

“The world is coming to our doorstep and the church must learn to “Welcome” those of other faith traditions. No longer do we need to cross oceans to tell Muslims of Jesus. They are beside us at work, school and in our neighbourhoods. Scott does an excellent job providing practical, biblical and compassionate wisdom on sharing the gospel with our Muslim friends. This book is written to the church and for the church as it seeks to reach Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

John Klaassen, PhD; Program Director for Doctorate in Missiology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Program Coordinator for Global Studies, Boyce College

“Rob Scott loves Muslim people and so he wants to share the good news of Jesus with them. And we should want to do the same. This is a brilliant book – not only because Rob is an expert who knows his Sunni from his Salafi and can quote chapter and verse from the Qur’an – but because he has had many conversations with actual Muslim friends. He knows the things that most intrigue them about Jesus, the caricatures they have of Christians, the caricatures we have of them, the best ways to start a conversation. And he makes it

seem so easy. I learned a lot from this little book, and it's given me the confidence to give it a go."

Andrew Sach, Pastor, Grace Church, Greenwich;
Author, *Dig Deeper* books

"What a gift for the church! Rob's little book is a model of what learned, living and loving Christian-Muslim engagement looks like. It will give many of us a confidence boost and practical push-start as we seek to share the gospel with our Muslim neighbours. Highly recommended."

Dr Daniel Strange, Director, Oak Hill College;
Author, *Plugged In*

"Rob Scott and his family love Muslims, have Muslim friends and have demonstrated a passion to share Jesus with them in East London and Bangladesh. In this book, Rob knows personally what he is talking about. You will meet some Muslims with a sincere faith that will challenge you, others who are entirely nominal and a few who are very political. Whether you meet Muslims as members of your family, or as colleagues, or at the local shop, or the school gate, or over the garden wall, this will be a very helpful, practical and readable book for you. It will help you

share your faith with Muslims who will become your friends and hopefully, by the power of the Spirit, friends of Jesus too. Thank you Rob for sharing your heart and experience. As I write this, a Muslim family have recently moved into our street and live just two doors away and I intend to use the wisdom in this book, as I try to build a friendship with them.”

Bryan Knell, Founding Convenor, Christian Responses to Islam; Former Chair, Muslim World Forum; Trustee, Mahabba UK

“Sharing the Gospel with a Muslim Neighbour is a great book for those who want a brief introduction to how to speak to their Muslim friends. It is easy to read and covers all the main areas a Christian needs to be aware of. Rob Scott’s experience shines through and provides the reader with the practical steps that are needed to get started in this area.”

Samuel Green, Islamic Specialist, Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students

“As I read this book, I found myself being challenged, yet moved, by the reminders of biblical truth. Our zeal that Muslims accept the friendship presented by the eternal Son of the Father, through his death

and resurrection, should not stop us from seeing the immense value of our Muslim friends, having been ‘made in the image of the Triune God’. Our Lord is so gorgeous and delightful, He wants Muslims (and all others) to have abundant life by believing in Jesus Christ, the son of God. If you have the godly desire to share the glorious gospel with Muslims but are not sure where to begin, this book is for you. This book will encourage you to dig deeper and use your unique personality to start and maintain conversations with Muslims, for the sake of our Lord.”

Hatun Tash, Director, DCCI Ministries

“This book is the fruit of years of walking with Muslim friends and neighbours ... combined with the most careful study of both Scripture and the Qur’an. Rob totally gets our lack of confidence in reaching Muslim people – and he equips us in a way that’s practical, relationship-driven and faithful to Jesus.”

Kev Murdoch, Senior Minister, Euston Church

“Using his considerable experience Rob Scott has given us a thorough and accessible introduction to Islam, and more importantly the encouragement to meet and engage more deeply with Muslim friends and

neighbours. He has provided an exciting window into the Muslim world that gives enough information to enter into that world and in Christ share the message of hope in Him. I thoroughly commend this book, and pray that through it many will be drawn into sharing Jesus with Muslim friends.”

