

Understanding and Responding to Islamic Terrorism

Lesson 8: Biblical Responses to Islamic Terrorism

Lesson Outline

- Problematic Responses
- Interacting with Moderate Muslims
- Practical Responses
- The Evangelistic Response
- Proclaiming the *Imago Dei*

Problematic Responses

- What are problematic responses?
 - Inappropriate and unhelpful
 - Often a result of ignorance
 - Sometimes come from deep-rooted prejudice
 - Some are easily dismissed while some are quite offensive

Reality check: all of us can be guilty of these responses

Problematic Responses

Problematic Response #1: Fear of All Muslims

- The fear of all Muslims because of the actions of a few
 - News outlets report terrorist attacks predominantly
 - Rarely do we hear stories about Muslims promoting peace, challenging Islamic extremism, or advocating for the victims of violence.
- Muslim neighbors suddenly become suspected terrorists
 - Paralyzing fear for Christians
 - Avoidance of interaction and engagement
 - Avoidance of building relationships

Problematic Responses

Problematic Response #2: Conclude that All Muslims Are Terrorists

- All Muslims are terrorists, regardless of their respective country of origin, language, culture, specific doctrinal beliefs, or personal views on Islamic extremism.
- What is wrong with this assumption?
 - It is not supported by statistics
 - Islamic extremism represents between 1% and 3% of Muslims
 - That's roughly 40 million Muslims at most
 - There are around 1.2 billion Muslims in the world
 - It is offensive to Muslims
 - Unfounded claims
 - Slanderous accusations

Problematic Responses

Problematic Response #3: Hatred and Condemnation

- Islam is the problem and Muslims are the enemy
 - Some expressions of Islam kill thousands of people
 - Muslims must deserve eternity in Hell for following this evil and violent religion
- Should Christians condemn Muslims?
 - "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-45)
 - Bless those who persecute you (Rom. 12:14, 17)
 - We were wicked, but are now forgiven (Eph. 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-9)
- Condemnation reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the Gospel

Problematic Responses

Problematic Response #4: Ignoring Multiple Motivating Factors

- Denial of the fact that Islamic terrorism is often a result of a myriad of motivating factors
 - Only Religious motivations
 - Only Political, social, economic factors
 - Both extremes are problematic.
 - Islamic terrorism is often a result of multiple influences
- Muslims around the world suffer socially and economically
- Past politics makes the US an “enemy” to some Muslims
- A legitimate presence of problematic texts in Muslim sources

Problematic Responses

Problematic Response #5: Dismissal of Moderate Muslims

- Denying the presence of moderate Islam
 - The vast majority of Islamic religious expression around the world
 - Moderate (and often modern) interpretations of Islamic sources
- Rejecting the opinions and efforts of Moderate Muslims
 - Peaceful citizens trying to better this world
 - Many take active roles in opposing terrorism
 - Many support democracy and modernism

Interacting with Moderate Muslims

Recognize Moderate Muslims

Appreciate the Voices Against Violent Islam

Call for a United Global Response

- We see a few Muslims denounce terrorism
- We have yet to see a global movement of Muslims opposing extremist Islam

Interacting with Moderate Muslims

Shocking Global Statistics

- 26% of younger Muslims in America believe suicide bombings are justified
- 8% of Muslims in America believe suicide bombings are often or sometimes justified (81% never)
- 25% of Muslim-Americans say that violence against Americans in the US is justified as part of the “global Jihad” (64% disagree)
- 57% of Muslims worldwide disapprove of al-Qaeda
- 51% of Muslims worldwide disapprove of the Taliban
- 81% of respondents to an al-Jazeera poll support ISIS

Interacting with Moderate Muslims

We need to see a global movement of Muslims denouncing and working to stop extremist ideology

- That means interacting with problematic history and texts
- It means countering the common practice of calling terrorist groups “un-Islamic” (review lessons 3 and 6)
- We also need to see the numbers shift to where support of extremist ideology is an overwhelming “minority.”

“Until the Islamic community as a whole deals with the problem of the interpretation of Qur’anic passages that appear to promote violence against the non-Muslim world (whether Jewish, Christian, or “pagan”), Muslim extremists will continue their acts of violence, finding justification for their deeds in a particular reading of Qur’anic verses.” – Riddell and Cotterell

Practical Responses

Practical Response #1: Genuine Conversation

- Genuine conversation between Christians and Muslims regarding the issue of violence
 - Most Muslims will agree that there are difficult passage in the Qur’an that appear to advocate violence against non-Muslims.
 - What are non-Muslims in general and Christians in particular to make of these texts and Muhammad’s life?

