

An Evening with Abdu Murray

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 February 2017

Preacher: Abdu Murray

[0 : 00] Thank you for coming.

I know that we've got some folks who are not part of our church and the word kind of got out.! I haven't noticed about this thing, but when I found out about it last Thursday and wasn't sure just how we were going to work that, that didn't give you much time to get the word out, not even to your own church.

We've got other things going on. Our WANA kids are busy with their ministry, and that's good, and the people who work there, and they're kind of wishing they could come in here. Anyway, I'm glad you came, and I think you'll be thoroughly blessed.

Some of our elders and deacons had an opportunity to meet with Abdu before tonight and just a moment ago, and very pleased with some of the things that he shared with us about his life and ministry and maybe giving us a little heads up on some things he's going to share with all of us, and I know it's going to be a blessing.

But we are pleased to have Abdu Murray here from Detroit. You know, I didn't know much about Abdu. I looked up on the internet, website.

[1 : 32] Abdu is the Director of North America for Ravi Zacharias International and has worked with Ravi Zacharias Ministries for not a long, long time, but a good while.

Also teaches here some courses here at Oklahoma Wesleyan University. And just as I know, a tremendous testimony. Even the little bit that I heard just kind of whetted my appetite for the opportunity to hear the whole thing.

But he's going to speak more about just his personal testimony, how he came to Christ, which is interesting and glorious in and of itself.

He's going to share some other things about ministering to Muslims, sharing the gospel with Muslims, and other things like that. So let's have a word of prayer as we begin tonight, and then Abdu, you come share with us.

Dear Father, thank you so much for this opportunity to be a part of Abdu's ministry and to hear some about that and to hear about your work of grace in his heart and life.

[2 : 47] And now, Father, through this ministry you've called him to, and to hear about how through the years you have equipped him in so many ways to be ready to be used in this way, not just here in North America, but all around the world.

And so, Father, we pray for Abdu as he shares with us here tonight. And we know that you have prepared him and you will direct him. And we also pray at the same time you would open our hearts and minds, giving us understanding and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to us and to inform us and to challenge us.

And so we lift all of this up to you, Father, in the great name of Jesus. Amen and amen. Abdu, you come. Thank you. Well, thank you very much for having me and for coming out with such short notice.

It's one of those things where you get an opportunity that arises, and in some senses, this was short notice for me too. I actually found out last Thursday I was going to be here, and you found out last Thursday I was going to be here.

So we are both coming to this with a little bit of a short notice and a bit of a surprise to us all. But it is truly an honor and a blessing to be with you all. My name is Abdu Murray, and oftentimes we're going to do Q&A;, by the way.

[4 : 07] Hopefully I'll get done enough time just to get a slew of questions out. But one of the interesting things about my story is my name. People often ask, well, what's the deal with the Abdu and the Murray?

The Scottish last name? How'd that happen? And basically they Anglicized us when we came over to the United States. My understanding of the story is that we said our last name is Mir'ai. And they said, what's that? Mir'ai. And they said, okay, it sounds like Murray to me, which means I'm Lebanese and Scottish and haggis and hummus all around. Doesn't make for advertising ideas here.

What I want to talk to you about today, and I'm so glad that you guys are gracious enough to let me speak about it, is Islam in terms of its grand central questions. Now I wrote a whole book on the idea of grand central questions from the viewpoint of not only Muslims, but secular humanists or atheists, pantheists, those who come from Eastern backgrounds, with Eastern religions that also include things like Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism, other isms as well.

And then of course the religion of my birth, which is Islam. Now the idea behind the book and what I'm going to share with you today, the book is called Grand Central Question, is that every worldview tries to answer fundamental questions of life.

[5 : 29] A lot of different questions of life, but fundamental questions of life. But they center on what I call the grand central question of that worldview. So for example, secular humanism.

Humanism is the worldview face of atheism nowadays. Humanism basically says that human beings are special. Somehow we're special over and above like leopards and chimps and other things. There's something about us that's special and inherently valuable.

But secular means we don't need God to tell us that. So the question for the secular humanist is, how do we actually justify human specialness, human value, objectively, independent of human opinion, if human opinion is all we have?

There's no transcendent authority. For the pantheist, it's how to escape suffering. Through the death cycle of death and rebirth and all these things, how do we escape the cycle of suffering? For the Muslim, it's God.

God is the idea of God and his greatness. When I was a kid, I was pretty serious about my religious faith. I thought that Islam was true, everything else was false, and that people should believe true things and not false things.

[6 : 37] So in the area I grew up in Michigan, it was largely homogeneously white. Now it's very, very diverse. There's lots of diversity, lots of Indians and Pakistanis and Arabs and everything who lives there. But we weren't the only Muslim family or the only Arab family in the area, but we were one of the few.

So we were sort of a dash of olive oil in the sea of salt around us. So we were spicy. We were a little bit exotic. And people would ask us questions about what we believe and where we come from and our traditions and all these things.

Gave me great opportunity to speak with people about their religious beliefs. Now, it was an equal opportunity, faith knocker out or ever. It wasn't just Christians I was after. It was anybody. But Christians were sort of low-hanging fruit, at least people who identified as Christians, who were nominally Christian.

So they'd say they were Christian, and I'd say, what does that mean to you? Well, that means they go to church on Christmas and Easter at the Presbyterian Church or the Baptist Church or the Catholic Church or whatever it is. Like, that sounds like tradition to me, not actual truth.

You believe it because of tradition. That's what I would say to people. And they would largely have to agree with me because largely they believed it because they had to. That's their heritage. They hadn't thought it through. So I began to challenge Christians on why they believed what they believed.

[7 : 49] You see, I would often hear Christians saying, you know, God is great, especially Christians who were committed or who were at least committed in terms of their church attendance as opposed to their whole life.

And they would sing this song, How Great Thou Art. You probably sang that song in this church. I would often tell my Christian friends, you should change the words to How Great Thou Art because your God is not great.

You're telling me God is great, but your God needs help. God the Father is God, but God the Father needs help from God the Holy Spirit and God the Son. If God the Father is God, he would need no help from anybody, and you have partners with him.

You're just a confused tritheist. And no response back. They don't know how to even define, let alone defend, the Trinity. And I'd ask them a question. If you can't define it, why should you believe

it?

And why should I? And so I would launch into why that's false. The idea of the scriptures. See, Muslims believe, because the Quran, the holy book of the Muslims, actually says that the Bible, parts of the Bible, the Taurat, which is the five books of Moses, the Zabur, which are the Psalms of David, and the Injil, which is the Gospel of Jesus, were actually revealed by God to the prophets. [9 : 04] But Islam teaches those books were eventually corrupted to contain blasphemous lies like the Trinity incarnation and the atonement on the cross. And the Quran came to fix all that.