Phil Rawlings, Co-director, Manchester Centre for the Study of Christianity and Islam

“This is a short but very practical invitation to having gentle, authentic, and vulnerable conversations with our friends who are Muslim. God’s heart of kindness is revealed in Rob’s powerful but small book. The message of curiosity and kindness is woven throughout these pages. Rob encourages us to check our hearts and motivations as we endeavour to find out what really matters to our friend when he/she asks questions before we go in with guns blazing. A desire thoughtfully and actively to listen to a fellow human being goes a long way in demonstrating integrity as a follower of Jesus.”

Deborah Warren, Cross-Cultural Educator; UK Co-Director, Encountering the World of Islam

“A simple, easy-to-read book without falling into simplism. Clear without unnecessary repetition. I personally appreciate the author’s knowledge of the Muslim soul and the spirit of respect and love with which the Christian is invited to consider his relationship with his Muslim neighbour. I am pleased to see all the efforts that the author makes to encourage openness and tolerance towards Muslims, without compromising the Gospel message. This book is very welcome and is a useful addition to those already available on the subject.”

E.M. Hicham, Author and co-founder, Word of Hope Ministries

“Immensely readable, Rob’s book is a deeply helpful blend of biblical principles and practical insights; theologically robust yet with a compassionate heart for our Muslim friends. Such balance is not common. I heartily concur with Rob’s MO of a warm and yet confident, questioning approach. There’s no reason to be either on the back foot or disrespectful.”

Andy Stovell, Outreach Worker, Christ Church Central, Sheffield

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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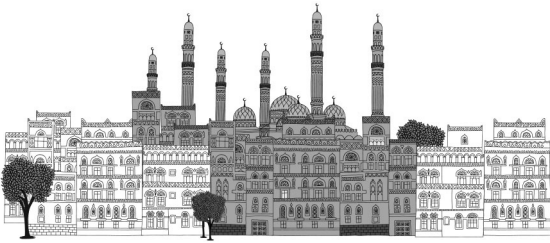
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'WE LOVE JESUS'



'I love Jesus because I'm Muslim,' says the T-shirt of a guy smiling at me in the market. Really? His mate's hoodie says it too, along with a poster on his book table and the banner across the bottom of it.

'Jesus is one of the greatest prophets of Islam. And so we love him, as we love all the prophets,' the man declares as he offers me an iced cupcake. Really?

This man is at a *dawah* (meaning 'invitation') stall, where Muslim people invite others to know what their religion teaches. I don't know how you might respond to such statements. Maybe

with relief: ‘Phew, I don’t need to tell them about Jesus then. I’ll get on with my shopping.’

Or confusion: ‘I thought we were different from Muslims. Are they saved too?’

Or anger: ‘How dare they try to trick people like that! How can they say they love Jesus when they’re following their false prophet Muhammad.’

Or sadness: ‘They do know something about Jesus, but they seem so far from knowing the true Jesus. How can they ever truly know?’

Or fear: ‘Christians used to be on the streets, but now it’s just Muslims. Are they taking over?’

Or encouragement: ‘Great, someone who wants to talk about Jesus. Let’s go over and chat.’

Or it may make you think and feel entirely differently. But I would love us all to be able to think, respond and speak Christianly when we see such people. I hope that in a small way this book might help, whatever kinds of Muslim people we meet. And many will often be very willing to talk about these things.

MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE, FALLEN BUT LOVED

Before looking at whether Muslim people do love Jesus, and the kind of Jesus they say that they

love, we might need to check our own hearts and motivations. I know I often need to do that. Do we love Jesus? Do we listen to his words and take them on board, particularly when it comes to relating to Muslim people?

