

SEEDBED

2005, Second Trimester

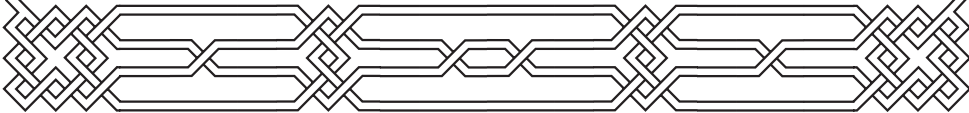
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EDITORIAL

The world is in turmoil these days as terrorism and suicide bombers bring death and destruction. News commentators interview politicians and police authorities in their search for explanations. As Christian workers in the Arab world, we look more closely at questions of theology and seek to understand the thinking and practices of the Muslim peoples we know. At the same time, we press forward in our efforts to share the Gospel with them. We hear amazing stories of God's work to reveal Christ in a variety of situations throughout the Arab world. We do not lose heart, but continue to make Him known and to disciple those Arab Muslims who are coming to faith in Christ.

This issue of *Seedbed* has a variety of articles to stimulate our thinking of how we evangelise and how we disciple. We are reminded also of the importance of prayer behind all our efforts. I look forward to your reactions and suggestions that are stirred up by our colleagues' articles. Have you any experience with the

question of coincidence that IL has raised from his teaching of students? Or can you add to Um Ithnain's guidelines for personal evangelism? What has been your involvement with transformational development as described by SM? What practical suggestions can you make for its implementation? How have you applied its principles to church planting issues? What advice do you have for discipling MBBs and encouraging their formation of a community?

Bear with us as we continue to work through the electronic publication of *Seedbed* — both for AWM colleagues and for other subscribers. If you have not yet contacted us to let us know if you would like the electronic version, please do so soon. We are trying to bring our records up to date as well as to develop a system of archives for past issues. If you would like any of the materials mentioned by our authors in this *Seedbed*, please get in touch with me.

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The Why, When, Where, How and What of Evangelism (Part 2)

By Um Ithnayn

What are the major challenges in telling others about Christ? What should we be telling people? This two-part article is based on the Evangelism seminar given at the East Area Women's Conference (November 2004) that explored various aspects of evangelism:

- **Why:** A joy shared is a joy doubled.
- **When:** Live a life of witness.
- **Where:** Homes and Hangouts.
- **How:** Prepare in Prayer.
- **What:** Prepare Ministry Tools.

Part One stated that half the battle of evangelism is spending time with our Arab Muslim friends. It is easy to fill our lives with many good things; but to increase our evangelistic ministry, we need to proactively maximize the time spent with Arab Muslims. The other half of the battle is opening up spiritual conversations once we are sitting with our friends. How do we turn the conversation to spiritual things? This second half of the article focuses on our prayerful preparation for evangelism and then describes a few practical ideas for creating opportunities for spiritual conversations.

How to Begin: Prepare through Prayer

Our evangelistic ministry is an outgrowth of our own reconciled relationship to God. We are called, commanded and compelled to draw others into the joyful security found in

God through Christ. Since evangelism is secondary, we must start with the foundation: our own relationship with the Lord. As our relationship with God deepens, we are better able to sense His leading. Obeying Him in our ministries brings us still closer to Him.

Since this is the Lord's ministry, we must seek His direction. Prayerful preparation includes praying for our friends and the people we have yet to meet, as well as asking how He wants us to prepare for spiritual conversations. At the East Area Women's Conference, R.Y. led a seminar in which she listed ten steps to effective intercession.¹ Among them was the need to acknowledge that we can't pray effectively without the Holy Spirit's enabling and leading. We need to wait before the Lord and listen for His direction concerning how He wants us to pray. She also suggested we pray with a Bible nearby so that God can readily give direction from His Word. In this case, His answer would concern evangelistic goals for our friends.

