

Approaches to Islam:  
Theological and Practical

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Topics and Outline for the Course

## Introducing Myself

1. Born in Tanzania to parents who were pioneer Mennonite missionaries
2. Witnessed the grace of Christ transforming people and society in life-giving ways as a church was formed.
3. Christ called me when a child and after my conversion I knew Christ was also calling me to be his ambassador among unreached people.
4. At 15 years of age moved to the USA for high school and university study
5. Met Grace in high school who later became my wife; we both knew God was calling us to serve among those who have not yet heard the Gospel.
6. That calling has taken us in surprising directions: New York City, Somalia, Kenya, USA in pastoring and in missions administration, Lithuania to help establish LCC International University.
7. At present serving as international missions consultant with Eastern Mennonite Missions with a focus on building Christ-centered peacemaking bridges with Muslims.
8. Grace and I are a team in ministry and we have been blest with 4 children who are married and have blest us with 7 grandchildren.
9. We live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in the USA

## Introduction to the Theme of the Seminar

1. Several years ago the Muslim Student Association in the UK invited me to engage in six major dialogues.
  - 1.1 They said the reason they were inviting me is my books.
  - 1.2 They added that my books reveal that I am committed to Jesus Christ and that I love Muslims.
2. That observation is in harmony with my life commitment: 1 Peter 3:15
  - 2.1 Be clear that Jesus is Lord.
  - 2.2 Give account of the hope of the Gospel to all who ask.
  - 2.3 Do this with gentleness and respect
3. My hope and prayer is that the spirit of this seminar will reflect those three principles.
  - 3.1 I shall attempt to represent Islam in ways that Muslims would affirm.
  - 3.2 If Muslims acquire this seminar and they perceive that in any way I have distorted Islam, I invite them to contact me for I do not want to misrepresent Islam.
  - 3.3 Likewise, if Christians feel I have distorted the Gospel, I invite them to contact me as well.
  - 3.4 And although what I share reflects what I have learned over the years in many conversations with Muslim friends, I confess that I understand Islam imperfectly. And I bring to the table a yearning to commend Christ. I am not an expert. I am on a journey learning what it means to be a faithful ambassador of the Christ in whom we are reconciled to God and to one another.

## Topic 1: My Journey with Muslims

1. The call to Somalia
  - 1.1. Restrictive environment
  - 1.2. Open doors
  - 1.3. The Holy Spirit is not bound
  - 1.4. Signs of the kingdom
  - 1.5. Fellowships of believers
  
2. The call to Kenya
  - 2.1 The Sufi mosque
  - 2.2 The reading room
  - 2.3 A Muslim and A Christian in Dialogue written with Badru Kataregga, who is a devout Muslim.
  - 2.4 The People of God Bible study series.
  - 2.5 The church
  
3. Current ministry: open doors

## Topic 2: Quiz

### True and False

1. The Qur'an states that Jesus is the Messiah.
2. The Quran states that Christians are the closest to Muslims in faith.
3. Muslims believe in a second coming of Jesus
4. The Quran commands Christians to stand by all that God has revealed to them.
5. There are a number of references to the Holy Spirit in the Quran.
6. The Quran commands Christians to make their scriptures available for others to read.
7. Muslims believe that Jesus was born to a virgin
8. The Quran states that Jesus is the Word of God.
9. The Quran advises Muhammad to ask Christians what their Scriptures say.
10. The Quran states that Jesus fulfills the Scriptures.

### Topic 3: Early Theological Formation in the Arabian Context

Background Reading: Journeys: chapters 1, 2.

Questions: For each of the assigned readings from Journeys related to each topic, select one question at the end of the chapter and write a one-page essay on that topic. Also be prepared to discuss in class any of the questions. For example, in chapter 2 of Journeys, there are 8 questions. Write an essay on one of those questions and come to class ready to discuss any of the 8 questions.

(Four ways that Arabian culture at the time of Muhammad formed the context in which the Ummah (Muslim community) developed.

#### 1. Christian context

##### 1.1 The Christian environment

Yemen  
Ethiopia  
Egypt  
Palestine  
Syria  
Edessa  
Persia

##### 1.2 Christian controversies

Arianism  
Nestorianism

##### 1.3 The church in mission

##### 1.4 The legacy of Constantine

##### 1.5 The yearning for a book from God among Arabian people

##### 1.6 The Christians in Arabia before the time of Muhammad referred to God

Almighty as Allah. So the name Allah for God did not originate with Muhammad, but rather was in common use by Christians in the 6th century.

#### 2. The Jewish context

##### 2.1 Elohim: the God of Abraham

##### 2.2 Torah and Qur'an

##### 2.3 Talmud and Shari'ah

##### 2.4 A place for worship

##### 2.5 Direction for worship

#### 3. The Jahiliyya context

##### 3.1 The polytheists

##### 3.2 The Ka'bah

#### 4. The hanif context

##### 4.1 The hanif and Allah

##### 4.2 The hanif and Muhammad

## Topic 4: The Muslim Community (Ummah)

Background Reading: Dialogue Chapters 1, 8, 13, 21.

1. Muhammad was born in 570A.D. in Mecca into a family who traced their lineage back to Abraham and Ishmael. In 610 Muhammad claimed that he began to receive revelations through the angel Gabriel. The people of Mecca as a whole rejected his message. In 622 he migrated to Medina (the Hijra) and established the Muslim community. Eight years later he returned to Mecca in triumph as a general, statesman and prophet. By the time of his death in 632, all of Arabia had come under the rule of the Muslims.
2. Jews, Christians and Muslims claim Abraham as a father of their faith
  - 2.1. Over half the people on earth are participants in these three families of faith.
  - 2.2. The Abrahamic faiths are missionary faiths. So is Buddhism.
  - 2.3. The other faiths of humankind are either tribal or national—but Abrahamc faiths seek to be a blessing to all nations.
3. The legacy of Adam (first prophet of Islam)
4. The legacy of Abraham (middle prophet of Islam)
  - 4.1. Ishmael
  - 4.2. The Ka'bah
5. The legacy of Muhammad (the final prophet of Islam)
  - 5.1. An Arabic Qur'an
  - 5.2. An Arabian prophet
6. The Ummah
  - 6.1. the perfect community
  - 6.2. the balanced community
  - 6.3. a witness over the nations
  - 6.4. the ummah is the one world-wide international Muslim nation that transcends the nation state
7. Jews, Muslims, and Christians are committed to worshipping the God of Abraham
  - 7.1. The nature of God
    - 1) God as Elohim or Eloha
    - 2) God as Allah
    - 3) Allah is the Arabic way of saying the Hebrew Eloha, which means the God Almighty
  - 7.2. God as Eloha or Allah is God the creator or God almighty who is the one and only true God
8. God revealed himself as I AM to Moses at the burning bush. (Exodus 6:2-3)
  - 8.1. God as I AM is referred to as Yahweh or The Lord
  - 8.2. God as I AM (Yahweh) is quite different than God as understood in the Qur'an. What are the differences?
    - 1) God as I AM is the God who is beyond naming.
    - 2) God as I AM (Yahweh) comes down and meets us in order to save us.
    - 3) God as Yahweh meets us in I Thou encounter.

- 4) God as Yahweh reveals himself to us, not just his attributes.
9. In Jesus God reveals himself both as Yahweh and Elohim or Eloha (Allah).
    - 9.1 His name is Jesus which means Yahweh saves
    - 9.2 He is also Emmanuel which means Eloha (Allah) with us.
  
  10. Bible translators seek all over the world seek for the local pre-Christian name for God.
    - 10.1 For example the Kikuyu of Kenya referred to God the creator as Ngai.
    - 10.2 They said that Ngai the creator had gone away to live in Mount Kenya and that he would never return.
    - 10.3 The missionaries translated the Gospel of Matthew into Kikuyu.
    - 10.4 They used Ngai for God in their Bible translation.
    - 10.5 The Kikuyu were astonished to read in Matthews Gospel that in Jesus Ngai had come to live among us and that one of the names of Jesus was Ngai is with us (Emmanuel).
    - 10.6 Arab Christians have always used Allah to refer to God. As mentioned earlier, Allah is not only the Muslim name for God, but was also the name Christians in Arabia used prior to the time of Muhammad.
  
  10. God is known through revelation
    - 10.1 Jews, Muslims, and Christians believe that creation is a dimension of revelation.
  
    - 10.2 Muslims, Christians and Jews also believe that God reveals truth through scripture
      - 1) Jews believe that the Torah is the soul of scripture
      - 2) Christians believe that Jesus is the living Word whom the Bible reveals.
      - 3) Muslims believe the Qur'an is the final revelation.
  
    - 10.3 Each of these Abrahamic faiths are, therefore, formed by different revelation centers:
      - 1) Judaism-the Torah with the Tanach, which Christians call the Old Testament;
      - 2) Christianity-Jesus the living Word and the total biblical witness culminating in Jesus and the formation of the church.;
      - 3) Islam-the Qur'an the final Book which Muslims believe Muhammad modeled perfectly .

