

## Seeking Allah Finding Jesus

### Interview with Nabeel Qureshi

*Nabeel Qureshi, with a fascinating story of his journey from Islam to faith in Christ, was raised as a devout Muslim in the United States. He grew up studying Islamic apologetics with his family and engaging Christians in religious discussions. But one day, he met a Christian at his university who after one such discussion the two became best friends and began years-long debate on the historical claims of Christianity and Islam.*

#### **What Accounts For Islam's Rapid Growth Today?**

According to Nabeel Qureshi, some studies have been done on this. From a survey within the past few years and also anecdotally, one can get an understanding of the growth rate being primarily by birth rate as Muslims are generally more fertile or producing more children. There were also some conversions. A survey that was done a few years ago indicated that 30,000 people in the United States accept Islam every year. A lot of this has to do with marriage as well as active *dawah* which is the Islamic form of evangelism where people are being invited to Islam. These account for almost all of the growth of Islam around the world.

#### **What Attracts People Especially In The West To Islam?**

A lot of it has to do with community. If you don't have a good solid community and you see the way Muslims come together, you'll notice the sense of solidarity when they pray the five daily prayers. A lot of Muslims actually pray the five daily prayers in congregation as they are supposed to. They also come together every Friday. If community is one of those things that you're looking for, generally, you can find that in Islam. This draws a lot of people to Islam.

As mentioned earlier, part of this attraction is through marriages as a lot of young women are falling in love with Muslim men. We see them converting to Islam. Nabeel Qureshi personally knew at least a dozen who have done this. Also, Islam does have an appeal to it. We need to be aware of its very mystical appeal especially for people who are drawn to discipline. Islam can be very appealing for such individuals. So, community, discipline, and its mystical appeal draw a lot of people to Islam.

#### **Why Should Christians Be Equipped in Engaging Friends And Family In Islam?**

As we've seen already, Islam is growing and immigrants are coming by large numbers. A lot of refugees are coming to the West. The United States allows for 50,000 refugees to come every year. Most of them are coming from places plagued by war and corruption which largely are Islamic nations. In order to embrace the fact that we are called by Christ to reach out to our neighbors, we need to be equipped, to understand what Islam is. This doesn't happen just by reading books or by an academic study. It happens when we are willing to go out into our neighborhood, meet with real people, and find out what their life or concerns are like. In so doing, we can engage the Muslims next door, not just a theological concept, but real persons with real needs and tell them about Christ.

## **Nabeel Qureshi's Family Background**

Nabeel Qureshi's mother was the daughter of a Muslim missionary whose family is from Pakistan. Her father was a missionary in Indonesia and so Nabeel's mother was born and raised in Indonesia until the age of ten. They were a very, very devout family. Her mother was also a missionary kid born in Uganda. So, his mother's side family was very, very devoted to practice Islam even with their missionary work. Nabeel's father, a 24-year veteran of the US Navy, came from Pakistan in the mid-70s and joined the Navy when he got to the US. He gave his life to serving the United States for those 24 years and was also a very devout Muslim. He was very kind, gentle, and self-sacrificial. Nabeel also had an older sister. They were all devout Muslims and in a heartbeat could tell why they practice and follow Islam and that they love it.

## **A Devout Muslim Versus A Nominal Muslim**

It's important that we understand what a devout Muslim is and how it differs from a nominal one. So many people in the West by analogy call themselves Christians. If you take a survey, approximately 80% of the people in the United States call themselves Christians. Now, we could say that anyone who is actively claiming to and following Jesus is a Christian, but if you have someone who just takes the title *Christian*, it's not really a good indication of what he or she believes and follows. It's the same within Islam. There are Muslims who only take the title and heritage. By the way, most Muslims who take the title *Muslims* are honestly more ready and willing to defend their heritage than an average Christian who's nominal.

A devout Muslim family prays the five daily prayers, reads the Quran regularly, teaches their children how to recite the Quran, and learns what Mohammed's life was like and tries to follow his life. That's the difference between a cultural Muslim versus a devout Muslim.

## **Nabeel Qureshi's Childhood as an American Muslim Compared with His Christian Friends**

The majority of Christian friends that Nabeel had were Christian in name only. If you ask them what they believe, they would label themselves as a Lutheran, a Protestant, or a Catholic. They had no concern or care for what their faith was or what it taught. They may go to church on Sundays but even that was a stretch. Generally, they only took the title.

