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GREEN



FIVE HURDLES BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND THE GOSPEL

FIVE HURDLES TO THE GOSPEL RICH STREET

Have you ever had the opportunity to talk with a Muslim and tried to explain the Gospel to them? If so, you've probably discovered that simply sharing the essential points of the gospel is not enough. There are some major hurdles to get over: five of them in particular.

There are five major issues concerning the very nature of God, Christ, and the Bible which must be worked through and which a Muslim must understand before he or she will be prepared to accept the Gospel and make a commitment to Jesus Christ. The following material is designed to give you a basic understanding of these five issues.

1. The Authenticity of the Bible
2. Consistency of the Bible
3. Why We Believe Jesus is the Son of God
4. Did Jesus Really die on the Cross
5. The Trinity

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had the opportunity to talk with a Muslim and try to explain the Gospel to him? If so, you've probably discovered that simply sharing the essential points of the gospel is not enough to win a Muslim to Christ.

Booklets such as the "Four Spiritual Laws" and "Knowing God Personally" are very often effective tools in explaining the gospel to Muslim. You must be prepared, however, because once you've finished sharing such a booklet you will find that your discussion has only just begun. In my 25 years of full-time ministry, rarely have I seen a Muslim pray to receive Christ immediately after the Four Laws were shared with him. Recently, a brother and I saw two Muslims come to the Lord, but only after a period of four months. Both of these men had seen the JESUS Film, and there is a prayer at the end of the film that is the same as in the Four Laws. One of them, a businessman, prayed with tears in his eyes! Still, it took months to explain the Gospel to them.

The reason for this is that there are five major issues concerning the very nature of God, Christ, and the Bible which must be worked through and which a Muslim must understand before he will be prepared to accept the Gospel and make a commitment to Christ. The following material is designed to give you a basic understanding of these issues. Now one might say, "*Why not simply add these to the Four Laws and then distribute it?*" Although this may seem like a good idea, it leads to one important consideration: **everything** in Muslim culture is based on relationships. You cannot hand the Gospel presentation to a Muslim and say, "Here's how to become a Christian" and then leave. On the contrary, you must be prepared to spend time with him – to discuss, argue, debate, and even to laugh and to cry with him. Only then it is possible to see someone become a true believer.

FIVE PREREQUISITES

When you endeavor to share Christ with a Muslim, you are stepping into a true spiritual battle. The average Muslim has great cultural and religious biases against many of the foundational truths of Christianity. For him, the cross is a stumbling block. No other religion hates the cross like Islam, and it is for this reason that you must be prepared not only intellectually, but also in spirit and in attitude before taking up this challenge.

There are three simple, yet vitally important prerequisites we need to examine before moving on to the theological issues involved in sharing Christ with a Muslim.

1. **You must be filled with the Holy Spirit.**

One of the most critical elements in witnessing to a Muslim is that one must be Spirit-filled. Jesus said in John 15:26, **“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of me.”** Success in witnessing is simply sharing the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.¹

I’m sure we could all recount experiences where we’ve shared the Gospel and felt that we were perhaps not filled with the Spirit, but were then amazed to see the person accept Christ. God in His sovereignty works, at times, in spite of us to bring people to Himself. Again, when you are sharing with a Muslim you are engaged in an intense spiritual battle. If you are not filled with the Spirit of the Lord, you will find yourself quickly exhausted both spiritually and emotionally. I have been in sessions with Muslims where I felt as if I was going to have a heart attack. To give an example from my own life, I once sat with a Muslim man from Lebanon in a smoke-filled café late one evening, trying to explain the Gospel. As we talked, our discussion began to get really

heated. The conversation kept going in circles, back and forth, up and down until I thought I was going to explode. At one point, I was so frustrated I thought to myself, “*Why can’t he understand!?*” and I literally felt like punching him in the face! I had to remind myself, “*You must continue in the power of the Holy spirit.*”

Satan would like to let you think that the people you are sharing with are just too far from the Kingdom to become Christians, but you must continue. Being Spirit-filled is the most important factor in your being able to continue. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to answer even the most difficult questions asked by Muslims. I was once sharing with a Muslim when he asked me a question that I had not heard before: “Doesn’t the Old Testament prophesy about the coming of the Prophet Mohammed?” He quoted a verse from Deuteronomy which I had always known to be about Christ. I immediately asked the Lord to give me wisdom to answer him and started by asking him a question; “Does the Koran say that Moses was referring to Mohammed, or are you the one saying that?” He immediately replied that Mohammed did not say in the Koran, “Moses spoke about me”. At that moment, the Lord impressed upon me the verse from Luke that says that Moses spoke about Jesus:

He [Jesus] said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’”
Luke 24:44 (see also John 5:46)

