



# ENGAGING اسلام

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# Understanding and Engaging Islam

Islam is the second largest and the fastest growing major religion (due to birth rate) in the world with over 1.8 billion followers.<sup>1</sup> Demographically it is said by 2050 Islam will soon equal or even surpass the number of Christians in the world.<sup>2</sup>

With this many followers the Islamic faith has become part and parcel of the world in which we live—whether it is from simply living next door to or working with a Muslim, news of the fighting of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or the militant group ISIS killing people in Iraq and Syria, or the terrorist attacks in New York, London, Paris, Madrid, and many other places.

If we are thinking about Islam from a Christian worldview and want to engage and understand it, then we need to ask the question “What do Muslims

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1. The primary reason for the growth of Islam is not conversion but high birth rates. See “Why Muslims are the world’s fastest-growing religious group,” Pew Research Center, April 6, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group>

2. See “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050,” April 2, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050>

believe?" This is because not only are Muslims trained to challenge the core doctrines of Christianity, but the Qur'an misunderstands and misrepresents the meaning of the Bible's teachings (the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the crucifixion and resurrection, etc.).

For example, the Bible claims that Jesus is the Son of God (a divine title), but when Muslims hear this, they think that this means God had sex with a woman and produced Jesus as their offspring. The concept of Jesus being the "Son of God" is wrong for the Muslim because the Qur'an teaches Allah does not have any partners and is a Father to no one (Surah 5:18, 6:101, 21:26). Because of this distortion of Christian teaching, Muslims often do not understand the gospel.

It is important, therefore, that Christians know where the Islamic faith came from and why Muslims believe what they believe, or we will not be able to clearly present the gospel to them and defend the Christian faith (1 Peter 3:15). Christians do not need to know everything about Islam, but they do need to know some things about Islam, as it is too big and relevant to current events for a Christian not to know anything about it. Many Muslims who believe in the truth of Islam will not take the gospel seriously until their own beliefs have been challenged with the saving truth of the gospel.

It is important to remember as we share the gospel and the truth of Christianity with Muslims that they are made in the image of God and, therefore, have dignity and value. As Christians, we should also remember that at one time we were "separated from Christ" and "having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Therefore, we should not reach out to

Muslims in fear or hate but with love and grace, as this is what we have been shown by our Savior (Ephesians 2:5; Titus 3:5).

The purpose of this book is to help Christians understand what Muslims believe so that they can clearly communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. But if you read this as a Muslim, I hope it helps you understand the truth about the Bible, who Jesus Christ is, and your need to trust in him for the salvation of your sins.

This book will briefly look at the origins, practices, and central beliefs of Islam, and then it will specifically look at what Islam teaches about: the Qur'an, Allah (God), the cross, Jesus, sin, and salvation and critique them in light of the Bible's teachings on these issues. It will then deal with a classic objection from Muslims: "Where did Jesus say, 'I am God; worship me'?" But we will begin by briefly looking at the origins, practices, and beliefs of the Islamic faith.