Conclusion: Any dialogical encounter between these faith communities proceeds from commitments to these different truth centers. This means that there are similarities (for example the belief in one transcendent Creator who is almighty) and there are differences (for example God who comes down to meet us and save us within Biblical revelation is different than the Muslim conviction that God sends his will down but does not come down to save us.)

## Topic 5: Muslim Theology and Praxis

Background Reading: Dialogue, Chapter 9, 10

1. The Five Pillars of Muslim Theology (Iman).
  - 1.1 Belief in one God, Allah.
  - 1.2 Belief in the books of God: Suhuf (Scrolls), Taurat (Torah), Zabur (Psalms), Injil (Gospel), and Qur'an (Recitation)
  - 1.3 Belief in the prophets of God
  - 1.4 Belief in angels.
  - 1.5 Belief in the final judgment.
  - 1.6 (Belief in determinism) (qadr)
  
2. The Five Pillars of Muslim Praxis (Ihsan).
  - 2.1 The Shahada: Confession that there is no God but Allah and Muhammed is the prophet of Allah.
  - 2.2 Performing prayer (salat) five times daily facing the Ka'bah
  - 2.3 Giving the required alms (zakat)
  - 2.4 Fasting (saum) during the month of Ramadan
  - 2.5 Going on the pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca if possible
  
  - 2.6 Striving in the way of God. (Jihad)
    - 1) greater jihad
    - 2) lesser jihad
      - jihad of the pen
      - jihad with the Qur'an
      - jihad of the sword as a last alternative
  
3. Muslims believe they have a mission to the whole world
  - 3.1 The mission is expressed in the call to prayer five times daily
  - 3.2. The mission in regard to Christians:
    - 1) Help Christians become unified
    - 2) Clarify the Christian confusion about the Trinity and Jesus.
    - 3) Protect Christians as long as they respect Muslim authority
  
  - 3.3 Bring every area of life under the authority of Islam
  
  - 3.4 There are two dimensions of the Muslim mission:
    - 1) Da'wah (invitation)
    - 2) Dawlah.(political)
  
4. The Christian calling when encountering the Muslim community.
  - 4.1 Bear witness to Jesus as Lord and Savior
  - 4.2 Serve in the Spirit and power of Jesus

## Topic 6: Adam and Eve

Background Reading: Journeys, chapter 3.

Dialogue, chapters 2, 3,4; 14, 15, 16

1. My friend and neighbor, a sheikh, told me that the biblical accounts about Adam and Eve made him exceedingly disturbed. Why would that be?

1.1 Because in the Bible Adam and Eve turn away from God, and in turning away from God, we become sinful. In the Qur'an Adam makes a mistake, but he never turns away from God, and people are good, not sinful.

1.2 In the Bible God enters the Garden and meets Adam and Eve hiding behind the bush. In the Qur'an God sends guidance down, but God never comes down to meet us.

2. The Qur'anic account of Adam and Eve

2.1 Adam was created in Paradise

2.2 God breathed his Spirit into Adam. This means:

- 1) The ability to discern right and wrong.
- 2) The will to choose.
- 3) The authority to make use of creation.
- 4) The power of speech.

2.3 God taught Adam the names of the animals.

2.4 Satan deceived Adam because he was jealous of the way Adam could learn.

2.5 God sent Adam down to earth to live near the Ka'bah for a period of time as a testing

2.6 God sent Islam down to Adam to guide him in his conduct.

2.7 God provided the clothing of righteousness for Adam and Eve (7:26)

2.8 God intended for Adam to be his caliph (caretaker) on earth.

2.9 Adam and his descendants are basically good, but they need guidance; God sends down the guidance they need and that guidance is Islam.

2.10 Adam is the first prophet of Islam; he worshiped God in the Islamic way at the Ka'bah.

2.11 They are the servants of God who submit to his will – the first Muslims – all people are born Muslim. Our nature is to be Muslim.

3. The Biblical account of Adam and Eve

3.1 Adam and Eve are both created on the sixth day when other mammals are created.

3.2 Adam and Eve are both created in God's image. This means:

- 1)The fullest humanity is in a right and joyous relationship with God.
- 2)The ability to commune with God and to receive and comprehend the thoughts of God.
- 3)The authority to have dominion over the earth.
- 4)People are living souls with eternity with God as God's intention for all people.

3.3 Adam and Eve turn away from God looking to nature (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) rather than to God as the center of their worship and authority.

3.4 God enters the garden where they are to meet them personally.

3.5 God grieves; he knows that in turning away from him all humanity will experience sinfulness and death.

3.6 God plans to redeem us: a Son will come; God personally clothes Adam and Eve with the skins of an animal (Genesis 3:15; 21).

4. The significance of these different accounts is tremendous.

4.1 Qur'an: Adam created in Paradise; he is sent to earth for a time of testing.

Bible: Adam and Eve created on earth; created to glorify God and enjoy God forever..



- 4.2. Qur'an: God breathed his Spirit into Adam and Adam is be caretaker of the earth.  
Bible: God breathed his Spirit into Adam and Eve and they are in God's image.
- 4.3 Qur'an: God named the animals.  
Bible: Adam named the animals.
- 4.4 Qur'an: Adam made a mistake. We are all naturally good.  
Bible Adam and Eve turned away from God and became sinful and experience death. We all participate in sinfulness for in turning away from God the image of God in whom we are created is distorted.
- 4.5. Qur'an: God sent guidance (Islam) to Adam. That guidance is righteous clothing.  
Bible: God promised to send a Son to redeem us from sin; God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of animals – a sign of the atonement for sin that we have received in Jesus the Lamb of God.
- 4.6 Qur'an: Adam and Eve worshipped God at the Ka'bah and submitted to his will as the first Muslims.  
Bible: God met Adam and Eve and confronted them in the garden.
- 4.7. Qur'an: Adam was the first Muslim prophet.  
Bible: Adam and Eve were created for fellowship with God.
- 4.8. Qur'an: The Ka'bah was where Adam first worshiped God and that is the direction all Muslims turn toward in prayer. There is no movement forward toward a future hope.  
Bible: God meets us wherever we are and so there is no geographical prayer center for Christians. There is promise and hope calling us forward as we anticipate God fulfilling his promise of redemption.

Conclusion: In Islam the world is a school house filled with good children. All we need is instruction and leadership.

In the Bible the world is a hospital in need of a doctor so that we may be healed and recreated.

## Topic 7: Abraham: Ishmael and Isaac

Background Reading: Journeys chapter 4

Introduction:

God called Abraham to leave his people and so that through his seed nations will be blest!  
(Gen. 12:1-40)

Faithful Jews, Christians and Muslims seek to be faithful to their understandings of that call of God to Abraham—a people through whom God blesses the nations.

There are differences and similarities in our understandings of the nature of that call. For example an Imam said: There is nothing surprising in Islam. In the Abraham Biblical account we meet a great surprise!

1. God called and promised Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)

- 1.1 Land
- 1.2 Offspring
- 1.3 A great name
- 1.4 Through his seed, all nations would be blest.
- 1.5 Those who curse Abraham would be cursed.

2. The challenge: God promised Abraham children.

- 2.1 Sarah had no child.
- 2.2 Abraham decided to help God so he took Sarah's maid, Hagar, to be his wife.

Ishmael was born.

- 2.3 God was not impressed. At 90 years of age Sarah bore Isaac.
- 2.4 A struggle began in the home of Abraham that continues today.
- 2.5 In great sorrow Abraham sent Ishmael away; God promised to bless Ishmael!

(Genesis 17:20)

- 2.6 God provided water for the child Ishmael in the desert of Beersheba  
(Gen. 21:8-20)

3. The Muslim teaching.

- 3.1. When Hagar and Ishmael left Abraham's home they became thirsty and God miraculously provided water at the well of Zamzam near Mecca.
- 3.2 When Abraham was prepared to offer Ishmael as a sacrifice, God miraculously intervened by providing a ram as a "tremendous" substitute.
- 3.3 Abraham and Ishmael established the true worship of God (Islam) at the Ka'bah in Mecca.
- 3.4. This means that Adam is the first prophet to worship God at the Ka'bah and Abraham is the middle prophet to do so. Muhammed is the final prophet who also worshipped God at the Ka'bah.
- 3.5. Mohammed came from a family who worshiped the God of Abraham (Allah). These worshippers of God in Arabia were known as the hanif.
- 3.6. Muhammad traced his family line to Abraham through Ishmael.
- 3.7 Abraham was an imam over the nations; now his descendant, Muhammad, carries that role of imam over the nations.

4. The Biblical teaching.

- 4.1 Isaac was born to Sarah is the son of promise. However, God has blessed Ishmael.
- 4.2 There was conflict between Ishmael and Isaac, so Abraham sent Ishmael and Hagar away.

4.3 That conflict is a sign of the conflict between a faith based on human effort and faith that is a response to the surprises of God's grace (Galatians 4:21-31).

4.4 God provided a ram for a sacrifice instead of Isaac whom Abraham was ready to sacrifice to God.

4.5 All nations of the earth are blessed because of the "seed" of Abraham through Isaac.

4.6 Abraham is the father of faith for Abraham believed God, and God credited his faith to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6; also Romans 3-5, esp 3:28)

5. The theological and practical meaning of the accounts.

5.1 Muslims: Worship Allah. This is the same name for God that Abraham used. Abraham called God Elohim and Allah comes from that word.