It was revealed to bring people back to true monotheism, and God vouchsafed the sort of purity of the Quran through the ages. Because previous scriptures were corrupted, but the Quran would not be corrupted.

So I'd launch into the Bible with my Christian friends, that you believe that the Bible is the word of God, but don't you know that it's been changed? And I would quote Bart Ehrman, because Bart Ehrman was white and not Jewish, which I thought meant he was a Christian.

Bart Ehrman is an honest-to-goodness actual New Testament scholar who's written basically the same book 17 times, saying why the Bible is not the word of God, or it's been changed over time. I thought this was great evidence.

Turns out it's not that great of evidence, but I thought it was then. And these Christians didn't know any better than I did. But they knew less than I did. So I would attack the Trinity. I would attack the Bible as being unreliable.

[10 : 03] Then I would attack the idea of God becoming a man. I would say to my Christian friends, are you telling me? And I wasn't angry about it. It was just during conversations. We'd be watching the football game. Eventually this would come up.

Because I was good at steering the conversation this way. I'd say, you're telling me that the God of the universe, the one who creates this universe, that it's billions and billions of light years across. But also the God who creates subatomic particles that are so small, there's no way for us to detect them.

That God gets trapped in a man's body that walks the earth, gets hungry, sweats, and eventually dies. And by the way, not only dies, but dies shamefully at the hands of the very sinners he created. This is the God who is great. You should change your lyrics to how great thou aren't. And very few people had a response to what I was saying. Now see, the important thing here, friends, is that there was a grand central question that I had as a Muslim.

How do we understand or worship a God who is truly great? You've probably heard this phrase, Allahu Akbar, right? You've heard this phrase? You've probably heard this phrase, and you got nervous because the Arabs said it in a crowd.

[11 : 11] Now, that's semi-funny. Semi-funny, because, here's why. It's terribly unfortunate that we come to associate Allahu Akbar with a terrorist chant. Most Muslims don't say it with violence in their heart.

What the words actually mean, it's got a name. The phrase is so important to Muslims that the phrase has a name. It's called takbir. Takbir means the, how do you treat it in English?

The expression of greatness. It's a phrase of greatness. It literally means, it literally means, God is bigger. Allahu, it means God. God, it's just an Arabic word for God.

Allah means the God. That's all it means. Akbar is a superlative. Kabir is big. Akbar is bigger, greater. So the connotation is, God is greater.

For the Muslim, God's greatness is the central idea. It's the most important idea in Islam. All other ideas, like God's oneness, that he is one in nature and one in person, that God is all-powerful, that he is merciful, that he is forgiving, but he's also a judge.

[12 : 13] All these things flow from God's greatness. So God's greatness is the unparalleled, central doctrine of Islam. Now Muslims say, Allahu Akbar, when they walk into a house and they say, Allahu Akbar, look how great God is for blessing you with this wonderful home.

Or if they get bad news, like that maybe they're sick or they have the death of a loved one, they say, Allahu Akbar, God is greater than all of this. So it's not just a terrorist call.

It's a prayer and a praise on the hearts and minds of Muslims all over the world in common everyday life. Because most Muslims are not out to get you. They're not. They're not sitting behind the airport stairwells, twisting their mustaches, thinking of ways to blow the place up.

They're not doing that. Some are. I mean, let's not be silly about things and not be realistic. But the vast majority are not. When they come to this country, they just want to live the American dream, as it were.

Find a good job. Make good money. Meet the girl or guy of their dreams. Have a happy marriage. Have kids. Have those kids have kids. And then die happy grandparents. Sound familiar? That's the common experience.

[13 : 23] Not the uniform experience, but the common experience of Muslims. But they want to worship a God who is truly great. What I'm hoping to show you today is that we can actually offer that to them through the gospel.

The doctrines of Christianity, incarnation, trinity, the Bible itself, and the atonement, I once thought, insulted God's greatness. I've come to be convinced that they're the very doctrines that demonstrate God's greatness.

So how do you reach a Muslim with the gospel? Blaise Pascal makes this, the scientist and theologian makes this wonderful statement about how do we actually show the truth of, he says religion, but in this particular instance it's Christianity.

He says, men despise religion. They hate it and fear that it may be true. The cure for this is to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect.

Next, make it attractive, he says. Make good people wish it were true, and then show them that it is. It's important to hear what he's saying.

[14 : 28] Make good people wish it were true, and then show them that it is. because any worldview worth believing has to meet a need you have. Not just an intellectual curiosity, but a need you have.

Not because it's a crutch, so there's a need it satisfies, but there's a truth that makes it real. It's not a fake crutch, it's a real crutch. We all need crutches. In fact, I would even venture to say we all need stretchers.

But it's a real one, something you can really rely on. That echoes the Apostle Paul's words in Colossians chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. I have modeled my entire ministry off of these two sentences, essentially, of phrases in the New Testament.

When the Apostle Paul, the king of all missionaries outside of Jesus himself, says this, we are to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. He's not saying be engineer-like in your efficiency, or like a psychiatrist.

Time's up, gotta go. He's not saying that. What he is saying is that you are to make the best use of the time with people who are outside the faith because you're supposed to know what it is they care about.

[15 : 36] What speaks to the hearts and minds of a non-Christian? What is it that they care about? How does the gospel affirm the question and then offer the answer?

So walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. But then the next two phrases are so important. He says, letting your speech always be gracious as though seasoned with salt. What you say should be attractive so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. That last word is terribly important. This is how I was reached.

Christians who talked to me weren't interested in answering my objections, nor were they interested in answering my questions or my controversies. They were interested in answering me. Paul doesn't say, so you may know how you ought to answer each question or controversy or issue or subject, how you ought to answer each person.

Because questions don't need answers. People need answers. And you and I are in the question, not in the question answering business, we are in the person answering business and they have questions that lead them to the truth at some point if they're asking sincerely.

[16 : 47] That's why I want to focus on the grand central question. I could go for hours and hours and hours on a 1400 year old religion to do it in a half an hour and then take questions is just not going to do enough justice in terms of its depth.

That's why I want to focus on the grand central issue because what Muslims care about is more important in my view than what, you know, little jot and tittle details that you might, you can pick up any book and find that out.