2. You must be in prayer at all times.

You will have to pray the Muslim into the Kingdom of God, otherwise you shouldn’t even begin to share with him. Islam is based on one presupposition: that Christianity is false. The Muslim claims that Islam exists because Christianity was corrupted, and if ever they accepted Christianity to be true, then Islam would have no reason to exist. When you go witnessing, you must not go

straight onto the field with the purpose of sharing. When I go on campus, I always spend time in prayer first. The few times that I am extremely pressed for time, or am unable to spend extended time in prayer I still go forward in an attitude of prayer. There is no other way. Muslims are perhaps the most difficult people in the world to evangelize, and there will come moments when you're so discouraged you'll want to quit. It is at that precise moment that you must start again in prayer, and continue always in prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Be joyful always; *pray continually*; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 6:18, “And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

You cannot enter into an evangelistic appointment of this nature unless you are filled with the Spirit and bathed in prayer.

3. You must have love.

The mass media in the West has done an excellent job of ensuring hatred toward the Muslim people through their portrayal of Islam. When the average Westerner or American thinks of the religion of Islam or of Muslims in general, what does he think of if not the Ayatollah Khomeini, the oil embargo, or terrorism? There seems to be little compassion, little concern for their need for Christ, and a lack of understanding that they are lost without the message of the Gospel. At times, there seems only to be the pervasive stereotype of the “fanatic Muslim terrorist.” Are we to say that over a billion of the world's people are terrorists? And even if they were, would this be reason enough to hate them? We need Christian love to combat these misconceptions and to restore our burden for those who are lost without Christ.

Secondly, we need love because only love will keep us from losing heart when a Muslim rejects Christ. Without love, it is so easy to stop praying for him, or to lose interest in spending time with him. I have experienced several situations like this where

I just did not want to see a certain person's face again. I remember a man from Tunisia named Mahmood. He grew up thinking, "*Christianity is false,*" and while all his arguments were sincere, it was because of his rejection of Christ that I found myself rejecting him. But guess what! Two years later, Mahmood prayed to receive Christ! Muslims actually feel sorry for Christians; they consider us to be misguided blasphemers. They believe they are preaching God, and want to bring us to the truth. However, it is through the love of Christ working through us that they can come to know Him personally.

The third reason we need love is because it is the only thing against which a Muslim cannot argue. You can talk about Iran and Iraq, two Muslim nations having fought a war against one another, and they will say, "*What about Ireland, the Catholics and the Protestants?*" You bring up the Bible, they bring up the Koran. You argue for Christ, they argue for Mohammed. Take any issue you like, and the Muslim will have an answer for it. However, reach out to them with unconditional love and acceptance, and there will be nothing they can do except to love you back.

Matthew 22:37-40 "Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: *Love your neighbor as yourself.* All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

None of these prerequisites may be new to you, but they must be emphasized before getting into the details of explaining the Gospel to a Muslim. These three things – being Spirit-filled, being in prayer, and loving – are far more important than knowing all about Islam or the Koran. I know Americans who have led Muslims to the Lord with no knowledge of Islam and, while the more one knows the better, I doubt if there is anyone who can bring a Muslim to the Lord if he is not Spirit-filled, not praying, and not loving. It is by these three things that the Gospel will be proven true.

4) Expect concrete results

This is very important as we get close to Muslims. We must expect results which honor the Lord. While it is easy to believe that we have no impact on the Muslim world, we must remain convinced that it is nonetheless not totally out of reach. It is within reach; we must expect concrete results. When I present the Gospel to a Muslim, I talk to him about the Lord, offer him a gift, perhaps the Jesus Film or a New Testament, the Injil, I know at that moment that I have given him all he needed, and I leave the results to God. And I thank God that one day “Mohammad” or “Omar” will be in heaven with me. It is important to expect results. If you have no expectations, you won’t be disappointed, but in the end, you will achieve nothing. But if you expect results, and God honors your expectations, that’s what faith in Jesus is.

5) Expect problems or even persecution.

There is no minister worthy of the name working among Muslims who does not have his share of trouble and persecutions. When a Muslim comes to Christ, he pays a high price, and persecution can come at any time. Several of my friends have told me that they can’t return to their country of origin because of the persecution they would surely find there. They are exiles from their country of origin because of their faith. I know many people in that situation because they gave their life to Christ. But persecution can take various forms, and we need to be prepared for it. Jesus said that if His persecutors acted as they did towards Him, how much more should we expect that kind of thing. We must expect it as something almost inevitable.

FIVE AREAS YOU NEED TO EXPLAIN TO A MUSLIM

There are five major issues which must first be explained and worked through with a Muslim before you will be able to go back and say, *“Here is how you can become a Christian”*:

- 1. The authenticity of the Bible**
- 2. The consistency of God’s revelation**
- 3. Why Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God**
- 4. Did Jesus really die on the cross?**
- 5. The Trinity**

Again, you need to take the necessary time to explain each of these issues. Once, I worked with a Muslim for a period of over two years. On many occasions we would have all-day meetings, from morning until evening, discussing these things. There will be times when you think you’re not getting across to your contact; however, this is not true. As someone once said, *“It’s not strange for a Muslim to hear the Gospel more than fifty times before it starts to make sense to him.”* On the other hand, it is not how many times you share the truth but **how** you share it that is important. Let us, therefore, discuss in detail each of the above issues.

