



**iinsight**

*A Journal for International Student Ministry in the UK*

## Reaching Muslim International Students

**Mobilising and Facilitating Churches in Outreach to Muslim International Students**

Rahab Chandler

**Crossing the Divide on Campus:  
Christian Students Reaching Out to Muslim Students**

Matthew Fox-Lilley

**Honour & Shame:  
Towards an Understanding of an Alternative Worldview**

Heather McCallum

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We welcome your comments and responses to the articles featured in this edition of *Insight*. Please address all correspondence to:  
**[insight@friendsinternational.org.uk](mailto:insight@friendsinternational.org.uk)**

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## a word from the editor



**When my husband and I returned from working with OMF in Indonesia, we were disappointed not to meet many Indonesians in Birmingham.**

Yet, having lived in a predominantly Muslim country for 10 years we found ourselves relatively at ease in relating to Muslims from other countries.

Initially it was Iranians we met in great numbers, all sent by their government and having to demonstrate a level of adherence to the regime, in public at least. We found them very open to friendship. Several had a devout faith and appreciated meeting Christians whose faith was central to their lives. Some of those early relationships have continued, strengthened by a visit we made to Iran.

Today's Iranian students are very different: younger, some privately financed, prepared to enjoy the freedoms of the west. Alongside the Iranians, we are meeting Muslim students from many other countries, including some where there is no church officially permitted, with little opportunity to meet Christians or hear the message of the Injil (gospel). Our experience in Birmingham is replicated on most campuses throughout the UK. This edition of *Insight* focusses on how we respond to the challenge and opportunity of this situation.

Friends International is committed to working through local churches and Rahab Chandler's article suggests that this will mean church leaders grasping the importance of reaching Muslims and churches finding creative ways to do this. The Friendship First model is commended as a way to get at least a group within the congregation believing that they *can* engage with Muslim people.

Those with the most immediate access to Muslim students are the Christian students on campus and yet many UK students are reluctant to engage with Muslim students, as Matt Fox-Lilley, a staff worker with UCCF, describes. He also writes about a few initiatives that have been tried by CUs to facilitate the building of friendships and trust between Muslims and Christians.

If we are to build meaningful relationships with Muslims and learn how to communicate our faith in ways that can be understood, then we need to have some understanding of their worldview. Muslim culture is often characterised as an Honour and Shame culture: concepts unfamiliar to us but found frequently in the Bible, with its middle-eastern context. Heather McCallum helps us to understand how these concepts will be expressed by the students we meet.

May we all be encouraged to take small steps towards building relationships with Muslim international students whom we meet on campus and in our communities, praying that seeds planted will take root and one day lead to a harvest, as many discover that knowing Isa al-Masih as Saviour and Lord is indeed good news for them as individuals, and also for their communities.

**Patty McCulloch**

*Guest Editor*

*Friends International Head of Learning and Development*



# Mobilising and Facilitating Churches in Outreach to Muslim International Students

By Rahab Chandler

While there is no doubt that the UK church needs to send more people to the Muslim world, there is now a very great challenge to local churches to share Christ with the Muslims living all around us, including thousands of Muslim international students.

## Opportunity is knocking on church doors

Opportunity is knocking loudly, right now. With Muslim students coming from Islamic societies highly resistant to the gospel of Jesus, now is the time like never before to seek them out, to build relational bridges, to offer Christian friendship, Bible study opportunities and other gospel witness, praying that the Holy Spirit will apply truth to prepared hearts.

Engagement in international student ministry (ISM) now presents us with significant numbers of Muslim international students but most of us would only know one or two, if any, who have come to faith. Some (ex) student believers from a Muslim background are thriving here in the UK, others are struggling with their new lives and identities, while others have shown interest and then left us, either to return to their home countries or to the Muslim community. *It doesn't feel like a fruitful ministry yet.* What are the issues which are holding us back? How can we help churches to get excited about this challenge?

## Unreasonable restraints

We have seen and understand British, non-Christian, mostly negative attitudes to the growing presence of Muslims in our country, based largely on ignorance but also due to fear of extremism. As the church are we really very different? Are not many good Christians also unreasonably restrained by anger, prejudice and fear?

