

Should I  
*say hello?*



*say hello*  
SERVING MUSLIM WOMEN

## SHOULD I SAY HELLO?

Beneath her Islamic veil she is not much different from me:

She is a sister, a mother, an auntie, a grandma--who pours her life into family and wonderful friendships.

She values inner and outer beauty.

She is modest.

She strives for success.

She avoids shameful deeds; she strives to uphold honor.

She is probably a foodie, and she loves fun.

She probably prays very often.

She works hard to please Allah.

She will almost always respond to a friendly "hello."

*In fact, she is more like me than I thought...*

Except that she has **no hope** for her **eternity**.

This is why I should say, "hello."

Many of us have had the inclination to reach out to Muslim women. But maybe we've been intimidated, afraid, not sure of where to start.

The truth is, Jesus entrusts Muslim women to Christians because He means to extend His redemptive mission to them through believing women. This is true of Christian and Muslim women **everywhere**. Christ wants believing women to say "hello" on His behalf.

So how do we start?

First, here is some basic info to start the conversation that could change her life forever.

## YOU MAY NOT KNOW HER WORLD

We need to start with what we don't know about Muslim women.

### *The Veil*

At the beginning, the Muslim woman's veil is probably our greatest deterrent to friendship with her. In our western thinking it tends to represent a world of reasons why we might choose to keep our distance from her. Ironically, the physical veil your Muslim friend might wear is largely about the things that make Christian and Muslim women the **likeliest** of friends.

### *Why Veil?*

Muslims value honor above all, and they work hard to uphold honor in a shame-filled world. In Islam, honor is focused on chastity and sexual purity. Generally, in a Muslim context women are

the keepers of said honor. If a woman behaves shamefully or is shamed, it reflects poorly on the men who are responsible for her protection and sustenance. It is this context that prescribes Islam's careful modesty codes. Clearly, a modest woman is less vulnerable to shame.

A Muslim person's **identity** is totally community-dependent; the honorable or shameful act of one person reflects upon the whole group.

*A woman who veils communicates very honorable intentions.* First, she obeys Allah with her modesty. Second, by veiling she tells the community that her husband is honorable as well.

### *What We Do Know: Christ – the Veil*

Her veil does exactly what the enemy of our souls wants it to do. It communicates **mystery**. It marginalizes, and it paralyzes.

### ***But Jesus is always greater.***

He proved it on the cross, when He gave his life for us (Matt. 24:45-53). He paid the penalty for our sin in full, so that all of humankind might have **eternal** relationship with Him. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life."

In Hebrews 10:20, the Apostle Paul reminds us that *Christ's body was the veil that was ripped in two* so that all of humanity – Muslims included – could have unrestricted access to God. All we have to do is "draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings" (Heb. 10:21).

### *She Needs Christ; She Needs YOU*

Although the veil of Islam **isolates** the Muslim woman from relationship with Christ, *He has already paid the price for her redemption.* She needs to be directed to Christ, where no veil separates us any longer from unlimited, personal relationship with Him.

### **She needs you to tell her the GOOD NEWS!**

## **FATE: HER UNCERTAIN PATH TO PARADISE**

It's important to understand your Muslim friend's expectations for her future.

For starters, there is *no redemption* in Islam.

- Jesus is believed to be a revered prophet, but not the Son of God.
- He did not die on the cross.
- He will return to Earth at the end of time, to help make the world Islamic.

All Muslims believe they must **earn their way** to paradise, or Islam's heaven. The path to paradise is **uncertain**, but the foundational pre-requisites for paradise are one's diligent adherence to the **five pillars of Islam**:

- **Faith** – belief in the creed that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger
- **Prayer** – five times daily, at prescribed times (she is not allowed to pray during her period)
- **Fasting** – compulsory, during Ramadan, to celebrate the revelation of the Qur'an (women who are pregnant, nursing, or having periods can't always participate, which puts them behind in their spiritual duties)
- **Giving of Alms** – 2.5% of income
- **Pilgrimage to Mecca** – at least once in a lifetime

### *What Might Paradise Look Like?*

For all Muslim women, *paradise is about reward, not relationship*. Most Muslim women believe there is a place for women there, of great comfort, ease and luxury – with lots of food and drink. Beyond that, however, most Muslim women don't know what to expect.

### *Slim Hope for Paradise*

Many Muslim women find it very **difficult to hope** for paradise because their prophet tells them what he has seen with his eyes: that "the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were [women]." This is because of their believed deficiency in intelligence and religion.

Since adherence to the five pillars of Islam are one's good-deed venues, and because women who are menstruating or nursing can't fast or pray, the tally of their good deeds always seems to be falling short, left wanting – **they just can't do enough**.

Can you imagine how your Muslim friend feels?

She's fighting a losing battle. She has no security, no confidence, *no assurance for her eternity*.

## **CUSTOMS & PRACTICES OF YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND**

There are a few things you should try to be mindful of when engaging with your Muslim friend. She will notice and appreciate the time and effort you've put in to understand where she is coming from, to understand her **worldview**.

### *The Qur'an*

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the sacred text of Islam, the verbatim word of Allah as spoken to their prophet, Mohammed.

Your Muslim friend will have been taught to revere her Qur'an. In her own home she will keep it on a shelf high above all others, most likely on a stand or in a specially made cover.

### *Your Response*

She will appreciate your honest and compassionate conversation about Christ and your understanding of her position about Allah. If the opportunity presents itself, you may want to ask her if she would like a Bible.