Nabeel's Muslim family was very devoted in their practice. Nabeel had read the entire Quran by the age of five in Arabic which was a language he could recite but couldn't understand. He had memorized the last seven chapters of the Quran. They regularly talked about Islam, Mohammad, and Allah. He would start his day by praying to Allah saying a little prayer in Arabic: "*Alhamdulillahillazi ahyaanaa ba'da maa amaata-naa wa ilaihinnuhuur*," every morning upon waking up. This prayer means, "All praise belongs to the One who gives me life, causes me to die, and raises me up again." It's a prayer thanking God for life and for waking him up every single day. That's what his life was like as a Muslim whereas the average Christian friends that he had never gave God a moment's thought during their day.

## **The Impact of Nominal Christianity on Nabeel Qureshi**

Muslims are taught that Christianity is a false religion, Jesus never claimed to be God, the Trinity is blasphemy, and the Bible is corrupt. It was how they saw Christianity as devout Muslims, or at least, that's the

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popular understanding of Christianity amongst devout Muslims. It was verified by his discussions with Christians as he saw that they didn't have the slightest clue how to explain the Trinity or how to tell him why the Bible is reliable. By interacting with the people around him who called themselves Christians, he didn't know any better who was a real Christian or who wasn't it. He was confirmed in his perception of Christianity.

### **Nabeel Qureshi's Training on Islamic Apologetics as He was Growing Up**

Muslims often see the West as a Christian region particularly the United States as a Christian nation. It's how they see things because in the Middle East and in Islamic lands, as far as Muslims are concerned, generally there are areas that are Islamic. When they come to the West, they expect the same thing.

However, you have Westerners who are taking the title *Christian* but are dressing inappropriately. They are fornicating. There's adultery, divorces, and drunkenness. Muslims who come from Muslim lands to the United States and who don't develop relationships here maintain those false pre-conceptions about the West and about Christianity. They assume Christianity has caused the immorality in the West. So, raising their children, they'll make sure that they are defended against Christianity and they have to be sure that they know why Christianity is false and why Islam is true.

Generally, the Muslims in a Middle Eastern or Muslim country aren't as equipped in apologetics with the few exceptions like Pakistan and Bangladesh. There are Muslims who are just Muslims and they are not really concerned about the apologetics. But when they come to the West, they have to defend their kids and make sure their culture is preserved.

Growing up, Nabeel would be told by his parents to recite to them Islam facts like who was the first wife of the prophet, who was the best friend of the prophet who accepted Islam first, or, how old was Mohammad when he was called to prophethood. His parents would drill them on these kinds of questions at the same time ask them questions like how they knew that Christianity is false, why Christians believe what they believe, or how they knew that the Bible is corrupted. They would casually ask them these kinds of questions like on a family trip going from their home to their uncle's home. Nabeel had a friend in Michigan, a former Shia Muslim who is now a fulltime Christian apologist, who said that this is a part of the academy of the American Muslim home. This is what they learn.

### **Nabeel Qureshi's Religious Conversations with His Christian Friends**

A young girl approached Nabeel when he was in junior high school. She was the token Christian in their grade who represented Christ. She wore a smile on her face all the time and was ready to tell people about her faith wherever she went. She had a beautiful heart.

One day, she asked him if he knew Jesus and his response was, "Yes, yes, I know Jesus! The Quran tells me all about Him. The Quran tells me that He is virgin born. The Quran tells me that He is able to cure the lepers and the blind and raise the dead, that He is the Messiah. He is going to come back at the end of times. These are all things that the Quran teaches me but I also know that Jesus never claimed to be God."

At that point she said, "No, the deity of Christ is a part of our faith. It's actually an extremely important part of our faith."

So, he challenged her, “How could you possibly believe Jesus was God when He said things like He doesn’t know when the end of times is. He says in Mark 13, no one knows when the end of times is, not the angels, nor the Son, but only the Father. So, you’re telling me that Jesus says God knows when the end of times is and He Himself does not know when the end of times is but you still think that he is God.”

In providing these challenges, he wasn’t asking any trick questions. He was just referring to Bible verses that he had been told about in the mosque, by his family, and in books that he had read which challenged the deity of Christ. He never received a good answer.