For some Christians, the question in their minds, if not on their lips, is "Why should we treat Muslims lovingly when Islamic nations generally treat Christians so badly, in some cases appallingly?" This is an understandable question but the answer is very clear. We know from Revelation 6:10-11 (and elsewhere) that God is not ignoring the cries of the persecuted and nor must we. However, most Muslims we meet have nothing to do with the

appalling treatment of Christians and are shocked to learn of it. In regard to this we need to separate the Muslims we meet from the Islam into which they were born. To make it really clear for us and for churches, Romans 12:17-21 speaks clearly of overcoming evil with good at every opportunity.

In our ISM we are bound by scripture to love all Muslims. To be held back by abhorrence for what is happening to Christians in Muslim countries is therefore an unreasonable restraint.

Talking with a church leader recently, we spoke of how caution and church conservatism mean that many good, well-taught Christians, including some church leaders, are very risk-averse and would regard outreach to Muslim international students as potentially too unsettling for the church. It is right that church leaders take preservation of unity very seriously, but what a tragedy if over-caution results in much lost opportunity to see Muslim lives transformed by the gospel.

In order to mobilise local churches in outreach to Muslim international students, the fear and uncertainty of Christian believers need to be addressed.

## Top-down versus bottom-up impetus

Usually, Muslim outreach happens when a few people who care about Muslims start doing it. These are often, but not always, people who have previously worked as missionaries overseas in Muslim societies and who have eyes to see the opportunities here in the UK. Church leaders are normally happy to see the enthusiasm and endorse the activity but intentionality is bottom-up with little, if any, top-down commitment.

Talking recently with an honest church leader at a local church where there is mature ISM and where in recent years, a handful of church members have become passionate for outreach to Muslim students, this was well-exemplified. Those who are involved in Muslim outreach are highly regarded by the leaders and supported by prayer and encouragement, yet the impetus is all from the church members themselves. The church leaders are delighted to see Muslim students

attend activities and events, but there is nothing in the church's DNA which will result in ongoing commitment to Muslim outreach. If the church members engaged in it were to leave, admitted the church leader, the outreach would probably stop unless other members stepped up to do it. There is after all, much excellent activity going on in and through the church and no church can do everything.

It is true: no top-down commitment will usually mean no lasting commitment.

### **The gospel compels us**

Muslims revere Isa al-Masih (Jesus Messiah), but not knowing what Messiah means, they reduce Jesus to being special yet just one of the many prophets. We know that only one gospel can save. Envisioning of churches and individuals must always be respectful, gracious and careful but it can also be passionate and compelling. Many who try to envision others for this work often meet, at least at first, with disinterest or objection because outreach to Muslims is often regarded as extreme, risky evangelism. Why? Are not most of the Muslims we meet friendly, hospitable people? They are if we bother to get to know them! *We don't need to be brave to reach out to Muslims, just convinced that they need the gospel.* The current incoming tide of Muslim international students may turn and we must make the most of the present opportunities, not because our negligence will thwart the plans of God but because He has told us to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19) and to make use of every opportunity (Ephesians 5:16). Yet people need convincing.

### **Helping churches to get creative**

Churches are different and inhabit different contexts. To mobilise and facilitate churches we need to be ready to think creatively with them, helping them to look at their context and consider what kind of activities would draw in Muslim students. There are a few necessary considerations like providing halal food or avoiding alcohol (or at least providing appropriate, good alternatives). Most Muslims and their families love being invited to events and activities and, if there is already some existing relationship, even church-based activities will only keep out a few. We should talk more about *creative access*: activities which are not overtly evangelistic but that build relational bridges across which we can take the gospel as soon as possible.

We need more activities where ladies are being ladies with Muslim ladies; men being men with Muslim men; where families can spend time together having fun. It seems so obvious but it is not happening enough and *most Muslim students and their families find themselves only making friends with other Muslim students because nobody else offers them friendship.* They are not backing away from us: we – the gospel-bearers – are backing away from them! Creative access allows us to share our common humanity with Muslims students and their families: the need for togetherness, for that all-important sense of belonging which is in fact a foretaste of what it feels like to be part of God's family. Muslims need to know that the Christian church is a vast family, a community that surpasses the worldwide community – the 'ummah' – of Islam.

Encouraging churches to plan Muslim-friendly parties, picnics, family fun evenings, discussion evenings, pamper nights, culture nights and similar will set them on a good road towards many opportunities for sharing the gospel with Muslim students. Where God's people love Muslim people, Muslim lives are touched by God.

