

MUSLIM PEOPLES OF NORTH AMERICA

CULTURE CATALOG

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

CHURCH PLANTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUSLIMS	1
MUSLIMS IN NORTH AMERICA	1
3 KEYS TO MUSLIM EVANGELISM	2
PRAYER AND FASTING	2
REDEMPTIVE RELATIONSHIPS	2
REDEMPTIVE WORDS	3
ISLAM TODAY	4
CULTURAL TIPS FOR RELATING WITH MUSLIMS	4

FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

- Prayer - 5x a day (*Salat*)
- Almsgiving - 2.5% of one's net wealth (*Zakat*)
- Fasting - observed during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan (*Sawm*)
- Pilgrimage - to Mecca at least once a lifetime (*Hajj*)
- Confession of faith - There is No God but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet. (*Shahada*)

CHURCH PLANTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUSLIMS

Muslims represent 1.2 billion people of the world's 6.4 billion people. Conversions to Christ are few and starting churches among them is difficult. However, Muslims living in North America can be more open to the gospel than those living overseas. Southern Baptists therefore have an unprecedented, God-given opportunity to evangelize and start new churches among some of the most unreached Muslim background people groups of the world, right here at home.

Unfortunately, not many Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are available to start new churches for Muslim peoples. In such situations, non-MBB church planting leaders must take the lead in initiating various outreach methods to Muslim communities. Such cross-cultural efforts require using biblically rooted missiological principles for effectively communicating the gospel. Often, the best way to start a new church for Muslim background peoples is by building trust

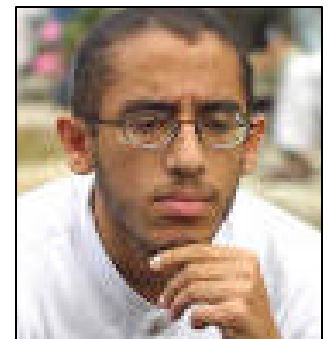
through genuine, long-term relationships with a few Muslims in a selected area.

To facilitate developing such relational church planting approaches, this Catalog introduces some basic principles for relating to Muslims. It is the result of many hours spent with practicing Muslims in the U.S., Canada and other countries, interviews with MBBs to learn how God saved them, interviews with missionaries to Muslims, much prayer and much study. All of this was done to determine the non-negotiable elements for seeing Muslims come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Many Christians are looking for the "silver bullet" of Muslim evangelism. They are looking for a program or formula for quickly bringing Muslims to Christ. God's model for Muslim evangelism though is "incarnation" - God revealing Himself in flesh and blood through the indwelling Christ who lives within you.

Through Christ, Christians are to be "good news" to Muslims, praying and fasting for them, sharing Christ through living in relationship together, telling the stories of Christ's life and telling what He has done and is doing in their life. If Christians live like this, Muslims will come to Christ.

Reaching Muslim peoples with the Gospel is difficult and potentially dangerous. But it is doable through Christ! Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me so send I you." (John 20:21)



A Muslim student contemplates his future. Will Jesus play a part?

MUSLIMS IN NORTH AMERICA

How many Muslims are in North America? This is a question under much debate today. Muslim lobbyists in the U.S. would claim up to 8 million, some observers would put the figure closer to 3 million. The truth is that we can probably put the figure between 4 and 5 million in the U.S. and around 700,000 in Canada.

Muslims can be found almost anywhere in the United States and Canada but cities attract the greatest numbers. The adjacent chart shows that an estimated 20% live in these large cities. Those who work with Muslims in these cities estimate the actual population is 3 to 5

times higher.

Immigrant Muslims in North America come from many different countries. African-American Muslims and children of Muslim immigrants continue to increase in numbers. The variety of Muslim peoples, their assimilation levels and the types of Islam they practice point out that North American Muslims are not a single, uniform group. A critical need therefore in building church planting relationships is to first identify the Muslim people groups or population segments in your community.