For example, as I pray for a friend, God brings to mind her specific deep needs. He shows me *how to pray* and *how to prepare* to share spiritual truth with her. Does He want me to offer to pray with Fatma concerning a particular felt need? Should I prepare to share a verse that would speak to her

situation? As the Lord lays ministry ideas on my heart, I pray that He will prepare her heart to be receptive to what He is leading me to attempt.

What to Tell Them

Collecting and creating ministry tools

Always be ready to give an answer... for the hope that you have (1 Pet. 3:15). We must have an attitude that is eager to make the most of any impromptu opportunities to share Truth. However, *being ready* can also mean we actively prepare ourselves for these opportunities. The Spirit leads us in our careful, detailed preparation just as much as He guides us in the spontaneous opportunities to share. We seek God's direction on the choice of topics, what to say concerning them and even how to create the opportunities to share what He is leading us to say. How does God want me to explain a particular truth to Khadija and Muna? What do they need explained in more detail in order to better understand what I sense God leading me to say? These prepared evangelistic statements are our ministry tools in evangelism.

Evangelism is not merely repeating the essential truths of the Gospel until they are understood. We must prepare apologetic answers to Islamic objections and barriers. The path to Christ is a progression, and so evangelism can touch upon discipleship issues as well. Answers to common questions, our current devotional reading or even what we are learning

about Islam can inspire a topic for a ministry tool. We investigate how others have addressed the various topics; sometimes we reshape what they have written to fit our own ministry situation.

What should we prepare?

Whatever you are reading or studying, *prepare* it so you can share it. During your devotions, spend a moment thinking about how your friend would react to the Bible passage. I carry my devotional/prayer notebook in my purse so I can pull it out and share with my friends what God has been teaching me.

Prayerfully prepared answers allow us to make the most of every opportunity (Eph 5:16). One common question often asked is 'Are you a Christian?'. If we merely answer 'Yes', our opportunity is lost. Instead, we can be ready with 'salty' responses, interjected with a bit of truth. Preparation helps put the Arabic vocabulary and lines of thought at the tip of our tongue; thus, these ready responses will more easily come out in conversation with our friends. I have an extremely poor memory, so I write down ministry tools and carry them in my handbag. Just before a visit, I glance over my notes to remind myself of the main points and the essential vocabulary words.

Writing your own ministry tools

Usually we are given only short opportunities to introduce a spiritual topic; therefore, short responses or statements are more practical. The

following is a simple format for creating ministry tools:

- **Choose a topic** to address in the ministry tool. If possible, think of an opening question or comment that could lead into the desired spiritual comments.
- **Research a scriptural response** by reading through appropriate Bible passages that speak to the topic. Pick one or two passages on which to base the prepared statement. It is also helpful to research ways that others have addressed the topic by checking books on apologetics, *Min-Tools*,² the PALM CD or various evangelistic websites geared for outreach to Muslims.
- **Write a response** of one or two paragraphs on the topic.
- **Rewrite the ministry tool in Arabic.** After deciding what to say, work through it again, according to your Arabic abilities and in light of the way things are communicated in Arabic. Write down any vocabulary words needed.

If your ministry is in Arabic, please do not skip the rewriting phase. I find that I often cannot say things in Arabic in exactly the same way I would say them in English. When I rework the ministry tool in Arabic, I may realize that my friends need more explanation of a Christian term that I have used, or that my whole line of reasoning is too complicated and *western* for my friends to grasp easily. Sometimes I need to break down a topic into several smaller items, rather than tackling a huge theological topic all at

once. I am not suggesting developing mini-theological treatises on every evangelistic topic under the sun. This format merely helps prepare what God is leading us to share, in order to make the most of every opportunity.

Finally, I suggest you write up your ministry tool in a format that is easy to glance over in order to refresh your memory. I keep my ministry tools in English, adding vocabulary notes. Others write their ministry tools completely in Arabic. Maybe all you need is a few main points to refresh your memory. *Appendix A* contains a list of possible ministry tool topics to get you started writing your ministry tools. *Appendix B* is a sample ministry tool in which I have answered a question I am often asked: Why don't you become a Muslim?