### **Facilitating a return to hospitality**

Why should we expect Muslims to attend church activities if we haven't even invited them into our homes? Muslim students are often baffled by the fact that they don't get invited into people's homes. This is not a stand-alone issue – because they are Muslims – but part of the much bigger one: many people in the UK don't generally 'do' hospitality anymore. Yet the challenge of hospitality won't go away if we are to connect meaningfully with Muslim students. We need to help Christians to feel good about befriending Muslim students and assure them that it is not difficult to share their lives and faith with them. To facilitate hospitality we can provide support for hosts, give guidance on where to buy halal food and possibly visit with the students on the first occasion.

Hospitality programmes are now active in many university settings, often overseen by Friends International staff but sometimes led by local churches who have acted on the need they have seen. An important part of facilitating those churches in Muslim outreach is helping them to advertise what they already do in places and



spaces where Muslim students will take note and have the chance to respond to the offer.

### A task for ordinary Christians:

#### Correcting the expert-only mentality

The tendency of churches to regard outreach to Muslims as the work of a few brave men and women needs addressing. *In this season of opportunity with so many Muslim students, colleagues and neighbours in the UK, the task has become 'every-person's'*. Although the journey from committed Islam to commitment to Christ is usually a long and difficult one, it is easier to get talking with Muslim students about faith, God and Jesus than with many others. Certainly, we do need to know our Bibles well enough and we must be willing to find answers to difficult questions. However, the question is: do we believe that the gospel has the power to save if Muslim students hear it? Romans 10:17 states, "So faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." Do we believe that? As Romans 10 goes on to ask, "How can they hear without someone telling them?" So we need graciously to exhort individuals and churches to open their doors more obviously to Muslim students and give them the chance to hear.

#### The 'Friendship First' route

Most of us would agree that the best evangelism flows from friendship and that certainly applies to Muslim students. There are many excellent books and tools for helping us to relate to Muslims, but for mobilising and facilitating churches in Muslim outreach, the 'Friendship First' course - produced by Steve Bell and Tim Green of Interserve<sup>1</sup>- is currently the best, most practical tool in our toolbox. It could hardly be easier to run, offering uncomplicated materials and a support website for those using it or considering doing so<sup>2</sup>. It is produced with ordinary Christians in mind, for leaders and non-leaders alike. It is not aimed specifically at those involved in ISM, but builds a foundation of understanding and a commitment to befriending Muslims which can easily be applied to ISM. If we want churches to care about Muslim international students, we need them to care about Muslim people generally.

'Friendship First' provides six sessions - best done weekly for a couple of hours - including teaching by DVD, discussion, cross-cultural exercises and prayer. With helpful guidelines on use of time and content for each session, it allows space to think about the local opportunities and challenges. To add practical experience to the theory, there are a few light homework tasks and a group visit to a local mosque.

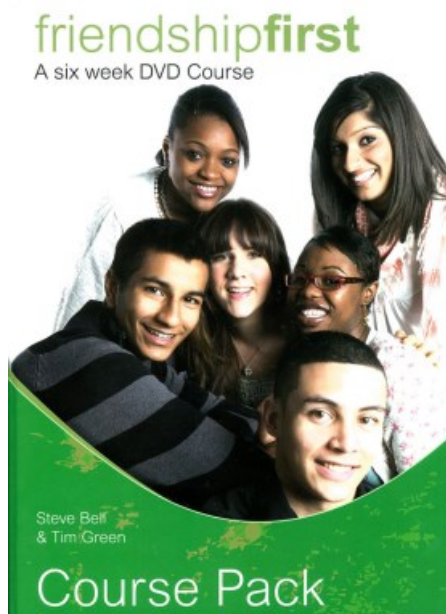
In short, Friendship First addresses the issues above:

- Opening eyes and ears to opportunity
- Addressing attitudes and fears, removing unreasonable restraints
- Bringing top-down and bottom-up thinking together
- Applying our compelling gospel to the task
- Helping churches and individuals to think creatively
- Giving helpful hints for hospitality
- Busting the myth that Muslim outreach is only for experts

Suited to be run in a small group setting or a larger one, it helps churches to be able to say "Yes, we can do this!"

#### In conclusion

We want churches to say, "Yes, we can do this!" Churches are busy, church leaders are busy, church members are busy. There are many reasons for not giving attention to the Muslim international students, but we can and should help. Of course, the outreach and the bringing in are just the beginning; the nurturing and discipleship is another challenge in itself and needs other articles to address it. In the meantime, may God enable us to work with churches, to envision, mobilise and facilitate so that many Muslim international students will find something much more precious than a good education when they come to study in our nation.



