



# Islam: A Religion of Peace?

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# Islam: A Religion of Peace?

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What images come to your mind the moment you hear the word Islam? Do you think of September 11, 2001, terrorists, radical men, women, and children walking around masked and with guns? Islam claims to be a peaceful religion but how do we reckon this statement with the Islamic Extremist who have called for an outright religious jihad on anyone who will not convert to Islam. Is there such a thing as an Islamic Extremist or do Muslims have a different plan in mind?

The Bible is silent on the specific religion of Islam but we do see other areas in Scripture that speak of the countries, people, and the land where Islam gets its roots from. Throughout this booklet we will attempt to bring more clarification to the religion of Islam and its objective in this world.

## Facts about Islam

We begin by examining a few simple facts about Islam. These facts are central in developing a basic framework of understanding for us to study the nature of this religion.

- Islam literally means “submission.”
- Islam makes up 20% of the world’s population.
- There are 1.5 billion Muslims today.
- There are 1.4 million Muslims in the United States (6% of adult population)
- Islam began in Arabia by Muhammad and spread to North Africa, South-Central Asia, and Indonesia.
- The *Qu’ran* is the holy book for Islam and consists of Muhammad’s revelations from Allah. They claim it is inspired by God.
- Non-Arab Muslims outnumber Arab Muslims by nearly three to one. Muslim populations: Indonesia 88%, Pakistan 97%, Bangladesh 97 %, India 11%.
- One fifth of international students in the United States come from 40 Islamic countries.
- Following Muhammad’s death two groups divided over his successor. The Sunnis believed the successor should be elected. The Shi’ites believed he should come from the blood line of Muhammad.

- Sunnis are 90% of the Muslims. They emphasize consensus and the authority of the written tradition. These include not only the *Qur'an* but also the *Sunna* or “customs.”
- The Shi'ites are more authority oriented. They believe that God spoke through an *Imam*. The twelfth Imam disappeared, and they await his return. In the mean time they and the Sunnis rely on *ulama* or religious scholars.

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### Questions to Consider

What stands out to you about these simple facts on Islam?

Why would these facts be important in helping Christians develop a Biblical framework for understanding the threat of Islam?

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### Scriptures to Consider

**2 Peter 1:20-21** – Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Peter 2:1** – But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.

## History of Islam

The majority of this section will come from an article written by Dr. David Reagan.<sup>1</sup> Islam was founded in the early seventh century by Muhammad. He was born in Mecca in the Saudi Arabian peninsula in 570 A.D. His father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was six years old. He was raised first by a grandfather and later by an uncle.

Muhammad was illiterate throughout his life. Until the age of 25 he worked in caravans. During his extensive travels, he encountered many Christians and Jews. Through his conversations with them, he picked up bits and pieces of both Judaism and Christianity.

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### Question to Consider

Why is this an important item to note in the birth of Islam?  
(Think of historical and religious roots of Islam.)

<sup>1</sup> Reagan, David Dr. Lamb & Lion Ministries. www.labmlion.com, McKinney, TX. 2009

Fifteen years after the marriage to his first wife, at age 40, Muhammad had a visitation from a spirit, in A.D. 610. Supposedly, this spirit told him that he was called of God to be a “prophet” and an “apostle.” It is interesting to note that there was no tradition in Arabian religions of either prophets or apostles. These terms were obviously used by Muhammad to appeal to Jews and Christians.

Muhammad decided to proclaim that there was only one god — and he selected Allah as that god. That’s the reason the crescent moon became the symbol of Islam. Muhammad also proclaimed that he was the prophet of Allah.

Initially, Muhammad expected both Jews and Christians to receive his new revelation. Thus, early passages in the Koran speak admiringly of “*the people of the Book*.” These are the passages that Muslims in the West love to quote in their effort to prove that Islam is a tolerant religion. (NOTE: *Sura* Means Chapter in reference to the Qu’ran.)

**Sura 5:82** — “You will find that those who are nearest in love to the believers [Muslims] are those who say, ‘We are Christians.’ “

History shows that the Jews and Christians rejected Muhammad and then he turned fiercely against them, and later passages in the Koran speak of them disparagingly:

**Sura 5:51** — Commands Muslims not to take Jews and Christians as friends.

**Sura 9:29** — Commands Muslims to fight against Jews and Christians until they either submit to Allah or else agree to pay a special tax.