Christians: Worship the God of Abraham.

5.2 Muslims: Believe that the true faith of Abraham (Islam) has become a blessing to the nations through Ishmael

Christians: Believe that Christ who has come through Isaac is the Savior of all humankind.

5.3 Muslims: Sacrifice animals at the Feast of Sacrifice when they go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. They offer these sacrifices in remembrance that God provided a ram as a sacrifice so that Ishmael might live. (Id al-Adha)

Christians: Share in the communion to remember that Christ is the sacrifice for our sins. He has taken our place and so our lives are redeemed.

Conclusion:

1) The Ishmael and Isaac stories reveal the struggle between Islam and the Gospel. Perhaps the central question is this: how do we find salvation? Is it through our human effort like Abraham marrying Hagar in order to help God fulfill his promise? Or do we receive salvation as the surprising gift of God's grace, a gift that is so surprising that Sarah called her son Isaac. That name means laughter. She said the surprise of God's grace is so great that people will laugh when they hear that 90-year-old Sarah had a baby!

2) Ishmael was sent away from the home of Abraham. Every year in the Pilgrimage Muslims reenact the drama of God providing water for Ishmael so that he will not die. There is a keen yearning among Muslims to be included! Ishmael was sent away; they yearn to be invited back.

## Topic 8: Muhammad and Jesus

Background Reading: Journeys chapter 5

Dialogue, 6, 7; 18, 19.

Introduction: All Muslims and all Christians agree!

- 1) That God speaks through prophets.
- 2) That Jesus is the Messiah (Christ)

However: The meaning of prophets and Messiah is different.

- 1) Muslims believe that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets.
- 2) Christians do not believe that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets.
  
- 1) Christians believe that Jesus the Messiah is Lord and Savior.
- 2) Muslims do not believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

1. The Messiah is a mystery for Muslims.

1.1. The name of Jesus in the Qur'an is Isa, not Yesu (Jesus). The name Isa has no meaning in the name itself, although the Qur'an provides meanings for Isa and his mission.

Jesus means Yahweh (the covenant God) saves.

1.2. According to the Qur'an the following is true about Jesus the Messiah.

- Messiah (3:45)
- Good News (3:45)
- Born of a virgin (19:16-35)
- The Word of God (4:171)
- The Spirit of God (4:41)
- Miracle Worker (3:49)
- The sinless one (19-19).
- Established the former Scriptures (5:49)
- Brought the Gospel (5:49)
- Predicted the coming of Muhammad (61:6)
- Not the Son of God (9:30)
- Limited mission (13:38)
- Rescued from death on the cross (4:157)
- Taken to heaven without dying (3:55-58)
- Returning at the end of history to get the world ready for the final

judgment. (43:61)

2. According to the Qur'an and Muslim theology embraces some remarkable qualities in Jesus and there are hints of the Gospel within the Qur'an. Nevertheless Islamic theology has turned away from the core of the Gospel:

- 2.1 The incarnation – God does not meet us.
- 2.2 The crucifixion – We do not need an atoning sacrifice for our sin.
- 2.3 The resurrection – Jesus is not our resurrected Lord – We do not need an

intercessor.

3. The Qur'an and Muhammad

3.1 Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets.

-Muslims say that they respect all prophets equally.

-However,

-Muhammad is the final prophet and the seal of all the prophets.

-Jesus is a wonderful mystery, but other prophets are really more significant than Jesus.

3.2 Three exceedingly significant prophets are:

- 1) -Adam: the first prophet.
- 2) -Abraham: the middle prophet.
- 3) -Muhammad: the final prophet.

-Muslims believe that these three prophets each established or re-established the faith of Islam at the Ka'bah in Mecca.

3.3 The final scriptures, the Qur'an, came through Muhammad.

1) All Muslims should seek to pattern their lives after Muhammad.

-The Sunnah (Way) of Muhammed is the way for all Muslims.

-The Traditions (Hadith) describe the Sunnah.

2) Muslims give Muhammad great authority and honor. He supersedes all other prophets.

3) Muhammad is the "first" among all Muslims.

4) Muhammad is the perfect example.

#### 4. Jesus and Muhammad

4.1. Muslims believe that Jesus prophesied that Muhammad will come.

1) Muslims believe that promise is found in John 14:16, 26; 16:7 where we read that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (Paracletos).

2) Muslim scholars say that the original word in the Greek was not Paracletos, but rather periplutos (the Praised One or Muhammad).

4.2 Take note: this is not correct. All the ancient New Testament manuscripts use Paracletos.

Conclusion: Muslims ask Christians: What do you think about Muhammad?

Jesus asks: Who do you say that I am?

Question: What do you think about Muhammad?

Question: Are there any truths about Jesus contained in the Qur'an? If you answer, "yes" what are those truths?

Question: In what ways does the Qur'an deny Jesus of Biblical revelation? In what ways does the Qur'an affirm Jesus of Biblical revelation? Who Jesus is?

Question: Can we use the Qur'an as a point of connection in regard to Jesus – but invite Muslims then to see what the Gospel reveals about Jesus for it is in the Gospel and it is in the Bible and the total apostolic witness concerning Jesus that we meet the full revelation of Jesus.

Question: If you answer "yes" to that question, give an example of a helpful way to use the Qur'an as a starting point in sharing the Biblical revelation concerning Jesus

Topic 9: The Qur'an and the Bible

Background Reading: Journeys, Chapter 6

Dialogue, Chapter 5, 17.

Introduction: Ibraihim asked me for a Bible.

-A day later he returned the Bible to me and said, "This is not the Word of God; this is a history book."

-Ibraihim was right: The Bible is primarily a history book.

-Ibraihim was also wrong: The Bible is the Word of God.

-The Qur'an is not a history book..

-Why this important difference between the Bible and the Qur'an?

1. This is what Muslims believe about revelation: it is tanzil ( God sending his will down).

1.1 Muslims believe that the first revelation came to Muhammad in a cave on Mount Hira outside of Mecca in 610 during the month of Ramadan

1.2 They believe that Gabriel appeared and proclaimed: Recite: in the name of thy Lord who createth, createth from a clod of mud. Recite: And thy Lord is the most bounteous, who teacheth by the pen, teacheth man that which he knew not. (Proclaim 96:1-5)

1.3 The night of revelation is the night of power:  
Lo! We revealed it on the night of power. Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is? The night of power is better than ten thousand months. (The night of Power 97:1-3)

1.4 God sends his will down, but he does not meet personally.

1.5 There is a Mother of the Book in heaven (Umm-ul-Kitab) which is the source of all true revelation (Ra'd: Thundder 13:39).

1.6. God has sent portions of the Mother of the Book down to earth through angels. The Qur'an is the final revelation which clarifies all previous revelation.

1.7 The Qur'an is ijaz, that is a miracle that cannot be repeated. It transcends history.

1.8 Some portions of the Qur'an are allegorical and others clear and foundational (Al-I' Imran:3:7)

1.9. The prophets who receive these revelations are known as rasul (apostles).

1.10 God has sent down five books of revelation:

The Suhuf (Scrolls) revealed through the prophet Abraham.  
(This Scripture has been lost).

The Taurat (Torah) of the Prophet Moses.

The Zabur (Psalms) of the Prophet David.

The Injil (Gospel) of Jesus the Messiah.

The Qur'an (Recitation) of the Prophet Muhammad.

1.11. Christians and Jews are called the People of the Book.

- 1) They possess the former Scriptures: Taurat, Zabur, and Injil.
- 2) Muslims believe that they possess the Qur'an which is the final Scripture.
- 3) The Qur'an commands 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..." (Qur'an 10:94).
- 4) The Qur'an also commands the People of the Book to expound their Scriptures to mankind and not to hide their Scriptures (Al-I' Imran: 3:187).
- 5) The Qur'an also commands the People of the Book to stand upon their Scriptures. (Maida: 5:68)

## 2. The Arabic Qur'an

- 2.1. Muslims believe that the Qur'an was sent down to Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel.
- 2.2. The Qur'an was sent down in Arabic.
- 2.3. -The Qur'an was sent down in Arabic to the Arab people so that they might understand. (Yusuf: 12:2)
- 2.4. -It can be interpreted into other languages.
- 2.5. -It cannot be translated into another language.
- 2.6. -For this reason all Muslims must learn Arabic.
- 2.7. -In all mosques around the world the Scriptures are always read in Arabic and the prayers are offered in Arabic. The mosque sermons are interpretations of the Qur'an and can be preached in the language of the people.

3. The Qur'an is organized according to the size of the chapters, with the longest chapter coming first.

- 3.1. The exception is the first chapter known as the Fatiha (Opening). (The Fatiha is the prayer that Muslims always offer when they bow in prayer.)
- 3.2. There are 114 chapters in the Qur'an.
- 3.3. If the Qur'an was a history book, then the chapters would be organized according to when they were written. Since it is not considered to be history, then organizing the chapters according to size makes a lot of sense.
- 3.4. Muslims believe that the Qur'an clarifies and brings to completion all the former Scriptures.
- 3.5. Muslims handle the Qur'an with highest respect; it must be the highest item in a room and never laid on the floor.

