

# Approaches in Ministry to Muslims

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Due to the complexity of communicating the gospel cross culturally to Muslims, various approaches have been attempted with varying results. An analysis of the life of Christ from the gospels reveals that Jesus used many approaches to reach different people with the gospel. Let us examine six approaches to Muslim evangelism in light of the example of Jesus.

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. - John 13:15*

Paul the Apostle also said: *"Therefore I urge you to imitate me."* -1 Corinthians 4:16

- 1.**Polemic:** Attack, confrontation. From Greek, polemikos "to war against", via Latin .
- 2.**Apologetic:** Defense. From Greek apologetikos, "to speak in defense".
- 3.**Irenic:** Peaceful dialogue. From Greek Eirene= peace
- 4.**Insider:** "Contextualized" approaches.
- 5.**Creative Access:** Business as Missions, Humanitarian work, Education & services.
- 6.**Kerygmatic:** Proclamation. From Greek Keruso "to proclaim".

God can and does use any method, approach, or strategy however each approach is only effective for the Kingdom of God if they were gospel centered. The gospel is the only hope for the lost.

## 1. Polemic: Attack, confrontation.

(From Greek, polemikos “to war against”, via Latin.)

**Confrontational.** It exposes the falsehood of Islam primarily through the use of debates, media, written materials, and lectures.

### Purpose:

To shake the confidence, Muslims have in their religion,  
To cause them to consider the alternative, Christianity,  
To silence those who oppose Christianity.

### Jesus' Examples:

Jesus used polemics when he confronted the Jewish leaders. He called them:

Hypocrites: white-washed tombs

- you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you:

These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; they teach as doctrine the precepts of men. **Matthew 15:6-9**

—Matthew 15:6-9

-Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let in those who wish to enter. —Matthew 23:13

Blind fools

**Matthew 15:12-14; 23:17, 19, 26, , 27-28**

“Your father is the devil.”

**John 8:44**

See also: **John 5:37-38; Matthew 9:4; 12:34; 23:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 6:26.**

### Paul's Example

*[Paul] talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.*

- Acts 9:29

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

- 2 Corinthians 10:5

### Results:

#### Negative

They tried to seize him and kill him. **Matt 12:14; John 7:30-32; Mark 11:18**

They were offended.

**Matthew 15:12-14; John 8:41**

They called him demon-possessed.

**John 8:52; John 7:20**

#### Positive

The crowds believed. This is the ultimate purpose of this approach.

*Many in the crowd put their faith in him.*

- John 7:31

#### Risks

It polarizes people and solidifies the opposition.

It may close the door for future evangelism.

You may win the argument but lose the person.

#### Benefits

Polemics silences the opposition.

It raises doubts and exposes problems and contradictions in Islam.

### Qualities of the polemic teacher:

If God is calling you in Polemic ministry,  
 You need to be an expert in Islamics  
 You need a decent knowledge of Arabic, Quran, Hadith, history and theology.  
 A casual knowledge is not sufficient to be effective.  
 Quoting from a book that quotes the Quran can be dangerous. Muslims can defeat your argument easily

## 2. Apologetic

Defensive. Apologists defend the Christian faith and answer the objections of Muslims.  
 C.S. Lewis said, arguments do not bring about conviction of sin. Only the Holy Spirit does. But without supporting arguments people's faith is destroyed.

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*

- 1 Peter 3:15

### Purpose

Without attacking Islam, apologetics helps us answer objections about Christianity. Knowing how to defend the faith helps solidify our own convictions about the truth of our message and removes obstacles from those we are trying to reach, especially those seeking the truth.

### Jesus' Example

Jesus answers Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and others.  
 Jesus defends his sonship.  
 Jesus defends eating with the tax collectors and sinners.  
 Jesus defends his disciples.  
 Jesus defends healing on the Sabbath.

John 3:5-8; 4:10-1  
 John 3:16-18; 5:19-23  
 Matthew 9:12-13  
 Matthew 12:3-8  
 Matthew 12:11-12

### Paul's example

# Paul uses apologetics in Thessalonica and Berea.

– In Acts 17 we see Paul at Synagogues defending his faith and arguing with the Jews.  
 – in Athens Paul debated and proclaimed the good news of Jesus to Philosophers.

He answered their questions and engaged them at their level. Acts 17:1-14

Acts 17:1-14

### Results:

#### Negative

Same results as in Polemics.  
 Paul was kicked out of Thessalonica and Berea.

#### Positive

Jesus silenced his opponents:  
*"...no one dared to ask him any more questions."*  
 Jesus amazed his hearers.

Matthew 22:46  
 Matthew 19:25; 22:22,33

Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman believed and brought others.  
 A ruler believed and asked Jesus to heal his daughter.  
 Many believed Paul's message, especially in Berea

**John 4:11-12**  
**Matthew 9:18**  
**Acts 17:4, 11**

### Risks

Apologetics risk winning the battle but losing the friendship.  
 This approach focuses on theological issues and not enough on the spiritual needs.  
 Answering someone's questions may not lead them to faith in Christ.