Muhammad also found opposition to his teachings in his home town of Mecca and was eventually forced to flee the town to Medina where his message was received. The Islamic calendar dates from this year when Muhammad fled to Medina and found a receptive audience, resulting in the formal establishment of Islam as a religion.

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### Question to Consider

Why did Muhammad find opposition to his teachings?

## Samples of Teachings of Muhammad

- **Sura 5:33** — “[For those who do not submit to Allah] their punishment is... execution or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet, from the opposite sides, or exile from the land.”
- **Sura 2:216** – “Fighting is prescribed for you, and [some of] you dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that you love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knows, and you know not.”
- **Sura 9:5** – “Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war.”
- **Sura 2:190-193** – “Fight in the way of Allah... and slay them [the unbelievers] wherever you find them and drive them out... and fight them until... religion is for Allah.”
- Muhammad is quoted in the **Hadith** (the oral tradition of Muhammad’s sayings) as saying, “The sword is the key of heaven and hell. A drop of blood in the cause of Allah — a night spent in arms [war] — is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven, and at the day of judgment, his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim.”
- Also in the **Hadith** it says “Whoever changes his religion, kill him” (Hadith 9:57).
- The Qu’ran also expresses an intolerant attitude toward any person who decides to reject the Islamic faith or convert to another religion. Such persons are to be executed (Sura 9:12).
- These commands and many more are practiced in all Islamic Fundamentalist countries today.

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### Question to Consider

Is this a peaceful religion that is just misunderstood or is there more to the story?

All of Muslims who were alive after the death of Muhammad took up the sword, as directed by the Qu’ran and devoted themselves to advancing Islam through military might. The resulting spread of the religion was phenomenal. Within a century, Islamic forces had conquered Saudi Arabia, the entire Middle East, Central Asia, and large parts of India. The armies raged through Egypt and across North Africa, destroying corrupt Byzantine Christianity in their path.

In 710 A.D. the Islamic armies crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and quickly conquered three-fourths of Spain and Portugal. They then invaded France and took one-third of the nation. They were 125 miles from Paris when they were miraculously defeated at the Battle of Poitiers (also known as the Battle of Tours) in 732 A.D. by a French army led by Charles Martel. Their influence in Spain lived on for a few more centuries before they were slowly driven back to North Africa.

A second powerful attempt to control all of Europe was made 900 years later in the 17th Century when the Turks expanded their Ottoman Empire. They made their way to Vienna by the late 1600's and were once again defeated by the Western forces. At this point, Islam fell into a state of virtually nonexistence until the 20th Century where it awoke once again.

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### Questions to Consider

What factors have led to the rise of Islam in our world today?

Why should Christians be aware of these facts?

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### Scripture to Consider

**2 Timothy 4:3-5** – For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

### Reflect and Compare the Teachings of Jesus

Take a few minutes and reflect upon a few of the teachings of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Compare these teachings to some of those that you have already learned about with Muhammad.

**Matthew 5:44** – But I tell you: Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

**Matthew 5:39** – ...If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

**Matthew 7:1** – Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

**Matthew 7:12** – So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...

**Matthew 22:39** – ...love your neighbor as yourself.

**John 15:17** – This is my command: Love each other.

**John 15:13** – Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

**John 14:6** – Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

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## Questions to Consider

How are these teachings different than that of Muhammad?

How would these teachings lead us to the understanding that Allah and Jesus Christ are not the same God?

## Basic Beliefs and “Pillars”

It is also important for us to understand the most basic beliefs of Islam in order to understand the main difference between Islam and Christianity. The beliefs of Muslims worldwide are diverse but there are six basic elements of faith common to nearly all Muslims. In addition, there are six “Pillars” that must be completed.

### Six Basic Belief Elements of Islam

#### *Element #1*

The first of these is that there is no god but Allah. The pre-Islamic Arabs were polytheists. Muhammad succeeded in leading them to devote themselves solely to the chief God of the pantheon whom they called Allah (which simply means God). To worship or attribute deity to any other being is considered *shirk* or blasphemy.