4. The Qur'an was organized in its final form under the leadership of Caliph Uthman That was completed about 652 or 20 years after Muhammad's death.

5. Muslim history.
  - 5.1. Muslims place great value on the history of Muhammad and the early Muslim community.
  - 5.2. That history is not included in the Qur'an for they believe that these Scriptures came down from heaven.
  - 5.3. However, that history is recorded in the Hadith (Traditions)

6. So for Scripture Muslims read the Qur'an; for history they read the Hadith.

7. Christians believe that revelation is incarnational (God meeting us in our situation).
  - God met Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
  - God met Moses at the burning bush.
  - God met Israel at Mount Sinai.
  - God met Joshua at the Jordan River.

- God met Isaiah in the temple.
- God met the disciples of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost.
- God met me!
- Supremely, God meets us in Jesus Christ.

8. God acts in history. For example:

- God acted through the flood at the time of Noah.
- God acted by delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt.
- God acted by signs and wonders before Israel at Mount Sinai.
- God acted by causing the walls of Jericho to fall down.
- God acted supremely through Jesus Christ.
- God acted by creating the church.

9. God reveals himself through meeting us and through his acts in history.

- That is what the Bible is about.
- God always reveals himself within our culture and history.
- That is why the Bible is primarily a history book. It is the account of God's acts

in history and our response to what he is doing. It is the account of his revelation of himself.

-The Bible has been written over 1,500 years of time. God has inspired many writers whose accounts of God's revelation are included in the Bible.

10. Incarnation and Bible translations.

-God chooses to meet us in our own culture and history (incarnation).

-It is for this reason that the Biblical writers have different styles and perspectives. For example, in the New Testament Peter writes in a rather rambling style and Paul writes with very long sentences and with very good organization.

-Because revelation is incarnational, Christians seek to translate the Bible into languages everywhere.

-No Christian should need to learn Greek or Hebrew in order to read the Bible!

-Today parts of the Bible are available in at least 3,000 languages!

11 Muslims often accuse Christians of corrupting the Bible

11.1. These are the reasons for the accusation.

- 1) The Bible is mostly a history book.
- 2) There are many translations of the bible.
- 3) There are contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an.

11.2 Here is a Christian response to those accusations.

1) The Christian and Muslim understandings of Scripture and revelation are very different.

2) God reveals himself personally in history, therefore the Bible needs to be primarily an account of God's acts in history.

3) There are hundreds of ancient Old Testament manuscripts and at least 5,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts. These documents enable scholars to be confident that our modern Bible is an accurate transmission of the original text.

4) The Dead Sea Scrolls contain some Old Testament manuscripts that are over 2,000 years old. These greatly strengthen confidence that the Old Testament is a trustworthy transmission of the early Hebrew texts.

5) We know that God will always protect his Word.

-The Qur'an: "..., there is none that can alter the Words and Decrees of God" (An'am: Cattle 6:34).

-The Bible: "Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Psalms 119:89).



11:3 Christians do not accuse Muslims of corrupting the Qur'an. We request the courtesy of Muslims to also recognize that Christians stand on their Scriptures. In fact, the Qur'an itself commands Christians to "...stand fast by...all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord" (Maida: Table Spread 5:71).

## 12. The doctrine of abrogation

12.1 However, even if Muslims are persuaded that the Bible is a trustworthy transmission of the original texts, the doctrine of abrogation might mean that some Muslims will not take the Bible seriously.

12.2 The doctrine of abrogation applies to the Qur'an. It means that some portions of the Qur'an abrogate other portions.

12.3 Some Muslim scholars view the later (Medina) revelations as abrogating the earlier (Meccan) revelations. The principal is that revelation progressed with later revelations superseding or abrogating earlier revelations.

12.4 Other scholars view abrogation as relating to the context. The portions that are most pertinent to the current context would abrogate those revelations that are less applicable to the current context. In that case the Meccan revelations might be the more contextually relevant and therefore abrogating at least some of the Medina revelations which came later.

12.5 Other scholars point out that within the revelations that have come down from the Mother of the Book there is a revelational core that sets the tone for the whole Qur'an and in some contexts that core has abrogation authority over less clear or allegorical portions.

12.6 Some scholars push the doctrine of abrogation beyond the Qur'an and apply the doctrine to the Bible. That does not seem to have been the intent of the doctrine as stated in the Qur'an, but some scholars nevertheless apply the doctrine to the former scriptures.

Conclusion: Christians cannot respond fully to all such nuances that deflect Muslims from taking the Bible seriously. Nevertheless we bear witness that the Bible is the Word of God and we invite Muslims to read and hear that Word praying that God will open their hearts to the life-giving message of the Word of God.

## Selective References in the Quran in regard to the Bible

### 1. God has revealed and former Scriptures.

He, (Allah) sent down the Law (Taurat of the Prophet Moses), and the Gospel (Injil of Jesus the Messiah) (Ali Imran 3:3).

For to them was entrusted the protection of God's Book... (Maida 5:47).

O People of the Book, you have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the Law (Taurat) and the Gospel (Injil) and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord (Maida 5:71).

The writings of Moses are the furqan of truth (Anbiyaa 21:48) and Baqara 2:53).

It is also guidance, light, and mercy to humankind. It is the Book of Allah (Maida 5:47; Hud 11:17; Anbiyaa 21:48).

No change can there be in the Words of God (Yunus 10:64).

In regard to the Gospel, the Quran states: Therein was guidance and light and confirmation of the law (Taurat) that had come before him (the Messiah) a guidance and an admonition (Maida 5:49).

The Quran also advises the Prophet 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...(Yunus 10:94).

Occasionally the Quran insists that God's Word cannot be corrupted. Here is an example of that kind of affirmation. Rejected were the Apostles before thee; with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until our aid did reach them; there is none that can alter the Words and Decrees of God (Anam 6:34).

2. The People of the Book must respect and protect their Scriptures.

There are also admonitions for the Christians not to corrupt their scriptures, not to hide their Scriptures or sell Scripture for a profit, and not to misquote the Scripture.

And remember, God took a Covenant from the People of the book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it (Ali Imran 3:187).

There is among them a section that distorts the Book with their tongues; (As they read) you would think it is part of the Book, but it is not part of the Book, and they say, 'That is from God,' but it is not from God; it is they who tell a lie against God, and well they know it (Ali Imran (3:78).

Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while ye have knowledge (Ali Imran 3:71).

Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: 'this is from God,' to traffic with it for a miserable price! --Woe to them for what their hands do write and for the gain they make thereby (Baqara 2:79).

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Conclusion: The basic difference:

1. For Muslims God is merciful and therefore he sent the Qur'an down by the Angel Gabriel through Muhammad.

2. For Christians God loves us so much that he has entered our history in Jesus the Messiah. The center of the Christian faith is: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

3. One of the primary ways the Holy Spirit works to bring Muslims to faith in Jesus Christ is through the Bible. So let us make the Bible available to Muslims

## Topic 10: Tanzil and Incarnation

Background Reading: Journeys, chapter 7

Introduction:

- 1) Muslims believe that the final Word of God has come down to us as a book, the Qur'an. (tanzil)
- 2) The Bible reveals that the eternal Word of God has become human and lived among us. (incarnation). The New Testament refers to the Messiah who is the incarnation of the Word as the Son of God.

Muslims seriously misunderstand the Christian confession: Jesus is the Son of God.

- 1) The Qur'an indicates that Son of God means that Christians believe that God had relations with a woman through whom his son was born.
- 2) Such notions are known as polytheism, where god and the gods have sexual relations like humans.
- 3) Arabians at the time of Muhammad did believe that kind of polytheism. In fact outside of Mecca was a shrine where three daughters of god were worshipped. They were called Al-At, Al-Uzzah and Al-Manat.
- 4) All sorts of evil were associated with the worship of these gods.
- 5) -That is what Muhammad and most Muslims today think of when they hear Christians say that Jesus is the Son of God. (Maida: The Table Spread 5:75).

1. We must clarify to Muslims what we mean.

- 1.1 Christians do not believe that God has a wife.
- 1.2 Christians do not believe that Jesus is one of three gods or one of two gods
- 1.3 Christians do not believe that God is Christ – the New Testament reveals the

Christ is God

2. Who is Jesus the Messiah?

- 2.1 At least three times God clearly revealed that Jesus is the beloved Son of God:
  - 1) The Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that he will be the Son of God
  - 2) At his baptism (Mark 3:11).
  - 3) At the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:7).

2.2 Both the Qur'an and the Bible refer to the Messiah as the Word of God (Nisaa: the Women 4:171; John 1:1).

-Note that the Muslim and Christian understandings of the Messiah as the Word of God are different.

-However, we invite our Muslim friends to hear the witness of the Gospel about what it means for the Messiah to be the Word of God.

-Remember that the Qur'an advises Muslims to go to those who have the former Scriptures when there is a question about what the Qur'an says.