*Pat Zukeran: These are some of the issues at Cults or World Religions class. Sadly, the vast majority of Christians are unable to address some of these challenging verses.*

Either they haven’t thought of it or felt that it’s inappropriate for them to ask questions for some reasons. The average Christian hasn’t explored these issues and once it’s brought to them, they are ill equipped to answer them.

*Pat Zukeran: We need to be engaging the non-Christian world and it’s great if we can answer the questions that they bring up. It inspires us to further study and really learn the Word.*

As long as we remember that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, we should never be afraid to explore truth matters. If we have real faith, it doesn’t mean ignoring our doubts or concerns. It means believing that Jesus is the truth and exploring those doubts to find Him.

### **The Religious Conversation That Changed Nabeel Qureshi’s Life**

Nabeel and David met at the university and were on the same public speaking and debate team. One day, David was reading his Bible. Nabeel had never seen anyone read their Bible in their free time nor seen anyone pull out a Bible except in church. As he had been given a lot of arguments that the Bible had been corrupted and that it wasn’t trustworthy, he challenged David when he saw him reading the Bible.

He said, “Do you realize that the book you’re reading is not trustworthy?”

Instead of becoming defensive or running from the conversation, David closed the book and looked at Nabeel and said, “Well, go on. What are you saying? What’s your argument here?”

And Nabeel gave him the best he had.

What Nabeel didn’t know about David was that he had been an atheist almost his whole life and he had accepted Christ about six years earlier. Someone had explained reasons for his faith to David so he was able to show Nabeel why the Bible was reliable. He told him all about the field of textual criticism and the early Biblical manuscripts. He just made the case for the reliability of the Bible.

From that point onwards—Nabeel didn’t believe him, he didn’t agree with him—but he thought, “Well, if I’m going to dialogue with anyone, it’s going to be this guy.”

Nabeel kept challenging David. He'd go study and find more challenges. He brought every single argument he could over the following few years but he knew that if he looked for the answers, he would find them. Over years of conversation with David on issues like the reliability of the Bible, the death of Christ on the cross, the resurrection, he had all his questions explored and answers provided. That made all the difference.

### **How the Quran and Hadith Differ From the Christian Bible**

The Bible as we know it is the Old and New Testament, 39 and 27 books respectively written by multiple authors over a long period of time. The Quran is not like that. The Quran is a book by one person written over approximately 23 years and is written patchwork. It's not written beginning to end. There were certain portions of it that were composed at one time and others at another time. After Mohammad died, it was all brought together into one volume. It was written in a very different way with a voice that is very different. The method of reading it is also very different. You don't do exegesis the same way at all. Whereas with the Bible, for example, if you want to figure out what John is saying in John 5, you want to read the book of John and you want to understand John's overarching emphasis, points, and themes that keep appearing. You can't do that with the Quran because it wasn't written from beginning to end as it was written patchwork. Instead of going to surrounding verses to understand the meaning of the Quran, you generally go to Hadith.

The Hadith are a collection of sayings and deeds of Mohammad depending on which book you're reading: Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan, or Abu Dawud. As Protestant Christians have a phrase *Sola Scriptura*, that the authority comes from the Scripture - we believe that our faith and doctrine all come from Scripture - this is not true for Muslims. They believe that the Quran must be complemented by the Hadith. That's where the vast majority of Islamic life comes from. For example, the number of prayers per day, five, is not found in the Quran but in the Hadith. The words you say when you pray the five daily prayers are found in the Hadith. The ritual cleansing, etcetera, etcetera - almost all of Islamic law comes from the Hadith. The Quran is used as a primary foundation but must be supplemented by Hadith.

*Pat Zukeran: It's important for Christians to understand this because the Quran by itself is quite difficult to understand. It's like coming into the middle of a conversation and trying to figure out what's going on. When you figure it out, then it changes topic.*

It has to do with the manner in which it was composed.

### **A Key Element of Islam Which Nabeel Qureshi Began To Question**

Some of the primary teachings that Nabeel struggled with had to do with the treatment of women. At first it wasn't really a problem for him when he had seen some of the verses. We know for example that Mohammad married Aisha at a very young age. Although her age wasn't recorded in the Quran per se, we do have references to Aisha in the Qur'an. It bothered people around him because he supposedly married her when he was 49 years old and she was six. They waited for consummation which was when he was 52 and she was nine. Nevertheless, it was something that really bothered people.