1. The authenticity of the Bible*

The Muslims claim that both the Old and New Testaments have been changed, and that the Bible is, therefore, not trustworthy. For this reason they believe it was necessary for God to give another book, the Koran, to replace it. They believe that the Koran contains the essence of all the heavenly books, including the Old and New Testaments.

* One good habit to form is to always take your Bible with you and allow the person to read the passage for himself. God’s Word is living and active and will minister to him directly. While you may not always have your Bible with you when witnessing opportunities arise, make sure you bring it when meeting again for a Bible study or a follow-up meeting.

A. Can the Word of God really be changed?

In addressing this issue, it is important to direct the Muslim's attention to the fact that the Bible is God's Word. The following are a few good questions you might consider asking your Muslim friend: If the Bible is God's Word, how could man change it? Isn't God able to protect His Word from being changed? Since the Bible is God's Word, whom are we accusing when we say it's been changed? Aren't we accusing God Himself by saying that He was not able to protect it from being changed? Who changed the Bible? When was it changed? Which parts were changed? And for what reason? By asking him such questions, you will soon find out that he does not have answers to any of them. The Muslim simply says, "*It was changed,*" and that just shows that he has absolutely no proof or evidence to support his allegations.

B. What does the Bible say regarding itself?

Because the Muslim agrees that the Bible is God's Word, you may also want to direct his attention to what it says about itself:

Matthew 5:18 (Christ speaking) "...until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

Matthew 24:35 (Christ speaking) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my Word will not pass away."

1 Peter 1:24, 25 "...the grass withers and the flowers fall off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever." (also Isaiah 40:8)

2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."

2 Peter 1:21 “For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy spirit spoke from God.”

C. What does the Koran say about the Bible?

The Koran itself does not say the Bible has been changed. In fact, it says that unless one obeys the Torah and the Bible, they are nothing. It mentions the Torah and the “Zabur” (the Old Testament with the Psalms) and the “Injil” (which is the New Testament) many times. When the Koran was written, no mention was made of the Bible having been changed. Thus, when Islam began in the 6th century, 600 years after Jesus Christ, the Bible was accepted as true.

D. What about the issue of translation?

The Bible we have in our hands today was translated from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. Whether it was printed in 2000, 1980, 1970, or 1950 it was translated from the original language. We have a complete Bible that dates back to the third century A.D 300 years after Christ and 400 years before Islam. It is a complete, original Bible and we have several of these in existence: one in a museum in London and another in the Vatican in Rome.

However, someone may say, “*Well, maybe it was changed before the year 300.*” We have thousands of original copies of various sections of the Bible that date back to before the year 300. If these pieces were put together, the result would be hundreds if not thousands of complete Bibles dating back to before the year 300. The oldest of these manuscripts dates to around the year 100 A.D. We also know that the first books of the New Testament were written in 40 or 50 A.D. Evidence of this may be found in the writings of the Church Fathers, by whom many books and articles were written prior to 100 A.D. The entire New Testament, with the exception of five sentences that have nothing to do with theology

or doctrine, can be reconstructed from the quotes of the church fathers found in these writings. In essence, we have original copies from the same time as the writings of the Apostles who wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

E. Why are there four Gospels rather than just one?

Some Muslims argue that Islam has one Koran, while Christianity has four Bibles. It is important to explain to them that this is not true. While we have what we call the four Gospels, of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, these are not divergent accounts but rather the same story told from four different points of view. These four agree on the basics of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and neither contradicts the other. They do not record the entirety of the events surrounding the life of Jesus, but together with the Old and New Testament writings they combine to form one Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

What is interesting is that in the days of Christ, the region of the Middle East where Christ was born and brought up was under the influence of Greek civilization. The Greek judiciary system required two witnesses to appear before a judge to bring evidence in a trial. God in His sovereignty, however, has provided us with four witnesses, all of whom are in agreement concerning the events of the life of Christ. II Corinthians 13:1 says, "...every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Finally, the Bible is not a scientific book, but where it mentions science it is accurate. It is not a history book, but where it mentions anything historic it is again accurate. It is not a geography book, but where it mentions geography it has proven to be true and accurate. The Bible, as it is in our hands today, is the true Word of God and is able to stand up to any type of test, research, or criticism.