2.3. Jesus the Messiah is the Word of God in human form (incarnation).

-God creates and sustains the universe through his Word

-God's Word is eternal, uncreated, one with God, for the Word is God's eternal

self expression.

- God's Word is the true and eternal expression of who God is.
- God's Word is living and personal.
- God's Word came to earth through the Virgin Mary.

2.4 God's Word is the Gospel. God's Word is the Messiah.

- The Gospel is not a book; it is the Messiah himself.
- Since God cannot tell a lie, and his Word is the true and personal revelation of who he is, when we meet Jesus the Messiah we are meeting God's full and personal revelation of himself in human history.

2.5 There are therefore several meanings of Jesus as the Son of God.

- 1) The Messiah is the Word of God in human form, the full revelation of who God is.
- 2) The Messiah had a perfect relationship with God, and we are invited to begin to also experience a right and joyous relationship with God. That is why the Messiah taught us to pray to God as "our Father."
- 3) Jesus the Messiah was the perfect Servant—in every way he obeyed God fully.
- 4) Jesus restores the image of God that our sinfulness has distorted.

3. Conclusion: Rather than debate about who Jesus the Messiah is, it is wise to encourage Muslims to read the accounts of his life.

3.1 These accounts are recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- The life of Jesus is so remarkable, that if we had only one account we would not take the account seriously.
- God has, therefore, planned for four accounts to be included in the Bible.
- Each one is different, yet all describe the life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah.
- These writers were persons who had either been with the Messiah or who were close associates with the disciples of Jesus. For example, Mark was Peter's translator, and the early church referred to Mark as Peter's Gospel.

3.2 This is very important:

- As we read the accounts of Jesus the Messiah, ask this question: Who is Jesus?
- Ask the Spirit of God to reveal who Jesus is.
- Jesus said that we can only believe when God reveals the truth to us (Matthew 16:17).

## Topic 11: The Hijrah and the Cross

Background Reading: Journeys, chapter 8

Introduction:

Two narratives about two different journeys reveal the different directions that Jesus and Muhammad take in relationship to suffering love: Islam denies the cross; the cross is the fullest revelation of God's great love for us.

- 1) The first narrative: Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina. This migration is the Hijrah.
- 2) The second narrative: the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.

1. Muhammad left the persecution of Mecca to go to Medina.
  - 1.1 For 12 years Muhammad preached in Mecca (610-622)
  - 1.2. He was rejected by most and his very few followers were suffering much.
  - 1.3 At one point he sent about 300 of the Muslim community to Ethiopia for protection from Negus, the Christian king.
  - 1.4. Then Medina invited him to come to their city (400 kilometers away) and become their prophet and governor.
  - 1.5. Muhammad accepted that invitation.
  - 1.6. The secret migration from Mecca to Medina (622) is the Hijrah.
  - 1.7. This is when Muslims date their calendar; it is the beginning of the Muslim era.
  - 1.8. From Medina Muhammad led the Muslim armies into victories against the Meccans and others who were opposed to Muslim rule.
  - 1.9. Within 10 years all of Arabia, including Mecca, was under Muslim rule.
2. Jesus the Messiah went to the cross.
  - 2.1 In Galilee Jesus fed the 5,000 miraculously.
  - 2.2 The people wanted him to become king.
  - 2.3. Jesus refused and instead "set his face" to go to Jerusalem.
  - 2.4. At the last supper Jesus washed the feet of Judas who was going to betray him.
  - 2.5. In Jerusalem he was arrested and crucified.
  - 2.6 His disciples (especially Peter) urged him not to say "yes" to the cross.
  - 2.7 At his trial he said he could call 12 legions of angels (72,000) to rescue him.
  - 2.8 He commanded his disciples to put away their swords and rebuked Peter for using a sword the night of his arrest.
  - 2.9 As Jesus was dying he cried out in forgiveness of those who were crucifying him.
3. God raised Jesus the Messiah from the dead on the third day.
  - 3.1 The resurrection of the Messiah demonstrates that suffering love overcomes hate.
  - 3.2 The resurrection is confirmation that Jesus is indeed the Messiah and our Lord and Savior.

4. The significance of the Hijrah and the Cross in understanding God and the nature of his kingdom.

4.1 Islam: The Messiah could not be crucified because God is all powerful.  
Gospel: The power of God is revealed in the “foolishness” of the cross.

4.2. Islam: The kingdom of God cannot be established without the use of political and military power.

Gospel: The kingdom of God happens through the cross, not political and military power.

4.3. Islam: Muhammad’s military success is evidence that he is a prophet of God.

Gospel: The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the proof that Jesus the Messiah.

4.4. Islam: Muslim ethics are based on the way Muhammad established his authority in Medina.

Gospel: Christian ethics are based on the way of the cross that Jesus demonstrated .

5. The significance of the cross in the forgiveness of sin.

5.1. Islam: Each person must receive the just punishment for her sins.

Gospel: Jesus the Messiah took our place taking upon himself the punishment for our sins.

5.2. Islam: God decides who to forgive; offering extra prayers might persuade God to show special mercy.

5.3 Gospel: The Messiah is the sacrifice for our sins, and so all who will are invited to receive the gift of forgiveness.

5.4 Islam: No one can be sure that he is forgiven.

Gospel: All who believe are forgiven; all is by grace—unmerited favor.

5.5 Islam: Believers strive to acquire merit worthy of forgiveness.

5.6 Gospel: Believers joyously seek to serve God faithfully in thankfulness for the gift of grace and forgiveness.

Conclusion:

There is a mystery within the soul of Islam. Every year millions of Muslim families offer an animal in sacrifice remembering, as they believe, that Ishmael was saved from death by a ram that was provided as a “tremendous” substitute. What does that mean?

Christians invite Muslims to consider the sacrificial death of Christ. Is not the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice a sign pointing to the need for an ultimate sacrifice? Christians give witness that Jesus the Messiah is that ultimate sacrifice who was crucified so that we might be forgiven. Just as the ram took the place of a son of Abraham, so Jesus the Messiah has taken our place. We are forgiven and free.

Christians also give witness that the way of the cross is the way of the Kingdom of God. We give witness that political power and military might cannot change the heart of a person, and it is only within the heart that the Kingdom of God can take root. The suffering love revealed in Jesus crucified is the way of the Kingdom; all other ways are human enterprises that will ultimately fail to create the fruit of love, joy, peace and righteousness that characterizes the ethics of the Kingdom of God.

## Topic 12: Medina and Jerusalem

Background Reading: Journeys, chapter 9

Dialogue, chapter 12.

Introduction:

There are two sides to most Muslim expressions of mission: Da'wah (witness and invitation) and Dawlah (political control). The Hijrah made it possible for Muhammad to express both these dimensions of Islam.

### 1. The Muslim Ummah in Medina.

1.1. In Medina Muhammad became both a prophet and statesman.

1.2. People who opposed his rule were dealt with

1.3. He formed a constitution to govern the affairs of ummah and state.

- The rights of the community superseded the rights of the person.

- The different communities (exiles and helpers) were united into

one ummah.

1.4 The model of unity between ummah and state that developed in Medina has become the model that most Muslim communities desire. Most Muslims yearn for the ummah and the state to be united.

1.5. In Medina the understandings began to develop of a world divided in three spheres.

1) The Dar Al-Islam: The region of peace under Muslim political control.

2) Dar al Ahd: The region of the covenant who are communities that are not Muslim but are at peace with the Dar al-Islam.

3) Dar al-Harb: The regions of war who are hostile against the Muslims. .

1.6. For many Muslims their mission in the world is twofold:

(1) To extend the rule of Muslim political control over regions not yet ruled by Muslims (dawlah).

(2) To invite people to become Muslims – without compulsion (da'wah)

1.8 The ummah must do all in its power to prevent a Muslim from leaving Islam.

1.9 A primary responsibility of any government is to assure the well being of the ummah.

1.10. The ummah is a witness to the nations; it is the rightly balanced nation that welcomes all into its community of peace.

1.11 It is in Medina that the “sword” passages of the Qur'an are proclaimed, e.g., Baqara 2:190-193.. These passages speak into the Muslim confrontation with dissenters within Medina and the wars with Mecca. These passages call for violent reprisals against the enemies of the Ummah. It is these passages that modern day militant Jihadists look to for the support for their policies. Of course the mainstream of Muslim leadership urge these violent movements to also take head of the more gentle face of the Qur'an.

1.12 It is in Medina that the Muslims engaged in their first wars, these were wars with the Meccan polytheists. Generally the Muslims had remarkable victories in the battles. However they suffered defeat in one battle, some thirty Muslims were killed and Muhammad was wounded. The Qur'an speaks into that situation with principles that are noteworthy. (Ali Imran 3:134-200)

(1) Those killed in battle are martyrs who will go straight to paradise.

(2) The defeat happened because the Muslims did not adequately obey their Prophet's commands.

(3) God will not permit the faithful ummah to experience defeat.

2. The creation of the church in Jerusalem.

2.1. Christians everywhere celebrate Palm Sunday, once a year.

-On that day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt.

2.2 His army was children.

2.3 Five hundred years earlier, the prophet Zechariah had prophesied that the King who rides a colt into Jerusalem would proclaim peace to the nations and his rule would extend to the ends of the earth. The Messiah will do away with the weapons of war. (Zechariah 9:9-10).

