

How to mobilise church leaders and Christians to engage with Muslim ministry

What motivated you, personally at the start, to get involved in Muslim outreach (or gospel outreach generally)?

- ☐ Scripture: ref & topic _____

 - ☐ Other direction from God _____

 - ☐ Experiences or Interactions with Muslim persons: in life context or in ministry project
 - ☐ Seeing a problem needing a solution
 - ☐ Other: _____

- Which of the above serves as a testimony, and which might serve as gentle challenge or encouragement to others? Consider that we are not trying to guilt or bully others into such ministry. How might our own journey provide some perspective that encourages others to consider Muslims?
 - To what extent was time involved in forming this motivation in you? Does this have implications for others you would like to see mobilised? Few people came to Christ at the first hearing, and likely the same is true of being drawn into mission to Muslims. Let's have realistic expectations and a longer view.

1) Some common challenges or objections

- *Brainstorm some solutions or answers in 2's & 3s, then move to large group.*
- *Context A: sentence or two answer in a conversation with a Christian or church leader;*
- *Context B: some teaching developed around a theme and scriptures, whether a lesson/sermon to be delivered, or some cell group sessions.*
- *Context C: some practical ways to practice obeying & gain experiences*

a) Muslims are a difficult road. hard grist.

- i) Which do we mean:
 - (1) hard to meet and talk to?
 - (2) hard to build relationship with?
 - (3) hard to talk about our faith with?
 - (4) hard to find people being open and responsive to the gospel?

Different people might answer these questions out of rather different experiences.

- ii) In terms 'hard' as unresponsive to the gospel –in some ways yes, they are a hard lot. Let's admit it.
 - iii) Yet **Wind in the House of Islam**-Garrison is evidence that God is indeed working mightily among Muslims around the world. Cause for hope.
 - iv) In God's economy, there is still a part we can play that is not such a hard row, and as the Anglicans say, "We have the cure of souls in our patch." Perhaps we should ask God what he wants to do, and ask how we should join him in it. 'Own it.'
- b) **Can do good works all day, but doesn't result in Muslims coming to faith. And doesn't contribute to the health of struggling our church (numbers?)**
- i) Some churches have been selflessly giving to the large Muslim community around them for years, but their church remains small and struggling, barely viable. So how do they increase their chance for survival, when if they take up ministry to Muslims, they are not likely to see any increase in their worship attendance?
 - ii) In what way could a sense of purpose, hope, and intentionality – partnering with God as he reveals Himself to others including Muslims – affect the spiritual vitality of your church? How might we together increase the likelihood of this translating into a sense of purpose and greater spiritual vitality? What other things need to be put in place to assist this?
- c) **If M do come to faith, it will hurt the church's good relationship to the large surrounding Muslim community.**
- (Assuming a large Muslim community surrounding/adjacent to the church.)
- i) It may, being honest. That is one thing we are weekly talking to God about, asking him to change the spiritual/social environment, so that M can explore and follow Jesus in freedom. That's one reason why regular, concerted, persevering prayer is at the core of Mahabba.
 - ii) Can we engage in ethical witness, not preying on the vulnerable, offering gospel witness but not trying to convince those who are not seeking? Ethical Guidelines witness – Christian Muslim forum. Can we have honest and respectful conversations with leaders in the community about this? Mutual recognition of the call to represent our faiths and invite the other, and respect of those who change faith?

d) Too few resources, too many needs, stretched too thinly already.

- i) Let's ask God how our church can be meaningfully involved.
- ii) Can ministry to Muslims be included properly in any way with existing or already envisioned ministries? Can we help you think through how to do that well?
- iii) Do we assume ministry is always a project requiring organisation, money, and time – what about relationships as we go throughout the week (work, school, neighbour, shopping, hiring work, etc.). Then it's more a bit of equipping and alertness.
- iv) Do we have vision for what God really wants to do in our city, and to find our part in it? (see a.)

e) People in our church have difficulty giving any verbal witness – even talking about their life in God to other Christians.

- i) Is this about confidence in God and our walk with him? Is it being able to express ourselves verbally? Is it a reticence to be vulnerable and talk of our spiritual life with others? Other?
- ii) Do we need to re-think the way we approach spiritual formation in our congregation? Both intentionality and method?
- iii) Do we need to develop a change in spiritual discourse of each Christian – a change in the life of our church, what we expect to talk about with each other, and how?
- iv) If we learn to talk naturally with each other about our life in God, pursuing God, God pursuing us -- Can we apply aspects of this to talking naturally about this with people of other faiths, including Muslims?
- v) What about witness that is not persuasion-argument-apologetics focused, but is instead a witness of the beauty of God, the beauty of His Ways, and the beauty of His revelation in Isa? How our lives, values, decisions, consciousness revolve around him and his ways?

Some thoughts on issues and approaches to mobilising

a) Experience vs. Teaching

- i) Role of Experience: Experiencing Muslim people can be powerful for someone in ways that teaching about them is not.
 - (1) Real humans with hopes, dreams, fears.
 - (2) But it can also be positive or negative, hit or miss. And often needs to be mediated well.
- ii) Role of Teaching: Teaching provides a Biblical framework – a way of thinking about things – which can change our attitudes and priorities.
- iii) Which comes first? Diff for diff people.

b) Drip-feeding hope and another way of seeing Muslims, the Church.

- i) Don't put it all into one sermon or one conversation. Find one thought or perspective you can plant as a seed in their mind & spirit, and then leave it to germinate. Then plant another in a few weeks. And again.
- ii) Find out how this person/group is looking at these things now.
- iii) Hope: Do they lack hope? Give hope.
 - (1) God intends all tribes & tongues to come to know him.
 - (2) God can speak and work through us.
- iv) Muslim perspectives: Do they have a distorted view of Muslims? Give another view to consider.
 - (1) M as Humans that God loves and are blinded; everyone is to some extent.
 - (2) Terrorism issue 'out there' vs. your neighbour/ colleague.
 - (3) Facing the real issues of grooming/ drugs, of youth seeing purpose, power, and excitement in Syria – and Muslim communities/ families which are ill equipped to speak into the issue with wisdom or grace. Coming alongside communities/families in crisis rather than as judges.
- v) Mission perspectives: Is their view of mission narrow & 2-dimensional? Do they have misconceptions?
 - (1) Thinking of Mission as obligation and burden vs. mission as joining the hope and purpose of God, an opportunity that feeds life of the church.
 - (2) Is mission "starting new projects" or equipping people for confident life in God: learning how to speak about that life in their sphere of influence and show Christ's love in both word and deed in those relationships (sensitively & appropriately)? Can their ministry to that sphere of influence be considered

part of the life and ministry of the church (equip them, encourage them, they report back failures & successes, and get coaching to try again)?

vi) Evangelism perspectives:

- (1) Is evangelism: Persuading the uninterested, or highlighting God and His ways especially as revealed through Jesus, and pursued in your life, and then responding to who comes towards that message wanting more.