So I had this kind of view on the Bible that it's been changed and I had this kind of view that everything else was silly in Christianity but then I began to look at things. Two guys, two Baptist

guys came to the door at my apartment complex in the University of Michigan when I was an undergraduate there and they wanted to talk to me about Jesus and I was all more willing to do that. They were going door to door at the apartments which is interesting because Ann Arbor, Michigan is like Berkeley, California. Super, super liberal but just colder. And they would come to the dorms or to the apartments and knock on doors and people would, they'd say, we want to talk about Jesus with you and they'd say, nope, no thanks or they'd call them bigots or they'd call them, you know, sorry kook or religious nut or Jesus freak and they'd slam the door in their face.

They came to my door and I was like, you guys deliver? This is great. Come on in. And they came on in and I made these two guys very uncomfortable for hours at a time. But they kept coming back to my apartment.

[18:09] They were gluttons for the punishment but I could tell they actually wanted me to be in heaven and I wanted them to be in God's paradise. So we had this mutual love for one another and we shared the truth in very heated but very substantive conversations.

Well, I began to look into some things and that started my journey down the path. Remember what I was saying about Christians? I would say to Christians, why are you a Christian? And they'd say, tradition. And I'd say, it's not good enough.

Well, I was reading a Bible trying to find a contradiction a systemic contradiction a very serious one that these two guys couldn't reconcile. That it wasn't like a small one like a scribal error in terms of the copying of the script the manuscripts but like an actual factual error that was different in Luke and Matthew or different in Mark and John that they couldn't possibly reconcile and it was consequential.

So I wanted to find something like that. So I sat down with this little green Bible which I still have which is in my bag back in my apartment in my hotel room and I tried to find a contradiction in it and that's when I came across the passage of scripture.

This is all prelude by the way to the actual meat of what we're going to talk about but it's important to set the stage here. I was reading this Bible without any intention of thinking is this true?

[19:26] I thought maybe part of it was true because Islam does teach that the Bible was corrupted not that it was wholesale fabricated but I didn't want to believe any of it really and I came across the passage of scripture in Luke chapter 3 verses 7 and following where John the Baptist is talking to those who come to him to be baptized and he says who told you to flee from the wrath to come?

Referring to God's judgment for their sins of course and then he said something remarkable he says do not even think to yourself you have Abraham as your father for I tell you God can raise up sons of Abraham from the stones.

Did you hear what he's saying? Don't even think that your tradition will save you. That's because your children of Abraham means that'll save you because God can make one just like you out of a rock. That's what he's saying.

Tradition does not save. Truth saves. What's interesting about that was that's what I was saying. I had been saying that to my Christian friends. Tradition doesn't save. Truth saves. And all the time I ever talked to my Christian friends about why they were Christians they would say tradition.

I would jump on them. I didn't give them a chance to ask why are you a Muslim? I would fill in the gaps with all the evidence I thought Islam provided but they never got to ask me the heart question of why are you really a Muslim?

[20:42] And so no one ever asked me. Isn't it interesting? That's the very Bible that I thought was corrupted over time. Has the words in it from John the Baptist on his lips that God had preserved over 20 centuries to ask me that question that no person I knew had asked me why are you a Muslim?

Is it tradition? Is it because you're a child of this tradition? Or is it truth that matters to you? So that began the journey of trying to say look I want to see if my tradition is true or not.

And I began the journey to see is Christianity true? Is Islam true? What's true? Fully confident Islam would win the day but I began on that journey. And I say all this to say this the Bible itself often times in our encounters we don't want to go there because if we quote the Bible or use the Bible in our encounters well the people we're talking to are non-Christians they don't think the Bible has any authority or any actual weight to it but the reality is this I was a skeptic reading that book and it touched me I didn't become a Christian sitting on that chair but I did suddenly have my mind slightly altered and slightly changed to be more objective here's my point I work for Ravi Zacharias one of

the most eloquent speakers you'll ever hear I have gotten around myself and have spoken and have numerous debates and have talked on these issues and seen people come to Christ all my colleagues in the same way and every one of us without an exception Ravi included will tell you none of us is as powerful or as eloquent as the Bible itself so use that book in your evangelism may you never speak with lofty arguments in a closed Bible use lofty arguments but keep that Bible handy because that word changes people well

I began to see something my mind slightly shifted where I was going to read things in an open and honest way Muslims teach that the Bible was once parts of the Bible was once God's word but became changed over time what was interesting to me is I thought that the Quran actually taught that as well but it doesn't the Quran the holy book of the Muslims does not teach that I came across a passage in the Quran in chapter 5 the Quran has what are called surahs surahs are chapters of the Quran it's about 114 of these chapters in the fifth one there is a statement in chapter 5 verse 46 and 47 where it says this let the people of the gospel in Arabic it's it literally says let the people of the gospel meaning Christians judge present tense verb by what God has revealed therein did you catch it people of the gospel

Christians you are to judge by what God has revealed in the gospel and then it says and if you don't you're rebellious or you're evil so here's the question if Islam's been teaching me all along that the Bible was once God's word but became changed over time and the Quran came to fix the corruptions why is the Quran telling Christians to judge in the present tense in seventh century when the Quran was revealed by the gospel why would it say go judge by a corrupted book it wouldn't tell Christians to do that because that would be misleading them not leading them to the truth same chapter chapter 5 verse 68 of the Quran it actually says oh people of the book people of the book is a euphemism in the Quran for Jews and Christians they're called people of the book because they had the sacred scriptures it says people of the book you have no foundation until you observe again present tense right now the time Muhammad was speaking these words until you observe the Torah and the gospel and all that is revealed to you from your Lord so you see what it's saying you have no foundation until you observe the Torah and the gospel how could they do that observe that if it was so corrupted that the Quran came to fix it it references them by name as the foundation for the faith of Jews and Christians in addition to the Quran see the problem

[24 : 56] Islam was teaching me that the Bible was changed the Quran is saying no it hasn't they may have misinterpreted the meanings of the words or taken the meanings out of context the Quran says but no one's actually changed the text and I began to look into the various proofs on this and see that the earliest Muslims who were commenting on these verses of the Quran were very hesitant to say anything like the text itself was changed only at best the meanings of the words were reinterpreted to suit the needs and the wants of the Christians and the Jews but not the text in fact the Quran says in two places no one can change God's word this is what Al Gore would call an inconvenient truth because as a Muslim I have to believe the Quran is my authority but the Quran is saying the Bible is also an authority so here's the problem with that if the Quran says the Bible is right and the Bible is right then it contradicts the Quran because in the Quran