2. The consistency of God's revelation

In the Muslim mind, God has established three religions over the course of history: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Muslims believe that He first sent Moses to establish Judaism, but because the Jews were a stiff-necked, disobedient people He scattered them all over the world and sent Jesus, the Son of Mary, to establish Christianity. By the fifth century, however, Christianity had become so corrupt that God sent Mohammed to establish Islam, His last and final revelation. Muslims believe that Islam *includes* both Judaism and Christianity and they say that even Abraham was a Muslim. In their mind, Islam is everything and everything is Islam. What we need to explain to the Muslims – and it is not an easy task – is that God was consistent in His revelation and will continue to be so until the end.

God's primary purpose was not to establish a religion; religions are man-made. Rather, he desired to establish a **personal relationship** between Himself and man. This is the message of the entire Gospel. The first two chapters in the Bible speak about creation, including that of man and woman. In the third, we read about the fall of man into sin. From the fourth chapter of Genesis through to the end of the book of Revelation, the primary message of God's Word is that of Salvation.

There is a very important passage in Genesis chapter 3, verses 14 and 15, in which God confronts Adam and Eve regarding their sin:

«And the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life;
And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on

the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.’»

story of Adam and Eve, the creation and the fall. They also believe that Satan appeared in the shape of a serpent and tried to seduce the woman to eat from the fruit, that she succumbed to temptation and ate, and then she gave some of the fruit to her husband to eat. The key point here, however, is God’s promise: “...**the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of Satan.**” If you ask a Muslim, “Who from the time of Adam and Eve until today was indeed born only from a woman and not the union of a man *and* a woman?” they will say “*Jesus*”. They know this and believe it. Explain who the seed of the woman is, and also God’s promise – that from the seed of the woman He would destroy Satan and redeem man. Explain that his promise, given the moment man fell into sin, was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

You can also show how the prophets pointed their prophecies toward the coming of Christ. His coming was, from the beginning, part of God’s plan:

Isaiah 7:14 “Behold, the virgin shall be found with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Emmanuel.”

Isaiah 9:6 “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on his shoulders; and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

Note: Appendix A lists 45 Old Testament Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in Christ.

Matthew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us.’”

3. Why we believe Jesus is the Son of God

Is Jesus really the Son of God? The moment you begin speaking to a Muslim, typically the first and most offensive objection they have is that we say that Jesus is the Son of God. This is because when we say “Son of God”, they think we are talking about a physical son (God having sexual relations with Mary), and this is blasphemy. We, too, believe this is blasphemy. You must clarify to the Muslim that when we say “*Son of God*”, we do not believe that God ever had a physical relationship with a woman to have His son.

In explaining the Sonship of Christ to the Muslim, we need to tell him that Jesus is the Son of God from a spiritual point of view, not a physical one. Jesus is *not* the physical offspring of God. Refer to Luke chapter 1 and read together verses 26 through 35, about how the angel brought the news to Mary that she would conceive and give birth to a son. Pinpoint these important words to him: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you... So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*” He is not the physical son of God, but we call him the Son of God because he came from the Spirit of God. Therefore, he is not the physical son, but “He shall be called the Son of God.” Underline these words for him.

The second concept you need to understand and explain to the Muslim is that, especially in the Arabic version of the Bible, there is a big difference between the word “son” of God, and “child” of God. In Arabic they are the words “*ibn*” and “*walad*”. “*Ibn*” means “son” and “*walad*” means “child”. “*Ibn*” refers to the child you adopt; “*walad*” means it was born to you. This is why we **never** call Jesus in Arabic “*Walad Allah.*” We call Him “*Ibn Allah*”, meaning He came from God. If the person you are sharing with is an Arab, ask him, “*What is the difference between ‘ibn’ and ‘walad’?*” Let him think – see what he comes up with, and then explain the difference.

There is one other logical illustration you might give to the Muslim. In Arabic, the phrase “son of...” is used to signify where one is from. For instance, I am from Lebanon, and am often called a “Son of Lebanon.” A man from Morocco would be called a “Son of Morocco.” And because the Nile is the most famous part of Egypt, and Egyptian will often be called “Son of the Nile.” One could also be called “Son of Education”, meaning that he is a very well educated person. The phrase may also be used to express one’s main interest. In the same way, Christ is called “Son of God” because He came from the Spirit of God.

4. Did Jesus really die on the cross?

A. Does the Koran refute Christ’s crucifixion?

Muslims do not believe that Jesus died on the cross. There is a verse in the Koran which says, *“They killed Him not, they crucified Him not, but it was likened unto them. They killed Him not knowingly, but God raised Him and God is the most merciful of merciful.”* Ninety per- cent of the time, the Muslim will tell me immediately, *“But they killed Him not, they crucified Him not!”* In the Muslim’s mind, this verse is saying that God was so merciful that He could never allow a wonderful prophet such as Jesus to be crucified by His enemies. They believe God saved Him, and lifted Him up to heaven. God then punished Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Him the night before, by changing him into the likeness of Christ. Muslims believe it was Judas, not Christ, who was crucified and they say this in defense of a prophet whom they consider to be great and wonderful. They say this out of zeal and respect for Jesus.