Also, there seems to be an indication in the Quran that men can be married to pre-pubescent women or to girls who haven't yet hit puberty. When that was shown to Nabeel, he rationalized it and tried to find a way

around it. When you have one issue you're dealing it, it's not too hard to rationalize that one issue but there were other things that kept coming up in the Quran which were multiple scientific inaccuracies. That slowly added up.

But if there was one thing that was like dynamite, it is the phrase that you find in the Quran which says, "Allowed for you are your wives and those whom your right hands possess." *Those whom your right hands possess* - what does this mean? What is that about? Nabeel wondered.

As you start reading the Quran and the Hadith, you'll find out quickly that this is a phrase referring to female captives. At the time of Mohammad, women were sometimes taken as spoils of war. At other times, women were bought as slaves and used as servants. But this verse is saying that you can use your female captives and slaves for sexual gratification. The context, as said earlier, is found in the Hadith, in Sahih Bukhari, Sunan Ibn Majah, and Sahih Muslim. As you look through these books of Hadith and what the context is you find out that some of these women's husbands were still alive. They had just been captured on the battlefield and some were impregnated and sold into slavery afterwards. All the same, Mohammad was fine with his warriors having sexual intercourse with these women. In fact, the Quran seems to not just say it's okay but seems to encourage it, in chapter 4 verse 24.

It was something Nabeel saw completely unconscionable. There was no way in his conception of who God is that He would ever allow women who have just been captured to be used for sexual intercourse, impregnated and then sold into slavery especially with their husbands still alive. Yet it's something recorded in Islamic history. That was certainly a tipping point for Nabeel.

*Pat Zukeran: A lot of people in the West don't know this history of Islam or the readings. They would react to it as an exaggeration or twisting the truth.*

### **Nabeel Qureshi's Advice Response**

"It's exactly what I thought when I first heard these arguments," he would say but then you can read verses like 4:24 in the Quran. There are two other verses, which he cited in his book, that talk about *those whom your right hands possess*. You can read them in the most trustworthy books of Hadith. Those are not random books, but the ones that Muslims go to as their gold standard. It's incontrovertibly in the Quran, in all levels of the major books of Hadith, and in the Islamic history as well. We wonder what can one actually believe about Islam or what basis is left. If these were eviscerated as well as others—and there's plenty more accounts of Mohammad that we don't like from the sources, what's left is not even trustworthy.

*Pat Zukeran: When friends say they can't be true, we usually go back to the original source which Nabeel has documented well in his book.*

Noticeably, the vast majority of Muslims haven't seen such issue. They don't know it's there and of course, they are not going to learn about it in the mosque nor from their parents. They'd have to have the wherewithal and the impetus to look up these arguments or to have a friend who presents them to them and then to go forward and investigate. This is a rare combination of circumstances.

*Pat Zukeran: Because we're presented in the West how Islam values and exalts women, for those men to take those wives to take care of and protect them because their husbands had been killed in a war, would be an act of mercy. It's an act of grace for these men to take these women in and protect them from living a single life. It's how we are taught here which is a perspective that is not consistent with what Nabeel is saying is in the Quran and the Hadith.*

All we have to do is pull out one of the Hadith books, Sahih Bukhari which is even stronger which says that we could still hear their husbands who are prisoners of war moaning. We could hear them in the distance yet we asked Mohammad if we could use these women and he still agreed.

It simply doesn't work as an explanation. It's exactly right to show our Muslim friends the Hadith. However, it's a concern how we present this information without offending our friends. We have to build that bridge of relationship first. They have to know that they can trust us and that we love them. They also have to know that we're not trying to tear them down because that's how they're going to feel when we present them these arguments.

### **Challenging Muslims About the Quran**

"I thought that the Quran was a book for all people," Nabeel would say. But if it's something that must only be read in Arabic then it's only for the Arabic speaking world. But the fact of the matter is if you learn Arabic as he did—six semesters at the university level and growing up reciting the Quran—they would say you need to be a native speaker. There will always be an out. However, it's a good thing to point out to them that if they really are trying to find the truth, it's not a matter of whether one speaks Arabic or not. It says what it says and they should be careful before they retreat.