Jesus is not God it's blasphemy to call Jesus God there is no Trinity it denies the Trinity it denies that Jesus even died on a cross so the Bible affirms every one of those things so if the Quran says the Bible is right and the Bible is right then the Quran is wrong because the Bible says these things and the Quran says that's wrong here's the worst part though if the Quran is saying the Bible is right and the Bible is wrong the Quran would still be wrong because it said the Bible was right now that's a conundrum it's a problem for me it's a little bit when I put it that way it's sort of amusing but I'll tell you this I wasn't so amused I was upset I did not want this to be so but people often ask me well how can you how does God's greatness fit into all this see I wrestled with this particular dilemma for years years years here's the problem you can go through all the manuscript evidence by the way and figure out these issues well let me leave it back up what I did was

I tried to find out well maybe the Bible wasn't changed before the Quran maybe it was corrupted after the Quran that would get me out of the problem because if the Quran was referring to a book that was intact then but not later it doesn't have a problem anymore so I go to look in the evidence the evidence is remarkable for the reliability of the Christian scriptures remarkable that what we have today was what was written then when you look at all the manuscript evidence almost 6,000 copies of the New Testament in Greek alone the original language of the New Testament and 25,000 copies or so of the New Testament in Greek and other languages as well some dating 12th,

13th, 15th, 16th century but a lot of them very very early one piece of papyrus called the John Ryland's papyrus it's called P52 papyrus 52 it's not a fighter plane it's just a little postage stamp of a fragment of the Gospel of John chapter 18 it's dated between 95 AD and 125 AD why is that important?

it's because we don't have the original manuscripts we don't have what are called the autographs we don't have an actual Gospel of John that John wrote or the one that Mark wrote those are gone we don't have the originals we don't have the originals of any antiquity we don't have the original Quran for example we have copies usually copies of copies of copies now here's what's important about this the Gospel of John is the last Gospel written for a long time all the critical scholars would say the Gospel of John was probably written in the 200s well after Jesus' death so it contains all kind of legendary fabrications but along comes this little tiny fragment they find and the scholars dated between 95 and 150 AD so all that scholarship dated to the 200s put it in the garbage because this little tiny postage stamp size fragment of the Gospel of John puts it all to shame here's what's interesting this is a copy of a copy at least which means the original of course is earlier that's how copies work the original is earlier and the Gospel of John is written last which means if this copy of a copy was written between 95 or 90 and 150 AD the original is written earlier than 90 most likely if it's probably earlier there are great reasons to think that the Gospel of John is written before AD 70 now if that's the case and the Gospel of John is the last one written that means the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are written probably in the 50s and 60s AD and those borrow from Mark in some ways and Mark was the first Gospel written which means that the Gospel of Mark was probably written in the 40s maybe the 50s AD

Jesus dies in the 30s AD this whole idea that the Gospels were written decades and decades after Jesus' death is just wrong it's just not true the Old Testament even interesting there too because our Old Testament documents for example we actually have our Old Testaments are based on what's called the Masoretic Text our translations are in the Masoretic Text the Masoretic Text is a 9th century or 10th century Jewish text 10th century AD so it's actually younger than the New Testament in terms of the manuscripts and so all our translations are based on this so people are saying well how can you rely on a book for thousands of years that's based on the translations that came in the 900s well we uncovered the Dead Sea Scrolls and we soon realized that the ones we have now are the same as the ones that were written earlier in fact one document I want to say it was from Leviticus could have been Exodus though there's a rolled up piece of a fragment of Exodus or Leviticus that was burned so you can't actually open it it was recently discovered if you opened it it would crumble into a billion pieces so they did a laser scan the cycling thing went around it to see what it said it dates to even earlier than the Dead Sea Scrolls and this document is identical to what we have today every time you shove a shovel into the ground in the Middle East something confirms the Bible so the evidence is not there to say it was corrupted after in fact all the evidence we have is that the Bible we have today is what existed before the Quran came in the 600s AD so now what do you do with that that's a hard thing for me to deal with so the reality was the dilemma that I was facing more than that was God's greatness the evidence was important to me of course but remember I said

[31 : 36] God's greatness Allahu Akbar God's greatness is the central idea of Islam well if you look at God's greatness there's two things that have to follow if God is truly great then he would have two qualities he would be all powerful and he would be trustworthy!

if he's not all powerful well then why believe him? I mean why worship that God? I mean come on if he's like Hercules he's powerful but not all powerful well then how could he create the universe? that's all a bunch of bunk it sounds like Greek mythology right?

so why would you believe that? if he's not trustworthy why would you believe anything he says? because if God can lie to you how are you going to know? I mean he could pull the wool over your eyes and you'd never know it because he's all powerful right?

so he's got to be all powerful and trustworthy to be worthy of your belief to be a great God here's the conundrum here's the big problem if the Bible or the parts of the Bible were once God's word but were corrupted over time then only two things follow and I look for a third and there's no third either God couldn't protect the Bible from corruption or he wouldn't protect the Bible from corruption if God couldn't protect the Bible he's not all powerful if he's not all powerful then he's not great and every Muslim believes that God is great so they have to believe that God could protect the Bible if God could have but chose not to protect the Bible that means that he allows his revelation which is the

only way we know anything about him what he wants who he is who we are relationship to him to fall into such disrepair that it contains horrible blasphemies and it's his fault that we believe these damnable lies he could have protected it but chose not to it's his fault and by the way if he says I'll protect the Quran from being corrupted why would you believe him he's got a bad track record he didn't do it two other times why believe him now do you see the problem if you believe in a God who's great you'd have to believe in a God who's trustworthy and a God who's trustworthy would have protected his scriptures so if God couldn't protect his scriptures he's not all powerful and he's not great if God wouldn't protect his scriptures he's not trustworthy and he's not great but a Muslim must believe that God is great which means that they must believe he's both powerful and trustworthy which means they have to believe that God could protect his scriptures that God would protect his scriptures and the history I've already shared with you shows that God did protect his scripture.

[34 : 09] God is great. Our Muslim friends want to believe that? I'm with them. The protection of scripture demonstrates it. Now on to some harder issues.

The Trinity. This is where it gets complicated. Put on your thinking caps for just a moment. When I was a Muslim, and in fact, even when I became a Christian, I didn't quite get the Trinity 100%. I was like, you know what? The Bible teaches it, but I don't get it. I'm going to take it on faith, because I had enough other evidence to show me that other things I believed were true. That Jesus was God, that the Bible was God's word, and that he rose from the dead to prove he was right. I have since come to believe that the Trinity is the most beautiful doctrine in all of Christianity. Everything else makes sense because God is triune. It is my favorite topic to talk about. Without question.

My favorite topic to talk about. Here's why. Now, I often describe the Trinity at three levels. One is logical possibility.

[35 : 14] That it's logically possible for God to exist as a triune being. Then, level two, it's biblically mandated. The Bible describes God as existing in three persons.