#### *Element #2*

The second element of faith is belief in angels and jinn. Jinn are spirit beings capable of both good and evil actions and of possessing human beings. Above the jinn in rank are the angels of God. Two of them are believed to accompany every Muslim, one on the right to record his good deeds, and one on the left to record his evil deeds.

#### *Element #3*

The third element is belief in Allah’s holy books, 104 of which are referred to in the Qu’ran. Chief among these are the Law given to

Moses, the Psalms given to David, the Gospel (or Injil) given to Jesus, and the Qu'ran given to Muhammad. Each of these is conceived to have communicated the same basic message of God's will to man. Obvious discrepancies between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and the Qu'ran were accounted for by Muhammad in his suggestion that the Bible had been tampered with by Jews and Christians.

#### ***Element #4***

The fourth element of faith is belief in Allah's prophets, through whom Allah appealed to man to follow His will as revealed in His holy books. Among them were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. But all agree that Muhammad was God's final and supreme prophet—the "seal" of the prophets.

#### ***Element #5***

The fifth element of faith is belief in the absolute predestinating will of Allah. The Koran seems to support the idea that all things (both good and evil) are the direct result of Allah's will. Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so.

#### ***Element #6***

The final element of faith is belief in the resurrection and final judgment. At the end of history, Allah will judge the works of all men. Those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will enter into paradise. The rest will be consigned to hell. One's position with regard to Allah is determined by his success in keeping His laws.

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#### **Question to Consider**

How could Islam and Christianity be seen as similar religions when looking at the six basic elements of faith?

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#### **Scripture to Consider**

**Exodus 20:1-5** – And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me..."

## **Six Pillars of Islam**

We now draw our attention to the six basic pillars of the Islamic faith. The Pillars of Islam are seen as items that they must accomplish to enter into paradise with Allah for eternity.

### ***Pillar One – Recite the Shahadah***

The first pillar is recitation of the creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.” It is commonly held that to recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses is to constitute oneself a Muslim--one in submission to God. Remember that the word Islam simply means “submission.”

### ***Second Pillar – Pray***

The second pillar is the regular practice of prayers. Sunni Muslims are required to recite specific prayers accompanied by prescribed motions five times daily. (Shi'ites do so only three times a day.) All male Muslims are also enjoined to meet for community prayer (and sermon) each Friday at noon.

### ***Pillar Three – Give Alms***

The third pillar is almsgiving. Born an orphan himself, Muhammad was deeply concerned for the needy. The Qu’ran requires that 2.5% of one’s income be given to the poor or to the spread of Islam.

### ***Pillar Four – Fast***

The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast during the month of Ramadan (the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar, during which Muhammad is said to have received the first of his revelations from God, and during which he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina). During this month, Muslims in good health are required to forego all food and liquid during daylight hours. This fast promotes the Muslim’s self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.

### ***Pillar Five – Make the Pilgrimage***

The fifth pillar is the pilgrimage to Mecca. If possible, every Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life. It can be made properly only on a few days during the last month of the Muslim year. The pilgrimage promotes the ideas of worldwide unity and equality among Muslims. But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin.

## ***Pillar Six – The Jihad***

A sixth pillar is often added. The term *Jihad* means “exertion” or “struggle” in behalf of Allah. Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or “holy war.” The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!

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### **Questions to Consider**

How could this be seen as a religion of works?

How is this different than Christianity? Explain.

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### **Scripture to Consider**

**Ephesians 2:8** – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...

## **Agenda of Islam**

The Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran was the modern day Islamic spokesman who revived Muhammad’s vision of world conquest. He taught that the re-establishment of Israel was a Satanic miracle allowed by Allah because of the lukewarm stance of the Muslim masses. He called for a renewal of true Islam to accomplish three purposes:

- To overthrow the “secular” rulers of Islamic countries (like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt), just as he had done in Iran.
  - To take back the land of Palestine for Allah, exterminating Israel in the process.
  - To conquer the rest of the world for Allah.
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### **Question to Consider**

What are different ways these three purposes could be carried out? Explain.

# Letter from a Muslim Seeker

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*From Philip Yancey, Christianity Today*

## **Christians aren't the only ones asking 'Why?' after September's tragedy**

My deadline for writing this column came shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11. A dozen different potential columns passed through my mind. In the end, I decided to devote this space to excerpts from a letter faxed to me on September 12, one day after the tragedy. It gives personal, individual focus to a conflict normally discussed in global terms—and poses an important challenge to the church. For me, everything going on in the world took on a different slant because of this letter.