If your friend is a Muslim, chances are he or she doesn't speak Arabic either. Vast majority of Muslims don't understand and speak Arabic. Even those that do or those that come from Arabic speaking lands don't speak Quranic Arabic which is classical Arabic. The closest thing to classic Arabic today is *fusha* which is modern standard Arabic which is what scholars speak and which you hear in news reports. The average Muslim Arab speaks colloquial forms of Arabic. You have to go to school to learn this form of language. So, if speaking classical Arabic is a requirement to be able to read the Quran that disqualifies everyone today from understanding the Quran.

*Pat Zukeran: This is a key point because Muslims view the Quran as the perfect book which came down from heaven. They don't want it criticized or attacked. If you point out some difficulties in it, it is a huge threat to this particular doctrine that they're taught.*

This is a large part of the reason why Nabeel wrote his book because, firstly, you would not want to do it yourself. You wouldn't want to tell your friends that the book they trust as the Word of God has all those mistakes in it. It's going to take a toll in your relationship. It will be so much better if you read a book that lays it out in an easy to understand way, hand it to them, and ask them what they think of this. You're not being combative. They are going to get the same information and think about it first honestly for themselves. This is what Nabeel attempts to do in his book.

Even in his book itself, Nabeel is not presenting the argument in a combative way, but rather in the way that he found out about them, which was as a Muslim. He is reading the arguments as a Muslim in his book. What he is saying is, “I found this out and my response was this. Then I found an argument against that and at the end of my day I was shocked, but this argument was strong.” He is not directly saying to a Muslim to learn those facts about his book. He is saying that, as someone who was a Muslim, he was shocked to find out this information. His heart rebelled against them but no matter how much his heart rebelled, his mind knew it was true.

### **The Differences Between the God of Islam and the God of the Bible**

There are tremendous differences between the God of Islam and the God of the Bible. First of all, the God of Islam commands a lot by fiat. He tells you to do what He wants you to do. It doesn't have to have any rhyme or reason. He can be freely capricious whereas the God of the Bible is absolute. There are principles that flow forth from His nature that are immutable. He is infinitely just and merciful. He can't just choose to ignore some sins randomly. Since He is infinitely just, every sin has to be paid for. He can't just take favorites and just forgive them their sins. If He can offer mercy to anyone, He offers mercy to everyone because His mercy is infinite. As a God who has infinite characteristics, He's much more like the philosophical nature or concept of God that has been born out in philosophical discourse over the past few centuries where His characteristics are absolute. The Islamic God is unlike that.

We can also see in the Bible His lovingness. God loves everyone unconditionally as His child. In the Quran, it is not so. You have to do certain things in order to be loved by God otherwise you will lose His love.

Another difference is that, in Islam, God would never come into this world, or at least that's how Muslims believe. If God were to step into this world, He'd be jeopardizing His majesty and His glory. They can't imagine why on earth He would ever do that. In contrast, Christians believe that God would do this because His love is greater. It is greater than His desire to hold on to His majesty as Philippians 2 tells us, He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped but lowered Himself.

Our God is also humble. In the Christian God, you have an embodiment of all things that are good. Everything that is good is good because God is that thing. It is good to be loving because God is love. It is good to be generous because God is generous. It is good to be compassionate because God is compassionate. As for humility and self-sacrifice, it is good to be humble because, in Christianity, God is the most humble Being in the universe. For Muslims, it's just something that God has deemed by fiat to be a good thing. We recognize that in our heroes' stories one of the most positive attributes anyone can have is to be willing to sacrifice himself for the ones he loves. In Christianity, it is good to be self-sacrificial because God is the most self-sacrificial Being in the universe. With Islam, it is because God commands you to be self-sacrificial therefore it's a good thing.

The Muslim God and the Christian God are different in substantial ways. The Christian God is a lot more philosophically coherent and obviously, He is more attractive in His love and humility.



## Do Christianity, Islam, and Judaism All Worship the Same God?

Muslims believe that they are worshiping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They believe that they are worshiping the God of Jesus, Moses, Noah, and Adam. You can take all these names from the Bible and they would say they're found in the Quran, too. Many people ask whether it is the same God. What does "to be the same God" even mean?

Nabeel casts a scenario of having a talk with someone about his father.

"I have a story about your father. Your father did this," the person says sharing a false story.

Nabeel thinks, "Is that a different father or is that an incorrect story about my father?"