In explaining the second part of the Koranic verse, which says, *“They killed Him not knowingly”*, you can remind the person you’re sharing with of the attitude the Jews held toward Christ. When Jesus was taken to the Roman governor, they did not believe

He was the Messiah. They wanted to get rid of Him. So by saying, *“The killed Him not knowingly”*, the Koranic verse is simply saying they killed Him without knowing He was the Messiah.

In fact, there are other verses in the Koran which state that Jesus was killed. One verse in particular attributes to Jesus the statement, *“Peace unto Me the day I was born, the day I died and was taken to heaven.”*³

B. The Biblical prophecy and necessity of Christ’s crucifixion

The issue of Christ’s death on the cross also brings us back to the verses in Genesis 3:15. In this passage, God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise Satan, even though Satan would bruise His heel. The bruising of His heel is nothing less than His crucifixion and being nailed to the cross. But, though Satan managed to nail Him to the cross, that same death would bruise his own head. Through this death and resurrection, Christ won the victory over Satan and redeemed mankind.

Also, in Genesis 4, we see how God accepted Abel’s sacrifice, the lamb, but rejected Cain’s sacrifice, which was the fruit of his labor. Explain to the person with whom you are sharing that the lamb is a substitute for man and represents the coming of Christ. The fruit of Cain’s labor was representative simply of good works, and was not sufficient to meet God’s requirement.

In Genesis 22, Abraham takes his son as a sacrifice in obedience to God’s command: **“And He said, ‘Take now your son, you only son, whom you love, Isaac, 4 and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you”** (Genesis 22:2). What does this mean? Why would God have asked such a thing? Discuss the passage together, focusing especially on the picture of God providing a ram miraculously as a substitute for Abraham’s son.

Abraham had lifted his knife and was ready to kill his son, but what happened instead? He heard a voice saying, **“Abraham! ... Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me”** (Genesis 22:12). What would have happened had Abraham not listened? His son would have been killed. But Abraham believed and took instead the ram, which he sacrificed in the place of his son. You can explain that the ram represents Jesus Christ, and we can look back 2000 years ago and see Him on the cross for you and me. Turn to John 1:29, where John the Baptist proclaims, **“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”** Jesus is the Lamb of God.

In addressing the issue of Christ’s death further, I strongly suggest you read through Isaiah 53, which very clearly speaks about the coming of Christ and the redemption of mankind – Jesus Himself bearing our sins on the cross, Himself being the sacrifice. The entire chapter talks about Jesus, but you should focus especially on verses 4 through 12. Take time to underline all the prophecies regarding Him. If possible, let the person you’re sharing with read the passage first by himself, out loud. I have had dozens and dozens of Muslims read that chapter aloud and every time I ask them, *“Who do you think the prophet Isaiah is talking about here?”* No one has ever given a wrong answer. They say, *“It is clear; he is talking about the son of Mary, Issa, Ibnou Mariam,”* that is, Jesus, son of Mary. Christian Arabs call Him “Yassoua,” which is taken from “Yashoua,” the Hebrew name for Jesus, while Muslims call Him “Issa,” taken from “Yssus,” the Greek name for Jesus. Take this opportunity to show him that what was prophesied in Isaiah was fulfilled in the person of Christ nearly 600 years later.

Another important thing to point out here is that “the Lord was pleased” (verse 10) to offer Christ as a sacrifice for man’s sin. God

is just; He said in Romans 6:23, “**For the wages of sin is death,**” which is eternal separation from God. However, God is also merciful. He would not allow the whole world to go to hell. From the moment man fell, the death of Christ was planned as the solution for sin.

Now there are those who would question the necessity of Christ’s death on the cross, citing good works as a means of atonement for one’s sin. But suppose I stole your watch, and you caught me, brought me to the police and turned me in. Suppose further that because of this, the police sentenced me to five days in jail. Could I get out of it by saying, “*Wait a minute, I bought him lunch yesterday, paid for his subway and everything!*” Would this be sufficient to cancel out my crime? Would the police accept it? Of course not! It’s not logical. Good works alone are not sufficient payment for one’s crimes.

I will often use the illustration of the just judge: A judge is sitting in the courtroom, wearing his judicial robe, and a young girl stands before him. She has been charged with driving without a license and speeding down the highway, for which the penalty is ten thousand francs. He points his finger at her and asks, “*Are you guilty or not?*” To which she answers, “*Yes, Your Honor. But I cannot afford to pay the penalty.*” The judge, however, tells her, “*You must pay!*” And with that dismisses the court. He then steps down from the bench, takes off his robe and gives the girl ten thousand francs. Why? Because he is her father, and while he could not dishonor his name by letting her go free, he is also merciful and loving and could not bear to see her put in jail because of her inability to pay. The only solution, therefore, is for him to pay the penalty himself.