CITY	MUSLIM POPULATION*
Los Angeles, CA	167,548
New York, NY	152,337
Detroit, MI	124,585
D.C., MD, VA, WV	113,987
Chicago, IL	88,742
Orange County, CA	59,262
Houston, TX	47,010
Oakland, CA	42,691
San Diego, CA	39,172
Boston, MA	37,177

*Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban & Regional Research, Univ at Albany

3 KEYS TO MUSLIM EVANGELISM

KEY 1: PRAYER AND FASTING

Two MBB evangelists were walking toward a new village to share the good news. The Muslim governor stopped them and forbade them to come into his territories. The team left to spend the night in prayer and fasting. In addition, their entire network of house churches prayed and fasted. It was determined that they should go back and tell this governor, "We have only come to pray for you and your people, but if you do not want us to do this we will leave." In the morning the governor saw these evangelists returning. He came out of his palace personally to meet them. When he came face to face with the evangelists, to their surprise he knelt before them and welcomed them to his territory. Then he invited them to tea and instructed his personal security guards to gather the Bibles the men had with them and load them into his own Toyota Landcruiser™ to be delivered to whomever of his peo-

ple that wanted one. Then he instructed the guards to protect these workers and to report any disturbances to him. The evangelists could scarcely believe this was the same man that 24 hours earlier had threatened them with bodily harm if they returned. After having freely proclaimed the message and distributed every Bible they had with them they returned. The governor invited them once again to tea and told them that God had told him he was to be the governor of both the Muslims and the Christians, and if Muslims had the right to evangelize and build mosques then Christians had the right to evangelize and build churches. The evangelists left rejoicing.

This true story is a practical example of what Jesus said in Matthew 12, that a strong man will only allow his house to be plundered if someone comes in

and ties him up first. This is what prayer and fasting does to the spiritual powers that keep the doors locked in the hearts of Muslims today. We must, by prayer and fasting, allow God to break through the locks and bind the spiritual powers that keep people in darkness. We know the Bible teaches that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12) which keep men and women from seeing the truth which is in Christ. We must win in the spiritual realm first. This is the heart of the struggle!

Fasting can follow the Muslim example of Ramadan, a month long time when Muslims fast from food and some from drink during the daylight hours. One may eat a breakfast early in the morning and then another meal after the sun goes down, dedicating that time of abstaining from food to the cause of removing barriers from the hearts of Muslim people.

KEY 2: REDEMPTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

In much of the world Americans are seen as cold and unable to form deep relationships. Sadly, much of what we now call relationship looks curiously like "acquaintance-ship" to other cultures. We barely know our neighbors by sight and do not seem to have time to do much else but run from one engagement to another. There seems to be no time to develop meaningful relationships as we run the race to move ahead.

One MBB in the Middle East asked me, "Do you know what the snare of Satan for America is right now?" Prepared for another criticism of American culture from an outsider, I responded, "No, tell me." He replied, "Satan has allowed you to build walls of isolation around yourselves. You no longer speak to one another, your morals have declined as a result of your unwillingness to

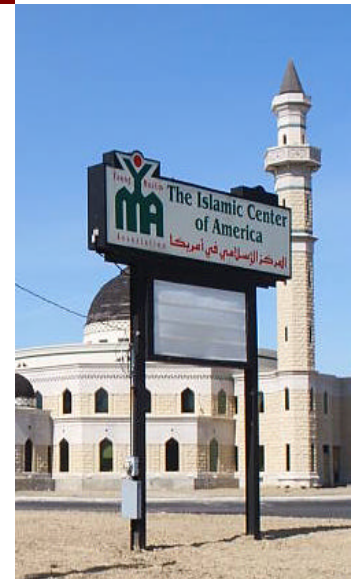
say something that might hinder the *rights* of someone else and you have become completely self-absorbed."