"It's an incorrect story about my father," Nabeel ventures saying the latter.

If we have just one or two differences between the God of Islam and the God of Christianity, it would be just an incorrect piece of information. But when you start looking at the God of Islam versus the God of Christianity, you'll find that there are *so* many of such differences.

"Let me tell you about your father." And the person gives hours and hours of incorrect stories about him.

"You're talking about a different man," Nabeel would say.

This might be the case between Islam and Christianity. It's a very different picture, different enough to where it's a different God but at the very least it's an incorrect perception of the One True God.

## Explaining the Trinity to a Muslim

If you are a Trinitarian Christian, you should be able to articulate the Trinity. If you say you believe the Trinity but you cannot say what it is, you do not actually believe it. You just want to believe it. When we can explain what it is, we can then unpack it.

The Trinity is the belief that God is one in being and three in person which Muslims charge as a contradiction. It is not so because it's one being in three persons. The next question then is what's the difference between a being and a person?

A "*being*" is that essence, quality, or characteristic that makes something what it is. A "*person*" is that which makes you who you are. These are two different things. For example, when we're talking about Nabeel, he is a human being. That's what he is. But who is he? He is Nabeel Qureshi. That's who he is. Nabeel Qureshi is one being with one person. God is one being - *what He is* is a divine being: God, Yahweh. *Who He is* is three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. That is not a contradiction.

We may also encourage our Muslim friends to understand that we were never told in the Bible to have to understand the Trinity before we are Christian. We are charged instead to confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead according to Romans 10:9. We have to follow Him and in following Him over time we will begin to see Trinity and understand it. It is not a prerequisite.

## What Muslims are Taught about Muhammad and How They View the Prophet Of Islam

Generally, Muslims see Muhammad as the most perfect man who ever lived, *al-Insan al-Kamil* as said in Arabic. The best you could possibly be. He was the chief of the prophets, the seal of the prophets. All these mean he was the most generous man as they believe. They also believe he was the most loving, most compassionate, and the most merciful man. It's also their belief that he was the best statesman and diplomat, the best spokesperson, the best general - it doesn't matter what title you give him he was the best of all of them. That's how the people see Muhammad because these are the stories they've been told from childhood about him.

When you want to share the truth about Muhammad, you would do it very, very carefully and after years of having established a relationship with a Muslim friend. You may ask "How do you know what Muhammad is really like?" You could be honest and say "If Muhammad is really like what you say, I may want to know him. Maybe he's a man really worth following. But if he is not like that, you should want to know."

To really know who Muhammad is, you start going through the historical sources on Muhammad's life. No matter what source you turn to, you would find *innumerable* problems with the traditional account of Muhammad in light of what's recorded in the history. There are assassinations—even women being assassinated, Satanic verses being revealed to Muhammad, one thing after another. They start adding up. Nabeel's friend, David, started pointing out things and he easily rationalized about a dozen of them. He had difficulty rationalizing about the next hundred but he still did rationalize them. After about a hundred of those problems, Nabeel had to consider who this man was that he was following.

### Sources for Studying the Life of Muhammad

If you are a Christian who just wants to study Muhammad's life and if you want to go to a primary source, Ibn Ishaq (one of the early biographies of Muhammad) is a good place to start. If you have Muslim friends especially if they are Sunni Muslims, it would be good to read alongside them Sahih Bukhari because that's the book they consider as the most reliable. Ibn Ishaq is probably better for apologetics and historical purposes but for your Muslim friends' sake, consider reading Sahih Bukhari.

If you want to read some modern books in order to understand what's going on, you may want to consider reading something somewhat controversial to get an understanding of the nature of historical sources. Robert Spencer's book *Did Muhammad Exist?* might be a good place to start although he is seen by many to be as too polemical. If you're more academically inclined, Dan Gibson's *Quranic Geography* will give you an awareness and understanding of just how poor the early Islamic evidence is.

If you want to read a book that's a really fun read but a little intense to go through, Tom Holland's book, *In the Shadow of the Sword* would do. It's a bestseller in the UK which actually outsells the Quran in the UK as a book on Islam. It's fascinating and fun to read. It will also show you the nature of the historical sources of Islam. But if you're trying to reach a Muslim friend, it might be best to just read Sahih Bukhari.

