



Lesson Five

How Would Christ Respond to Muslims?

"Compassion costs. It is easy enough to argue, criticize, and condemn, but redemption is costly, and comfort draws from the deep. Brains can argue, but it takes heart to comfort."
Samuel Chadwick (1820-1869)

1. How would you describe Jesus? Write down a few of his characteristics.

2. As we examine Christ and how he would (and we should) respond to Muslims, think back to what people often decide about "Christians" (see lesson 2, question 1), and how their perceptions differ from the Christ you just described. Also review your answers in lesson 4, (questions 3a and 5a, b): What would it take for people around you to perceive his characteristics in you?

3. Sadly, Muslims are limited in seeing and being able to describe the same characteristics of Christ you have mentioned. The barriers that thwart them are fortified by their history, cultures, and languages. Their external perceptions of Christ and Christianity are also restricted by their lack of experience with Christians who exemplify the Christ you described within their communities. Moreover, as we approach Muslims, we are quickly tempted to argue about theology, trading accusations back and forth.

- a. Why are we tempted to assert "facts" about Christianity and to allow the conversation to become contentious?

- b. How does Paul answer accusations which questioned his credentials as an apostle in 2 Corinthians 3:1-3?

4. We agree that our response to each other and to Christ is a heart response, rather than being simply intellectual. Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-25; 2:1-5, 13-14; and 2 Corinthians 12:5-10.

- a. Why is it important to address people's hearts?

- b. Why should we rely on God's power in our weakness instead of upon our own ability to convince?

5. Christ's humanity is as significant as his divinity. We hold that Christ's incarnation – his becoming like us, coming as a frail human – is key to his mission. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, and consider how we might follow Paul's example in our witness.

- a. What does Paul mean by "mak[ing] myself a slave to everyone"?

- b. How did Paul become "like one not having the law" (v. 21)?

6. Read Matthew 9:35-36 and John 8:10-11; Christ came with good news, with compassion, without condemnation even for those least appreciated by their culture – those without advocates, the sick, women, and children, for example.

- a. Why did this shock those around him?

- b. How did they want him to behave?

7. In addition to his willingness to behave contrary to people's expectations in his ministry, Christ identified with our sin. He demonstrated this willing identification at his baptism and in his suffering and death on the cross. Read 1 Peter 2:18-23 and list guidelines for our behavior as we minister to others, guidelines which emulate Christ.

8. Maybe at this point you are wondering, “But when do we defend our faith or ourselves?” or “What about 1 Peter 3:15-18?” Read this passage again and note all of the instructions there.

9. Meditation and memorization: Gentleness, respect, and not responding in kind when slandered make for a difficult path to follow while giving Christ-centered answers as to why we put our hope in him. These behaviors demonstrate the same attitude which Christ had. Remember that the chief of Christ’s character traits that we are to emulate is love.

- a. Read 1 John 4:7-12 and reflect on the attractive power of love in response to any and all treatment.
- b. Memorize 1 Peter 2:21-23: *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”*

Selah

“Reason is always a kind of brute force; those who appeal to the head rather than the heart, however pallid and polite, are necessarily men of violence. We speak of ‘touching’ a man’s heart, but we can do nothing to his head but hit it.”

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Overview of Indo-Iranian Muslims



Like the Turkic peoples, the Indo-Iranian peoples are spread across Central Asia in Afghanistan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Some Indo-Iranian people groups have substantial populations in Azerbaijan, China, Georgia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Serbia, Montenegro, and Russia. Two Indo-Iranian Muslim groups have 100,000 emigrants in Argentina: the Northern Pushtun and the Iranians.

Indo-Iranians number more than 130 million people, including the Afghans, Kurds, Persians, and Tajiks, all predominantly Muslim.

The Kurds, an estimated 25 million people, live in a region they call Kurdistan, which straddles Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. They are the world's largest ethnic group without a nation. Most Kurds live apart from others, in mountainous areas where they can retain their own culture, traditions, and languages. Traditionally nomadic herders, most are now semi-nomadic or settled. The majority practice devout *Sunni* Islam. As a people, they lack political unity, yet have usually withstood subjugation by other nations without losing their identity. However, in vying for autonomy in the last half of the twentieth century, the Kurds have been used as pawns in war and have suffered genocide multiple times in the hands of the region's governments. As a result, thousands now live in North America and Europe. Recent openness has resulted in a young but growing church-planting movement among the Kurds of northern Iraq.



Prayer Points:

- Praise God for, and ask him to protect and mature, fragile communities of believers among the Kurds, Persians, Pushtuns, and Tajiks.
- Pray that God would bring true peace to these war-ravaged peoples and remove the strife between peoples by uniting them in Christ.
- Pray that Christians would be tangible representations of Christ as they live among these peoples.