

*Recap of previous weeks:***Session 1: Missionary God, Missionary Church, Missionary Christian**

1. **MISSIONARY GOD** - What is God's mission? To Spread His Glory and Presence!
 1. "Be fruitful and multiply" - God's Holy Presence spreads from one family, to one nation of families (Israel, starting in Exodus), to family of nations in Christ
 1. Gen. 1:26-8; Gen. 17:1-8; Jer. 23:3-6 - "Fruitful and multiply" can be understood as being both God's royal representatives who steward the earth on His behalf, as well as royal emissaries who declare His kingship and enact it through the gospel
 2. Fulfilled and Climaxed in Christ's Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension
 3. God's Word IS Redemptive History - the story of God chasing after sinners
2. **MISSIONARY CHURCH** - How does God accomplish His mission? In, with, and through sinners in the Church!
 1. Ascension as the Launch Pad of the Church and Our Mission in Christ - Acts 2; Matt. 28:17-20
 2. Is this mission to send out individuals as evangelists, to form churches as corporate evangelists, or both? BOTH! Read Ephesians 4
3. **MISSIONARY CHRISTIAN** - Every Christian is a "missionary"
 1. The Gospel cannot be kept secret
 2. Sharing the Gospel

Session 2: A Christian View of Religion

1. **The Reality of Pluralism**
2. **Confronting the Western view of religion:**
 1. **Compartmentalizing** religion as one part of life
 2. **Beliefs vs. Facts - "The Fact/Value distinction" and its error**
 1. "If we have a disagreement about beliefs and values, we may discuss it but in the end we accept the fact that beliefs and values differ; we live in a pluralist society. But if there is a disagreement about what are called 'facts' we proceed differently. We argue, carry out tests, go on arguing until we agree. We do not take it as an opportunity to celebrate the blessings of pluralism." - Newbigin
 3. **Impulse to Unite Beliefs** - as if all religions are just following the same God
3. **An Alternative Understanding of Religion** - where it is comprehensive, universal and claims spiritual power

Session 3: A Point of Contact

1. **Surprised by Common Ground**
2. **Theological Basis for Common Ground**
 1. Remnants of Creation: Image of God, General Revelation
 2. Distinction between general and special revelation
3. **Common Grace**
 1. Restrains sin, wrath and evil; confers good
4. **Being Sympathetic Insiders**
5. **Being Critical Outsiders**

Encountering the Heart of Islam

When Applied to Islam.....

- Realizing Islam is a comprehensive religion with an alternative view of the world compared to Christianity, yet.....there is both great overlap and great conflict with Christianity

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ISLAM AND OUR MUSLIM NEIGHBORS

Learning the language of Islam - note, this is not meant to equip you so that you can argue with a Muslim on Islamic grounds, which would take a great deal of training (from someone else!) and we would still be just as dependent upon the Spirit of God to effect conversion.

- Rather, this is meant to help us love and sympathize with Muslim friends, showing them respect and a desire for mutual understanding. Rather than attacking some view of Islam you've heard, try to engage and love your neighbor where they are at.
- Don't trust media stereotypes to be true of your neighbor, or even Islam in general, just as we wouldn't want someone to do that for Christianity!
- Remember, even if Islam teaches something, that doesn't mean each Muslim believes it (just like Christianity). In fact, at times it may be better if you were a bit ignorant on Islam, because then you would have the opportunity to ask questions and show love in that way, rather than coming in acting as if you already know what they believe and who they are. Your goal is to have compassion on the neighbor so that they can see their need for Jesus.... speaking the truth in love. It's not often great to come in firing, as if you've trained to take them down!

"This is not evangelism of a proselytizing, triumphalist sort that plots to destroy Islam. Rather it sets forth Jesus as the fulfillment of the hearts of all of us longing for peace with Allah. It is an expression of hospitality in which one wants to give only one's best to one's companion at the common meal. And the best we can offer is Jesus, the seal of the prophets. It is one beggar saying to another beggar, 'We have found bread; come, eat with us.'" - Harvie Conn

Why would someone convert to Islam?

- They are bold and strong in evangelism and in raising their children in the faith
- Its requirements are achievable and seems to appeal to human reason, being oriented to law and human work. Compared to the Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and original sin, Islam is straightforward.
- Strong community, especially among African-American men, who can often view Christianity as a white man's religion. Christian leaders are also not seen as advocating for black men as well as Muslims do.
- Churches have failed to meet their community's needs.
- The prevalence of immorality, drugs, and family breakdown in Western society, as well as materialism and lack of answers to life's questions from science.

Basics about Islam to help us love our neighbor

- **Muhammad** is seen as the last and greatest prophet, in a long line of prophets all the way from Abraham to Jesus. The Jewish and Christian Scriptures, however, have corrupted the true prophetic voice, which Muhammad has come to renew, clarify, and

give the final and best interpretation, which became the Qu'ran. He received verbal revelation from Allah (simply the Arabic term for God) through the angel Gabriel, beginning in 610 and lasting until his death in 632.