All people everywhere are made in God's image. There has been a fair bit of theological debate down the ages about what Genesis 1:26–30 means, where we find this teaching, but it must at least mean that all people are equally worthy of dignity and respect. This covers everyone from Mother Teresa to Osama bin Laden. It includes the guys in the market, local councillors, mums at the school gate, dads driving for Uber, students, footballers, drug dealers, boys who throw fireworks, girls who wear makeup and a hijab, City professionals, teachers, teaching assistants, carers, *imams*, neighbours, the people we see on our screens. Just like everybody else, Muslim people are made in the image of God. I therefore try to use 'Muslim' not as a noun but as an adjective before 'people' because this reminds me that they are people made in God's image and worthy of dignity and respect.

We are all made in God's image, but we are also all fallen. The sin, rebellion and corruption of Genesis 3 has affected everybody. It has corrupted our natures and causes us to suppress the truth about God. It has made us into rebels against God – people who prefer cracked cisterns to God's living water (Jeremiah 2:13), who choose lies over truth, who love so many things but not the God who made all those things. Rather than give our Creator the glory that is due to him alone, we give it elsewhere. And all this brings us rightly under God's judgement.

Yet this God so loved our fallen world that he sent his Son so that all who truly believe and trust in him as their Saviour might receive eternal life. All people, therefore, need to hear the truth about God and his Son in order to be forgiven for our corrupt living. All people need to know Jesus. Anyone can come to know him and receive life in his name.

Therefore, we should be talking to Muslim people about Jesus (even if they say they believe in him). Like everyone, Muslim people need to know Jesus truly. They need to know his love and forgiveness before they meet him as Judge

when he returns. They need to honour him as Lord, not simply as a prophet.

Since we do know Jesus, our lives should be built on him and his words. His teaching was extensive and challenging, including that we should love our neighbours and our enemies. Jesus himself showed such love. Whether you consider Muslim people as your neighbours or your enemies, they are to be loved. No one falls outside these categories. I don't say this glibly, not least because some Muslim people do persecute Christian people here and around the world. However, Muslim people, made in God's image yet fallen, are to be loved.

This extends to both the kind Muslim neighbour who helps you out with the school run and brings round a curry every so often, and the angry Muslim street preacher who wants to destroy the things you hold dear. Such love must at the very least include speaking about Jesus, who can bring them eternal life and forgiveness.

The Apostle Peter says, '*Though you have not seen him, you love him*' (1 Peter 1:8). Muslim people say that they love Jesus, but they are not loving the *true* Jesus. They need to hear about the true

Jesus so that they might be forgiven and enjoy the certain hope of eternal life that Peter writes about in the rest of his letter. As Christians, we have been rescued by Jesus; we love him because we know him and what he has done for us. As those who have his Spirit, we should be seeking to build our lives on Jesus and his words. This includes loving Muslim people by speaking to them about Jesus, and enjoying their cupcakes.

**BUT I DON'T KNOW ANY MUSLIM PEOPLE
... AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY**

If that is the case for you, thank you for reading this anyway. Hopefully it will prepare you for when you might meet some Muslim people. You can also prepare those in your church who do have Muslim friends. If you have students away at university who have Muslim friends, help prepare them for such conversations too. You probably have children who are learning about Islam in RE and may need help navigating the similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity. Maybe God might bring Muslim people to your area – or

CONTINUE →

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open your eyes to Muslim people who are already there, working in restaurants, taxis, doctors' surgeries, schools, delivery vans, shops and so on.

When you do know some Muslim people, here are some great questions to ask: 'What does it mean for you to be a Muslim? Do you go to mosque, watch Islamic TV or have a favourite preacher? Would you call yourself a perfect Muslim? Do you think a person can be perfect? When you die, will you go to paradise? Do you think people understand the Qur'an properly? Have you ever learned about Christianity? What do you know? Have you ever learned about the Bible? What do you know? Have you read it? Can I explain to you what the Bible is?'

Alternative questions are: 'What do you think God is like? What is your experience of grace? Does God love you? How does prayer work for you? Do you know God's forgiveness? What difference does your faith make at work and at home? Does Ramadan bring lasting change to your life? What do you know about Jesus? What is the Muslim calendar on your wall about? What is your experience of Christians?'