Muslims should be willing to discuss these problematic elements and provide alternative interpretations that are logical and consistent with the historical context in which the Qur’an was delivered and in which Muhammad lived.

Practical Responses

Practical Response #2: Support Muslim Victims

- Christians need to stand up for the thousands of Muslims being killed by Islamic violence.
 - Terrorism is a greater threat to Muslims than Christians
 - The Christian West is only concerned with terrorism when the victims are Christians.
- Christians must oppose all Islamic violence, regardless of the victims' religious affiliations.

Practical Responses

Practical Response #3: Train the Global Church

- Train the global church to respond to Islamic terrorism
 - Particularly in America, Christians are largely uninformed, unengaged, and uninterested in Islam.
 - There is relatively little evangelistic work to reach Muslims
- Christians need to be equipped in Islamic theology, practice, history, and texts.

Until Christians are equipped to engage the growing number of Muslims around the world, the cross will continue to be unknown in the house of Islam.

Practical Responses

Practical Response #4: Support Government Initiatives

- Support initiatives that oppose Islamic terrorism and defend justice for all people
- Work with governments to oppose violence through physical force, while also promoting the idea that ultimate change will occur not through armed resistance, but through the Muslim world hearing the Gospel message.

When Christians support government opposition to terrorism, they demonstrate the balance between temporary solution and long-term change, the balance between present work and future hope.

Practical Responses

Practical Response #5: Recognize the Limits of Military Engagement

- Military engagement defeats terrorists but not terrorism
 - Defeating groups is not defeating ideology
 - When one group is destroyed, others emerge
- Military engagement is not the complete answer
 - We need evangelism of Muslims
 - We need greater Muslim involvement in opposition to militant ideology

The Evangelistic Response

Many Christians are quick to respond that the remedy to Islamic terrorism is evangelism.

- Is the solution to terrorism really so simple?
- Is evangelism by itself the answer?

If so, then it behooves Christians to double their efforts for missions and evangelism.

If not, then what exactly is the role of evangelism in a broad response to Islamic terrorism?

The Evangelistic Response

Believers agree that the only remedy for a sinful heart is new life in Christ through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

- Muslim terrorists are spiritually dead and totally depraved
- Terrorist acts flow naturally from unregenerate hearts and minds

Hearing and responding to the Gospel brings this heart change

- It makes sense to conclude that evangelism is the answer
- PROBLEM: evangelism and resulting conversion takes time
- So, throughout the evangelism process, violent terrorist attacks will continue to take place

The Evangelistic Response

While it is biblical to say that only the Gospel will change Islamic terrorism completely, it is also biblical to say that violence will continue until the return of Christ.

- Evangelism cannot be the only response to Islamic terrorism
- There must be a physical response from governments

Evangelism is a central component of a broader response

- While governments continue to oppose terrorism through armed efforts and diplomatic procedures, churches should increase their efforts to evangelize the Muslim world.

Proclaiming the *Imago Dei*

In response to Islamic violence and the blatant disregard for human life, there is a need for Christians to advocate an alternative view of human life.

- The *imago Dei* means that man is in the “image of God” and that man is “like God and represents God”
- When God makes man, he does so in a manner that is different from how he created everything else (Gen. 1:26a, 27)

Unlike all other creatures, man is made “in the image of God,” a reality that is rich with depth, for it makes man “unique among God’s creatures.”

Proclaiming the *Imago Dei*

Ethical Ramifications of the “Image”

- Man’s value is determined by God’s own actions in creation.
- While the animals were spoken into existence, man was fashioned from the dust and received the very “breath of life” into his lungs (Gen. 2:7). As a result, man is unique and “invested with a special sanctity which may not be violated.”

Because man is created in God’s image, he has a value that is inherent to his nature.

- The “image” is not applied to man at a later date.
- Because it is God who creates man in his image, no mere man can negate the presence of the “image.”

Proclaiming the *Imago Dei*

Because the *imago Dei* applies to every single person, the doctrine will not allow for racism or prejudice against certain groups.

- “Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the *status* of being in God’s image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God’s image-bearer.” - Grudem

Whereas the violence committed by Islamic extremists indicates a disregard for human value, the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei* places the greatest value on man.

- Human value cannot be violated by any other person.
- Man’s value is independent of his relationship to God, meaning that Christians are of equal value as non-Christians.

Questions and Comments