Dear Mr. Yancey,

Considering the terrible tragedy that happened yesterday in this nation, I don't know whether this is the appropriate time to write about something personal. But perhaps because of what happened, I think I should write this letter, because I am convinced now that evil does exist in this world.

Growing up in Pakistan, I was a moderately religious Muslim. During the past few months, some of the events in my life caused me to think about God. A friend of mine had a brain tumor, and that caused me an immense amount of pain and sent me searching for the answer for "Why?" I read some books about the prophet Muhammad and the Islamic faith by Western scholars. I was shocked to learn a lot of things about my religion that I never knew. I felt—and still feel—betrayed and hurt. In a closed society like Pakistan, any sort of criticism of Islam is punishable by death, so one cannot have an unbiased view of the faith.

As I found out all these not so agreeable things about Islam, I found myself drawn toward the Christian faith. So I just called [a local pastor in the United States]. Over the past few months, I met with him regularly, and every time I asked him a lot of questions. Each time he would give me books to read.

For a Muslim person to be that interested in the Christian faith is unthinkable. [My family and I] have talked about issues like the concept of salvation in Islam (which is through deeds) and that of Christianity. They find it quite ridiculous—the concept of a Savior and one person dying for everyone's sins, and that all you have to do is to believe in him. To be honest, I find this concept a little strange too.

Islam does believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus, but it says that he was a prophet of God and no more. It also says that he was lifted up by God and was not crucified; the Jews only thought that they crucified him. Islam even believes in the Second Coming of Jesus. I have found myself defending the Christian beliefs against my family, arguing that the Crucifixion is a historical fact and that someone who is so special as to be born of a virgin—and who would even come back to the world—can't be just a prophet of God.

But the most painful discovery for me about the Islamic faith has been its concept of militancy. I always used to think that these fanatics were just misguided people who give Islam a bad name. To be sure, Islam does not permit killing of innocent women and children, but as I have found out, its teachings are quite different from those of Jesus, who wants you to turn the other cheek. As I know now, violence does have a strong precedent in Islam.

The terrible tragedy that happened yesterday in this country seems to be the logical outcome of teachings that tell you it's okay to reply in kind. I think that's what happens when you try to enforce God's will in this earthly world rather than believing that his kingdom is not of this world but of the other world.

My mom is so distressed. She has been pleading with me not to abandon my faith. I love her so much. But how can I force my heart to believe in something that just doesn't seem right? I still have a lot of questions about Christian beliefs, but I know that if I decide to convert, I will be causing an immense amount of heartbreak. I would be ostracized by all my relatives. Also, my legal status in this country expires next year, and considering my views about Islam now—and my sympathetic and favorable view about the Christian faith—I can't imagine going back to Pakistan.

Do you think I would find loving and open-minded friends in the church? Would it be fair to say some people would put their guards up and won't want anything to do with someone who belongs to some different Asian Indian race? Someone who has a different color of skin and speaks with an accent?

I really am so confused, so lost. Please tell me what to do.  
God bless you.

# “Crescent Project” Resources

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The *Crescent Project* exists to mobilize and equip Christians to share the Hope of with Muslims. The Crescent Project is based out of Indianapolis and their online site is [www.CrescentProject.org](http://www.CrescentProject.org). The following information was introduced shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

## Militant Muslims

The majority of Muslims today are not involved in what is known as “Militant Islam,” which supports the use of force to implement Islamic law.

Although militancy varies widely by country, most researches estimate that roughly 5% of Muslims worldwide are involved in “Militant Islam.” Most Muslims in the West are moderate.

## Going Back to the Roots

Militant Islam has its roots in the teachings of the Qur’an on *Jihad*. Jihad in Islam means “to strive and persevere in implementing God’s law.”

The *Qur’an*, the *Sunna* (teachings on Muhammad’s life) and the *Hadith* (traditions on Muhammad’s life) all include passages that support the use of force to implement God’s law.