One God in three persons. And then, level three, is theological necessity. To believe in a God who is truly great and needs nothing to be who he is, he's got to be triune.

I'm going to skip sections one and two for purposes of time. Maybe we can talk about it during the Q&A.; And go right to step three. The theological necessity. Because this gets to the heart of the grand central question of Islam, which claims, Allahu Akbar, God is greater.

Now, we share some commonalities with our Muslim friends. The commonality is this. There is only one God. That God is eternal. He never began. That God does not need anybody to be who he is. He is self-sufficient. And that God is relational. Maybe you've heard this, that God is not loving in Islam. There's not a loving God. This is not really true, actually.

[36 : 16] God is loving in Islam. He's just got a lot of conditions on his love. He doesn't love the sinners and the backsliders and these kind of things. But he does love those who do righteousness and do good things. So God is loving.

In fact, there's 99 names of God in the Quran. There's not even more than 99 names, but there's 99 beautiful names of God that most Muslims try to memorize during their lifetime to actually memorize these 99 names of God.

Like al-Rahman, which is the compassionate or the beneficent one. Al-Rahim, which is the merciful one. Al-Khalaq, which is the creator. Al-Adal, which is the judge.

And al-Wadud, which means, it's loosely translated as the loving one. So intensely relational. He's a relational being. Intensely so. It's endemic to who he is to be relational.

As a Christian, you believe every one of those things about God. Same thing. In fact, the Bible says not that God is loving, but that God is love itself. He defines love in 1 John 4, verse 8.

[37 : 15] God is love. So here's the issue. Here's the question. Why it's necessary for God to be triune. If God is the uncreated being and everything else was created, but he's also relational, that means that at some point, he was alone.

All that existed was God and nothing else. No angels, no nothing. Just God. He just existed. If he is inherently relational, the question is, who was he relating to when he was alone?

He needs to create something else to be who he is. He needs to create something. Something else has to exist for him to love because love and relationship in general is inherently self-giving to the other.

You didn't walk into this room and just love, right? I love. What do you love? I don't know. I just love. Well, that's just silly. You don't just love. You have to love someone or something. Even a self-directed love is a bit of a narcissistic thing.

It's not a true love because you're not giving to anybody. You're just giving to yourself and that's not actual love or how we think of a pure love which is self-giving to the other. So for God to be that great quality, something else has to exist.

[38 : 34] He has to create something else to love it or to be relational toward it and a God who needs something else to be who he is cannot possibly be fully great.

He can't be the greatest possible being if he needs. The Trinity solves the problem. It's not a problem to be solved. It's a solution to a problem because God exists as one being, one what, with three centers of consciousness that are distinct from each other.

His one essence, his one being has three who's. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, each loving the other for eternity in the community of the Trinity.

He never needs anything to be in relationship because he exists eternally as a relational being within himself. He never needs it, he actually defines it.

That's why the Bible doesn't say God is loving. The Bible says God is love because he eternally exists in a state of perfect love. What is perfect love?

[39 : 41] Perfect love has three aspects to it. Self-directed, others-directed, communal. That's what you need. Self, other, communal. What do you need?

What's the minimum you need for communal love for all three? Three persons. How many persons in the Godhead? Three. He satisfies it perfectly. Now, there's one more aspect to this.

Love is the supreme ethic. Perfect love is given selflessly without any gain for itself. So why does God create you and create me? Not because he was lonely.

In himself, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, they love each other perfectly without any flaws in the relationship. So why create you and create me to mess it up? You're not going to love him perfectly.

Why create you? See, this is the thing. God doesn't create you so that he can have relationship.

He's already got it. In a self-giving way, God creates you so that you can have relationship with him.

[40 : 44] That's the fulfillment of the reason for your existence. You are here to be in relationship with the creator of the universe. What a glorious calling.

And the triune God makes that possible. He gives utterly, selflessly. one of the ways he gives is that one of the persons of the Trinity sharing the same divine being as the others incarnates into a man and walks the earth and lives the perfect life that you and I can never actually live in our own.

Now, why does that happen? Two things about the incarnation of God in Christ that show God's greatness. The first thing is this. If you were to reveal yourself to someone, if you wanted someone to get to know you, who you are, what you expect and all these things, you could write a book.

I wrote two. And you could read those books and get to know me a little bit, but you'll never actually know me. You follow me on Twitter, you read my Facebook wall, maybe you got an email from me. You're not going to get to know me.

You're going to know about me, but you're never going to actually get to know me. The greatest way for me to get you to know who I am, what I need, what I expect of you is for you to actually encounter me. Specifically.

[41 : 58] That's the greatest way. And it seems to me, it's not necessary, but it seems to me to be very in context with God's greatness that the greatest possible being would want to reveal himself to us in the greatest possible way for our benefit.

And the greatest possible way to reveal himself to us is not just through the revelation of scripture, although that's terribly important, of course, but it is to actually become something that we can relate to, someone we can relate to.

God condescends to become, to take on a form of a servant to serve us all so that we can get to know him. That's why Hebrews says that in various times and in diverse ways, God has spoken to us through the prophets, the books of old, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son.

The word of God is the revelation, the Bible that is, is the word of God about the revelation of God the word made flesh. So what does that mean?

Why is that important? Again, God's greatness. And I remember, this is the big thing for me. This is what really got there. By the way, just as an aside, you know, when you think about the inspiration of what this leads, the beauty of this, and Muslims love the idea of linguistic beauty.

[43 : 11] The Quran is considered a revelation in Islam because it's beautifully written and it rhymes. Most of it rhymes, which is why it's so easy to memorize, like memorizing a really, really good, long song. Not exactly, but that's kind of the point.

It's easy to memorize. So they love linguistic artistry. Think of the inspiration that the incarnation actually gives. And I love this part from my Arab heritage, loving the idea of how language works. St. Augustine, when he was talking about the incarnation and the inspiration that inspired what the incarnation actually is, listen to the words. This is just beautiful. This is free. This is an extra thing for your charge. He says, he so loved us that for our sake he became a man in time, though through him all times were made.

He became man who made man. He was born of a woman he created. He was carried by hands that he fashioned. He sat and cried in wordless infancy.

He, the word, without whom all human eloquence is mute. Is that something? The poetry of the idea that the one who created was the very one who delivered those who carried him and that he sat in wordless infancy but he was the word made flesh.

[44 : 21] Amazing stuff. But why do all that? And this is the linchpin. This is really it. This is the linchpin. When I was a Christian, when I was a Muslim and I was looking for the God who was great, I thought this idea of God dying on the cross was just silly.