In the same way, we can see how Christ has paid the penalty for **our** sin in Philippians 2, verses 5 through 11: Christ, being equal with God, nevertheless emptied Himself, taking off the robe of heavenly glory and coming down as a man to bear the cross. At

the cross, the justice and the mercy of God met together, and both were satisfied. Ask the person with whom you are sharing, “*What would you think of God if for thousands of years He promised that Jesus would come and die for the sins of the world, and at the last moment, when Jesus was about to be put on the cross, He took Him alive and changed Judas into the image of Christ? Does this description fit the God we know?*” Not only would this make God out to be a liar, but also there would have been no provision for man’s sin! Jesus was the **only** sacrifice sufficient for man’s salvation.

C. If Jesus died on the cross, and if Jesus is God, does that mean that God died on the cross also?

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, we are told that God is Spirit. In the original Hebrew language, Spirit is “*roh.*” From this word, the word “*rihe*” is taken, which is also the air in the atmosphere. Air is every- where. Though you cannot see it, you know it is present: You can feel it, you breathe it, even though it has no color or shape. The same thing is true with the Spirit of God – He is present everywhere.

If you take an empty bottle, you know that it is empty of any liquid, yet it is filled with air. The air that’s inside the bottle, furthermore, has taken the shape of the bottle, even though air has no shape. The characteristics of the air inside the bottle are identical to the characteristics of the air outside the bottle. The fact that there is air inside the bottle does not mean there is none outside the bottle, because air exists every- where in the atmosphere. Now, if you were to take the bottle today, and smash it against the wall, it would break into hundreds of little pieces. It would be shattered. Can we say that the air inside the bottle would also be shattered? No. Only the vessel that **contained** the air has been shattered.

The same thing took place when God, who is Spirit, dwelt among us in the body of Jesus Christ. God took the likeness of man. That does not mean that He no longer existed. Rather, like the air when it filled the bottle, God still exists everywhere. Furthermore, Jesus' crucifixion on the cross does not mean that God was killed, but rather that the body, which contained the Spirit of God, was killed. God has always existed, even during the three days in which Jesus was dead in the tomb. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul has written in his epistle to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5-11:

“Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

5. The Trinity

The final major issue which must be addressed with the Muslim is that of the Trinity. Muslims often say, *“You Christians believe in three different gods – God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. That is blasphemy! One cannot believe in three different gods.”*

The task of helping a Muslim understand the Trinity is not an easy one – there are even many Christians who have a hard time explaining it. Take a molecule of H₂O for example: It manifests itself in three different forms, liquid water, solid ice and vaporous steam; but it is the same substance. Others use the sun illustration: the glowing ball of gases itself, the source, as representing God the Father; the radiating light represents Christ, the light of the world; and the heat that we feel representing the work of the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of which illustration you use, it’s important to use the Word of God itself. Begin by establishing our belief in only one God – I Corinthians 8:4 says, **“There is no God but one,”** – and then follow up by sharing as many verses as possible which illustrate the Trinity.

Appendix B will help you better communicate the doctrine of the Trinity. Each of the passages cited refers to attributes which are possessed only by God, such as His holiness and His unchanging and eternal nature. They also refer to function, such as baptism and salvation, for which only He is responsible. As you share these verses, note that **each** person of the Trinity is said to possess each of these attributes and is involved in each of these functions. It therefore follows that either all three persons are God, or all three are One.

IN CONCLUSION...

Please remember that it is not an argument we are trying to win, nor are we out to prove the other person wrong. Rather, it is the Gospel we wish to share and explain to the Muslim. Avoid all forms of arguments and debates and seek to explain the Gospel and answer any questions a Muslim may have, especially pertaining to the five basic issues discussed here. As Peter said in his epistle:

1 Peter 3:15 “...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

As we give an answer, let us trust that the Word of God, which is living and active, will minister to our friends through the power of the Holy Spirit and lead them to know the Way, the Truth, and the Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

¹Bright, Dr. William R.; How to Witness in the Spirit; Copyright 1971, Campus Crusade for Christ International.

²At this point, you may have some argumentative Muslims who will tell you that the Bible actually talks about the coming of Mohammed, not just Christ. They will ask you why you do not also believe in Mohammed. You need to ask him, **which** verses talk about the coming of Mohammed. Most likely you will end up returning to the issue of the authenticity of the Bible, and whether or not it has been changed. Some Muslims however, if they have really studied and learned a lot, will point to the prophecy Jesus gave: “I will send you the Comforter.” In Greek, the word “Comforter” is “Paracletos.” If this word is changed just a bit to “Paracletas” – in Arabic it would mean “Mahmood,” which has the meaning “being thanked” or “thankful.” This has the same root as Mohammed. They will say that the Bible was changed from

saying, “I will send you Mohammed,” to “I will send you the Comforter.” In John, chapters 14 and 16 however, we see that the word Paracletos is never used by itself. Whenever Christ speaks of the Comforter in these chapters, He always says who He is – the Spirit of truth. Take time to read these verses with them. If the Muslim is really enjoying the discussion, read right through into Acts 2, in which the Spirit of truth actually comes to the disciples.