1. <http://www.interserve.org.uk>

2. <http://www.friendshipfirst.org>

# Crossing the Divide on Campus: Christian Students Reaching Out to Muslim Students

By Matthew Fox-Lilley

## Why Christian students don't want to share the gospel with Muslim students

### The harvest is plentiful...

In many British universities the Islamic Societies are ten times the size of the Christian Unions. How can we best give this massive number of students the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel? How can we effectively train and actively enthrust ordinary Christian students to share the gospel with their ordinary Muslim hall mates and course mates?

Here are large numbers of students, often from quite closed communities where they have had little or no contact with Christians whilst growing up, coming into contact with Christians. Those Muslim students who do come into contact with Christians are often very open to conversations about the Lord Jesus, but upon graduating many of these students then marry back into their own communities or move back to their own countries, and gospel opportunities wane<sup>1</sup>. University is a brief window of opportunity to present Christ to a large and growing number in desperate need of Jesus and open to hear of him. The harvest is indeed plentiful, but Christian students who are willing to be workers and who are equipped to reach out with skill and sensitivity are few.

### ...but the workers are reluctant.

At a conference for Islamic Workers in 2010 one of the delegates asked Chawkat Moucarray "Is it not hard to reach out to Muslim students, Chawkat?" His answer is one that should make us sit up and listen: "I don't think that the problem is the Muslim students; I think the problem is the Christian students." Colin Chapman then weighed in, agreeing that "many of the problems are on our side" – that many Christian students are not only "afraid" of Muslims, but "wilfully ignorant" about Islam.

I remember going to an Islamic Awareness Week event a few years ago. I brought with me some Christian students, and as we entered the event venue my Christian friends were literally shaking with fear! This is a hard starting point from which to make genuine friendships and share the gospel. But let's recognise that fear is there and that fear is a barrier.

Most of the students that I work with are convinced theologically that Muslims are in need of the gospel, but they find it hard to get 'beyond beards and burqas'<sup>2</sup>. Their primary barrier is not that of theological conviction but that of social (or even racial) alienation. Far from the 'xenophilia'<sup>3</sup> that Peter urged upon the Christians of his day (1 Peter 4), many of us harbour something of the 'xenophobia'<sup>3</sup> of our culture around us. It is not that we would go out of our way to be racist, but most of us are not brave or loving enough to reach out to those different to ourselves. This is reflected in the homogeneity of our churches and the evangelism of our CUs. Fear and disinclination are keeping too many Christian students from sharing the gospel with their Muslim fellows, such that we are squandering a wonderful window of opportunity.

## How can Christian students speak to Muslim students?

The first page of Colin's book 'Cross and Crescent'<sup>4</sup> has never been so pertinent. There he details how, in a lecture to a Christian Union, he was asked the innocent but telling question: "How should I approach a Muslim?" "Hello. How are you?" was his simple response.

Too many of us place Muslim people in a special category and, forgetting our common humanity, leave it to specialists to reach out to our Muslim friends. But if we were to learn and model to others simple, genuine relationships with Muslim people, then the job would be half done! As Martin

1. Insight from Tim Green, private communication.

2. Martin Goldsmith 'Beyond Beards and Burqas' (IVP)

3. Greek words meaning 'love of strangers' and 'fear of strangers'

4. Colin Chapman, 'Cross and Crescent', p.19 (IVP)



Goldsmith has written:

“The first stage in witness is to get to know Muslims. Every opportunity should be taken to talk and share with them. This may come about through studying together or... through sharing everyday activities like shopping, work or sport. If we long to bring the message of Jesus Christ to our Muslim neighbours, we shall look for any such possibility to make personal contact with them. Those who seek will find. Those who sit around bemoaning the difficulty of making friends with Muslims will not succeed.”<sup>5</sup>

In Leicester the two CUs organised a joint social with the Shia Society. We hosted, they brought (delicious!) food. We gladly segregated our seating. While we ate, we asked Ali, their president, to speak to us for ten minutes on the distinctives of Shia Islam. When he had finished (twenty minutes later), we gave over the rest of the evening for socialising, only setting a prize for whoever had arranged the highest number of dinner-dates with students from the other religion! A Muslim girl won the prize (a book about the Bible) and accordingly hosted the first of a few dinner parties for the CU and Shia girls. They met, they ate, they spoke about everything and nothing, and became friends. A few of them have since become good friends and, in the context of that friendship, have gladly gone to each other's events.



