

# ***Lutheran Mission Matters***



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# Common Ground with Muslims

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**Abstract:** Most Christians are quite unaware of how much we have in common with Muslims. Missionaries among them always begin with the beliefs, Scripture references, and practices that we have in common, for often Muslims also do not realize the commonalities. We become more comfortable to witness among Muslims and they more comfortable to hear our witness when we work from our commonalities. Then we also can make crystal clear our differences

Usually the best way to begin a meaningful relationship with anybody is to find some common ground. Many people have difficulty finding such common ground with Muslims. In fact, there is considerable common ground for LCMS people, often more than for other Christian groups. The information provided below is not for arguing with Muslims on these points. Our goal is that Christians appreciate the many points on which Muslims and LCMS Christians agree and can gain confidence to work and discuss respectfully together. For example, the People of the Book Lutheran

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Outreach (POBLO) missionaries know and assume all the points below. Thereby, they are able to quickly establish a foundation for mutual trust and understanding in their witnessing.

Note: “We” = Muslims and LCMS Christians, “Q” = Quran, “Hadith” = collection of authoritative traditions containing actions and sayings of Muhammad

### **On Social Issues**

- We both oppose abortion. (Q 5:22, 17:33, Hadith—Abu Dawood 4555, Bukhari vol. 4, Book 55:509)
- We both do not have female clergy. (Hadith—Muslim 881)
- We both do not accept the homosexual lifestyle. (Q 4:11, 7:80–84, 27:54)
- We both oppose same-sex marriage. (Q 7:80)
- We both oppose sexual relationships outside of marriage. (Q 17:32, 4:15–16)
- We both oppose trans-sexual changes.
- We both approve of married clergy.
- We both oppose pornography. (Q 16:90, 7:33)

### **On Scriptural Issues**

- We both believe and honor a divinely inspired scripture as the basis for all faith and life. (Q 3:3, 2:2)
- We both recognize a six-day creation. (Q 7:54)
- We both acknowledge the Ten Commandments. (Q 47:19, 43:1–2, 2:224, 17:23, 5:38–39, 24:7, 2:283, 5:32, 17:32, 4:36, 62:9)
- We both recognized the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels as God-given (Q 4:163, 5:46–47a), though Muslims consider the Bible to have been corrupted. (Q 2:75, 79)
- We both recognize that God sent spokesmen for Himself, prophets (Q 28:45), in the Quran such as Noah (Q 71:1–28), Abraham (Q 2:124), Moses (Q 19:51–53), David (Q 27:15), John the Baptist (Q 3:39) but does so no more. (Q 33:40)
- We both recognize the scriptural practice of fasting (Q 2:183) and prayer. (Q 2:43, 5:6)
- We both affirm the Exodus. (Q 28:2–43)

## **On Theological Issues**

- We both acknowledge God as One (Q 112:1), though Muslims reject the Trinitarian nature of God. (Q 112:3)
- We both acknowledge the fall into sin through Adam and Eve. (Q 7:19–31)
- We both acknowledge the reality of sin, alienating us from a holy God. (Q 7:23)
- We both acknowledge the reality of angels. (Q 2:30–31, 34, 98, 112, 161, 171)
- We both acknowledge the reality of Satan. (Q 7:20, 2:208)
- We both acknowledge the reality of life after death and a Final Judgment. (Q 2:28, 83:4–6, 4:159, 5:69)
- We both acknowledge the realities of heaven (Q 2:29) and hell (Q 2:24, 5:37).

## **On Jesus**

- We both recognize that Jesus was sinless. (Q 3:35–36, Hadith—Bukhari vol 4, Book 55:641, Muslim 030:5837)
- We both recognize the miracles of Jesus. (Q 3:49)
- We both recognize Jesus’ virgin birth through Mary. (Q 3:47)
- We both recognize His twelve disciples. (Q 61:14, Hadith—Bukhari vol 5, Book 58:227)
- We both recognize that Jesus has ascended into heaven. (Q 4:157–58)
- We both recognize Jesus’ return at the end of time. (Q 4:159)
- We both recognize Jesus as the Messiah. (Q 3:45, 49)
- We both recognize that Jesus is to be honored in time and eternity. (Q 3:45)
- We both attribute to Jesus the titles of “Word of God” and “Spirit of God.” (Q 4:171, 3:39, 45)

All of these points are common ground for forming a positive relationship. As we have seen in the first category above, in our communities we can make common cause with Muslims on many social and political issues. We are comfortable with each other’s conservative values. Joint efforts in the public arena are often a great way to build up trust and respect, which are key to any lasting and deep relationship. Such involvement also will naturally lead to a discussion of our motivations and

goals in these activities. For example, Muslims will typically view these issues as matters of law and compulsion, whereas Christians will approach them in a spirit of love and compassion.

When we relate from this foundation of common ground, we gain mutual respect. A Muslim typically cannot speak of loving someone outside the fold of Islam. However, he can feel close and trusting. Such close relationships will necessarily be within one's gender, men with men and women with women.

We can open common ground on many theological issues as well, as we have seen above. Of course, there are serious differences, but there is much common ground to have discussions. A major issue will be the deity of Jesus, His atoning death on the cross, and His triumphant resurrection. Yet, we begin with a common ground of high respect for Jesus and His life and ministry.

The pious Muslim will certainly have the objective of converting the Christian to Islam, just as the sincere Christian will have the same desire. Both can be up front about this without destroying the relationship. If a person really believes and values his religion, of course he would want to share it and have others join. This contradictory relationship becomes a ground for mutual respect and genuineness.

Muslims are not to be feared or avoided. We have much in common with them, first of all just as human beings, but also with many shared values and beliefs. Love your neighbor Muslim. It's only when we have that relationship that the Holy Spirit and can live through us to work faith and salvation.

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