



— SHARING THE GOSPEL IN IRAQ —

An Effective Guide To Sharing the Gospel with Muslims

Light of Life International
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Remember the Romans Road?

You can witness to Muslims. It isn't as difficult as you think. You don't need to know everything about Islam or the Quran to do it. In fact, you already know enough to share the gospel with any Muslim you meet.

The Romans Road to Salvation is a selection of Bible verses taken from the book of Romans that present a step by step plan of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is a simple yet powerful method of explaining why we need salvation, how God provided it, how we can receive it, and the results of salvation. As such, the Romans Road has served as an effective evangelistic tool for decades.

This is a “Romans Road” for Presenting the Gospel to Muslims.

I was born in Iraq, a country that is almost completely Muslim. My father came from a long line of strict Muslims, yet later accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. I've seen firsthand how the Gospel can completely change a person. On the other hand, I've also witnessed the roadblocks when it comes to sharing the Gospel with a Muslim.

Because of my background, I've received numerous requests on how to effectively witness to Muslims. This resource is intended to give you a guideline (and also some basic knowledge about Islam) so you can present the Gospel to Muslims more effectively.

This is not a “magical methodology.”

In the past, I often thought that explaining all of the Romans Road to a person would result in conversion. Obviously, this was folly!

The same is true of this resource. This is not some magical sequence that automatically results in conversions. However, it will serve as a suitable starting point. Here are the 5 steps:

1. Use the Quran to open a discussion about Christianity.
2. Ask if you can share some facts from the Quran that speak about Isa (Jesus).
3. Begin to tell of Jesus from the Bible, especially the Gospel of John.
4. Focus on the need to be reunited to God.
5. Explain that salvation can be assured.

Let's take a more in-depth look at these 5 steps:

1. Use the Quran to open a discussion about Christianity.

As Christians, you and I affirm that the ultimate truth about God can only be found in the Bible. Yet when witnessing to a Muslim, begin with the Quran. The reason is this: Muslims consider the Bible to be corrupt. They disregard the authority of Scripture, so any arguments that start on the basis of Scripture will go nowhere.

The better starting point is to use the book they already love and honor: the Quran. Leverage it as a bridge to explaining the need for Christ. Here is the key: explain that it is acceptable for a Muslim to search for truth. In fact, this is what Muhammad himself did in the Quran.

In Surah 10:94 we find these very important words given to Muhammad: “If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee.”

Note: The Quran does not have books like the Bible. Instead it has chapters called Surahs. There are 114 Surahs in the Quran. They are arranged from longest to shortest, with the exception of the first Surah.

Who are “those who have been reading the Book from before thee?” The Quran teaches that Islam is the completion of true religion. However, before the Quran was available, there were holy books called the Taurat (Torah) and the Injil (New Testament). Sound familiar? Of course – these holy books are found in the Bible!

In Scripture, Christians are exhorted to study to be good students of the Word. Conversely, Muslims are asked to memorize the Quran rather than study it. Generally speaking, they do not study the Quran in depth. This is a great access point to inviting a Muslim to look deeper into what the Quran says.

Remember, the Quran is held in the highest esteem.

Muslims believe the Quran was given to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel, but they believe it has always existed in heaven. Thus they hold the Quran in the highest regard; so much so that just memorizing the words is enough to guide one to holiness.

Interesting Fact: This is why prayers are recited and the Quran is memorized in Arabic – even in Muslim countries where Arabic is not the main language! Amazingly, many people reciting these prayers and verses don’t even know what they mean. (The very words of the Quran are considered to carry such power that merely saying them will make you a better Muslim, regardless of whether you understand it.)

This is why starting with the Quran to explain the Gospel can be so effective.

2. Ask if you can share some facts from the Quran that speak about Isa (Jesus).

Muslims believe in 124,000 prophets. The Quran discusses 25 major prophets, each with a specific role to play. For instance, Muhammad is considered the “seal of the prophets,” meaning he completed the work of all the previous prophets. Therefore, he is the last prophet needed.

Fortunately, Isa (Jesus) is one of the major prophets mentioned in the Quran. You can explain that Jesus was unique among all the other prophets. In fact, Jesus is referred to (in the Quran!) as “the word” in Surah 3:45, 4:171.

Another point that makes Jesus unique is his birth. The Quran attests to this. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary and declared she would have a child, she responded, "My Lord, how will I have a child when no man has touched me?" (Surah 3:47)

From the virgin birth, you can build a case for the uniqueness of Christ using the titles the Quran gives him. I've already mentioned that the Quran refers to Jesus as “the word.” He is also referred to as the spirit from God (Surah 21:91, 2:89), the Messiah (Surah 5:72) and finally the sign (Surah 21:91).

The Quran also tells us that Jesus was a miracle worker; he made a bird out of clay, healed the blind, cleansed lepers, and even raised the dead (Surah 3:49). Finally, while the crucifixion of Jesus is denied in the Quran, it is accepted that Jesus is indeed alive today (Surah 3:55) and will one day return in bodily form.

Note: I do not want to misrepresent what the Quran teaches about Jesus. The Quran does indeed say all these things but make no mistake: to believe that Jesus was anything more than a prophet is sin to Muslims. In fact, equating Jesus with God is considered the ultimate sin of Shirk (regarding anything or anyone equal with God). We present these truths as a way to open discussion as to why believing in Jesus is not Shirk.

Use questions that lead to answers.

