh persecution for the choice to trust in Jesus. It's important to remember that for a Muslim, becoming a Christian is a weighty and costly decision.

Video:

Play the video *Islam*, produced by the North American Mission Board. It's 2 minutes, 47 seconds long. Ask your students to pay attention to this brief clip that explains the basic beliefs of Islam and the need to reach out to Muslims with the grace, love and mercy of Jesus.

Three Keys to Reaching Out to Muslims

As we've seen in this video, Islam is one of the world's three major religions. And practicing Muslims can be found in the majority of world's communities, including most areas of North America. As Christians, we're called to love all of our neighbors by sharing the reality of Jesus Christ both in how we live together and in describing our faith. Today, we'll look at three key elements to sharing Jesus with our Muslim neighbors.

1. Be loving and respectful.

Ask a student to read 1 Peter 3:15-16 out loud to the class. Here it is from the Holman Christian Standard Bible for your convenience: "Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. However, do this with gentleness and respect, keeping your conscience clear."

Explain the following:

Right now, Arabs and Muslims in North America are facing some tough times. For one, no matter what their political views, they are often treated with suspicion or outright racism. In an era of war, some security precautions are understandable but hatred, unkindness and discrimination should not be our response toward any people group. It's even worse when that hatred and unkindness comes from so-called "Christians."

As Christians, we don't like it when movies or TV shows make us all out to be abortion clinic bombers or "extremists." It's no better when it happens to Arabs and Muslims. Instead, Christians should be the people Muslims can count on to be understanding, loving and respectful. After all, that's how Jesus treated people.

Peter taught his fellow Christ-followers who were being persecuted to always be ready to tell the truth about Jesus, but not to do it in a way that's "in your face" or motivated by



anger. Why would we ever deliver the good news about God’s love in an angry or insulting way? Instead, he said we should always be respectful and gentle in our approach.

If you have an opportunity to talk to a Muslim friend or family member about Jesus, you’ll get a lot further if you’re ready to do as much listening as talking. Ask questions. Pay attention to the answers. Be patient when explaining what you believe. Don’t insult anyone’s intelligence, family background or race. The key is found in treating others the way we want to be treated, even those who disagree strongly with our faith in Jesus.



2. Put out the “Welcome” sign.

Many of us will never have a conversation with someone of a different ethnic or religious background because we always have our “Closed” sign up. We avoid situations that might require interacting with people different from us. Or when a conversation with a mixed group turns to religious issues, we change the topic or walk away. It’s understandable to be nervous about potentially confrontational situations, but you can’t share Jesus with people if you never make yourself available to have that conversation.

Jesus, of course, was the expert at putting out the “Welcome” sign for people of different backgrounds and beliefs. In fact, John 4 describes a time when he broke the traditions of His own culture to make Himself available to talk to a woman with different beliefs.

The people of Samaria shared a common background with the people of Israel, but they were the ancestors of those who had intermarried with foreigners. So they were treated badly and were separated from the mainstream of Israel’s society. Most Jews would go far out of their way just to avoid going through Samaria because, in part, of the bad blood between the two peoples. But Jesus knew they needed the truth as much as anybody else. So He walked right into their lands.

Read John 4:4-9 out loud to your group. Ask them to notice some important points: 1) Jesus started this conversation; 2) He used their small talk about water to point the woman to the truth; 3) He was not afraid of what others would think, even though He knew His disciples would be surprised upon their return to find Him talking to a Samaritan woman (verse 27).

You can put out the “Welcome” sign to conversations with Muslims by treating them with kindness, paying attention when they talk, asking questions about their beliefs and including them in social activities. Of course, you might have to go out of your way—or into places you’re not expected—to get in a position to have those conversations.

3. Emphasize God's grace through Jesus.

As we saw in the video, the teachings of Islam and Christianity have a lot in common. We both believe there is only one, true God. We both believe in right and wrong. We both follow our understanding of God by faith. However, there's one huge difference: Muslims believe they must earn salvation by their own works—and even then they can't be completely sure they'll make it to “paradise.”

Of course, Christians believe we could never possibly do enough good works to earn our salvation and live with God forever in heaven. We understand that our sin dooms us to hell. The difference with Christianity is we believe God made a way through Jesus for us to be saved—in spite of ourselves.

Muslims who have converted to Christianity describe the relief in letting go of works as a way to earn God's favor. Legalistically following the rules of Islam is a lifelong burden for Muslims. Those who grasp that Jesus carried their burden of sin and paid it off completely, offering the free gift of salvation to those who will accept it, catch a glimpse of the freedom of Christianity.

Three great verses to share with Muslims, if you get an opportunity, are the following. [Ask three students to read them out loud as you talk about them.]

John 14:6: Jesus could not have been merely a great prophet, as Islam teaches. He claimed to be the Son of God and the only way to the Father. As C.S. Lewis explained, if Jesus was not God's only Son, He had to be lying about who He was or He had to be crazy. Either way, how could a liar or a lunatic be a great prophet? The only other option is that He was actually God's Son.

John 3:16: Jesus was, in fact, God's gift to humans so that we could receive salvation in heaven forever with Him. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of our sin. His resurrection proved God's power in Him. His promise is that we can be sure we're headed for heaven.

Ephesians 2:8-10: Salvation cannot be earned. It is a gift. Even our best works are not enough to cover for our sinful state. Christians do believe in doing good works (verse 10), but not as a way to earn our salvation. Instead, those works are our way of fulfilling God's purpose for us here on earth. They give us a way to express our love back to Him for the gift of salvation He has already given us.



Conclusion:

Close in prayer, asking God to send workers out to share the truth of Jesus with Muslims in your community and around the world. Ask Him to help each of you to be ready and willing to share the reason you put your whole hope in Jesus for salvation instead of in your good works. Ask Him to help Christians to remember to treat Muslims and Arabs with love and respect, as Jesus would.

Remind your students to check out *GOstudents.net* for more info on reaching out to Muslims or people of other world religions.



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