

# Why so few churches among Muslims?

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Historical reasons why there are so few MBB churches in the world:

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Thesis One: Only God Himself can "open eyes" and convince a Muslim to "bow the knee" to Isa Al Masih as Saviour and Master. Matt.16:17; John 6:44.

Historically, however, God has chosen to do that when and where His messengers are in long term residence spreading the teachings of Jesus in their heart language.

Thesis Two: Relatively few appropriately gifted messengers have focused on Muslims.

Thesis Three: Opposition and close-mindedness to the claims of Jesus Christ are rooted more in historical events than in theology. People called Muslims and people called Christians have been at war or otherwise violating each other for 1400 years!

Thesis Four: Unless both the messenger and the recipient of the message succeeded in clearing away the barrier of historical offenses, it has been very difficult for a Muslim to seriously listen and internalize what the messenger was presenting.

Thesis Five: The most basic reason Muslims have still not responded to the claims of Christ if OFFENSE was FORGIVEN is that those Muslims were still not acquainted with respected persons in their own society who had put themselves under the living Messiah's authority.

Thesis Six: It is the Koran-believing Muslim's duty to oppose any teaching that gives preference to any teacher over Mohammed and the Revelations from God given to Mohammed. Therefore, the more articulate Muslims are commonly bent on converting a Christian as opposed to listening to one.

Thesis Seven: Muslims follow those they respect most in their extended family or community. Since Muslims have no (or too few) examples of a "significant other" putting their reliance on Christ's act of atonement, and making the resurrected living Christ their utmost authority, s/he has not been able to conceive of such a radical departure from their community or tradition.

Thesis Eight: Unless what it means to be an obedient follower of Christ was understandably distinguished from the behavior of the so-called "Christian masses", especially Westerners, the Muslims have perceived very little "good news" in our message. Muslims have been unceasingly told by their leaders that "Christianity doesn't work".

Thesis Nine: "Christian mission" since Constantine, 300 A.D. and before the Protestant Reformation was not "regeneration", but most often no more than pressuring non-Christians to be baptised as an act of switching their allegiance to a particular ecclesiastical Bishop, Pope or Patriarch plus some minimal confessions and practices deemed most important by those rulers.

Thesis Ten: Until the late 1700s, the conviction that all men everywhere must consciously confess their reliance on what Jesus of Nazareth did on the Cross, [sacrificing Himself to atone for their rebellion and evil motives and behavior] and his resurrection from the dead, surrendering to Him as their daily Master- is a concept of mission that was nearly absent from the minds of the few spreading the Christian religion to Muslims.

Thesis Eleven: Even among those who recognized what Evangelicals understand as "the Great

Commission?, very few saw it as pertinent for their day or community of believers until the evangelical revivals of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in Europe and North America.

Thesis Twelve: Among the tiny percentage of Protestants determined to ?preach the Gospel to every creature?, extremely few considered residential efforts to ?make disciples? among Muslims to be advisable or even possible.

Thesis Thirteen: Missionaries among Muslims have been typically only ones and twos-?lone ranger? types with significant gaps of time between them and the next ones to take up the task.

Thesis Fourteen: Those missionaries most gifted in evangelism went to Latin America or Africa, where they were welcome. The few taking up residence among Muslims, historically, have tended to be gifted as scholar-teachers or medical personnel.

Thesis Fifteen: Because missionary visas were created by colonial powers, Muslim countries gaining independence withdrew such visas. From 1945 to 1975, countries not issuing missionary visas were considered ?closed? and therefore off limits for missionary endeavor by church and agency leaders.

Thesis Sixteen: In both the Catholic efforts and in Protestant era between 1790-1900, what Latourette calls ?the Great Century? missionaries sailed PAST the Arab world, Turkey, Persia. In Russia, China, India, and Southeast Asia, they avoided the Muslims to concentrate on Tribals, low-caste Hindus, Chinese, or non-evangelical Christians.

Thesis Seventeen: Historically, even where there has been some witness TO Muslims, there is little precedent for attempting to establish churches wherein the Muslim background believers were the majority. There was failure to recognize the H.U.Principle?Muslims did not want to associate with Hindus, or nominal Christians.

Yet, unless seekers can experience a new ?family? committed to seeing their needs for a spouse, house, work, education, and protection provided, it has been considered unsustainable to identify with the Christians.