How to Bring Up Spiritual Topics of Conversation: Some Practical Suggestions

In general, it is easier to talk about spiritual things with our Arab Muslim friends than it is in secular western contexts. Our friends believe that God exists and they respect and fear Him. In the Gulf, it is politically correct to be religious and so various Islamic topics are a normal part of their conversation. Even in this religiously charged environment, we often still need to create opportunities to talk about spiritual things or draw the conversation to Christian truth. What are some practical ways to bring the conversation to a topic we have prepared?

Ask for help with Arabic

Most of us carry on our evangelistic ministry in the Arabic language. To Muslims, Arabic is *the* language of spiritual matters, as well as the language of the heart. Non-native Arabic speakers struggle to become proficient in this *very difficult* language, but happily, God can use this weakness for His glory. God can use our lack of proficiency in Arabic to turn the conversation to spiritual things. As non-native Arabic speakers, we can create opportunities to share when we ask for language help on a spiritual topic or Scripture passage.

What's your news? What are your thoughts?

To move the conversation from surface pleasantries to deeper issues, I have begun following our local greeting شو اخبارك (What's your news?) with شو افكارك (What are your thoughts?). 'What's your news?' has a standard response, 'alHamdulillah', and rarely goes beyond that. In asking them about their thoughts, I can creatively open up a conversation about their real heart issues.

Of course, the question usually is turned back on me. What have I been thinking about lately? I can share about what I read in my Quiet Time that morning, or even something that I have been preparing specifically to share with them. My friend does not have to know that I have been thinking about this thing just in order to share it with her. It is, in fact,

something that I have been thinking about lately, and so I am answering her reciprocal question honestly.

Props & salty knick-knacks

Sometimes it is easier to bring the conversation around to a spiritual topic if I can bring some kind of prop to use as an illustration. The *Visualized Bible* booklets, children's Bible storybooks and Sunday school materials are props that I have used. As women and mothers, we may find this easier with our large handbags and our association with children. I have a natural opening to engage with the children when the hostess leaves to get the food. Once I have my Bible story props out and get started telling the story to the children, there is often an opportunity to share the Bible story with the adults as well.

One obvious item, although certainly not a mere prop, is the Arabic New Testament. It is important to show respect for the Bible, but we also want to keep it at hand and available to use when we are visiting friends. I carry a copy in a protective sleeve in my bag so it does not get tattered. I even choose my handbag based on its ability to carry my favorite version of the New Testament. Although it is cumbersome to carry a full Arabic Bible, several Arabic versions are available on computer. This allows me to print out specific passages from the Old Testament to take on visits. The Van Dyke version of the Bible is now available for Palm Pilots and Pocket PCs³ as well. It is harder to

offer our friends this Bible in its electronic form, but at least it is readily available to read with them at a moment's notice.

For times when my friends visit me, I strive to fill our sitting room with items that I call *salty knick-knacks*. Scripture wall hangings, holiday decorations or other items serve as visual aids and reminders of spiritual truths or Bible stories. Recently I added a pearling scale to my collection. My intention is to use the scale to talk about my friends' belief that they must balance their good deeds with their bad deeds. During the Christmas period, the star and the angel at the top of the tree lead to the two Christmas stories in Matthew and Luke. Here in the Gulf, I fill a *mandoo*, a Gulf-style 'treasure chest', with (fake) gold, frankincense and myrrh to illustrate the story of the Maji. Let us purposefully choose *salty knick-knacks* and think through how to use them in

order to open up spiritual conversations with our friends.