Sadly this assessment is too often true. Satan has deceived us into hiding behind the false values of tolerance and fear of offending others to the point that evil has been allowed to run rampant in our society. We no longer know our neighbors and often are afraid to correct an unruly child in a public place for fear of what someone might say. We have forgotten what it takes to get along with those with whom we do not always agree. With the continued trend of staying behind our four walls with our television sets, our computer screens and our video games it is likely that our isolation will only grow worse. Consider the following issues as you seek to build relationships with Muslims.

What contributes to redemptive relationships in a Muslim context?**1. Redemptive relationships with Muslims require spending significant time with them as friends.**

This means getting together for lunch a couple of times a week or for dinner at one's house. It means calling once a day just to see how things are going. It means a true sharing of our lives – both the strong points as well as the weak ones. It means being open to listen as well as to share, and responding to needs as they arise and as we are able to respond. It means talking about our kids, our jobs, our hopes and our fears. It means being vulnerable and laughing together.

Someone may ask, "Isn't it unethical to develop a friendship with someone so you can share Christ with them?" Perhaps some more



The Islamic Center of America
Dearborn, Michigan

"Too often, sophisticated organization and technology seem to prevent personal contact with people we are supposed to reach."

Colin Chapman



New Mosque in a Muslim
subdivision of Toronto, Canada

appropriate questions are, "Is it unethical to befriend someone because they are lonely and have no friends and you feel sorry for them? Is it wrong to befriend someone because you think they have an admirable personality and you would like to emulate them? Is it wrong for a single person to befriend someone because they think they are attractive? In reality, it is far worse to befriend a person for the purpose of sharing Christ with them and then dropping them when they either reject Jesus or surrender their life to Him.

2. Redemptive relationships with Muslims require living a holy lifestyle. One MBB said, "At some point in the friendship, God will reveal Himself in some way through the Christian to the Muslim. Therefore, Christians want to

make sure that they live a holy life so Jesus can shine through."

In one area of a predominantly Muslim country a Muslim businessman said, "I will only do business with Christians now. They will not lie nor will they cheat me like my own people do." Muslims must be able to connect the dots between how we live and how Jesus must have lived. This does not mean that you have to be perfect; on the contrary, God most often seems to reveal Himself through weakness, but never through sin.

3. Redemptive relationships with Muslims influence all of our relationships. Genuine friendships based on holy lifestyles are appealing to more than just Muslims. When a Gen-X person heard these principles for relating to Muslims, he blurted out, "That is what we

want! My generation is looking for "real relationships."

People are hungering and thirsting after real relationships. It is likely that if Christians prove Matthew 6:33 by genuinely seeking God's Kingdom first, then God will surprise us with redemptive relationship breakthroughs among Muslims.

Obviously, if relationships with Muslims take this much time and energy, the average Christian family will only have time for at most three or four such relationships! Therefore, the mobilization of a large portion of the body of Christ is needed to evangelize Muslims in NA. As Muslims come to Christ, they will begin to take the lead in reaching their own people as well. Think of the alternative if we fail to do this!



Muslim Worshippers

Muslims pray five times a day facing Mecca.

KEY 3: REDEMPTIVE WORDS

It is not sufficient to live a godly lifestyle before Muslims nor is it sufficient to demonstrate a servant heart, thinking that surely this will cause them to ask why. One MBB emphasized that befriending Muslims without speaking the gospel simply reinforces their belief that since they have the last word in religion it is natural for other religions to serve them. Indeed, people *ought* to serve them.

The focus here is not on a propositional explanation of Christianity or an attempt to prove Christianity right and Islam wrong. As Christian witnesses we need to emphasize "Jesus stories." These are the stories of what God is doing in your life right now, how He has helped you or answered prayers. These are stories of what Jesus did in the Scriptures or how a Scripture passage came to life in your experiences. In short, this is being a witness of what you have seen and heard of God.