I thought it was actually insulting to God's greatness. Then I realized something. Back to the God being great. If God is the greatest possible being, then he would naturally express the greatest possible ethic.

What is that? Not a mystery. It's love. Love is the greatest possible ethic. All other ethics and virtues flow from that. And if he's the greatest possible being who would express the greatest possible ethic, he wouldn't do it in a half-baked way.

He wouldn't do it kind of well. He wouldn't do it average. He would do it in the best possible way. So the greatest possible being, would express the greatest possible ethic in the greatest possible way. What is the greatest possible way to express love?

What is that? It's not a mystery. You kind of already inherently know it. It's not sending notes to your sweetheart or surprising your wife at work or sort of wooing somebody or giving nice gifts.

[45 : 31] Those are all nice things. Please do that for your spouses or your significant others. It's nice to do that. But there is an element to which that's about you because you're giving to somebody else so that they think that you're Romeo and she's your Juliet.

That story ended badly of course so don't go too far. But there's a selfishness in our selflessness. Our love has limits. The way you know someone truly loves you is when they give in a way that helps you and hurts them.

If you have had a spouse for any length of time or a mother and a father or you're a brother or a sister and you've shown that love that self-sacrificial love even in small ways that's the proof of true love and a love that gives in a way that thinks of the other first before yourself.

Self-sacrifice is the greatest expression of love that is out there and we can do it. We can do it. We do it for our loved ones. We do it for strangers maybe. If we can do it ought not the king of the universe the God of all creation who is the one who defines love be able to express love at least as great as we can do it and we are told no he can't do that he can't possibly sacrifice for our sakes that means that we can love in a way better than God can love.

Heaven forbid any such thing. But see we love and sacrifice for those who love us back or for those who are strangers to us. You know what you don't think to do?

[46 : 58] Sacrifice for those who hate you. When Osama bin Laden was killed did you think boy I wish I could take his place? I wish I could have taken a bullet and showed him the gospel by sacrificing myself.

Did you think that? Probably not. I didn't. Your love and my love as beautiful as they can be has limits. It has limits. I remember where I was when I read Romans chapter 5 verse 8 to show me that God has no limits.

For God demonstrates his love his greater love boundless love limitless love not regarding any persons of their status love. He loves those who hate him.

God demonstrates his love in that while we were sinners Christ's enemies Christ died for us. That is a boundless love that is undefined and unattainable in any other system.

That is the greatest possible being expressing the greatest possible ethic in the greatest possible way. If God is great he is the God of ultimate self sacrifice because that is the expression of ultimate love.

[48 : 07] When I read those words I recognized something that no matter what I would have to face including the loss of my identity how could I say no to that?

How do you say no? To the reality of that whatever I would lose was nothing compared to what he paid and the one I would gain and that's when God made me a son from a stone.

But you know it's easy to say these things now looking back it took nine years. Nine years. And the reason is this friends we got to get this into our minds too whether it's Muslims Hindus Jews nominal Christians or atheists everyone has a price to pay in coming to faith.

It's very difficult to change your world view because an opinion you hold with your open hand but a conviction you hold with a fist not in a defiant way but it's who you are and so you protect it.

How hard it is to spiritually pry those fingers open because you have to protect it and the loss you can face tremendous loss you can face it took me nine years not because the answers were hard to find it took me nine years because the answers were hard to accept.

[49 : 21] And that's the reality I think of anybody who is faced with a contrary world view. But it all comes together in this. Two quotes and then I'm done. We can open up for questions.

A Muslim is seeking how to worship a God who is truly great Allahu Akbar the God who is the greatest possible being. I think the gospel answers it through the preservation of scripture through the trinity through the incarnation and the atonement.

I hope I demonstrated that today but we can talk about it more if we need to. There was a quote by a famous Muslim that the Shiite Muslims revere as one of the wisest men outside of Muhammad.

His name is the Imam Ali. He wrote a bunch of sermons down and it's collected in a collection called Nahshu Balagha. He made a statement an interesting statement.

He said among the believers there are three. There are those who worship God to attain his heaven. That is the worship of the merchant. There are those who worship God to avoid his hell.

[50 : 20] That is the worship of the slave. But there are those who worship God out of gratitude. That is the worship of free and noble men. He's absolutely right.

Because if you believe that God will reward you and you only get to heaven because of your good deeds or you avoid hell because of your good deeds, you're either a merchant or you're a slave. And Islam teaches you have to please God with enough good deeds.

But if you can worship a God who has saved you in spite of yourself, you are no longer worshiping to avoid his hell. You've already avoided it. Or to get his heaven, you've already got it. You worship because you're free and noble.

And that is what we can offer our Muslim friends. Free and noble worship of God. They often think that God is weak in Christianity because he dies at the hands of the sinners he creates.

Let me quote this from James Stewart and then we'll be done. Listen to this quote. It's terribly important. In his book The Strong Name, it is a glorious phrase of the New Testament that he led captivity captive.

[51 : 27] The very triumph of his foes it means he used for their defeat. He compelled their dark achievements to serve his ends, not theirs. They nailed him to the tree not knowing that by that very act they were bringing the world to his feet.

They flung him outside the gates to die not knowing that in that very moment they were opening up the gates to the entire universe so that the king of glory come in. They thought to root out his doctrines not understanding that they were implanting imperishably in the hearts of men the very name they intended to destroy.

They thought they had God defeated, helpless, pinned, and defeated against the wall. They did not know that it was God who had sought them out and had searched them out. God did not conquer despite the dark mystery of evil.

God conquered through it. Isn't that amazing? The greatest possible being wouldn't run from these things. And in Islam Jesus is not on that cross it's a substitute.

God substitutes somebody else for Jesus on the cross when the gospel message is that Jesus has substituted on the cross for you. Not because God takes and rescues someone from trouble but God himself experiences the trouble not so that he can be defeated but so that sin can be defeated.

[52 : 40] The God who is great takes crosses makes them into thrones takes thorns makes them into crowns and takes sinners and makes them into saints. The God of transformation.

That's the God who is great. That's the God who when I think of God his son not sparing sent him to die I scarce can take it in that on that cross my burden gladly bearing he bled and died and take away my sin and when he shall come with shout of acclamation with joy shall fill my heart and there I shall proclaim my God how great thou art.

That's the God who is great. Thank you guys for giving me a hearing thank you guys for listening we'll take questions now if you have any. Wes you've got a microphone there we'll be around with some microphones so everybody can hear the questions.