Conclusion

Half the battle of evangelism is spending time with our Arab Muslim friends. We want to live lives of witness, meeting people in homes and at our hangouts. The other half of the battle is opening up spiritual conversations once we are with them. We must bathe the evangelism process in prayer, by praying for our friends and asking God how He wants to use us in their lives. Being ready (1 Pet. 3:15) means preparing for our evangelistic ministry. By prayerfully preparing our own ministry tools, we can be ready with *salty* answers to common questions and objections. Our concisely prepared statements can more effectively interject spiritual truth into conversations with our friends. May God bless and guide our efforts to proclaim His glory and salvation among Arab Muslims.

Appendix A: Possible Ministry Tool Topics

This is not an exhaustive list but just something to get you started.

1. Reasons Muslims become Christians:⁴

- A sure salvation
- The person of Jesus
- The Bible
- God's love
- Relationship with God
- Seeing others endure persecution

2. Answering common questions & objections:

- Are you a Muslim/Christian?
- Why don't you become a Muslim?
- Jesus was not crucified.
- The Bible is corrupted.
- Jesus is not a god/the Son of God.

3. Seasonal Sharing:

- Ramadan - Fasting
- Christmas
- Eid al-Adha
- Hajj - being 'born again'
- Easter - the Eid al-Adha of the Injiil

4. What God has been teaching you recently.

- Prepare a ministry tool based on what God is showing you in your devotions, Sunday School preparations or in a religious book you are reading.
- Prepare how you could answer: What are your thoughts?

5. Prepare a shame/honour-focused Bible story or Gospel presentation.

Appendix B: Sample Ministry Tool

Below is a sample ministry tool, written as I would say it in Arabic. This makes it a bit difficult to read, but I want to highlight how rewriting the tool changes what and how things are said. Although I did not end up directly quoting any of the supporting verses, my response is based on concepts found in: Isaiah 57:12, 64:6; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:20-26; Hebrews 9:22 and Genesis 22:13-14.

A response to: Why don't you become a Muslim? My answer: There is no hope in Islam.

There is no hope in Islam. In Islam you must balance *توازن* the bad deeds *بالسيئات* with the good deeds *بالحسانات* and this is impossible. Nobody is 100% perfect. Everyone sins and everyone deserves the fire. Even if God multiplies a Muslim's good deeds *حسنات المسلم* a thousand times, it will never be enough *بالمرة ما يكفي*.

The honour of God and the value of God are without limits; thus the weight *قل* of my bad deeds *سيئات* is infinite. Because God's value is great, the weight of my sins is great. No one can balance their sin and their bad deeds, not even the best Muslim in the world. A sin that we see as something small becomes something big when the person sins against God, the Supreme One *المتعالى* the Incomparable One *البديع*. So in Islam

there is no hope that we can escape the fire.

God is *irRahman irRahiim* (merciful and compassionate). He knows no one can balance *يتوازن* their sins, so He has provided a way for us *دبر طريق حقنا*. **He** is the one who balances our bad deeds when we trust in the redeeming sacrifice (*fidya*) He provided for us. This *fidya* washes us from our shame. It gives the good deeds, and more, to balance our bad deeds and our shame. I trust in this *fidya* so I have assurance that I will go to heaven when I die. I have hope that I do not see in Islam. This is why I am not a Muslim.

Footnotes

- 1 Taken from the Intercession Seminar PowerPoint, found on the East Area Women's Conference Compendium CD. Um Salat based this seminar on the book: *Intercession, Thrilling and Fulfilling* by Joy Dawson.
- 2 MinTools is an AWM user-interfaced database of topical responses and evangelistic stories. It can be found on the *Spiritual Arabic 2* CD.
- 3 For the Palm Pilot Arabic Bible visit: <http://unbound.biola.edu/unibible/>. A beta version for the Pocket PC can be downloaded from www.olivetree12.com/beta/arabic.
- 4 This list of reasons Muslims become Christians was taken from a lecture that was based on the article: 'Why I Chose Jesus', by Dudley Woodbury and Russell G. Shubin at <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/2001/01/muslim.htm>.