Since the inception of Islam, Muslims have viewed the world as two houses—the House of Peace, and the House of War. The House of Peace (*Dar-ul-Salam*) includes all countries under Islamic law. The House of War (*Dar-al-Harb*) includes all areas that have not surrendered to Islamic law. *Dar-al-Harb* became the name of a social institution led by Caliphs (emperors) whose sole focus was to war against non-Muslims.

Since the Caliphate (office of the emperor) was abolished in 1923, Muslims have lacked a religious / political leader to regulate their communal and religious life.

Since the 1950s, and especially since the rise of Khomeini in 1979, resurgence in militant Islam has rippled throughout the Muslim world. Many new militant movements were created basing their understanding of Jihad from the life of Muhammad, the Hadith,

and the Qur'an. The following verses from the Qur'an are often used by Militants to support their tactics:

**Sura 61:4** — “Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array as if they were a solid cemented structure.”

**Sura 9:111** — “Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their good; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): they fight in His cause and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth through the Law, the Gospel and the Qur'an: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.”

**Sura 9:5** — “But when the forbidden months are past then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them and seize them beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)”

## **Militants are at War**

Militant Muslims are at war with all governments (regardless of religious background) that do not claim allegiance to their understanding of Militant Islam.

In recent years, militant Muslims have used a modern style of tribal warfare called *Alkar walfar*, now branded as “terrorism.” Their objective is to kill and destroy as much as possible in one single attack in order to create fear and intimidation. They view themselves as soldiers in the army of God on a Jihad.

From the days of Muhammad, Jihad has had a two-fold incentive: first: material rewards for this life, and second: assurance of a blissful eternity for those killed in battle. Those who die in battle are called *Shuhada* (“martyrs” in Arabic), which is a misunderstanding of the real Arabic meaning. *Shuhada* actually means “peaceful witness.”

## **Are Militants Open to the Gospel?**

Most Militant Muslims have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. They acquire information about western culture through the entertainment media. They view western culture as decadent and worthless, and equate Christianity with it.

The Bible encourages us to pray for all people, including those who are fanatic and militant. The life of Paul is a prime example of

God's grace and power. God changed Saul, a militant, into the Apostle Paul. Believers in Christ should not fear religious fanatics, because the Grace of God is stronger!

Have faith in God— “The prayer of the righteous has great power and effectiveness.”

## **Prayer for Militant Muslims**

- Pray for an awakening in their conscience to turn from their evil ways and seek the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict them that violence goes against God's righteous and Holy character.
- Pray for Christians to portray authentic Christian conduct as they meet Muslims.
- Pray for God to send them Christians and Bibles, so they can clearly understand the message of Christ.

## **Tips for Sharing with a Muslim**

- Side step debate or argument. Let winning your friend be your goal not winning the argument.
- Avoid insulting the Qur'an, Muhammad, or Islam. Humiliation is alienating but the description of Jesus and His work is appealing.
- Be aware of Islamic practice and customs. We risk offense by placing the Bible on the floor, putting other objects over them, or marking passages in them.
- Christians should not denigrate one another. Refraining from criticizing other Christians or ministries.
- Uphold the simplicity of the Gospel and of believing in it.
- Maintain a consistent lifestyle, one that reflects that the Gospel of Christ is power from God for salvation from sin and deliverance from sin's power.
- On the issue of salvation, PRAY for a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

# How Should a Christian Respond to Islam?

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The final question that we ask ourselves is very simple: How should a Christian respond to a Muslim or to Islam? The answer is given by Jesus Christ himself in the following verses.

**Matthew 9:37-38** – Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

**Matthew 5:43-45** – You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

The fact is that as Christians we have been called to respond to Muslims with love, prayer, and the truth. We have been called to tell them the truth about Jesus. Many Muslims that you meet will not be as much of an extremist in their faith as the Muslims you see on television or read about in magazines and newspapers. Many Muslims have never been introduced to the real Jesus Christ and are intrigued to learn more about Him and that only comes from us being willing to tell them the truth in love. Islam is a religion that does not promote peace but Christianity offers peace in this life and the one to come. Pray and reach out in love!

## Resources

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The Qu’ran. King Fahd Printing Complex, Saudi Arabia.

Letter from a Muslim Seeker is reprinted from Christianity Today post “The Back Page: Letter from a Muslim Seeker” by Philip Yancey from December 3, 2001. [www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2001/december3/43.80.html](http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2001/december3/43.80.html)

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