



Sharing Christianity with Muslims

By Glover Shipp

Evangelizing Muslims is difficult because we know so little of their worldview or religious/political philosophy. We know so little about how to share our faith with them. And at the heart of the matter, we fear contact with them.

These barriers can be overcome, however. They are being overcome to a small extent in such places as Malawi, Indonesia, northern Ghana, and to a lesser extent in Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Albania, and other Muslim countries.

Hospitality and Friendship

Hospitality and friendship are essential to any relationship with Muslims. They have the idea that Westerners, and especially Americans, are superficial in their friendships and not particularly willing to open their hearts, homes, and kitchens to foreigners. Conversation is vital to them. While we may not agree with what they say, and may even argue, we should not feel compelled to win every argument. As Max Kershaw has pointed out, "In the Arab world disagreements are often a way friendships are tested."

In extending hospitality we must be careful to offer only food and drink that is acceptable to our guest. We must also be discreet in our male-female relationships in our guest's presence. Among most Muslims, friendships are formed between those of the same sex. They misinterpret the openness of American women, thinking that it means a possible intimate relationship with them.

Another way in which to show hospitality is to invite a Muslim friend to events in which you are involved, especially Christian events. Demonstrate vital Christian faith and

practice in a group setting. Those present can draw out the Muslim with sincere questions and share with him what Jesus means in their lives.

Contextualized Use of Honor

In his dissertation, "A Contextualized Theology of Honor," Evertt W. Huffard presents a case for using biblical concepts of *kabod*, *doxa*, and *time*, all expressions understandable to Muslims as a means of successful dialogue with them.

Kabod is a Hebrew word meaning honor, both in the physical and ethical realms. Its physical characteristics can be expressed in such terms as greatness, respect, praise, power, fear, and worship. Related concepts are loyalty, blamelessness, righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, and a good name – all indications of a correct community relationship.

The Greek word *doxa* means glory, and the Greek word *time* means inner worth or social approval. When the Torah was translated into Greek, *kabod* inherited a split personality between *doxa* and *time*. As used by the early church, *doxa* took on such meanings as opinion, the Christian tradition, reputation, a name for God, the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, praise worship, honor given to God, honor of men, final reward, popularity, and a desire for fame.

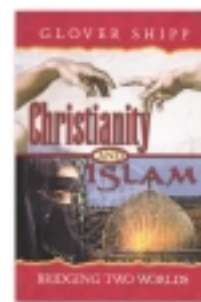
In applying these terms to dialogue with Muslims, Huffard argues that what God has done through Christ is for his *doxa*. Christians are to share the redemptive message because God's honor is at stake. Peter indicates this when he says that God's call to all humanity is based on His divine glory or *doxa* (2 Peter 1:3).

Paul defended his going to Gentiles

with the message of Christ by arguing that God's honor required it (Romans 9:22, 23). God's honor and glory are revealed in Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3).

In a structured society, as are Muslim communities, it is essential to maintain God's honor, which Islamic peoples can appreciate. The argument can be made successfully then that God, who can do all things He wishes to do, in the manner in which He chooses to do them, chose to show to mankind His *doxa* by sending himself, in the person of His Son Christ, to die for our sins.

Huffard affirms that "a theology of honor is a necessity in reconciling Muslims to God through Christ. With a theology of honor we create new models for communication cross-culturally." Incidentally, it might also strengthen our rationale for evangelism, since God's honor is at stake. God's will for humanity was not imposed through a unilateral book. He met us in Christ, a person as well as a manifestation of God, and through Him, we were able to know God and be reconciled to Him (John 8:45-55; 10:30; 14:8-14; Romans 5:10).



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