

# Reaching Rural America for Christ

A newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

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## Our "Life Together"

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To equip rural professional and lay leaders
- To support congregations in community engagement

Remember: RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!

## Please Pray for These Important Dates

April 26 - Webinar

"Reasons for the Faith: Apologetics 101 — Islam" with the Rev. Hesham Shehab, Salam Christian Fellowship  
1-2 p.m. CST

May 17 - Webinar

"Redefining the Graying Church: The Mission Field of Older Adults" with Dr. Rich Bimler, Ambassador of Health, Hope and Aging (AH-HAI), Arlington Heights, Ill.  
1-2 p.m. CST

Nov. 8-10

National RSTM Conference  
Hilton Kansas City Airport,  
Kansas City, Mo.  
[lcms.org/rstm/conference](http://lcms.org/rstm/conference)

If you have an idea or story for Rural Outreach, contact Amy at the RSTM office.

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# Sharing the Gospel with Muslims

In the seventh century, Christianity was afflicted by internal divisions, theological disputes and the worship of saints. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was exposed to unorthodox Christian beliefs that were widespread in Arabia. Unfortunately, those misunderstandings were perpetuated by the Islamic traditions that have been revered by Muslims up to our present time.

Islam's sources — the Qur'an (the holy book of Islam) and the Hadith (traditions on Muhammad's sayings and actions) — draw their ideas about Christianity from those distorted, heretical Christian sources. Islam rejects the Cross of Christ and replaces the Gospel with a legalistic and ritualistic system that does not speak to the heart of man. Muslims, particularly the devout ones, pray to Allah five times a day and follow the other four pillars of Islam with a lot of admirable zeal, but they have no loving relationship with Allah. Their relationship with him seems to be based on fear, and their religion is mostly a system of reward and punishments. St. Paul mentions: *"They have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge"* (Rom. 10:2). Muslims actually have a distorted knowledge of God.

In addition, many generations of Muhammad's followers did not have the Bible in their own languages, so they have readily misunderstood the Gospel. The distorted message of the Gospel and the distorted view of the Trinity were written in the Qur'an, which is considered by Muslims to be the inerrant, verbatim words of Allah. Because of that, the misunderstanding between Christianity and Islam continues.

Hence, Muslims view the Christian faith and the Bible with suspicion. It is our vocation as Christians to remain true to the Great Commission, trust God and preach the Gospel of Christ crucified, so that by His grace, Muslims might be called to faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, we should communicate to our Muslim friends the true faith in Jesus Christ. In this virtually borderless, modern world, it is incumbent upon us to be committed to evangelize Muslims if we are to see them come to faith in Christ.

We need to be confident that the power of the Gospel can change the hearts of Muslims as we preach God's Word. In addition, we must keep proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslims across the world and make evangelism a part of our Christian life, as it should be. A disciple of Jesus will be contagious in the way they express their Christian faith. Sharing Christ with the lost is not an option. It must be done through word and deed (Matt. 28:18-20).

Below are some suggestions for sharing the Gospel with Muslims:

- Begin your conversation with Christian beliefs that are familiar to Muslims based on the Islamic traditions. For example, the Qur'an mentions that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, but the book does not explain what it means. Explain that important

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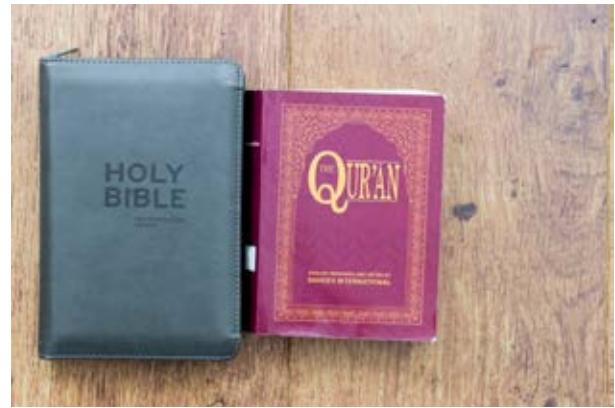
## Sharing the Gospel with Muslims *(continued from page 1)*

belief to your Muslim friend, but avoid using theological terms that they may not understand.

- Respect your Muslim friend as an individual who is a sinner, like anyone else, who needs salvation. Be patient, and do not expect that a Muslim would kneel and repent from the first encounter. While some will not listen, others will, with time, be called to faith in Jesus Christ. Many Muslims need to hear the Gospel more than seven times before they start to listen.
- Make an effort not to consider your Muslim neighbor as only a target for evangelism, but cultivate a genuine friendship with him/her. You must show genuine Christian love in word and deed. *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16).
- Be sure to preach the Gospel and not yourself by drawing your Muslim friend into the Word. The Word of God is the best tool for evangelism. Be encouraged by the promise in Is. 55:11: *"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*
- Be careful not to denigrate the Muslim faith or criticize Muhammad or the Qur'an. When your Muslim friend brings up his/her belief in Muhammad as a prophet of Islam, respectfully divert the conversation to Jesus, His teachings and His ministry. Jesus is

highly revered and exalted in Islam. Do not try to explain the Trinity or the sonship of Jesus in the preliminary stages of the discussions. These are difficult theological issues that most Muslims stumble over.

- Be patient and ready to answer your Muslim friend's objections as Christ did in His encounters with skeptics. Christian beliefs should be explained, in the beginning, using the words of the Bible. St. Paul reminds us: *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12).
- Emphasize that the Bible is inerrant and the Old and New Testament are one in its message: the redemption of sinful man. Explain to your Muslim friend the hundreds of prophecies that foretold the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament.
- Share your personal testimony, emphasizing the crucial difference between being a person living under the curse of the Law and being freed by the truth in Jesus Christ. Remember the apostle Paul shared his testimony in the New Testament as much as possible while preaching the Gospel. Introduce your Muslim friend to other Christians who could share their faith story, and invite Muslims to fellowship events and have them experience worship with



you. St. Paul reminds us: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 16, emphasis added).

- Be bold in inviting your Muslim friend to worship with you, trust the Holy Spirit, who calls people to faith from different nations, and know that in eternity, we all from different nations and backgrounds will stand together worshiping the Lamb of God.

*"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"* (Rev. 7: 9–10).

Amen.

Contributed by Rev. Hesham Shehab  
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Donations are tax-deductible.

## RSTM Events Update

**Don't forget:** RSTM provides free monthly webinars on topics important to congregations in town and country settings. Up next is **Reasons for the Faith: Apologetics 101 — Islam** on April 26 with Rev. Hesham Shehab of Salam Christian Fellowship, followed by **Redefining the Graying Church: The Mission Field of Older Adults** with Dr. Rich Bimler, Ambassador of Health, Hope and Aging (AH-HA!), on May 17. Find past webinars

in the webinar archive on our website as a free resource for use when you need it.

**Watch for information on all our upcoming events!** Remember that you can register for our Engaging Your Community events (EYC) as well as our Engaging the Wandering (ETW) events at [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm). To see our complete calendar or learn more about upcoming events, visit [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm). Contact our office at 888-463-5127 or [rstm@lcms.org](mailto:rstm@lcms.org).

LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission supports and encourages rural and small-town congregations in engaging their communities and growing together in Christ through Word and Sacrament.

Learn more about RSTM at [lcms.org/rstm](http://lcms.org/rstm) or by calling Amy at 888-463-5127. "Like" us on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/lcmsrstm](https://facebook.com/lcmsrstm).

Click the Give Now button to support the work of RSTM.

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