### **How Nabeel Qureshi's Perception of Mohammad Begin to Change**

At first, Nabeel simply dismissed off hand the possibility that anything like those described earlier could even possibly be true. He started reading about them and though externally he was still dismissing them he was internally having all kinds of difficulties resolving those issues. The cognitive dissonance within him was growing. He was putting on a facade showing people that he had no problem with them but internally he was quite confused.

Nabeel's struggle manifested itself by living a more Muslim life. He started leading courses on Islam, teaching the youth in his area, and leading the Friday prayers whenever he could because he was trying to make penance for the doubts he was feeling inside. Even though people were saying that he was becoming even more Muslim so they should stop sharing the gospel with him, his friend David kept going. He felt compelled to keep going which was a good thing because it actually meant he was getting closer and closer to snapping. When he got to a final point of saying that there's just too much, he went into a mode of despair. Instead of practicing anything, he just sought God and asked Him to guide him.

### **The Differences Between Jesus and Muhammad**

When you start reading through the historical accounts, you would see that Muhammad is unfortunately very much obsessed with war, women, and sex. The average Muslim doesn't know this because they've been taught things in the mosque and by their parents so that's not how they see Muhammad. It might not necessarily be the case early on in Muhammad's ministry but as he gains power and as he continues further on according to the broad contour of his life as told in Ibn Ishaq and Sahih Bukhari sirah, you see him getting more and more centered around sensual and carnal matters. Jesus isn't like that at all.

Jesus is amazing, compassionate, loving, kind, very much interested in matters of God and God alone, none of these carnal issues. He was not married. Muhammad had at least nine wives if not as many as 23. Jesus was not in charge of an army and didn't collect war booty. Muslims can also rationalize this by saying that Muhammad is in charge of cities and of expanding empires. He had to have money and marry people's daughters in order to bridge differences between tribes. They may be able to do so but once these things start compounding, it's too much to rationalize.

Finally, when you look at Jesus' life, he doesn't claim to be just a prophet as Muhammad did. He claims to be "*the way, the truth, and the life*". Al-ahajj was killed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, one of the first Sunni Muslims, because he claimed to be the truth. *The truth* is recognized as one of God's 99 names in Islam. Yet Jesus claims this name for Himself. Muslims then have to conclude that Jesus, according to John's Gospel, at least, claims to be God which Muhammad never did. So, there's a very big difference between Jesus and Muhammad.

### **Christian Teachings Offensive to Muslims**

The Trinity is definitely one of the teachings that are offensive to Muslims. Another is the idea of a false prophet - anyone who comes after Christ and proclaims to be him or proclaims to bring a new teaching. Also, ironically, they are saying that the teachings about the prophets in the Old Testament are tarnishing the name of God's chosen, for example, Noah getting drunk, Moses killing someone, David having an affair, or Solomon

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having hundreds of wives. Muslims often find these teachings offensive because those are prophets claimed by Islam, too, but Islam doesn't teach those. Of course, the drinking of alcohol and eating of pork are also offensive but theologically, those mentioned are the main offensive teachings for Muslims.

### **Nabeel Qureshi's Final Point of Decision and What Held Him Back**

A lot was holding Nabeel back such as his Muslim family and Muslim friends as his whole life was based on Islam. He was the eldest son in his family. If he were to accept Christianity, it would not only affect him but that would squander all the honor that his family had ever gained. As an honor-shame based culture that he was in, it was huge. He was not just accepting Christ and throwing his family under the bus. A lot was holding him back.

Also, Muslims believe that if you believe that Jesus is God, you are going to go to hell as said in 5:73 of the Quran. Nabeel struggled that he might actually be going to worship a false God. There is also the concern of getting killed for leaving Islam for Muslims like those in the Middle East. A lot of what you can read at *Ex-Muslims Forum*, which is a Twitter account that has mostly atheists, agnostics, and former Muslims, has to do with this worry. The law of apostasy is a very solidly established law in orthodox Islam. These are things that hold people back.

What put Nabeel over the edge though was when he started earnestly seeking God. He saw the evidence for Christianity was far stronger than the evidence for Islam. But that didn't convert him. However, it brought him to a point where he was going to earnestly seek God which He did. This was where the title of his book came from, *Seeking Allah Finding Jesus*. When he sought Allah to hear him, to answer his prayers and to show him how Islam is true, Jesus was the one who answered. He showed him that Christianity was true. He appeared to him in a vision. He Himself didn't appear to him in a vision but He showed him a vision in three dreams which led him to accept the gospel. Dreams and visions are a fairly common occurrence happening throughout the Muslim world which leads people to Christ.