The first question is always the hardest one so second question there's one right there there are people who follow Islam who are very peaceful there are people who are part of ISIS and others that try to kill others and enter paradise that way are some of them misguided what is the true picture of Islam is it because it's a book that can be read so many different ways and interpreted so many ways how do we end up with this mess?

Well that's a good question in fact the way you you phrase it at the end there is truly important because again going back to God's greatness if God is a lot of things are ambiguous because we language is limited language itself is just a limited medium it's a beautiful medium but it's essentially limited because there's going to be ambiguity and room for interpretation so we have denominations in Christianity now we don't have denominations that teach the inherent bloodshed of non-believers but we do have denominations that are within it so there's always going to be an inherent ambiguity the question arises then this if God is truly great would he make it so ambiguous about how to treat other people that some people can legitimately interpret the Quran to condone violence and others can say it doesn't seem like an interesting question if it's so clear why is it so not clear so many people now the question so the answer is this people often ask me is Islam a religion of peace or is it a religion of violence I always ask to respond in a very lawyerly way I was a trial lawyer for 15 years I know how to do that it depends on what you mean by religion and what you mean by peace let me go with the first one though what do you mean by religion if you mean the way most Muslims act is it peaceful the answer is yes if you mean by religion the way most people express their faith belief or their faith system and if you mean that's religion then yes it's peaceful if you mean what are the core teachings of the document the foundational documents and the life of the founder that's more complicated because the Quran does teach very peaceful things but it also teaches very not peaceful things so for example the Quran says in certain places that among those who will attain heaven are the Jews and Christians because there are priests and monks and pious ones among them it teaches that and that Christians are closest to you oh Muslims in belief because they believe in one God and they recognize

[56 : 07] Jesus as a prophet it says that but later on it actually says some things about Christians and Jews that aren't so flattering in chapter 9 of the Quran it says basically that you are to fight them wherever you find them even among the people of the book or the Christians and Jews until they basically feel themselves subdued or pay a protection tax because the Jews say that Ezra is the son of God and the Christians say that Christ is the son of God and these are blasphemous instead of in fact it says God's curse beyond them so that's what it says now some have interpreted that saying that was a context back then that was limited to a historical thing those aren't the words don't suggest that it's historically specific contrary to what the Bible does where for instance Joshua is commanded to kill the Canaanites someone could say well Christianity is equally violent because it's got this command to wipe out all the Canaanites all women women, children insects, everything but there's a whole response to that where he's not actually commanding to kill everybody left, right, and center it's a bit of a context to that but it's also specific just them because of their sin for what they've done in sacrificing their children to Molech and for picking off the weak and the sick of the Israelites their sin culminated for 400 years

God sends judgment it's over whereas the Quran it looks like it's normative it continues on and it's up to I think it's up to Muslims to actually justify how that's not the case how that's not the case so here's the thing I don't have to worry about that anymore as a Muslim it used to bother me I don't have to worry about it anymore I was at a dialogue at McGill University in Montreal and we were doing a thing with me and a Muslim imam we're in front of hundreds and hundreds of students and the question was who is God we presented our cases well we had tons of people asking Q&A; at the end lined up to the door and one guy walked up and said can you answer this question I'd like

both of you to answer this question can you emulate the actions of the founder of your faith consistently and be peaceful that's a difficult one now he said can you answer from both perspectives so Christian answer as a Muslim and a Muslim answer as a Christian and a Muslim see what happens it was sort of an unfair challenge but I had because I was a former and this guy wasn't a former Muslim or a former Christian he was just a Muslim his whole life so it was a little unfair for him but here's what I said eventually this is not my problem anymore because I used to

I'll let him defend his own religious system I'm not going to attack his nor am I going to defend his I'll let him take care of that but here's the deal I follow Jesus who shed no one's blood but his own for your and my sake there was an audible sound in the room and there were Muslims who talked to me afterwards who said that's the most beautiful thing not that I had said something beautiful but the idea of it itself was beautiful all in and of itself so there are some very troubling things that the Quran says and some troubling things about the history of Muhammad's life and other things as well but there are some other things that are quite good and so the question is is that how do we interpret this enigmatic person this enigmatic religion and I'm not interested in making more radicals but at the same time I am interested in pointing people to the prince of peace so the question always becomes are we asking this question for political reasons do we want to justify certain actions whether it's executive orders or whatever it might be to protect our citizenry and I'm not going to get into that debate so if you ask you're not going to get a debate from me but are we doing it to protect our citizenry do we want to know is it inherently peaceful or violent because we want to know if we should lock our doors at night when the Muslims move into the neighborhood the answer essentially is and let me put this to rest we can't live in a naive world where people aren't religiously motivated to kill you or irreligiously motivated to kill you there's all this evidence now that the Quebec shooter killed all those Muslims that horrible atrocity that evil action no matter what his belief systems are it was evil

I condemn it in no uncertain terms whether he was religious or not he liked Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens does that influence his thinking? I don't know I have no idea but he also was a fan of Trump and the nationalist in France I don't know what goes on in the minds of people like this but my point is this anybody can do this to each other and we do it all the time go to some of the places in Detroit where I'm from you won't want to walk outside by yourself and nothing to do with religion but can we be naive?

no there are people who use religion as excuses or as justification to kill us but the problem is it's a great question but I worry sometimes I'm not saying you're doing this but the motivation sometimes behind it is shouldn't I be afraid of my Muslim neighbor or they're moving into our country and let me just say this the answer is no not because it doesn't decrease the safety in some ways it might but you're not called to be safe you are called to be faithful and they're coming to this country from various places whether it's the seven nations we're talking about or other places the good news is they're coming to this country for opportunities make a friend who's a Muslim even if he never asks you one question about Jesus just be his friend be her friend just for the sake of them knowing someone who's got a Christ-like hospitality it's a great question but it's not as easy an answer as we'd like it to be but I also fear that it stifles evangelism if anything it should be the impetus for it yes please and then

[61 : 51] I see over here is there another question over here or no let's go opposite like this if we can anybody no this crowd is very silent we've had plenty of evidence that the leadership of Islam has always tried to suppress education for women and a lot of people is it because they don't want the people the Muslims to come to the same conclusions that you have that's a great question um uh I you know when I was a lawyer there was always a question you'd always get an objection to from the other side if I asked a witness how the other guy felt objection speculation how would you know how someone else felt or what their motivations were there's evidence of the act we can infer I can only infer what's going on here um one of the reasons why there's a suppression of education of women for example in certain Muslim countries and Malala um uh the woman who won the young girl who won the Nobel Peace Prize she's a Muslim she's all in favor of education for Muslims so there's a dichotomy let's see a variety within Islam but the you talk about the authorities why are they suppressing this

