

RELATING TO MUSLIMS IN A POST- 9/11 WORLD¹

As Christianity has Christians and “Christians” of every imaginable stripe and persuasion, so does Islam, from militant fundamentalist through secular and liberal varieties all the way to mere cultural or nominal Muslims. Most likely, your Muslim friend is an average moderate person. That’s whom I focus on here.

My emphasis here is person to person, not civilization to civilization. It is not political, except perhaps the final section.

Mission Considerations

1. Christianity and Islam are both missionary religions. They both strongly desire to bring others into the fold. That is a fact that we simply must acknowledge. It is always there.
2. This does not mean that everything we do with Muslims, or Muslims with us, should have evangelism as its basic and only motivation. It may have a place occasionally, but not as a normal routine.

Neighbour Relations

1. *Overlapping Values.* Over against the crude secularism around us, we share many family, sexual and modesty values. We both want to be a blessing to our society. These are the precious things we share, and that can form the basis of deep friendship.
2. *Displaying Interest and Concern.* Muslims have many interesting and profound ideas and traditions. Show interest in them. Ask questions. Such exchange will enrich both, often in unexpected ways.
3. *Social Life.* Include your Muslim friends in your social and recreational life. Go fishing together. Attend some sports events. Watch a movie together at home or in a theatre. Attend each other’s family celebrations and religious fest. Meet them halfway, sometimes doing things your way and sometimes their way.

Dialogue Relations

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Undoubtedly, occasionally your discussions will turn to religion. That should never be forced but come naturally. Listen patiently to your friend. Ask questions. An effective session might consist of reading to each other from our respective holy books.

Here, a warning: Muslims often interpret the Bible and Christian teachings in ways that we do not recognize. They are hardly ever open to correction of their views. Here you may sometimes respond with more firmness.

Post 9/11 Factor – Need to Understand

The events of 9/11 in 2001 aroused suspicion and fear, altering our perceptions of Muslims. We wonder.....

Muslim perspective. Experienced centuries of colonialism, exploitation, secular contempt of their religion and culture. Divide and conquer. Muslims have been warning the West for nearly a century that unless things change, there will be an explosion of some kind. If the West is angry for 9/11, Muslims have as many reasons for anger – centuries of it.

Christians need to take out their own beam, according to Christ. There are beams on both sides. So, we must recognize Muslims not as attackers on the West so much as fellow-sinners with ourselves. It is now time for both sides to work at reconciliation – but this takes us beyond the personal and neighbourly.

In addition, Canadian society as a whole is marked by violence. Check the headlines: almost daily shootings and murders. Muslims have no monopoly.

As a community we should cultivate friendship and support for the moderate Muslim community that opposes violence and terrorism as much as we do. Help them develop the support and tools to overcome the forces of violence.