- It began as a **radical call to monotheism and moral purity** in the backdrop of polytheism and moral debauchery.
- The ***Sunnab*** is the model of life of Muhammad, containing legal and social custom. The ***Hadith*** contain his sayings. Both are seen as secondary to the Qu'ran but very important.
- Its relationship to **politics** is long and complicated, and will probably depend upon the particular person you're interacting with. Muhammad became a military warrior and that contributed to his success and the spread of Islam.
- The split between **Sunnis and Shiites** arose immediately after Muhammad's death around who his proper successor should be. Shiites are predominant in Iran, Sunnis elsewhere.
- **Sufism** - a movement within Islam to recover a personal, intimate relationship with God, against legalism or theological stuffiness, that tends toward mysticism

PART 2: ENGAGING WITH THE HEART OF ISLAM

Being a Sympathetic Insider.... What about the desires underneath Islam can Christians affirm and share? What are some 'A' beliefs?

1. God is the creator and sustainer of the universe, and he relates to them in a personal way.
2. The whole universe is coherent and ordered, open to investigation.
3. God controls history and will bring it to an end in judgment.
4. God has revealed his will to people through prophets and apostles, and sacred scriptures.
5. All men, women and angels have the privilege and duty to worship God.
6. Part of our duty to God is to exercise social and moral responsibility.
7. Security in life is dependent upon the mercy and compassion of God.
8. Men and women may bring their requests to God in prayer, knowing that he will hear them and can effect his will in the world.

Note: They also have a very robust and long intellectual tradition, most notably from the Middle Ages when Christian writers were interpreting Aristotle through Islamic writers like Averroes, Avicenna and al-Ghazali.

Being a Critical Outsider.... What are some 'B' or 'defeater' beliefs?

1. **Jesus** - he is considered as a very prominent prophet, even the last & greatest before Muhammad, and the Qu'ran supports the Virgin Birth, among other things, but he is definitely not considered to be the Son of God.
 1. The most significant objection is their concern over monotheism, where they think Christians are tritheists.
2. **The Cross** - this is an utter scandal to Muslims (as it should be to everyone!) because it seems to say that God is weak. Our focus, of course, should be on the fact that it is the way that God redeems us, and reveals that the powers of the world are in fact weak,

whereas our God is strong on a whole different level. The need of sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins is not a part of Islam.

1. For Islam, **we make ourselves righteous, God does not make us righteous**. Muslim tradition teaches that it was not really Jesus on the cross, but an impersonator, or that he didn't really die, but was rescued by God and ascended to heaven without dying.
2. **Assurance** - Muslims can obviously not have assurance of heaven or God's favor, and the amazing grace that we can should be a focus for our lives and interactions with Muslims!
3. **God's love** - Muslims teach that God is loving, compassionate and merciful, but not in the same way as Christians. Again, this will depend on each individual Muslim, but there is no question that it does not hold the center of the religion as it does for Christians.
 1. Note: in light of this as well as their view of Jesus and God, love does not exist within God Himself. This contrasts sharply with our view of the Trinity, where there is constant communion and love between the Father and Son through the Spirit. They can say 'God is loving'; we can say 'God is love.' Christians can also affirm that God does not need another being in order to love since there is eternal love within the triune God. Therefore, our view of the reason behind creation is that his love and communion overflowed into creation, NOT that he needed it in any way. Ironically, even though Islam sees itself as defending the sufficiency and unity of God, this makes God more dependent on other creatures in order to love.
4. **Intimacy with God** - because of their concern for monotheism and God's transcendence, God does not enter the world and there is no human fellowship with Him.
 1. Hopefully, you can share from personal experience how you have felt intimate with God through His Word, Spirit and Community, even as that does not sacrifice his transcendence and sovereignty. Without a relationship with God, His love for humans would look and feel very different as well.
5. **Sin** - for the Muslim, sin comes from ignorance, bad habits, lack of judgments, etc., and so can be effected and curbed by moral and social adjustments. This makes sense as a part of their view of salvation, but we would say it is inadequate to account for the extent of human evil. With this account, there is no need for a changed heart and new creation as in Christian conversion.

Suggestions (some from a Muslim Background believer and pastor in the Islamic world):

1. We're concerned with what to believe, whereas they're concerned with how to be
 1. Westerners are more complicated, where Muslims are simpler - "show me a model, if I believe that, ok, now what? What do I do?"
2. Learn to be incarnational, loving particular persons, learning and appreciating their culture, music, language, etc.
3. Lose your stereotypes! Imagine if people understood Christianity from the media!
4. Don't wait to worship, or invite to worship last - we worship first and disciple later!
5. Ask how you can pray for them.
6. Don't be afraid! It's not complicated to love people - "its not what you do, its what you do next"