

Christians share Gospel at Muslim events in Washington, D.C. and New York

Sharing the Truth with Love

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Photos by Adrian Rodriguez



A believer distributes Christian literature at the U.S. Capitol, where several thousand Muslims gathered to pray in September.



Denny Barger was one of many Calvary Chapel believers who shared Christ with event attendees.



A Muslim woman reads information given to her by Christians in D.C.



On the U.S. Capitol lawn in Washington, D.C., Muslim men bow in unison toward the direction of Mecca. It is estimated that more than one billion Muslims worldwide have never heard the Gospel. Christian groups are answering the call to share the message of forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ.

The solemn, lingering tones of the traditional Muslim call to prayer wafted over the lawn of the U.S. Capitol building. The crowd of several thousand, hushed and still, listened attentively to the Arabic recitation. It was Friday afternoon, the most sacred Muslim prayer time of the week. As the voice of the muezzin, or prayer leader, rang out, the Muslims stood to face Mecca and began to move as one: bowing, kneeling, leaning forward to touch their foreheads to the ground, and rising; then they paused and repeated the movements.

In the back of the crowd, however, softer voices of prayer could also be heard—Christians had come, desiring to intercede and to share a message of hope. Scattered about, standing alone or sitting in small clusters, they were quietly asking God to open hearts and to destroy misunderstandings about Christ.

At recent events in Washington, D.C. and New York, Christians shared the Word and the love of God with American Muslims. A September gathering in D.C. called “Islam on Capitol Hill” attracted more than 100 Christians, and nearly 50 attended the Muslim Day Parade in October in Manhattan, NY. Equipped with literature and DVDs, the believers shared the biblical message that Jesus is God’s Son who offers forgiveness and eternal life.

Charles Neusch, a believer from Calvary Chapel Orange County, NY, commented, “Christians should not be afraid to share the Gospel lovingly at these events.” Charles began ministering to Muslims over a year ago when he learned that more than one billion Muslims worldwide have never heard the Gospel. “I found that staggering,” said Charles. “They need to be reached.”

The Christians came from several organizations and churches. They gave away a variety of materials: Some distributed booklets of John and Romans in English and Arabic, along with a *Jesus* DVD in 16 Muslim-world languages. Others handed out *The Path of*

the Prophets, a tract explaining how Old Testament prophets—whom Muslims highly respect—point to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Many gave out *More Than Dreams*, a docudrama about six former Muslims who decided to follow Jesus after encountering Him in dreams.

Referring to the New Testament, which some Muslims call “the Gospel,” Charles remarked, “They’re taught that the Gospel is good and that the Qur’an confirms it, but many have never seen the Gospel. ... Many are anxious to see it.”

Here for a Reason

Many of the Muslims at the events were immigrants from Middle Eastern countries. While opportunities to learn about Christ are scarce in many predominantly Muslim nations, “God is bringing people to this land where they can hear the Gospel,” said Denny Barger, a Calvary Chapel founding pastor who attended both events. “Saudi Arabia sends 40,000 students a year to American universities for one year,” continued Denny. “If just one percent came to Christ, 400 a year would be going back into Saudi Arabia with the Gospel. Can you imagine the impact that would make in that nation?”

Larry Holcomb directs Urban Impact New York, an organization that provided literature to Christians witnessing at the parade. “It’s been 2,000 years since Jesus commanded us to evangelize the world, and we still haven’t finished,” said Larry. “But now God has sent millions of Muslims to us here.” Immigration offers an extraordinary opportunity for American Christians to share the Gospel with Muslims.

Open Hearts, Closed Hearts

Many believers fasted the day before the parade, asking God to lead them to those ready to hear the Gospel. John Basilio, assistant pastor of CC Orange County, NY, commented, “I expected resistance, but I didn’t feel that. The Spirit went ahead of us and softened people’s hearts. ... Their willingness to take the resources was shocking.”



A Christian directs a Muslim woman after Islamic ritual prayers have ended at “Islam on Capitol Hill” in D.C. The Muslim lady is holding a packet of material the believer has just given her. Included are the books of John and Romans in both English and Arabic, as well as the *Jesus* film in the 16 languages spoken by the majority of the world’s Muslims.