Handle your Bible **respectfully** when you are with your friend. Don't set it where anyone sits or walks; keep its pages clear of tags and handwriting, and treat it with reverent affection.

She will appreciate this about you, and it will validate your gift to her, when you present her with a Bible of her own. When you give her a Bible, make sure to write a note to her on a card that you give her with the nicely wrapped gift.

### *Hospitality and Food*

To Muslims, *hospitality is as important as modesty* – it is a very high value, uniting communities for the sake of Allah, for the sake of reward. Muslims, like Jews, consider pork to be an unclean and a forbidden food, so you will never see them consuming this or have it present in their homes. Some Muslim immigrants choose to be vegetarians to make sure they aren't accidentally consuming pork. Many inspect gelatin, pudding and lard and other cooking ingredients to be sure that no pork is present.

### *Your Response*

Make **hospitality a priority** with your new Muslim friend. Plan as early as possible to meet over coffee, or to have a meal at your home. When you are hosting her at your home, be sure to never serve pork or any food item containing pork. It would be very appropriate to ask her if there is anything else you should not serve her.

Be ready to accept your friend's invitation to her home, as well. Don't be afraid to ask her what you should expect if she has a husband, parents or extended family in her home. She'll graciously teach you what you need to know.

### *Modesty and Separation*

Because of modesty codes and careful regard for sexual purity, in some Muslim contexts there will be obvious **separation of genders**. Some Muslims host men and women in separate rooms. As a rule of thumb, women do not shake the hands of men when they meet or greet. Men and women may be careful to avoid direct eye contact, since for some it is considered immodest.

## *Your Response*

Before meeting with your friend at her home, ask her to help you navigate introductions to males that might be present. She will appreciate the fact that you are attentive to those issues. Respect and understand that it would be inappropriate for you to shake hands with the men present and try to avoid direct eye contact with them.

Remember that impropriety on your part can hinder your own reputation and can cause trouble for someone else, so **do your best to be informed**. At the same time, particularly in contexts where yours is the host culture, be assured that Muslims know to anticipate differences in practice, and they are experienced, **gracious guests**.

## **WHAT TO DO**

Now that we know a little bit about the Muslim woman, *we must be compelled to reach out*. Muslim women everywhere **need** Christian women everywhere to engage with them, to offer them **Heaven**.

Still nervous?

### *Engage: Prayer*

Now is a good time to very specifically ask the Lord to lead you in this new venture. Be available to Him. *Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit*. Pray for clarity of **thought**, of **heart**, and of **speech**.

*Pray for the **privilege** of sharing faith with Muslim women.*

### *Engage: Patience*

When you have set your heart and feet at the threshold of Muslim friendships, you can begin to engage the Muslim woman's world. Apply the Apostle's words to heart for their sakes: "*Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2). Know this about the journey you're about to begin.

### *Friendship Takes Time*

Initial restraint from your friendship might be due to suspicions a Muslim girl could have about your intentions. Her Qur'an cautions her against friendships with non-Muslims, but it also tells her to behave honorably, particularly if the friend she is making has no interest in persuading her away from Islam.

Be patient. Remember to reach out to her because you love her – not as some sort of persuasive strategy to dissuade her from Islam. God can give you that love, and He will reward it by giving you a rich relationship with your Muslim friend.

Your life will validate your words, and Christ will do great work through you.

Your Muslim friend's salvation might not happen the way yours did. Most likely, you decided to follow Jesus and then were disciplined. Most Muslims, in fact, are **discipled into relationship** with Christ.

It might take you a long time to know that your Muslim friend considers herself a Christ-follower. She will probably believe, little by little, long before she comes into full expression of faith.

Be patient. Every day will be her day of salvation. Every day, *every interaction will count*.

### *Engage: Conversation*

This is where we say, "hello."

This is a simple greeting for us. But it is something we must take seriously with our Muslim friends.

The Muslim's "hello" actually means "God's peace be with you." Your friend will mean to bless you with her greetings – purposefully be **intentional** as well. Let your greeting share the love of Christ with her every time!

Reaching out is the joy of the Lord; your communication is the love of Christ. Be eager to begin conversation with a Muslim woman - **it is God's time for her!** She can't hear if we do not tell her, but once she hears about Jesus, she is able to call on Him! (Rom. 10:14-15).

Most Muslims love to talk about the things of God. Your Muslim friend will expect you to know about your faith since you are a Christian, so enjoy polite sharing.

### **Don't debate.**

*Listen well.*

**Be gracious**, particularly when God opens doors for spiritual impact.

Give your friend every opportunity to experience the presence of God with you, especially in conversation.

## **YOU CAN DO THIS**

What qualifies us to reach Muslim women? Simply put: **our salvation - Christ's work in us.**

The love of God that has changed our lives can change any life – Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist – any and every one.

God's relationship with us leads us to relationship with Muslims.

Out of love and mercy, God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth that He might overcome all barriers to His presence, that we could have relationship with Him.

How do we overcome the fear of the unknown and start a conversation? The same way Jesus overcame – through His Word.

We must choose our words **carefully** and **purposefully**.

Be mindful that success is not just in conversion. Success is a conversation that starts **relationship**, which will introduce Christ at the right time. There's more hope than discouragement in making new friends. **Believe for divine appointments.**

*This is your opportunity to be used by Christ.*

The Holy Spirit will give you wisdom, **so don't be afraid.**

Begin the conversation that bridges hopelessness to hope, for your Muslim friends to find Christ.

It's time to say, "hello."