2.4. Jesus then cleansed the temple of its unjust merchants with a whip of grass.

2.5 In his conversations with the authorities he made it clear that this temple of stone would be needed no more. Jesus and the church are the new temple. (Ephesians 2:19-21).

2.6. After his crucifixion and resurrection, the church was created on Pentecost Day. (That was the feast when Jewish people celebrated the first fruit of the harvest.)

2.7 The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples of Jesus as they were praying and worshipping.

2.8 As the disciples preached the Gospel, people from over a dozen nations were converted and baptized.

2.9 The church spread from nation to nation as a voluntary movement with no political or military power. It was mostly a persecuted minority movement.

2.10. The power of the church was the Holy Spirit; the center of the church was Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

2.11. The mission of the church is to give witness to the Gospel throughout the world and to be a living-expression of the love and compassion of the Messiah.

3. A great divide in Christian history.

3.1 In 312 A.D. Constantine claimed he has seen a vision to fight his enemies under the sign of the cross.

3.2 In 313 A.D. the Roman emperor, Constantine proclaimed that the church was legal within the Roman Empire.

3.3 Very soon church and state joined hands.

3.4 One result was that churches that were not part of the Roman Church system, were persecuted. In North Africa and Persia the persecution was so intense that the churches were practically destroyed; later Islam took the places of these weakened churches.

3.5 Then from the 11th to the 13th century Crusades from the western church attacked Muslim regimes in the Middle East, and Orthodox Christian regimes as well.

3.6 Crusade means cross. What a tragic betrayal of the cross of Christ it is when Christians use the cross as a justification for war.

3.7. These developments are sometimes called the Constantinization of the Western Church

4. The New Testament church and the ummah.

4.1. The Church is a voluntary community.



The Ummah may provide strong encouragement to people to become Muslims, like special taxes on non Muslims; however, the faithful ummah should not compel people to become Muslims.

4.2. The Church should influence political or economic systems with concerns for justice and righteousness, but not control or depend on such institutions. Church and state are separate.  
The Ummah should be supported by the state; state and ummah should be united.

4.3. The Church should respect the freedom of the person and bears witness to the authorities that God himself gives people freedom to choose or reject faith.  
The rights of the Ummah supersede the rights of the person

4.4. The Church is united through the Holy Spirit and the confession that Jesus the Messiah is Lord and Savior.  
The Ummah is united through Muslim law and the Arabic Qur'an.

4.5. The Church has no geographical, cultural, linguistic or common worship center. It is a community of remarkable diversity.  
The Ummah has a geographical, cultural, linguistic and common worship center. It is a community with remarkable similarities in spite of the wide diversities of people within the Muslim movement.

5. People within the ummah who become believers in Jesus the Messiah as Savior and Lord.

5.1 Recall that most Muslims believe that a responsibility of the ummah is to do all that is possible to prevent anyone from leaving the ummah.

5.2 One consequence is that a Muslim background believer in Jesus the Messiah is often put out of his home; a spouse might leave the marriage of a believer; such persons might be ostracized within from the community or possibly threatened in various ways.

5.3 This situation raises a couple key questions:

1) To what extent can such a person remain within the ummah as a believer in and follower of Jesus the Messiah?

2) In what ways can and should the church provide a secure and loving fellowship and support for the believer who has lost his home or even spouse?

Conclusion:

1) The Constantinization of the church and the Islamic commitment to the unity of ummah and state have much in common.

2) However, the early church in Jerusalem and the early ummah in Medina do not have much in common at all. The early church had no political or military power; the early ummah was established through political and military power.

3) These different visions reveal a very different understanding of the nature of the Kingdom of God and his people, and how God's will is "done on earth as it is in heaven."

## Topic 13:Tawhid and Trinity

Background Reading: Journeys, chapter 10.

Introduction: A confrontation with Ahmad

-He shouted: Tawhid means I must oppose the Trinity because Trinity is shirk (giving God associates)

I exclaimed: Trinity means that we should love one another.

1. Muslims proclaim: God is one!

1.1. Tawhid refers to the oneness of God.

1.2. The worst sin that a person can commit is to give God associates.

1) That is the sin of shirk.

2) Hell is the sure destiny of those guilty of shirk.

1.3 God's will is also tawhid.

1.4. This is the basis of the Iranian revolution: an attempt to unite the whole nation under the one will of God.

1.5. The Muslim desire that all society and culture be united within tawhid creates very serious stresses within many Muslim societies.

1.6 God as tawhid is compassionate, but he never comes down to save us.

2. Christians refer to God's revelation of himself as Trinity.

2.1 God as Trinity is the God who comes down to save us, God who reaches out to us in reconciling love.

2.2. The term Trinity is not in the Bible.

1) The term was introduced into the church in the 2nd century by a North African called Tertullian.

2) We use the term, Trinity, to try to express in human language our experience of God as three in one.

3. Bearing witness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit

3.1 God is love; within God there is loving fellowship, community and unity

3.2 God reveals himself as Father, our righteous personal Creator who encounters us and reveals himself personally to us.

3.3 God as Son has entered human history as our redeemer and savior.

3.4. God as Holy Spirit lives with us revealing truth and empowering us.

3.5. God as Trinity means that there is diversity bonded in loving fellowship and unity within God. Therefore, we are invited to love one another as God loves within himself.

3.6 Diversity with unity is a wholesome expressions of our humanity as created in God's image; that is one reason for diversity of churches; they demonstrate diversity within unity.

3.7 God as Trinity also means that God is reaching out to us in order to redeem us.

4. Interpreting the Trinity to Muslim.

4.1. We do not believe in three gods!

4.2. God as Trinity is a surprise and a mystery. Mystery does not mean that it is illogical or stupid—it just means that it is so wonderful and profound that human words are not adequate to explain the wonder of it all.

4.3 We do experience God as Father (personal loving creator), Son (the Word of God and redeemer), and Holy Spirit (present with us and within us) united in loving fellowship.

4.4 The Qur'an does talk about the Holy Spirit and the Messiah as the Word of God (4:171). The Qur'an states the Jesus is the Spirit of God and the Word of God. One cannot separate God from his Word or his Spirit.

4.5 We do not suggest that these terms mean "Trinity" within the Qur'an, but we do invite our Muslim friends to hear the witness of the Biblical Scriptures concerning the mystery of God.

Conclusion: God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is God who seeks us and redeems us!

## Topic 14: The Hajj and the Eucharist

Background reading: Journeys, chapter 10.

Dialogue, chapter 20, 22.

Introduction: Yusuf was a government official in our town in Somalia. He had a terrible temper. When he went on the pilgrimage to Mecca the town was hopeful that when he returns with the new name, Hajji, his temper would be gone. Alas, he came back with his temper still working over time.

### 1. The Hajj

1.1 Every Muslim is to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca if possible.

1.2 The pilgrimage takes place during the time of the Feast of Sacrifice. ('Id al-Adha)

1.3 The pilgrimage commemorates the three prophets of Islam who Muslims say established the true worship of Allah at the Ka'bah.

- Adam – the first prophet.
- Abraham – the second prophet.
- Muhammad – the final prophet.

1.4 Themes within the pilgrimage give special attention to the plight of Hagar and Ishmael when they left Abraham's home. The sacrifice and eating of goats at the climax of the pilgrimage is commemoration of the Muslim belief that Ishmael was saved from death by the substitutionary sacrifice of a ram. (Saaffat :Those Ranged in Ranks 37:107)

1.5 All pilgrims dress the same; they all worship in Arabic; they all circle around the Ka'bah.

1.6 Muslims believe that the black stone within the Ka'bah is a sign of God's covenant with all true believers. It is a sign of his guidance (Islam) that God has sent down.

### 2. The significance of the pilgrimage.

2.1 Every pilgrim returns home with a new name: Hajji or Hajjiah.

2.2 All pilgrims go to the same geographical center and worship in the same language and way.

2.3 All pilgrims are equal before God and one another for all dress the same.

2.4 The pilgrimage binds Muslims to the unchangeableness of Islam – the same faith and guidance revealed to Adam, Abraham, and Muhammad.

2.5 The pilgrimage celebrates what they believe was the beginning of the Muslim nation through the events surrounding Abraham and Ishmael.

2.6 The pilgrimage also commemorates the significance of the black stone for the Muslim movement, as they believe, beginning with Adam.

### 3. The Christian eucharist (communion)

3.1 Christians regularly partake of broken bread and a cup of juice in their worship

together remembering the crucifixion of the Messiah.

3.2 They gather for this Eucharistic meal in hundreds of thousands of congregations worshipping in several thousand languages around the world.

3.3. There is no cultural, language, or unity of worship pattern in the eucharist, yet the meal unites Christians in grace, fellowship and joy.

4. The significance of the eucharist.

4.1 It is a time for confession of sin and receiving of forgiveness.

4.2 It is a commemoration of the Messiah's crucifixion and sacrificial death for our forgiveness and salvation.

4.3 It is a reminder that the Messiah will return again and bring to fulfillment his Kingdom. –It is a looking forward with hope and expectation.