³It is not necessary for you to become knowledgeable of the whole contents of the Koran, although it would be profitable if you are able to read it as well as any other books you can find on witnessing to Muslims. There are however, two schools of thought concerning the **use** of the Koran in Muslim evangelism. One says that verses from the Koran should always be used, and the other says that they should never be used. The first group believes that using the Koran will prove the accuracy of the Bible; while the latter believes this will bring the Koran up to the same level as the Bible. The typical Muslim might say, *“If the Koran proves what you are saying, then I will continue believing in it, since it includes the same things – so why do I need the Bible?”* I tend to lean toward the second school, but I am not dogmatic about it because it is important for a Muslim to know you understand Islam. In this particular case, it is crucial that you understand the verse and where it comes from.

⁴There may be some argument here as to **which** son Abraham offered to the Lord. Muslims believe it was Ishmael, and this is important because Arabs are known to be the descendants of Ishmael. Because of this, the idea of God’s redemption of Ishmael, while wrong in terms of scripture, is very important, because it signifies God’s love for and re- demption of the Arab race. Try to avoid a long, drawn-out discussion of this, and focus instead on the **concept** of Abraham taking his son and offering him to God. Whether Isaac or Ishmael, which son is not the issue.

APPENDIX A

Old Testament Messianic Prophecies

45 Major Prophecies

Prophecies about Jesus in Bold

Fulfillment in Italics

I. HIS HUMAN ORIGINS

1. Born of the seed of woman; Gen.3:15.*Matt. 1:20&Gal.4:4*

2. Seed of Abraham; Gen.22:18;*Matt. 1:1&Gal.3:16*

3. Son of Isaac; Gen21:12;*Luke3:23,24,&Matt.1:2*

4. Son of Jacob; Numbers24:17;*Luke3:23,34,1:33&Matt.1:2*

5. From the tribe of Judah;

Gen.49:10&Micah5:2;*Luke3:23,33 & Matt. 1:2 & Heb. 7:14*

6. From the family line of Jesse; Isaiah 11:1,10; *Luke*

3:23,32 & Matt. 1:6

7. From the house of David; Jeremiah 23:5 & 1 Chronicles

17:11-14; *Matt. 1:1 & Mark 10:47-48 & Luke 3:23,31 & Acts*

13:22-23 & Rev. 22:16

II. HIS BIRTH

1. Born of a virgin; Isaiah7:14;*Matt. 1:18,24,25&Luke1:26-35*

Born 2. in Bethlehem; Micah 5:2; *Matt. 2:1,4-8 & John 7:42*

& Luke 2:4-7

3. Presented with gifts; Psalm72:10&Isaiah60:6;*Matt.2:1,11*

4. Herod will kill children; Jeremiah31:15;*Matt.2:16-18*

III. HIS SPIRITUAL NATURE (DIVINE)

1. His pre-existence; Micah 5:2 & Isaiah 9:6-7 & Prov. 8:22-23; *John 1:1-2, 8:58, 17:5,24 & Col. 1:17 & Rev. 1:17*

2. He shall be called LORD; Psalm 110:1; *Matt. 22:43-45 & Luke 2:11*

IV. HIS MINISTRY

1. **He will crush the head of Satan;** Gen. 3:15; *Heb. 2:14 & 1 John 3:8*
2. **He will be a Prophet;** Deut. 18:18; *Matt. 21:11 & John 6:14* 3. **He will be a Priest;** Psalm 110:4; *Heb. 3:1, 5:5-6, 7:26-27*
4. **He will be a Judge;** Isaiah 11:4, 33:22; *John 5:30 & 2 Tim. 4:1*
5. **He will be a King;** Psalm 2:6 & Zech. 9:9 & Jer. 23:5; *Matt. 27:37, 21:5 & John 18:33-38*
6. **He will have a special anointing of the Holy Spirit;** Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, 61:1-2; *Matt. 3:16-17, 12:17-21 & Luke 4:15-21, 43 & John 1:32*
7. **His zeal for God will be great;** Psalm 69:9; *John 2:15-17*
8. **He will be preceded by a messenger;** Isaiah 40:3 & Malachi 3:1; *Matt. 3:1-3 11:10 & Luke 1:17 & John 1:23*
9. **His ministry will begin in Galilee;** Isaiah 9:1; *Matt. 4:12-13, 17*
10. **His ministry will be one of miracles;** Isaiah 35:5-6, 32:3-4; *Matt. 9:32-35, 11:4-6 & Mark 7:32-35 & John 5:5-9, 9:6-11, 11:43, 44, 47*
11. **He will teach in parables;** Psalm 78:2; *Matt. 13:34-35*
12. **He will enter into the temple;** Malachi 3:1; *Matt. 21:12*
13. **He will enter Jerusalem on a donkey;** Zech. 9:9; *Matt. 21:6-11 & Luke 19:35-37*
14. **He will be a stumbling block to the Jews;** Psalm 118:22 & Isaiah 8:14, 28:16; *1 Peter 2:7 & Romans 9:32-33*
15. **He will be a light to the nations;** Isaiah 49:6, 60:3; *Acts 13:47-48, 26:23, 28:28 & Luke 2:30-32*

