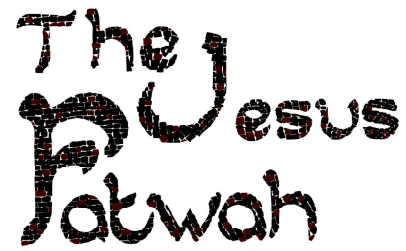


Love Your Muslim Neighbor as Yourself

Participant Reader by
Ben Daniel



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Session 1: “Islam 101:

In Which We Tell You Some of What You Need to Know About Islam.”

In this session we look the basic tenants of Islam. We live in an era in which much of what passes as information about Islam is weed-like disinformation rooted in stereotype and watered by fear. We decided to weed out the tares of ignorance by doing what, for Christians, apparently is radical: we spoke to some actual Muslims and to Christian scholars whose intellectual garden-sheds are filled with the tools of fact-based knowledge. The product of these conversations is a harvest of reliable information about what your Muslim neighbors and coworkers believe and about how they live out their faith.

Session 2: “Misconceptions about Islam:

In Which We Help You Adjust Your Malarky Filter.”

Again, we took the radical step of getting to know actual Muslims, and in our conversations we asked them to tell us about how American public discourse tends to misrepresent Islam. We are confident that you will like the people you meet as you join in this conversation.

Session 3: “Islam in America:

In Which We Introduce You to People Who Love America and Pray Towards Mecca.”

Chief among the popular anti-Muslim stereotypes is the idea that Muslims are plotting to overthrow American society. In fact, most Muslims love the United States. This is true of Muslims living in countries where Islam is the predominate religion, and it is especially is true in the Untied States, where Muslims, as a demographic, are among the most patriotic American citizens.

The Jesus Fatwah

Introduction

Love your Muslim Neighbor as Yourself

In Arabic, the word “fatwah” simply means “opinion” and, in a religious context, a fatwah is a spiritually instructive opinion, usually given as the answer to a question about religious law. Jesus was a master of the art of fatwah. His opinions, revered by Christians and Muslims alike, remain among the most beautiful and powerful fatwahs ever issued. Jesus pronounced what is perhaps the most famous of his fatwahs when a lawyer asked Jesus to name the greatest of all the commandments. He said, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

As with most fatwahs, Jesus didn’t invent his opinions about loving God or loving one’s neighbors. Rather, he found and quoted passages from his sacred text, the Jewish Torah. Many of Jesus’ contemporaries concurred with his most famous fatwah – and five centuries later Mohammad endorsed the Jesus fatwah when he said, “The most righteous person is the one who consents for other people what he consents for himself, and who dislikes for them what he dislikes for himself.”

Here at Living the Questions, our opinion—our fatwah—is this: Jesus meant it when he told us to love our neighbors. In an age of increasing Islamophobia, we believe it is especially important for Christians to love their Muslim neighbors, a process that begins when we learn who Muslims are and what Muslims actually believe. We’ve put this series together as a way of expressing faithfulness to the Jesus fatwah, and we’re happy you’ve joined us. As-Salaam-Alaikum!

-- David Felten & Jeff Procter-Murphy

Note: the English transliteration of the Arabic word, “fatwah,” can be spelled both with or without an “h” on the end. For the purposes of this study, we will be using “fatwah” instead of “fatwā.” Both are acceptable in English usage.