The boys did less well. Too many students – especially the young men – are far keener to engage in a debate than to invest in a friendship. Let's recognise that. Let's rebuke and correct that. Before going to ISOC (Islamic Society) events, now, we often meet beforehand to pray, and to remind each other that we are going to make friends and to learn about Islam – *not* to 'win the event' during the Q&A! I find Steer's advice useful when he reminds us to “[not] listen to criticise, but listen to understand”.<sup>6</sup>

Aston CU put on a 'Mutual Misunderstandings' event and invited their university ISOC. I spoke for twenty minutes, telling stories of conversations that I have had with my Muslim friends, and outlined some of the common areas of misunderstanding. By the

question time the whole feeling in the room was very positive and, as above, the questions were asked not with heat and to criticise, but as genuine questions from students who wanted good answers. The line we took for that event was 'If you take one thing from this event, let it be a telephone number' (of someone from the other society). Our events and witness mustn't be shy about the gospel, but dialogue is a much better strategy than diatribe. In February at a gospel event put on by Lincoln CU, an Algerian Muslim student felt so welcomed that she came back the next day (to another event about Jesus' resurrection) bringing with her a box of chocolates for the speaker to say 'thank you'!

We are ambassadors of a triune God – a God who is inherently and eternally relational, and he sends us to urge reconciliation to a people who believe in a *tawheed* god – a god who is utterly one and therefore only contingently relational. The very nature of the God who is there should shape our witness: God is relational, so too we must be relational.

#### Further training is useful

At that 2010 conference I asked Colin Chapman what he would have UCCF do as we seek to give every Muslim student the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. He replied that “Every CU has got to have a programme to educate them about Islam”. Very few do.

The focus on the training that we do give, I think, should be as above – urging ordinary Christians to make everyday and genuine friendships with ordinary Muslims. I am convinced that this is the focus that we must have, and feel that, conversely, where the main focus is on apologetics then we often do little more than weaponise ignorance and foster unfriendliness. With that relational focus to the fore, I would then urge further training on reaching out with skill and sensitivity; there are cultural and theological pitfalls that it is best to be aware of. For example, students ‘...might think that [they] are announcing that Jesus is the Son of God; Muslims are probably hearing a blasphemy about sexual relations between God and Mary’.<sup>7</sup> Though friendship covers over a multitude of offenses, too often slack speech serves to further entrenchment and misunderstanding.

5. Martin Goldsmith, 'Islam and Christian Witness' (pp.108-109) (OM)

6. Malcolm Steer, 'A Christian's Evangelistic Pocket Guide to Islam', p.63 (Focus)

7. Richard Sudworth, 'Holistic Responses in Multicultural Birmingham' in Bell and Chapman's 'Between Naivety and Hostility', p.191 (Authentic)

**Not just a 'Foreign Affair'**

Most of the Muslim students that I meet in Leicester are not international students. Whilst my context is very different to that in many other UK cities (where the number of Muslim international students is large and growing), nonetheless, we cannot afford to approach this ministry only as a 'foreign affair' anymore. Though this ministry continues to include much that is cross-cultural in aspects, we must begin to move the perception of this work beyond the sole remit of CU International Secretaries, Friends International Workers and Islamic Specialists, and do everything that we can to help ordinary Christians reach out in friendship to ordinary Muslims.



# Honour & Shame: Towards an Understanding of an Alternative Worldview

By Heather McCallum

*An intelligent young woman was awarded a PhD from an illustrious British university. Eager to work, she was unable to find employment in her chosen field. In the economic downturn she desperately wanted a job to help bring money to the family home, but she wouldn't work in an office or shop and her parents agreed that their well educated daughter should not do such menial work. Instead she stayed at home helping around the house for two years.*

What's happening in this situation? Why did this family make these particular life choices? What are the factors that affect the way people live, how they behave and how they make decisions? And when people are far from home and outside of their normal cultural framework, how do they continue to live well and make good decisions? What are the factors that determine whether choices made are good or bad?

This article seeks to explore a little of the dynamic of honour and shame in Muslim cultures and how it impacts the lives of international students from those cultures coming to the UK. Does the Bible help us at all? How can we understand Muslim students and share God's love with them in ways that they can understand?