4.4. It is a celebration of the bonds of unity created through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the church.

4.5 It is a commitment to go forth and serve as the Messiah served within our broken world.

4.6. It is a joyful receiving of God's boundless grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4.7 It is a celebration and recommitment to the Messiah who stands in the midst of the church wherever two or three meet in his name.

4.8 The eucharist is a celebration of the gift of salvation: sins forgiven, adoption into the family of God as sons and daughters of God, abundant life now and eternally, living within the shalom of God, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, redemption and new life in Jesus.

4.9 The eucharist is an expression of worship, not as a duty, but as a right and joyous relationship with God through Christ and in the joy of the Holy Spirit; it is the fellowship of breaking bread and eating together, participating in the fullness of life we have in Jesus who is the bread of life. .

Conclusion:

Both the Hajj and the Eucharist invite believers to come together in a pilgrimage. But the nature and meaning of the pilgrimage are very different.

The Hajj is a commitment to submission to God's guidance sent down to prophets of the past at the Ka'bah. The Hajj remembers that a ram was sacrificed as a substitute for Ishmael.

The eucharist is a celebration of God's grace and forgiveness in Christ who gave his life for our salvation. The eucharist remembers that Christ is the Lamb of God who was taken our place on the cross, and therefore we are redeemed from death.

As Christians we invite Muslims to consider this question: Why did God provide a ram as a substitutionary sacrifice for a son of Abraham? Isn't this a sign? We believe that sacrifice is a sign pointing to Jesus who is the Lamb of God who took our place on the cross.

A yearning for the Eucharist within Islam: Maida: The Table 5: 112-115. The disciples of Jesus beseech him to bring a table from heaven, and Jesus replies that the table is provided!

## Topic 15: Shari'a is Muslim law.

Background reading: Journeys, chapter 12.

Dialogue, chapter 11, 23.

1 Sharia means the path to the watering hole.

1.1 The law explains the sunna, (way) of the Prophet Muhammad for every area of life. The Shari'a is based on four sources.

1) The Qur'an is the primary source of authority. The 'ulama (theologians) have the responsibility to explain and apply the Qur'an.

2) The Hadith that describe the sunna of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad. The Hadith are an important source of authority because Muslims believe that Muhammad lived according to the teachings of the Qur'an. There are several respected systems of hadith, but the most comprehensive system is that of Bukhari (died 870) that contains 9,082 hadiths in 97 books.

3) The art of qiyas (analogy). When the Qur'an or the Hadith do not give specific instructions about a matter, then the 'ulama use analogies to interpret and apply the Qur'an. For example the Qur'an prohibits charging interest when loaning money; the theologians might make an analogy in another area of human relations by prohibiting exploitation of a poor person in any way.

4) All decisions are made through the process of ijma (consensus). It is the community of the 'ulama, not just one person who has the ultimate authority to interpret and apply the laws of God. These decisions should be made in consensus.

1.2 Fiqh is the gift of wisdom and insight based upon knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. It is through fiqh that the Muslim community discerns how to apply The Shari'a.

1.3 The process of interpretation and consensus that went into developing the Islamic systems of law is known as ijtihaad (interpretation of Muslim belief and practice based on insight and consensus).

1.4 Through ijtihaad the Sunni Muslims have developed four schools of Shari'a (law) which carefully define Muslim belief and practice. These systems of law were developed within three centuries of the life of Muhammad. The four Sunni schools of Shari'a are: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali. (The Shi'a have developed alternative systems of law.)

1.5 After the Shari'a systems were developed, the Sunni Muslims concluded that the door of ijtihaad is closed. This means that further development of Islamic law within the Sunni community is not possible. So the role of the 'ulama has changed; they do not develop new systems of law, but rather seek to apply the systems of law that were developed some thousand years ago.

1.7 The Sunni insistence that the door of ijtihaad is closed is based upon the doctrine of bid'ah, no innovation or change. This can bring deep tensions into Muslim communities. How does a community insist on bid'ah in a changing world?

1.8 Among the Shi'a Muslims the door for ijtihaad has remained open; this is because the Imam is viewed as having special authority to give new interpretations to Islamic law.

2. The Holy Spirit empowers the Christian to live according to the Law of Christ.

2.1 The Messiah and the Holy Spirit

2.2 The Holy Spirit in Christian experience.

2.3 The Holy Spirit and cultural questions

2.4 The Holy Spirit and proselytizing or conversion.

## Topic 16: The Shi'a or Shi'ite Muslims

Introduction: There is a deep divide within the world Muslim movement. This is the Shi'a – Sunni differences.

1. The Shi'a Muslim community has its roots in a debate about authority to lead the Muslims that developed at the time of the death of Muhammad in 632.

1.1 The companions of Muhammad believed that those who were closest to their prophet should lead the Muslims. The group that later became known as the Shi'a (party of 'Ali) insisted that a descendant of Muhammad should lead the Muslims. Since Muhammad had no sons, their chosen leader was the son in law of Muhammad, 'Ali ibn abi Talib.

1.2 The first three caliphs or leaders of the Muslim community were Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. Tragically Uthman was assassinated, and thereafter Ali became caliph, but the Muslim community was not united in this decision. Ali moved his caliphate from Medina to the more friendly environment of Kufa in present day Iraq. Civil war broke out and Ali was assassinated.

1.3 The struggle for leadership of the Muslim community continued, and in 680 Husayn, who was Ali's son and of course Muhammad's grandson, was assassinated at Karbala, also in present day Iraq. The Shi'a have never forgotten what happened, and have special rituals of remembrance on the anniversary of the assassination. The assassination of Husayn at Karbala was an event that deepened the divide in the Muslim community known as the Shi'a and Sunni communities.

2. The Shi'a are about 10% of the world-wide Muslim community.

2.1 Most of the Shi'a are Iranian, but there are significant Shi'a communities in other countries as well.

2.2 There are a variety of Shi'a groups; for example the Isma'ilis have been quite prominent in East Africa with the Aga Khan as their leader. The Iranian Shi'ites are known as the Twelvers or Imamis. They believe that the twelfth Imam vanished, but that he will return at the end of history to prepare the world for the final judgment.

3. The Shi'a are united with Sunni in their commitment to the Qur'an as the central authority. Like the Sunni, the Shi'a also rely on Hadith, although they have a different system of Hadith than the Sunni. The Shi'a have three systems of Shari'a, but they are also different than the four systems of the Sunni.

3.1 However, the most important difference between the Shi'a and the Sunni is their belief that the Imam who is the head of the community is so closely connected to God that he is inspired in ways that empower him to give infallible leadership. This authority to interpret the Qur'an and exercise infallible spiritual leadership is known as *ilhan* (inspiration).

3.2 The authority of the Imam is expressed in different ways within the different Shi'ite groups. Some groups are very progressive and adapt readily to modern times. Others are conservative and seek to preserve the ways of the past without change. However all Shi'ites are united in their belief that the Imam is infallible, and in fact, that he has the authority to intercede to God for the all who honor him as Imam.

Conclusion: Muslims often observe that the global Christian movement has great diversity and divisions. The same is true of the Muslim movement. It behooves both Christians and Muslims to refrain from the divisions of the other, for each movement struggles with differences that have sometimes led to divisions and even hostility.

## Topic 17: Sufi Mystics

Background Reading: Journeys chapter 13.

Introduction:

Faithful Muslims invest at least an hour a day in salat, the performance of the required ritual prayers. Chapter 13 in Journeys describes that the essence of these prayers is a commitment to submission to God and his will. However, the spirituality of the “sufis” invites Muslims to seek for a relationship with God that goes beyond salat.

The name “sufi” means “wool.” The early sufis wore coarse woolen garments, and hence the nickname, sufi. They are the mystics of Islam, whose movement seeking spiritual enlightenment commences within a century of the death of Muhammad.

1. Sufis represent a desire by Muslims to have an experience of God. This movement is wide spread within Sunni Islam. One of the best known early Sufis was Hasan of Basra in present day Iraq (d. 728). He often wept for the sins of the people as he preached, and encouraged his followers to live separately from the world.

1.1 There are several themes in the Qur’an that the Sufis emphasize. The Qur’an declares that Abraham was a friend (wali) of God; the Sufis yearn for friendship with God.

1.2 The Qur’an says that no one can be an intercessor between God and man unless God appoints the intercessor; Sufis believe that their chosen saint has been appointed as an intercessor for them. (Zumar: the crowds 39:44)

1.3 The Qur’an commands the believer to remember (dhikr) God often; the Sufis chant the names of God over and over as they seek to become absorbed into God.

1.4 The Qur’an speaks about the signs (ayat) of God in nature; the Sufis believe that the signs of God lead back to God.

2. Important Sufi beliefs

2.1 There is secret knowledge that leads one into an experience of God.

2.2 The Sufi saint is the pathfinder who reveals to his disciples secret knowledge.

2.3 In order to gain the inner secret understanding one needs to affiliate with a Sufi order known as tariqa. These are communities of disciples who learn from the Sufi saint. The word tariqa means the path.