Larry said that after the parade, he bought lunch from an Indonesian vendor. Unfamiliar with the food selections, he asked an Indonesian man for help deciding. He then asked the man if anyone he knew was affected by the recent earthquakes in Sumatra. “We had a heart-wrenching conversation,” relayed Larry. “He broke down and cried—he had lost many family members.”

Larry listened to the man, prayed for him, and related his own experiences losing family members. “It was very hard,” he added, “and I dealt with it by going to Jesus.” Larry commented later, “It was apparently the first time anyone had told him about Jesus, and he was very open.”

Other Muslims had previously formed negative impressions of Christianity that the believers sought to overcome. “One man in New York said he had been in churches, and he remembered the skirts getting shorter,” said Denny. “He advocated Islam because

of its stricter guidelines.” Denny agreed that people do need boundaries, commenting, “That’s why David said in the Psalms, ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet’ (Psalm 119:105a). This quote established common ground, explained Denny, since Muslims and Christians concur that God inspired the Psalms.

“I was looking for points of agreement,” said Denny. “But when he started listing rule after rule, I pointed out humanity’s need for grace.” The man believed that Jesus wasn’t necessary because obedience to God could earn His forgiveness. Denny used an analogy to demonstrate why good deeds don’t erase bad ones: “All it takes is one crime, and you go to jail. The judge won’t say, ‘Well, you have a good record; I’ll let this crime go.’ God says a similar thing in James”:

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. James 2:10

The man listened but was unconvinced. Denny was not discouraged: “If I planted a seed in his heart, maybe the next Christian he talks to will have something to add to that.”

Truth and Grace

While many American Muslims study theology and may seek to debate with Christians about the Trinity or Jesus’ divinity, “You can win an argument and lose a soul,” reminded Denny. “I don’t engage in angry conversations,” he added.

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient. 2 Timothy 2:24

“Why do we have to be patient?” asked Denny. “Because, for a Muslim, giving your life to Christ is a huge lifestyle change. It takes time.”

Larry said that the need to show Christ’s compassion and gentleness has been intensified



Muslim youth carry flags designating their country of origin during the Muslim Day Parade this past October in Manhattan, NY. The annual parade began in 1985.

stand against such negative experiences by sharing the Gospel in love, Larry added.

Building Bridges

Fear and misunderstanding limit many Christians’ witness to Muslims, Denny said. He lamented that many Americans think all Muslims are terroristic and added, “We need to distinguish between Islam and Muslims. These people are not the enemy; they are victims of the religion.”

In order to help believers overcome fear and share Christ effectively, Denny teaches a course using the BRIDGES curriculum. This program is produced by an organization called Crescent Project and “presents practical, biblical teaching about Islam and evangelism,” Denny said. As director of Dreams

Alive Ministries, which equips Christians to reach Muslims in the U.S., Denny has used the DVDs to train about 120 people in five northeastern Calvary Chapels.

The BRIDGES Leader Kit contains six 30-minute sessions. Topics progress from “Islam Rising,” which depicts Islam’s historical origins, to “Tools for Reaching Muslims.” The first tool presented is the reliability of the New Testament, which many Muslims believe has been changed after being originally inspired by God. The lesson reveals historical evidence that the New Testament has not been altered. The other tool is the concept of sacrifice—a critical issue for Muslims, explained Denny, who see no need for Christ’s sacrifice in their place. Islam teaches that good deeds earn God’s favor; BRIDGES explains that God offers forgiveness through Jesus’ death on the cross.

“My favorite session is the third, ‘Attitudes of an Ambassador,’” said Denny. “It presents four keys for sharing Christ with Muslims.” The course teaches that in sharing the Gospel, “We shouldn’t denigrate Islam or Muhammad,” Denny said. “Muslims know Islam doesn’t work; we don’t need to tell them that. We just need to give them the Good News.”

Denny Barger of Dreams Alive Ministries works alongside several Calvary Chapels.



Kevin Phillips witnesses to a man after the Muslim Day Parade. Some were eager to converse with the believers in spite of the intermittent rain and cold weather.

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