



Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

Engaging Islam Relating to Muslims

In his article, "Loving Muslims to Christ," Victor Knowles II provides valuable suggestions that will make us more effective evangelists, not only to Muslims, but to all people. The reader is encouraged to subscribe* to One Body, the magazine Mr. Knowles edits. The Fall 2012 issue is devoted to "Christianity's Supreme Opportunity" to effectively engage Islam for the cause of Christ.

Mr. Knowles' primary point is the fact that extending the genuine love of God to Muslims is very important, for Islam is devoid of this compelling divine characteristic. Citing former Muslims and those who have worked among them, Knowles contrasts Islam's love of power with Christianity's power of love.

But Muslims are not the only ones with whom this message resonates, of course. Consider the application of Mr. Knowles' suggestions relating to Muslims to our evangelistic work among all people. With Mr. Knowles' permission, I have modified and embellished his list for my purpose.

1. Be a friend. Show hospitality. This applies to evangelizing anyone. As we have reiterated time and again, there is a difference between being friendly and being a friend.

2. Show respect for your Bible. Muslims may have more regard for the Bible as a holy book than do many Christians. A Muslim will never place the Qur'an on a chair and definitely not on the floor. It is always kept on the highest shelf. We would do well to display similar respect for The Book. Although we are not to worship The Book, the way we treat it may reflect our regard for God, at least to Muslims.

3. Dress modestly. Immodest attire is a road block to evangelizing Muslims. None would contend that immodest attire is conducive to more effective evangelism in any culture. We should not **deduct** from the gospel by **attracting** attention to ourselves, especially when that attraction encourages sinful thoughts.

4. Never underestimate the power of prayer and the Word of God. Pray, lovingly and patiently present what the Bible says, and pray.

5. Be completely humble. Don't talk down to people (especially Muslims). Exuding an

air of superiority is a huge turn off. Our purpose is to **exalt Christ**, not to **promote self**. Choose words and expressions that clearly communicate that it is the Bible, not you, that is authoritative.

6. Learn what you can about Islam. Muslims (and others) will take you more seriously if you are knowledgeable of their religion and practices.

7. Testify to God's love, mercy and grace that provides you with confident assurance. This is especially effective when relating to Muslims, for they do not have a relationship with Muhammad. Nor has Muhammad changed their life. They live in fear and have no assurance or confidence, even though they have followed Islamic teaching and practice. Humbly rejoice in your present and eternal security because of God's gracious forgiveness.

8. Distinguish between Christianity and America when speaking to Muslims. Since Muslims equate the two, they associate the decadence of American culture with Christianity. A similar distinction must be made for all between "churchianity" and Christianity—between church attendees and Christians. More than **making** the distinction is **living** the distinction.

9. Don't assume the terms you use are understood. For example, Knowles points out that Muslims do not understand "sin" to mean that we are morally guilty and condemned before a holy God. They believe it means making mistakes. Another example is the different meaning Mormons give to biblical words. Be sure you communicate accurately.

10. Listen to people and offer to pray for them on the spot. When praying in the presence of a Muslim, hold your hands out in front of you with your palms up. The reverence in your voice and demeanor means as much as the actual words.

11. "Trust the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8). Only God can lift the veil that Islam has cast over the hearts of Muslims," writes Knowles.

12. Private study may be wiser than taking them to church. What a Muslim sees in many of our churches would likely be offensive (e.g., immodest attire, disrespectful

and even irreverent conduct, Bibles casually and carelessly disregarded, etc.).

13. Respect their dreams. Many Muslims, among others, claim to have seen Christ in a vision. Despite your opinion about such things, it may be counterproductive—even wrong to challenge them on this.

14. Be patient. Lee Turner labored fifteen years in Pakistan before the first congregation was established. Patiently and lovingly lay the groundwork through example of life and teaching. We should not expect a radical life change to occur quickly.

15. Love. Many Muslims testify that it was a Christian's love that attracted them to Jesus.

A former member of the PLO and Yasser Arafat's personal driver is now a Christian. He testifies, "Only

through the supernatural love (Christ's love) can we hope to reach Muslims for Christ. We must ask ourselves, do we love them enough to devote our time to prayer and fasting, studying, and understanding them? We must offer the Gospel to them on the plate of Christian love, which never fails. It is with love alone that you will be able to gain their confidence and thus open the door to speak to them about their eternal life." He, Taysir Abu Saada, continued, "If God can turn me from being a terrorist to a peace-loving man, then I believe it is possible and that there is hope for all Muslims."

This testimony is repeated by others formerly ensnared in cults and immorality.