*Pat Zukeran: We pray that they would have an open heart to listen to Nabeel's story and the message of the gospel of Christ.*

### **How to Effectively Reach Muslim Friends and Family for Christ**

Realize that you are not called to convert anyone. You're called to be a witness for Christ, not a prosecutor. You called to share the gospel, to tell people about Jesus. Tell them about Jesus and don't take it as a personal responsibility to convert them because, first, it is going to be extremely frustrating. Secondly, it's an affront to God because that's His job. Thirdly, it's going to cost you to consider after a long time whether or not you should continue the relationship because it's been unfruitful. The average Muslim takes seven years of hearing the gospel before they accept Christ. Over that time, just befriend your Muslim friends.

Love them because Christ told you to love them not because you have to convert them and that's why you are loving them. Love them because they are inherently worthy of love because they're made in the image of God. God loves them therefore you should love them. Even if your Muslim friends look like they're always

going to stay Muslim, no matter how long you spend on them, that's fine. Keep loving them, keep being a witness. Ask God through prayers to change their hearts. Keep praying for them.

Represent Christ with love. Remember that, generally speaking, your Muslim friends see their faith, Islam, as a system. They don't see it as a relationship with their Maker. Show them what it means to be in a relationship, in communion with God, to follow Him and not really care about the system per se but about Christ Himself. Stay persistent. Stay in prayer. Stay in witness. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength *while* loving your Muslim neighbor as yourself.

### **Nabeel Qureshi's Address to Muslims**

"I hope there's nothing I said... that offended you. It wasn't my intent to offend you. I found a lot of the things that I said... offensive when I myself was a Muslim but I ultimately found out that they were true. So, seek the truth. Don't be afraid to learn more about Muhammad, to learn more about Jesus. Read Jesus' words in the Injil. Muhammad says, the Quran says that the Injil is the Word of God so read the Gospel. Read what Jesus said about Himself and then find out. Read more about the historical Muhammad. Read Sahih Bukhari and Ibn Ishaq and see if you really want to follow this man. And no matter what, remember that you should put God first, not the system of Islam, as I as a Christian should not put the system of Christianity first. I should put God first. And seek Him and love Him. If you do that you will find the relationship with your Creator that is unlike any other relationship you could possibly have. And that is where God has created you to be."

*For more information about Nabeel Qureshi, his articles, and other works: [www.rzim.org](http://www.rzim.org), [nabeelqureshi.com](http://nabeelqureshi.com), [seekingallahfindingjesus.com](http://seekingallahfindingjesus.com)*

### **About Nabeel Qureshi**

Nabeel Qureshi was the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *No God But One* and *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, the only book ever to win Christian Book Awards for both "Best New Author" and "Best Nonfiction." Nabeel was an accomplished global speaker and held an MD from Eastern Virginia Medical School, an MA in Christian apologetics from Biola University, an MA in religion from Duke University, and an MPhil in Judaism and Christianity from Oxford University.

Raised as a devout Muslim in the United States, Nabeel grew up studying Islamic apologetics with his family and engaging Christians in religious discussions. After one such discussion with a Christian, the two became friends and began a years-long debate on the historical claims of Christianity and Islam. Nabeel chronicled his resulting journey in his first book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*.

Throughout his years of ministry, Nabeel lectured to students at more than 100 universities, including Oxford, Columbia, Dartmouth, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Hong Kong. He participated in 18 moderated, public debates around North America, Europe, and Asia. *Christianity Today* heralded Nabeel as one of "33 Under 33" in its cover story on emerging religion leaders in July 2014.

Other works of Nabeel's include *Answering Jihad*—a balanced examination of jihad, the rise of ISIS, and Islamic terrorism—and the *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus Video Study*, which goes deeper into the apologetics that led Nabeel himself to Christ.

Following a year-long battle with stomach cancer, heaven welcomed Nabeel home on September 16, 2017. He leaves behind his wife and young daughter who aspire to honor the ministerial legacy Nabeel established during his brief 34 years on earth.

<http://www.nabeelqureshi.com/about/>; accessed 10-20-18