2.4 Each tariqa has its own founder, who gained his secret inner knowledge through a line of spiritual leaders who go back to Muhammad. The leader of each local tariqa traces his spiritual authority and insight back to the original founder of the tariqa.

2.5 For example, the Qadariya tariqa is quite popular among East African Muslims. The founding saint of this order is Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani of Baghdad who lived in the 12th century. The living saint who leads the local Qadariya tariqa traces his spiritual authority through a long line of saints right back to the original founder of the tariqa.

2.6 Disciples of a tariqa may come and go, after having received blessing and spiritual insights. On the other hand some may covenant themselves to adhering to the tariqa until they have

moved into the inner mysteries and spiritualities that bring one into an experience of God. There is a step by step ascending into ever deeper mysteries and experiences of spiritualities that only the most devoted will experience. In some tariqa the ascending into spirituality might include the use of euphoria enhancing drugs.

2.7 The disciples believe that the founding saint of the order has been appointed by God to be intercessor. Some even believe that by going to the grave of the local saint, he will intercede.

2.8 An important part of Sufi spirituality is remembering God's name (dhikr). When they meet together for prayer, they will sit for many hours repeating the name of God over and over for they believe that this brings them into an experience of God.

2.9 Finally, each Sufi tariqa offers the disciple blessing (baraka) People will usually affiliate with the tariqa they believe will offer the greatest baraka.

3. Sufi communities such as the Gadariya, Salihya, and Ahmadiya offer a kind of spirituality and community that complements what they experience in Sunni Islam.

4. One way that this community solidarity is enhanced is in pilgrimages to the tombs of the revered saint.

4.1 These pilgrimages are tremendously significant for the poor who cannot go to Mecca. They view a pilgrimage to the tomb of their dead saint within their community as efficacious as going to Mecca.

4.2 These annual pilgrimages become a tremendous bonding experience for clan and family who go together to pray and celebrate at the tomb.

5. Within Shi'a Islam these mystical communities are known as 'Irfan.

6. The Gospel fulfills both the Sufi and 'Irfan quest to know God

6.1 Christians interacting with Sufis discover that the New Testament book of Hebrews is very fascinating to them, especially because Jesus the Messiah is appointed by God as the intercessor and through him there is blessing and a personal relationship with God. The Sufis do not talk about a personal relationship with God; rather they speak of an experience of God by being absorbed into God. But Hebrews offers a joyous personal relationship, and that is very interesting and attractive to Sufis. (Hebrews 4-10

6.2. The fullness of the Holy Spirit fulfills the Sufi quest to know God!

6.3 The resurrection power of Christ fulfills the Sufi quest for power and blessing.

6.4 The church fulfills the Sufi quest for a community of peace that disciples believers.

Conclusion: The Sufi movement reveals a spiritual yearning within Muslims. The descriptions of Jesus and his ministry within the Book of Hebrews commends Christ as an authentic fulfillment of the Sufi spiritual quest.



## Topic 18: Folk and Secularist Islam

### Introduction:

- 1) The seminar has focused on mainstream Islam.
- 2) Many Muslims do not fit into the mainstream.
- 3) One third of world-wide Muslims do not live within Dar al Islam and that dispersal of Muslims throughout the world is accelerating.
- 4) Muslims in diaspora very significant and they bring great diversity and challenge into global Islam.
- 5) This topic looks very briefly at two influence upon the Muslim movement that bring diversity into Islam as described in this seminar. These influences are folk Islam and secularist Islam.

### 1. Folk Islam

1.1 Many expressions of Sufi Islam are encompassed within the phenomenon of folk Islam.

1.2 Folk Islam combines the power of the Qur'an with the power of spirits and in some cases the power of the occult.

1) For example: when a person is ill the imam might write with charcoal on a board a verse in the Qur'an about power and then wash the charcoal into a cup and give the cup of Qur'an empowered charcoal water to the ill person to drink.

2) Many Muslims will wear a Qur'anic phylactery, namely inscribing a verse of the Qur'an on paper and then sewing the paper into a leatherpouch that is tied to the arm or neck or perhaps around the waist.

3) In some regions of West Africa the marabout function both as imams and spirit specialists, they combine both Qur'anic power and occultic power and are highly respected for they are not only leaders of the Muslim community but they are also specialists who understand how to placate the world of spirits.

4) The Qur'an acknowledges the presence of spirits known as jinns. They can be evil or emissaries of the good. This acknowledgement opens many Muslims to having a lively interest in the world of spirits.

5) In these contexts the triumph of Christ over the powers in his death and resurrection may be received as very good news and as empowerment to break free from needing to fear the powers of the marabout.

6) We are also aware that in many regions of the world there is also the phenomenon of folk Christianity where spirits and the occult are syncretistically combined with the veneration of Christ.

2. Many Muslims are secularist. They claim to be Muslim but have little awareness or interest in the teachings and practice of Islam.

2.1 This is true of many Muslims in Central Asia who were radically secularized during the Soviet era.

2.2 In the Turkish revolution of 1924, Attaturk deposed the Ottoman Caliph and declared that Turkey was a secular state and not a Muslim state.

1) This was a tremendous blow to the global Sunni Muslim world.

2) Since that event the Sunni Muslim world has not had a leader to be their spokesperson. The Muslim World Congress attempts to fill that vacuum as a council.

2.3 Today nearly 90 years after that revolution most Turks insist that they are Muslim, even though they might never do salat or go to the mosque.

2.4. The secularist streams and mainstream Islam often encounter tensions. For example at this time in Turkey some theologians are working on developing a new system of Shari'a that would give attention to some of the objections of secularist Muslims to the traditional Shari'a systems. They are calling for change, and their efforts are evoking enormous controversy.

2.5 In some regions secularist Muslims are finding faith in the Gospel as helpful, for the Gospel frees us from the burden of religious ritual while introducing us to a lively relationship with God.

Conclusion: Folk Islam and secularist Islam are two very different movements within Islam. Yet if you pass through Istanbul airport, you will see "seeing eyes" located at different locations, an evident presence of folk Islam within a modern airport.

### **Topic 19: Principles for Ministry Among Muslims**

Background Reading: Journeys, chapter 14  
Dialogue, chapter 24.

1 Peter 3:8-22 provides principles for ministry among Muslims. Here are sixteen principles taken from these verses.

1. Live in harmony with one another. (verse 8)
2. Be humble. (verse 8)
3. Bless those who do you wrong. (verse 9)
4. Keep your tongue from evil. (verse 10)
5. Seek peace and pursue it. (verse 11)
6. Pray. (verse 12)
7. Live righteously. (verse 12) When Christians live the Sermon on the Mount, that is an astonishing revelation of good news. The righteous living of disciples of Jesus is powerful evidence of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, and Muslims are delighted.
8. Do good. (verse 13) Most Muslims never read the Bible. However, they do read the Bible revealed within the lives of Christians (2 Corinthians 3:3) Christian ministry among Muslims should "do good."
9. Accept suffering. (verse 14)
10. Be bold. (verse 14) Often Christians are afraid of the questions Muslims ask, and so we avoid conversation. Or in other ways we express fear. We need gentle boldness, without fear.
11. Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (verse 15) Be clear about the center of our faith. Always treasure Jesus in the center of our hearts.
12. Give account of the hope with us to all who ask. (verse 15) When we live in the way of Christ among Muslims they will ask questions. We need to be equipped to give account of the hope that is within us

when they ask.

13. Show love, gentleness, and respect.

14. Rejoice in our salvation. (verses 16-21) Muslims sometimes comment that when Christians worship it sounds as though they are having a party. That is true. The joy of our salvation: forgiveness of sins, know God as our Father and best friend, the assurance of heaven, the joy of the Holy Spirit within—and all of this by grace alone—we rejoice. And that is witness indeed!

15. Be confident that Jesus has all authority. (verse 22) Although there will be many challenges, we press on in the gentle and persistent confidence that all authority and power are given to Jesus Christ, and that he is indeed returning some day to establish his kingdom forever and ever. We live with the daily prayer: Even so come Lord Jesus!

### **Topic 20: An Open Door (Revelation 3: 7-12)**

Background reading: Journeys, chapter 15.

1. Characteristics of a church for whom Jesus opens doors.
  - 1.1. Good deeds
  - 1.2. Little strength
  - 1.3. Keep the Word
  - 1.4. Love Jesus
  - 1.5. Endure patiently
  - 1.6. Accept suffering
  - 1.7. Obey the commands of Jesus
2. Those who once opposed will come seeking the Word of the Lord
3. Jesus makes our identity clear
  - 3.1 The name of the New Jerusalem upon us
  - 3.2 His name is upon us
  - 3.3 Become pillars in the house of God
4. Therefore!
  - 4.1 Remember Jesus is coming soon
  - 4.2 Hold onto what you have!

Conclusion:

Test the doors!!! Are they open?

There is urgent need in our world today for ambassadors of the Gospel of reconciliation to bear witness through their lives and witness that God is most fully revealed in the outstretch arms and hands of Jesus on the cross offering the grace of forgiveness and inviting reconciliation and peace with God and one another. As ambassadors of the Gospel of reconciliation believers in Jesus are called to proclaim the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. (2 Corinthians 5:19)