Thesis Eighteen: Until very recently, existing churches in countries with a Muslim majority have NOT welcomed Muslim seekers, assuming their motives to be sinister and/or that allowing them fellowship would bring violent retaliation from other Muslims.

Thesis Nineteen: Historically, due to poor communication methodology, even where some daringly proclaimed the ?Good news?, it was not heard as good news, but rather as BAD news. E.g. ?do NOT honour your father and mother? or ?reject your community?s traditions?.

Thesis Twenty: Because Muslims have tended to react violently or at least with violent threats, Muslim believers historically have been ?sent away? to a safe place; extracted from their community, usually never to return. This practice intending to be good shepherding resulted in missionaries getting a reputation as ?kidnappers?, and breakers up of families.

Thesis Twenty One: Missionaries have tended to invest in the first available seekers. These tended to be persons already marginal in their society unable to influence others and/or persons with the wrong motives.

Thesis Twenty Two: Unless there have been a sufficiently large group of Muslim believers, [critical mass] fear both among the handful of converts and the messengers has prevented the believers from meeting openly enough to invite or attract other Muslims. Hence reproduction or church growth/reproduction has typically been thwarted.

Thesis Twenty Three: The doctrine of the worth of the individual believer, unintentionally produced an individualistic, unaccountable missionary who if s/he won a Muslim, disciplined him also as one with

little accountability or commitment to the rest of the believers. Only community can reproduce community.

Thesis Twenty Four: A corollary of individualism has been the Protestant insistence on individual confession and baptism. Muslim societies however, tend to make corporate decisions including religious alliances. It is not considered noble to 'stand up against the crowd' in Eastern societies.

Thesis Twenty Five: Since the 1970s, church growth theory has encouraged workers to 'go to the responsive?'. This notion automatically excludes most Muslims peoples from receiving church planting teams.

Thesis Twenty Six: Historically, those missionaries intrepid enough to venture into Muslim communities most often had no models and therefore little idea how to proceed in church planting among Muslims. Coaching has been minimal.

Thesis Twenty Seven: The specific goal of establishing separate MBB churches with their own leadership in the same areas where churches of NON-Muslim believers exist was NOT endorsed by agency leadership until the 1980s. To avoid bringing the MBBs into the non-Muslim background churches was considered violating the unity of the Church by Western missionaries.

Thesis Twenty Eight: Missionaries, historically, were unwilling to take animistic practices seriously, [e.g. that jinn (demons) are part of a Muslim's everyday life] thus they often seemed irrelevant in their message to folk-Muslims. Protection and power, not forgiveness, has been the felt-need.

Thesis Twenty Nine: Too few messengers has taken up residence among Muslims because of a weak theology of suffering. If one has the goal of avoiding suffering, s/he will avoid proclamation to Muslims.

Thesis Thirty: the 1960-70s, birthed a fresh concern for the peoples of the world among evangelicals. Since the oil embargo of 1975, and especially after the end of the cold war with Communism, evangelicals have become aware of the many Muslim peoples of the world as never before in history. Awareness breeds concern which leads to involvement.

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Why didn't the Reformation produce missionaries beyond Europe?

Although the Reformers could see the logic of preaching salvation by faith alone to all creatures, they had difficulty seeing HOW it could happen because: The priesthood of believers was not practiced. No models. There was no 'Orders' of single people to go as the Catholics had. There were too few preachers even for Europe. Travel was only beginning to be something 'one could do?'; most people never left their parish or region where they were born. Learning other languages was not envisioned beyond Greek, Latin, and their own! There had been very little merchant 'middle class' or the option to do something other than what one apprenticed for? Muslims were considered a lost cause. Futile. Unconvertable.

Keys to progress in mission: It took the birth of science & the industrial revolution to provide transport, communication, printing, and medicine. Pietist movement, evangelical preaching, the realization that if I need to be personally converted, so does everyone else! Allowing the pendulum back to 'multi-individual' decisions, or conversions by families and clans. Heeded leadership telling the churches 'this must be done? Simeon, Jon. Edwards, and in Europe: Models in Brainard, Elliot, Martyn, pietistic Germans, and William Carey. Travelers wrote books about peoples in the East