## **Why do we behave as we do?**

We all have deeply rooted attitudes and responses to life. I behave in certain ways because these are the obvious ways to respond – I dress before starting my day's work, I lock my front door before leaving the house for the day, I take my children to school to give them the best possible education available to them. But each of these choices is determined by a particular view of life – that public nakedness is not acceptable, that my home and the possessions in it belong to me and those I choose to share them with, and that some learning is best carried out in the formal setting of a school building. These behaviours are determined by my worldview – the part of me that I think *with* rather than think *about*. These values seem normal and obvious and are often only challenged when I step out of my culture into another one that holds a different set of core values, where doors are not locked, children are educated at home and there is no need for clothes. When my worldview collides with an alternative worldview life

can become uncomfortable and insecure. This is the situation that many international students find themselves in when they come to the UK. Their rules for living which have led them and helped them well so far don't work so easily in this strange and unfamiliar place.

Almost one person in four on Planet Earth is a Muslim! That's a lot of people to be talking about. Muslims come from a diverse range of nations and cultures. One Muslim may find another Muslim just as much of a mystery as an Irishman is to an Amazonian. Cultures and worldviews are complex and we need to make sure that we don't generalise and end up with unhelpful, fixed ideas of cultures different to our own. Having said that, we need to start somewhere. So to help us understand honour and shame, we need to say a little more about worldview.

## **Individual or Community first?**

Most Muslim cultures are collectivist. That means that the 'American dream' – the right everyone has to personal freedom, to make their own choices and pursue their own dreams whatever anyone else thinks – is a nightmare! For Muslims, the value of the community is higher than the value of the individual. Each person is seen and understood in the context of where they belong in their family, their extended family and their community. People see themselves less as individuals and more as members of a group. Resources are shared so that no-one is in need. Putting the group first ensures that everyone is cared for and kept safe. Major values include harmony and solidarity, and the importance of the family cannot be overestimated.

Another important factor is how people form their identities. Identity comes from family. Who were your grandparents? Who are your parents? Arab men tend to have very long names so you know when you hear the name what family line you are dealing with. Occupation, status, wealth and reputation matter. In some cultures people have very specific identities in different contexts – I may be the supervisor at work but when I go out in the evening with my colleagues, the roles and hierarchy within the office are forgotten and we are all friends together. In Muslim cultures,

however, a person's identity is carried with them whatever context they are in. If someone has authority and power at work, then he or she will expect to be respected and have authority in every context. If I am from a family of influence then I will expect to have influence over others wherever I find myself because of who I am. Conversely someone who loses face in one context will feel shamed in all areas of life.

### **The meaning of honour and shame**

*A Muslim student studying in the UK failed her exams but still hasn't told her family back home. She's hoping she can succeed when she re-sits her exams and her family need never know of her shame. She knows that not just her reputation but the family's honour will be affected by her failure, so she carries her shameful secret to protect them.*

*A young Saudi man, a student in an English class, was an engaged and frequent contributor during lessons. His teacher encouraged his developing fluency by correcting a grammatical error in front of the other students. The student was mortified at being shamed publicly and no longer speaks during class.*

Honour is all about being of good character and integrity. Honour is gained from your lineage, from religious piety (memorising all of the Qur'an maybe), from hard work, achievement, good deeds and from being hospitable. Age brings honour. Leadership and authority require honour from others. The sexual purity of women also maintains the honour of a family and its community. Good girls are ones who are quiet and do not draw attention to themselves. In more traditional cultures, men and women who are not married must never be seen alone together as there must be no suggestion of impropriety of any kind.

Honour and shame are often the motivators of behaviour in Muslim cultures. The force of honour brings hope and life to the individual, family and community. A person's honour is tied to the group they are a part of and vice versa. A Muslim student's sense of well-being may be so tied to his place in his community that he does not have a strong sense of individual identity outside of the group. An immense feeling of loss can arise for Muslims who are far from home and outside of their community. The Muslim students around you may well feel very alone.

On the other hand, the bringing of shame on oneself

or one's community is to be avoided. To act in a way that might seem immodest or disobedient, or even to appear to act in this way is to weaken the family and endanger its integrity. Muslim children are scolded with shame and constantly compared with others who behave more honourably. From their earliest years they are taught to acquire honour and to avoid all appearance of shameful behaviour. Fear of bringing shame and punishment on oneself and family is a powerful motivator of conformity. Shame causes defilement. For a Muslim this is a very serious thing, as Muslims are deeply concerned with purity. Each time a Muslim comes to pray she must go through a process of ritual cleansing before she can approach God – she knows she is unclean.

