Contextualization Should’s and Shouldn’ts for ministry among Muslims

Engage Global teaches contextualization of the gospel message across cultures is biblical and necessary. Unfortunately, some contextualization strategies being promoted and practiced among Muslims today are not, from our understanding, biblically justified.

Therefore, we felt it necessary to articulate what the staff at Engage Global teaches and practices concerning what we should and should not do in our efforts to make disciples among Muslims:

1. **We should PRAISE Jesus as revealed in the Bible:**
   a. Pray for Holy Spirit conviction, repentance, and faith (Jn. 16:8-15)
   b. Read the Bible with them, not the Qur’an (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12-13).
   c. Acknowledge “Isa” (Jesus) as a peculiar prophet in the Qur’an but avoid extensive Qur’anic quotations (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12-14).
   d. Inquire about their hopes and dreams in relation to their faith (Jn. 4:5-30)
   e. Sensitive to culture, without violating biblical truths (1 Cor. 10:27-33)
   f. Express our faith in Jesus by praying for them (Rom. 10:1-4)

2. **We should not SYNCretize, model or teach believers in Jesus to:**
   a. Say/Recite the Muslim creed (*Shahada*): “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger”
   b. Yield to participation in the ritual prayers (*Salat*) in the Mosque
   c. Name/Identify oneself as Muslim.
   d. Cancel/Remove or replace the terms “Father” and “Son of God” in translating Biblical references to God and Jesus in any language.

**Biblical Rationale:** Acts 15:19-20 Gentile Background Believers were given four restrictions to show clear separation from previous religious practices; Rom. 10:9-17 One must confess Jesus as Lord to be saved; John 5:23 Whoever does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him; 1 Cor. 10:23-33 All things lawful but not all helpful; 2 Corinthians 4:2 We refuse to practice cunning; 2 Cor. 6:14-17 Believers are not to participate in worship of other Christ-denying gods.

**Cultural Rationale:** In Islam the form is the meaning; the meaning is the form. The two are inseparable. If Muhammad did it, it is *sunna* and therefore incumbent upon all Muslims to pray in the same manner. No one may add to or subtract from *salat* lest they be charged with the sin of *bid’a* (innovation), heresy. Muslims perform the obligatory prayers because Muhammad said so. *Salat* has a divinely revealed form and meaning. How can this form be filled with Christian meaning when Islam itself determines the meaning? Should a Muslim see a Christian performing *salat* he will think the Christian is a Muslim – not a Christian who has given the Islamic form new meaning.¹

We recognize that those who are in the process of discovering who Christ is through biblical revelation may continue to participate in Islamic rituals for a season. However, this statement declares that we, as cross-cultural ministers of the gospel, will not encourage such participation – especially once someone professes repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

¹ Excerpt from a lecture given by Dr. Jeffery Morton at an i2 conference, Liberty University 2010.