These should be blurted out right in the middle of conversation as if it were the most natural thing in the world, as if you were talking to a good Christian friend. Of course you should use language that a non-Christian would understand but your topic of conversation need

not be any different. Muslims wonder why Christians are so timid in talking about their faith. To them it is an indication that our faith must not be very valuable since we don't talk about it as if it was. You do not need to try to convince someone that you are right and that they are wrong. Although we want to identify strongly with the words of Paul, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience." (1 Corinthians 5:11) We must avoid the temptation to only frame an intellectual argument when what we really want is their heart.

Instead, we need to trust the Holy Spirit to convince men of the truth. Remember that most people come to Christ because Christians lovingly relate the truths of the Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit. The focus of a Christian's verbal witness is more enthusiastic proclamation than argumentative persuasion. In fact, the Greek word *euaggelizo*, which is often translated in English as "preach," means to herald or announce a message. In response to such proclamation, a Muslim may ask, "Are you trying to convert me?" Our response is, "No, we cannot convert anyone, only God can do that."

Never make derogatory comments about Islam. Instead talk about Christ, rather than about Mohammad. By all means you should ask questions about your friend's faith, but you should ask them respectfully and realize they themselves may not know the answer. Occasionally you will get into discussions and some may be heated, but a heated discussion does not signal the end of the relationship. In fact a pat on the shoulder or a joking reference about yourself or something else will defuse the atmosphere. Also, if while in discussion about a certain issue your friend stops arguing, move on, you have won that point. Your friend will rarely admit that he or she is wrong and you are right, silence may be your only clue.

Learn the basics of Islamic beliefs. Such knowledge helps you effectively witness to Muslims by enabling you to compare and contrast Christian beliefs with Muslim beliefs in a non-threatening manner. Be a good listener and learner. Seek to understand your Muslim friend's current level of commitment to Islam.

"Begin with an Arabic greeting, 'As salaamu alaykum' (peace be upon you). When asked if you are a Muslim, answer, 'I am a follower of *Isa Al Masih*' (Jesus the Messiah)."



Islam increased up to 79% in some US cities during the last 10 years.

ISLAM TODAY

If we step back and try to see the world from God's viewpoint, we see that *some unusual things* are happening in the world of Islam and among Muslims. (Note that we do not credit acts of terrorism to the hand of God. But God does turn evil acts of men into good. Gen 50:19-20). Some important events of the past few years:

1. **SPOTLIGHT.** Due to 9/11 and more recent events, Islam is on the world's mind. People have great concern and fears of Islam. The religion that propagates itself as a religion of peace is in the spotlight and under the microscope and the world is waiting for an answer. When light penetrates darkness, those living therein are exposed. The days of living comfortably and quietly in the darkness are over.
2. **CLOUD of SHAME.** Terrorism and Islam are becoming synonymous. Shame has fallen upon the majority of Muslims who are peace-loving people. Muslims are saying, "If Osama is an Islamic figurehead, then something is wrong with my religion." These acts of terror are revealing the cracks in the foundation of Islam. Once on the offensive, Islam is now on the defensive.
3. **NO BORDERS.** Many Islamic countries once thought to be closed to missionaries are now receiving missionaries.
4. **REFORMATION.** Islam is going through its own Reformation. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia has commissioned the Koran to be translated

from Arabic into every language. With the lay people reading the Koran in their own language, the lies of the Imams are being exposed. The *foundation of the priesthood* is severely damaged. Moreover, Muslims are discovering that the *Hadiths* (Islamic commentaries on the Koran) do not match up with the Koran. A national Bangladesh newspaper (May 1999) reported that in a district in Bangladesh, Muslims, under the leadership of their Imam, threw their Korans into the river. (Later it was discovered that there were 5000 Muslims that participated in this act. Their Korans were replaced with Bibles.)

5. **CONVERSIONS.** More Muslims have come to Christ in the last two decades than at any other time in Islamic history.