So much shame is brought upon the family if a member breaks away from the faith and traditions that some consider an early death better than the rebellious member continuing to bring shame upon the community. To outsiders this loss of personal choice and individual identity may seem unusually restrictive. Yet it also brings the benefits of security, safety and a sense of belonging.

So how do these cultural values express themselves? Here are a few pointers:

- Religious piety brings honour and the challenge to think differently about God and faith is not something Muslims are encouraged to do. God-fearing Muslims will not want to dishonour God or bring shame on themselves by stepping outside of their religious framework.
- Muslim students may struggle to make decisions because they are not equipped to do so on their own. They may be easily influenced by others they feel are honourable and trustworthy.
- Muslim students may tell you what they think you want to hear rather than what they really think, not because they are dishonest but because this is the honourable thing to do.
- Never underestimate the importance of hospitality, both hosting and being hosted. Muslims are very hospitable and generous hosts, and will expect the same from you. It is an honour to be a guest, and generous hospitality brings the host honour.
- Avoiding the appearance of shameful behaviour can lead to outward conformity



but wrong attitudes and motivations remaining unchallenged. For some it is 'getting caught' that brings shame rather than doing something wrong in the first place.

- If you are a leader or seen as someone with influence and authority, you will be someone worthy of honour. Being your friend will bring honour upon others.

### Scripture is full of honour and shame!

*"Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." Psalm 34:5*

*"The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." Rom 9:33*

*"He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honoured." Prov 13:18*

If you have never noticed before, try reading your Bible taking note of every time honour or shame is mentioned. In Genesis 2:25 "the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Before the Fall, creation was without shame of any kind. It was rebellion against God that brought shame into Adam & Eve's experience. The Old Testament records accounts of people who sought to gain honour and others who behaved shamefully (cf. Amnon & Tamar 2 Samuel 13:1-32, David & Bathsheba 2 Samuel 11). In Daniel 9:8 Daniel prays, "O Lord, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you."

Muslims often appear to us to have a weak view of sin – God understands that humanity is weak and bound to fail, so falling short of His standards is expected. But the challenge of not giving Almighty God the honour that is due to Him strikes a chord, together with the good news of the gospel that when Jesus went to the cross, he carried our shame so that we are free from it and can stand honourably in God's presence.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its **shame**, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

And in carrying our shame away, Jesus has earned a place of **honour** in his Father's presence – "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11) To truly understand Muslims and minister to them we need to appreciate the forces affecting their daily lives. Here are some ideas to get you started on the journey of exploration:

### Remember, we are all the same!

However different we may be from each other at times, we are all made in God's image. Ask God to help you see your Muslim friends as He sees them, even if they don't always make sense to you. It is a simple tip but it really helps!



### Learn to ask good questions well:

How honour and shame are expressed and experienced will differ from place to place and person to person. Show interest in the culture and context students come from and learn how honour is gained and what brings shame. Find out about their family background. As trust is established in deepening relationships, ask what brings defilement in their context and how they understand cleansing to take place.

### Honour your Muslim friend:

Work at fulfilling the criteria of a good friend within their worldview. How can you honour your Muslim friends and avoid shaming them? Being honourable and above reproach is a good start!

**Build a new community:** Muslim students need a new community around them more than they need to learn to think independently and individualistically. How can you help them find parents, siblings and friends in their new context? Both giving and receiving hospitality brings great honour.

**Think outside your cultural norms:** If your cultural context and your personality favours direct communication, learn to relate in a more nuanced way. Your directness will cause embarrassment and offence and stand in the way

of trusting relationships developing. Work on being subtle – it will be frustrating at first but you will learn!

**Understand that following Jesus is a serious business:** We know this is true, but for a Muslim, the disgrace of apostasy brings the stain of shame on the whole family. Receiving Christ is not an individual decision but one that impacts a much wider community, and in some instances can mean serious and life changing consequences. And for many Muslims they will never have made such a significant decision without their family around them.

**Admit that you are needy (because you are):** We need to show that we have needs that can only be met by God, but also that we need to be part of a community and share our lives with others. Develop genuine dependency on others because this is how God calls us to live (check out Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37). For Muslims to see the reality of our faith it must be expressed in relationship with others not just in privacy between God and yourself.