CONTINUE ↓



Hopefully these kinds of questions will help you not only to get to know Muslim people better but also to begin some conversations about Jesus. Saying, 'Hello, how are you?' can be just as good too!¹

CONVERSATIONS AND CUPCAKES SOMETIMES COME WITH SERIOUS BAGGAGE

Since at least the nineteenth century, European and Western powers have tried to control many nations, including those with majority Muslim populations. For some Muslim people, this echoed the Crusades (which we will look at in chapter six, alongside *jihad*). For others, it has been a period of shame, when the power of Islam has been neutered and its people colonised by superior armies, technology and corporations. For most, they have identified Western culture and power with Christianity, therefore seeing Christianity as an alien religion of oppression and untrustworthiness. 'Just look at national borders drawn up in the Middle East by Western powers after World War One, and broken promises to multiple people groups,' they might say.

While living in Bangladesh, and believing that an Englishman's word is his bond, I was often challenged by Bengalis who knew their history. Bengali history is full of examples of British aggression, deception and greed.² The linking of Britain specifically, and the West generally, with Christianity also means that many Muslim people across the world view immorality in the West as *Christian* immorality, much as we might stereotype political corruption in Pakistan, say, as *Islamic* corruption.

Partly due to our colonial past, large numbers of Muslim people now live in Britain. Our ties to Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, for example, have meant that many Muslim people from those countries settled here throughout the twentieth century. Yet Britain has often been racist and violent towards them, as it has been to many other people. The areas they settled in were often places where churches were not very welcoming and Christians were few in number. Their children, though born here, often do not feel at home due to ongoing racism. But nor do they feel at home back in their parents' country because they have never lived there. It is not

unsurprising that many find a renewed purpose and identity in their religion.³

SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Muslim people in the UK are all different from one another. They are unique individuals made in the image of God. Some were born and brought up here, as their parents and grandparents were. Others have newly arrived as fearful asylum seekers. We must meet each person where he or she is and bring Jesus the Messiah to them. Most Muslim people I know also carry real cultural and historical hurts that impact how they hear 'the good news of great joy'. For example, one friend seemingly refuses to acknowledge any truth in the Christian message because it makes him feel inferior as a non-Westerner and he wants to fight back.

Many Muslim people carry stereotypes about Christians, just as much as we might do about them. We need to be sensitive to this and show by our lives that we are not wedded to the West or a glorious imperial past or any other cultural background we may hold dear. As hard as it may be, try not to promote your own culture

against theirs. While certain aspects of your culture might have Christian roots, and that is fine to point out, this is not true of everything we do. We can also see aspects of *their* culture which might reflect biblical values better than Western culture, and we could affirm those. If you hold too tightly to *your* past and culture, it will most likely mean the gospel is not heard. It may also mean that anyone who does start following Jesus the Messiah does so as a clone of you and your culture, rather than being an authentic follower of Jesus from their own background.

A WORD ON STRUCTURE

It has been hard to know how best to structure what follows. Do you begin with the book Muslim people revere (the Qur'an), and then look at the man they follow (Muhammad)? Or do you begin with questions a Muslim might have when you first meet them? Or do you start by looking at the different kinds of Muslim people you might meet?

I have gone with a structure loosely based around first contact with a Muslim person, encountering them in their religious context,

answering some of their questions and seeing how they might be discipled in following Jesus. This means, for example, that I quote from the Qur'an early on, but do not have a chapter on it until later. That is partly to follow the flow of a friendship with a Muslim person. However, it is also so that you read that chapter having already done some thinking and raised some questions in your mind about the Qur'an, and therefore realise how essential that chapter is. I also believe that having chapters earlier on about the Qur'an and Muhammad, for example, can cause you not to listen to the Muslim person you are meeting; you do not try to understand them in their context. I am sure that my approach has its own flaws, but I hope that you can bear with them. (Some terms or ideas are also explained in the glossary if you cannot find a meaning for them in their immediate context.)