

KEYS TO FRIENDSHIP WITH MUSLIMS

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So you want to be a bridge to the Muslims in your community, but you are afraid of doing something offensive. Or maybe you are afraid the girl in a hijab in your Genetics class might be a secret jihadist. Perhaps you are a soccer mom and you want to get to know the Muslim mom on your son's soccer team, but you are afraid to invite her over because you don't know if she'll eat what you serve. Guess what? She is probably full of similar fears about you. These keys can help.

Put fear where it belongs: kicked out and cast out by love.

Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Let your sole motivation be love, love for God and for the Muslim woman He created. Don't allow fear to stop you from getting to know her.

Pray for her.

Don't be surprised if God wants you to pray for her often and fervently. You may be the only one in her life doing this for her.

Do the next thing that is clear.

One day I was in a Dollar General store and heard Arabic. I had been praying for God to grow my relationships with Muslim women in my city. A frazzled Muslim woman was trying to decipher her son's school supply list. I knew I could help her with that. My next clear step was to walk up to her and say hello. Unlike the general social mores of American culture where we are taught not to speak to strangers, her culture welcomed it. Our sweet relationship began that day.

Have a teachable heart.

Admit to your friend that you do not know her culture and ask her to teach you. Be a sensitive and non-judging listener. Ask for explanation about things you don't understand.

Understand your world view and hers.

(To learn more about world view, download my free guide *Honor and Shame: A Western Primer* or *Worldview for Dummies* to learn more.) Just a little understanding can go a very long way in building relationships with Muslims.

Be real. See her as a real person, not a project.

Let her see the real you. True friendships are built on sincerity.

Know the Bible, and share truth from it often in conversation.

Familiarize yourself with several stories of how Jesus honored women and retell them to your Muslim friend. She has great respect for the Bible and for Jesus. Don't be surprised if she asks you to read it from the *Injil*, or the New Testament.

Dress modestly.

Modest dress communicates respect for one's body and for God in Muslim culture. As a follower of Christ, this is a value we can agree upon with our Muslim friends and is worth the effort.

Show hospitality.

Whether you are a college student living in a dorm room, a single career woman, or a married mother of five, invite your friend into your space. Be generous with what you already have, be it coffee from a Mr. Coffee machine and Chips Ahoy cookies, or home-baked pound cake and chai.

Respect gender roles in Islam.

Build Muslim relationships within your own gender and don't spend time alone with Muslims of the opposite sex.

Remember that love is the clearest language of all languages. You don't have to know the language or the rules of culture to love someone sincerely. Love crosses cultures and world views and wins over expertise every time.