Present information in question form, but try not to stir up debate. The goal is to get your Muslim friend to think deeper about what the Quran itself says. (You can easily win the debate, and lose the person). Here are a few questions I ask:

- “What does it mean that Jesus was called the Messiah?”
- “Why did Jesus have to be born of a virgin?”
- “Why was Jesus given power to raise the dead?”
- “What does it mean that Jesus is the word?”
- “Why is Jesus still alive today, while Muhammad is not?” (Tread very lightly on this question, or save it for a later time. The easiest way to turn a Muslim into an enemy is to speak ill of Muhammad.)

3. Tell of Jesus from the Bible, especially the Gospel of John.

The most significant differences between Islam and Christianity exist over the question of Jesus' identity. Islam contends that Jesus was a prophet, but just a man. It also contends that Jesus was never crucified.

These truths are essential to the Christian faith, so concentrate on the Gospel of John. There are two reasons: 1. John emphasizes Jesus' divinity, and 2. It provides the "I AM" statements of Jesus, where he declares himself to be more than a prophet.

A significant parallel between the Quran and the Bible.

An effective approach at this point is highlighting that the Jesus we see in Scripture shares many commonalities with the Jesus of the Quran:

1. He is holy – He is clean and without error
2. He is eternal – He has always existed
3. He reconciles us to God

Much like the Quran was written to guide Muslims on the straight way and lead them closer to Allah, so Jesus came to reconcile us with God. Through Jesus, we can walk in relationship with God. "Isa al Masih" – Jesus is the Messiah!

Share John 1:1 and refer to the eternal nature of Jesus – He is, and always will be. Just like in the Quran, Jesus is referred to as "the Word." Highlight how Jesus is called the same thing in both holy books, though they carry different meanings.

Ask: "Why is Jesus called the word in Islam, and the Word in Christianity?"

This is where your Muslim friend will tell you that the Bible was changed and corrupted. Respond by asking how this verse was changed, and by who. Don't be afraid to challenge them to provide proof. This may be the start to them asking questions that only Scripture can answer.

Use the "I AM" statements of Jesus. Show how Jesus saw himself as the exclusive way to God. My favorite verse to use is John 8:12, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Other key verses:

- John 1:14
- John 1:29
- John 3:16
- John 10:28
- John 11:25-26
- John 14:6
- John 14:9
- John 20:31

4. Focus on the need to be reunited with God.

One important thing to understand is that Muslims do not understand “sin” or “original sin” as Christians do.

For example, if a Muslim does not believe in original sin and is rather focused on working his way to paradise (Muslims use the word “paradise” instead of “heaven”), why would he need Jesus Christ?

This has proven to be a sticking point in many conversations. Muslims find it strange that payment for sin had to come from one who is divine.

However, explaining that sin causes fellowship between God and man to be broken will help them understand this concept. You can reason, “Through Christ, you are adopted into the family of God. Only one who comes from God can make this happen.” This analogy is extremely helpful to Muslims. Here’s why:

A powerful illustration:

In Muslim cultures, family disputes are settled by an individual who is respected and considered “beyond reproach.” If a problem is significant enough that it results in a separation within a family, the matter will be brought before an elder in the community. This elder’s word is essentially the law.

Explain that Jesus Christ functions in the same way. Christ is the one that resolves the issue of our sin against the Father, and brings us back into fellowship with our family.

This analogy diffuses the problem that Muslims have with the term “Son of God.” Muslims often misinterpret what Christians believe about the trinity.

Muslims believe Christians to be *pantheists* who worship three different gods. In fact, most Muslims believe the Christian trinity is comprised of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Virgin Mary!

A great way to explain the Sonship of Christ:

In one of the early debates between a Christian and a Muslim, Timothy I of the Nestorians explained that Jesus was born of God like “light was born from the sun.” This is a terrific way to help Muslims understand that Jesus comes from the Father, yet also one with the Father. Use this simple yet powerful illustration.

5. Explain that salvation can be assured.

Ask any Muslim, “Will you go to heaven?” and their only response will be “Inshallah” (God willing). This is because they have no way to know what will be said of them on the day of judgment.

Yes, this question has often been abused in evangelistic efforts; in zeal, someone can seek to win a convert by providing insurance against the torments of hell. However, I use this question because I believe it to be appropriate, given the nature of “salvation by works” found in Islam.

Islam is based on works. Leverage this to explain the gospel.

Let your Muslim friend know it is possible to have assurance of salvation. Highlight that salvation is dependent on faith in Jesus instead of works. This is the time to press home the fact that all of his or her righteousness is as filthy rags, and that works will never be enough to reconcile them to God.

Undoubtedly, your Muslim friend will respond by saying something along the lines of, “Your God is too easy to believe in” and contend that we must work in order to please God. Turn it around and ask, “How can God be happy with only one month of fasting?” Or, “Wouldn’t God be more likely to accept you if you pray six times a day, as opposed to five?”

You might feel this is too contentious, but be assured – Muslims are very willing to engage in religious dialogue. They have no problem telling you what they believe; you should feel the same way.

By this point, you have built a strong case. Stand firm, and explain they have sinned against God and that sin demands a punishment they cannot pay. If they are to be reconciled to God, it is only through the work of Jesus Christ. Share the Gospel with boldness!

About the author:

Irfan Abdullatif is the director of Light of Life International, a ministry dedicated to reaching the Middle East by supporting and training indigenous church planters to build local churches. For more information, please visit lightoflifeinternational.org.