### Benefits

Apologetics can answer objections and sincere questions.  
 Provides opportunities for further discussion and contact.  
 Gives exposure to God's living word and gives reasons for believing. Irenic  
 A peaceful, conciliatory approach that seeks to win the trust of people you are witnessing to. Often this means establishing a relationship through friendship, lifestyle evangelism. Dialogue also seeks to produce positive responses from the target audience.

### Jesus' example:

Jesus blessed the peacemakers.  
 Jesus befriended tax collectors, "sinners" and others.

**Matthew 5:9**  
**Matthew 9:10; 11:19**  
**Luke 7:34**  
**Hebrews 13:2**

The Bible commands us to be hospitable to strangers.

### Results:

#### Negative

- The Pharisees were angry with Jesus for befriending the outcasts.
- Jesus' enemies were jealous because of his popularity.

#### Positive

- Jesus won the crowds, who were amazed by his teaching.
- *"many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him..."*

**Matthew 7:28**  
**Matthew 9:10**

*As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

**- Mark 10:17**

### Benefits

- This approach builds trust with those we befriend and earns us the right to be heard.
- It allows others to see inside the life of a Christian in personal ways.
- It reminds us that people are watching the way we live our lives.
- It can help us to be less judgmental of those with opposing beliefs.

### Risks

- Truth may be compromised for the sake of the relationship.
- This approach can delay verbal witness and may hinder it if ulterior motives are detected.
- It can lead to feelings of hurt and rejection if people feel deceived.
- Because this is a slow process, it probably reaches fewer people.

## Insider Approaches

*To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*

- I Corinthians 9:22

### The Insider Movement

The Insider Movement aims to see a movement within Islam of “followers of Isa.” The missionary enters a Muslim community to live, work and participate inside the culture. It promotes the notion that people can be followers of Jesus and maintain their original cultural and religious identity. It seeks to find ways for each individual culture to worship Christ within their own religious/cultural context. Missionaries assume an Islamic identity.

### Contextualization

This approach seeks to adapt the form of the gospel to an existing cultural context in order to make it more acceptable. It finds a way to communicate the gospel using indigenous cultural forms instead of ignoring or judging the receiving culture.

### Building Bridges

This approach seeks to find commonalities between Islam and Christianity and “bridge” the gap between the two. It assumes that the Qur’an and the Bible share significant common beliefs. This can be done in one-on-one relationships, or in public dialogue between Muslims, Christians and others. It focuses on mutual respect.

### Common Ground

The “Common Ground” approach looks for the similarities between the Bible and the Qur’an and the common teachings of Islam and Christianity for the sake of winning Muslims to follow Christ within their culture/religion.

### Applications:

#### Evangelism

The Qur’an is used as a bridge. Often the Bible is not introduced until later.

#### Church Planting

A new church is not required. The mosque or a home are considered adequate replacements.

#### Bible Translation

Islamic language is used, such as *Allah* for God, and *Isa* for Jesus. In the Russian contextualized translation, the word for baptism is the same word used for washing before Islamic prayer. Other serious issues are phrases like “Son of God”, which is replaced by other terms such as “Prince of God” or “loved by God”, and the removal of all references to God as “Father”.

Although some biblical support is used to promote these approaches, they are not consistent with the methods that Jesus used and taught. These approaches tend to cater to the culture in order to make the message more acceptable to the audience, whereas Jesus deliberately defied cultural values to teach the true meaning of spirituality.

## Kerygmatic

Proclaiming the good news! This approach urges us to preach the word of God to all people. It actively seeks to share the gospel with Muslims both relationally and publicly. Other words for this in the Bible are preaching, testifying, evangelizing, and witnessing.

A study of the life of Jesus finds that this approach is the most common to Jesus and his apostles. While other methods are found in the example of Jesus, preaching and making disciples are his imperative commands to us, his followers.

### Paul's Example

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel -- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

**- 1 Corinthians 1:17**

### Jesus' Example

*Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'* - **Matthew 10:6-7**

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...*

**- Matthew 28:19-20**

*Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come! The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'*

**- Mark 1:14-15**

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor... Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.* - **Luke 4:18-19, 21**

## Results

### Positive

- Nicodemus asks questions. **John 3:4,9**
- The Samaritan woman and many others believed. **John 4:15, 39-42**
- The crowds asked for the bread that Jesus said gives life. **John 6:34**
- Many put their faith in him; others were amazed. **Matthew 4:25; 7:28; Luke 4:22; John 8:30**

### Negative

- The Pharisees responded negatively, as in all other approaches. **John 6:41; 8:13,19**
- Many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. **John 6:60-66**

### Benefits

- This is a straightforward presentation of the gospel.
- It follows the example of Jesus, Paul, and the prophets.
- Clear preaching allows people to hear the powerful claims and convicting words of Jesus.

### Risks

- There is likely to be opposition to the message.
- The preacher may lose friends and cause divisions in families.
- It is possible to overlook the person's heart and focus more on their intellectual understanding.
- It may underestimate the importance of cultural, social, and communication problems.