God's deep desire is that all people should know Him, to be free from their sin and shame. May God give us the joy of seeing many Muslim students encounter Him and know what it is to receive honour that can never be taken away.

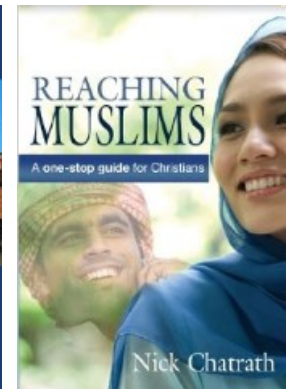


# Recommended Resources

Alan Howell of Kitab, Interserve resources ([www.kitab.org.uk](http://www.kitab.org.uk)) is an excellent go-to man for Muslim outreach resources. Here are his top recommended resources for outreach and discipleship of Muslims.

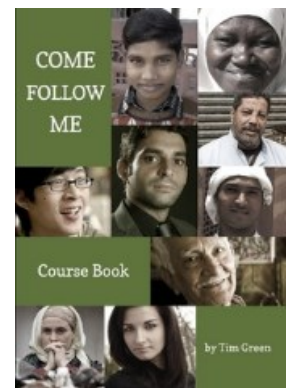
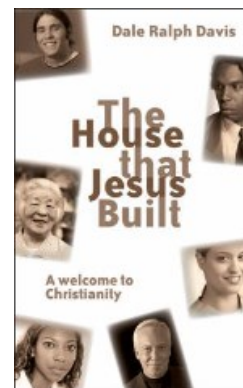
## For Preparing and Help in Outreach:

1. Friendship First (i.e. the Course and Manual)
2. 'Keys: Unlocking the Gospel for Muslims' by Colin Bearup with 'The Holy Injil: First Book Matthew'
3. A Christian's Evangelistic Pocket Guide to Islam by Malcolm Steer
4. Miraculous Movements by Jerry Trousdale
5. Reaching Muslims by Nick Chatrath



## For Discipleship and Support of Believers from a Muslim Background:

1. Come Follow Me by Tim Green (Course and Advisor's Guide)
2. Welcome Home by Horst B. Pietzsch
3. Unshackled and Growing: Muslims & Christians on the Journey to Freedom by Nabeel Jabbour
4. The House that Jesus Built by Dale R. Davies
5. A Muslim's Pocket Guide to Christianity (reprint date March 2014)



## Other Useful Resources:

- Kitab has many other excellent resources on their website ([www.kitab.org.uk](http://www.kitab.org.uk))
- For Farsi speaking students: Elam (<https://www.elam.com/>)
- For booklets which answer the common questions which arise in conversation with Muslims: Word of Hope Ministries (<http://www.word-of-hope.net/>).
- For 'Sharing Christ with Muslims' an easy-to-read handbook published by Frontiers: [info@frontiers.org.uk](mailto:info@frontiers.org.uk)

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## the contributors

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**Matthew Fox-Lilley** is coming to the end of five years working with UCCF, as a Staff Worker with three Leicestershire Christian Unions. He lives in Leicester with his wife Sarah, where they serve Avenue Community Church.

**Rahab Chandler** has lived in various cultures, including living in a Muslim society where her desire to share her faith with Muslims became a passion. She currently works with international students in the UK.



**Heather McCallum** spent 10 years living in North Africa with her family. Since returning to the UK she has been involved in local church leadership & cross cultural training. She is part of a network of Christians in her city involved in prayer, outreach & discipleship amongst Muslim people.

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## the insight team

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**Sue Burt**  
Head of Returnee Ministry

**Peter Teagle**  
Centre Team Leader, Oxford

**Lynette Teagle**  
Staff Worker

**Fiona Barnard**  
Staff Worker

**Patty McCulloch**  
Head of Learning &  
Development

**Jack Bentley**  
Communications & Media  
Coordinator





For comments, queries and submission details or to request to be added to the regular *Insight* mailing list please email: [insight@friendsinternational.org.uk](mailto:insight@friendsinternational.org.uk)

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**friends**  
INTERNATIONAL

The Rowan Centre  
All Nations Christian College  
Easney  
Ware, Herts  
SG12 8LX

01920 460006  
[info@friendsinternational.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsinternational.org.uk)  
[www.friendsinternational.org.uk](http://www.friendsinternational.org.uk)