V. GOOD FRIDAY

- 1. He will be betrayed by a friend;** Psalm 41:9, 55:12-14;
Matt. 10:4, 26:49-50 & John 13:21
- 2. He will be sold for 30 pieces of silver;** Zech. 11:12-13;
Matt. 26:15, 27:3-7
- 3. He will be forsaken by his disciples;** Zech. 13:7; *Matt. 26:31 & Mark 14:27,50*
- 4. He will be silent before his accusers;** Isaiah 53:7; *Matt. 27:12-14 & Luke 23:9 & 1 Peter 2:22-25*
- 5. Hewillbewoundedandbruised;** Isaiah 50:6, 53:5 & Zech. 13:6;
Matt. 26:67, 27:26 & 1 Peter 2:24
- 6. He will be mocked;** Psalm 22:7-8, 69:8-13; *Matt. 27:29-31, 39 7.*
- Hishandsandfeetwillbepierced;** Psalm 22:16 & Zech. 12:10;
Luke 23:33 & John 20:25
- 8. He will be crucified with thieves;** Isaiah 53:12; *Matt. 27:38 & Mark 15:27-28 & Luke 22:37*
- 9. He will pray for those who persecute Him;** Isaiah 53:12;
Luke 23:34
- 10. He will be hated without a cause;** Psalm 69:4; *John 15:25*
- 11. His garments will be parted and cast for lots;** Psalm 22:18; *John 19:23-24*
- 12. He will suffer thirst;** Psalm 69:21; *John 19:28*
- 13. He will give a forsaken cry;** Psalm 22:1; *Matt. 27:46*
- 14. He will commit himself to God;** Psalm 31:5; *Luke 23:46*
- 15. His bones will not be broken;** Exodus 12:46 & Psalm 34:20; *John 19:33,36*
- 16. There will be darkness over the land;** Amos 8:9; *Matt. 27:45*
- 17. He will be buried in a rich man's tomb;** Isaiah 53:9;
Matt. 27:57-60

APPENDIX B

Sharing the doctrine of the Trinity with Muslims

“...there is no God but one...” – 1 Corinthians 8:4

Prov. 30:4, Gen. 1:26, Isaiah 6:8, 9:5, Matt. 28:19, John 10:30, 14:9,11, 2
Cor.13:13

I. ATTRIBUTES OF GOD FATHER SON HOLY SPIRIT

Everyone in the Trinity is described as follows:

1. Eternal	Rom. 16:26	Rev. 22:13	Heb. 9:14
2. Holy	Rev. 4:8 Acts 3:14	Rev. 15:4	Eph. 4:30 Acts 5:3
3. Truth	John 7:28	Rev. 3:7 John 14:17	John 14:6 1John 5:7
4. Omnipresent	Jer. 23:24	Matt. 28:20	Psalm 139:7 Gen. 1:2
5. Omnipotent	Gen. 17:1	Rev. 1:8 Rev. 15:3	Luke 1:35 Acts 1:8
6. Omniscient	Isaiah 46:9-10 Acts 15:18	John 21:17 Isaiah 40:13,14	1Cor. 2:10
7. Creator	Genesis 1:1	Col. 1:16 John 1:3	Job 33:4

II. FUNCTIONS OF GOD FATHER SON HOLY SPIRIT

Everyone in the Trinity is involved in the following:

1. Giving us eternal life	Rom. 6:23	John 10:25,28	Gal. 6:8
2. Salvation	Titus 3:4-5	Matt. 1:21	2Thes.2:13
3. Resurrection of Jesus	Acts 2:32	John 2:19-20	1 Peter 3:18
4. Inspiration of Prophets	Heb. 1:1-2	2 Cor. 13:3	Mark 13:11
5. Comforting us	2 Thes. 2:16-17	2Thes.2:16-17	John 15:26
6. Baptism	Matt.28:19	Matt. 28:19	Matt. 28:19

III. ALL THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY MENTIONED IN THE SAME VERSE:

Isaiah 48:16, 61:1, 2 Cor. 13:14, Matt. 28:19, Gal. 4:6, John 15:26, 1 Tim. 3:16, Acts 2:33, 1 Thes. 3:13, Rom. 8:9, Heb. 9:14, 1 Cor. 12:3