6. **EVANGELISM TOOLS.** Missionaries and MBBs are recognizing that God has provided effective tools for Muslim evangelism. The Koran is being used by missionaries and MBBs as the number one tool for winning Muslims to Christ. Muslim-friendly Bibles and tracts, and the Jesus Film (in various heart languages) also are used.

7. **MORE MISSIONARIES.** Between 1982 and 2001, missionaries working with Muslims have nearly doubled from an estimated 15,000 to more than 27,000.

8. **B2J.** God has placed Islam on the hearts and minds of the church planting movements (CPM) taking place in China. These movements

claim that the Gospel originated in Jerusalem and eventually made its way to China. Now it's time to take it back to Jerusalem, thus the name, B2J (Back to Jerusalem). But standing between them and Jerusalem are almost one billion Muslims. Their goal is to establish CPMs among Muslim background people groups. One leader in the movement recently said, "The reason God has allowed us to face severe persecution in our country is only for practice...He is making us ready for the Muslim world."

9. **THE BURDEN OF ASIAN INDIAN CHURCHES.** Indian churches in the U.S. are turning their focus to the Islamic world. Asian-Indian churches in the U.S. have the most enthusiasm for Muslim evangelism.

10. **DREAMS.** A recent survey of 600 Muslims who came to faith in Christ revealed that one quarter became believers as a result of a dream. Even where missionaries are not working, God is. The most common theme in these dreams is seeing Jesus in a bright white robe.

11. **CPMS.** In Northern Africa, 16,000 Muslims recently converted to Christianity. In one South Asian country, an average of 100 Muslims daily are coming to faith in Christ and being baptized. Muslim converts are winning Muslims.

Adapted from Kevin Greeson, *Camel Training Manual*, 2004.



NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD, SBC
NAMB

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For further information, contact Mark Hobafcovich at mhobafcovich@namb.net or (770) 410-6228.

Online information may be obtained by visiting the Church Planting Village website at www.churchplantingvillage.net.

About Security

Even in North America, a Muslim that professes faith in Christ may be subject to persecution, divorce, loss of employment or family relationships and even children. Additionally, more severe pressures may be put on family members in other countries. While continuing to disciple new believers, let them take the lead on public professions and baptism. If possible, work with heads of families to gain permission for this change.

CULTURAL TIPS FOR RELATING WITH MUSLIMS

- Do not shake hands with your left hand, ever. Muslims consider the left hand unclean.
- Women should dress modestly, not necessarily in dresses but no short skirts and no sleeveless tops, even in an American context. Going to the mosque for women will involve wearing a head covering. Although it will not be demanded it is a sign of respect.
- Pork is unclean to Muslims. If in doubt about serving anything to a Muslim guest, ask them or ask at a kosher or Halal shop.
- Many Muslims see dogs as unclean — it may be a good idea to put the dog up while they visit.
- Men do not spend time with women and women do not spend time with men who are not their family. Ministry should be men to men and women to women. Brief eye contact is acceptable but no touching should be done except if the Muslim woman extends her hand to shake. Let them take the lead.
- Do not take pictures of Muslim women's faces.
- Muslims are generally very hospitable; it would be good to accept their hospitality and return it if possible.
- Learn to joke; if things begin to get hot make a joke out of it, this will put them on your side.
- Learn to touch men if you are a man and women if you are a woman. Men can pat each other on the back, on the shoulder or arm. It should be a hearty pat. Women can reach out to touch an arm of another woman or take them by the shoulder.
- Grabbing the sleeve of someone is an insult in Arab circles as is hitting someone with your shoe or even putting your feet up on a table with the soles facing someone.



New Mosque in Dearborn, Michigan

- Begin reading the Koran — you will soon have read it more than they have.
- Always treat your Bible with great respect, never place it on the floor or place other books on top of it. Try to keep it above your waist.
- Buy and read a good book — *Reaching Muslims for Christ* by William J. Saal and *The Camel Training Manual* by Kevin Greeson are good places to start. Another good author is Phil Parshall.