I think part of that is because there is a history a theological history but also a cultural history of the suppression of women from getting educations because then they'll suddenly want to get out of the

roles traditional roles that they've been placed in um before we look too uh far and start sticking our fingers in their eyes remember that suffrage the right to vote for women in Canada happened in 1915 so let's not get too proud of ourselves um but we also need to realize that there is a real issue that that's in the Muslim world um uh I do think information not misinformation or disinformation but information is um uh the sword in the in the fight for truth lots of it is spread throughout the internet lots of disinformation mostly disinformation and fake news this whole phenomenon of fake news and whatever it is but information is a king here because it does in fact educate people about the religious system so a lot of folks don't know certain things but then they're suddenly educated about those certain things and bam their their their their their awareness of whether

Islam's oppressive or not suddenly comes into the fore and it does in fact cause people to sort of disobey and come out of the ranks it does happen happens by the way in non-Muslim countries uh where women are suppressed from knowing certain things because they're considered stay here and don't do this kind of thing but yeah I think information is going to be a key issue um in the formation of Islam and its future especially among women um the Quran does say some things about women's roles and it's not flattering for the most part um uh but uh we do have moderate voices that are beginning to speak up I'll tell you this all the women that I'm aware of other than you know sort of first generation immigrants from the old country they're all educated now there are certain countries that's not true Afghanistan's a good good example when the Taliban took over there was no education for women that was not the case before the Taliban women had education in Afghanistan in Iran they had education as well it was when sort of extremist regimes took over that became a problem disinformation or no information is always important for totalitarian regimes! Always! So the key is to get them more information that's one of the keys is more information but with the right spirit it's a good question um but again a bit of speculation in one sense because I have to infer their motivations but I do think that more information is important the good news is that movement is starting where women are starting to get by the way it's not just women there's tons of people who don't know certain you're not allowed to question in those cultures who know why whether it's by the way far eastern cultures same thing that are not even Muslim it's a shame and honor situation see you and I live in a truth and falsehood paradigm where we what is true what is false we can make up our minds we live in an individualistic culture in the west very individualistic a friend of mine described it this way if you were to take a square and draw a dot in the middle of a square in the west the square is you and the dot is religious identity it's a very small part of who you are you are the captain of your own ship but in the east it's exactly the opposite the square is religious identity and cultural loyalty and the dot is you you are not allowed very much individualism that's good in some ways and bad in some ways so you can't ever question authority you don't question your parents you don't question the imams you don't question the gurus you don't question them you just fall in line and that is part of the cultural reason why information is suppressed because if you get too much of it you might start questioning the authorities and that leads to shame not honor questions over here kind of a two part question how did your family respond to your conversion and if it was negative or discouraging how did you navigate the days and weeks and months and years through that yeah great question you know what's always interesting about that question is that whenever

I'm in a crowd it's always asked usually first or second question and I always forget to give the disclaimer I'm not going to give detail it's very personal I hope you can appreciate that but what's also interesting is women always ask it not a pejorative thing it's just descriptive I think women also are always interested in the what was the consequence to your parents how did they feel how did you feel what was the relational dynamic which is I think an insightful thing this is honestly this is meant to be an absolute compliment oftentimes men miss that aspect of it what were the facts why did you decide as opposed to what was the cost of decision because you take the facts women want to know the facts but they also want to know what was the price because it's a fully orbed view of human interaction we can learn a lot from that that's another aside however it wasn't positive it wasn't like you threw me a party they didn't say great you're leaving the worldview that we raised you in yeah absolutely please with all dispatch please do it here's a cake they didn't do that it was pretty awful but God is good my family is strong we always were close we're close again the chief way to navigate that

[68 : 38] I think is as tempting as it can be to respond to emotional outbursts is to respond with an emotional outburst and you have to seriously pray hard to not do that because over the long haul that'll be a tremendous witness it honors my parents it honors my elders it helps to diminish the

sense of shame because I'm not being defiant I'm just holding on to what's true I'm not rebelling I just believe this is true and I want to show them that so if I respond emotionally then maybe my conversion was an emotional not intellectual thing but if I respond with a cool hand and a cool head then maybe they'll see he's taking this seriously and it's something we need to consider seriously ourselves I will tell you this none of them are Christians but we are close and we are together and we love each other dearly and there's that between us but it is a good relationship I can't say that's true of most Muslims I know a lot of them

I know don't have that in fact one guy I know was leaving the country from where she was born I'll leave it unnamed and his mother urged him to leave because his brothers were going to kill him because he converted to Christianity and as she it's so so paradoxical she hugged him to say goodbye and then as he left she spit in his face and he never saw her again that's a pretty tough one I could read for you and I won't because I'll get choked up if I do it if you ever want to do this Voice of the Martyrs I saw you guys' magazines out in the hall it tells a story of a girl named Fatima Al-Modayri who was a 26 year old Saudi girl who converted to Christ her brother found out and then killed her but before he killed her she penned a poem and published it on the internet called We for the sake of Christ all things bear I believe that it does in fact rhyme in Arabic it does not rhyme in English so when I switch it to rhyme it is one of the most beautiful things I've ever read in my life if you ever have a chance to read it understand what it means for someone to actually bear the price of what it means to be a Christ follower in a hostile environment my story is nothing compared to that story

I got yelled at she lost her life and that's the difference great question though thank you another question oh I'm going to drop this yes sir yes we talked about you know how most of our Muslim brothers you know are peaceful but how do we segregate that from members of ISIS you know they seem to be promoting the same Quran or Sharia law yeah and I was just wondering how we get a divide there well I would I would say this there's not a uniform most Muslims are like most people who call themselves Christians they don't know what their Bible says and they don't know what the Quran says most of them are just nominal at best honestly that's the case I remember walking into a house of a guy who had invited me and a friend to talk about the resurrection of Jesus whether it happened or not because Muslims deny it and I walked in and it quickly became apparent to me that he's not really interested in that question he's an agnostic he wanted to know how could there be a God if there's so much of suffering and evil in the world now that's an interesting thing for a Muslim to say it's still a question everybody has but he was basically saying why should I believe in God at all so because he calls himself a Muslim he's actually devoted to Islam and one could argue that that's the same thing for ISIS because they call themselves

Muslims they're terrorist acts don't actually speak for Islam and a lot of Muslims say that whether that's true or not is another issue altogether but your question is how do we separate the two well often times it's not a matter of dichotomy peace loving Muslims who follow the Quran and ISIS who are violent and follow the Quran there's a stratus what's the word a spectrum between the two there's peace loving Muslims who follow the Quran or who try their best to follow the Quran there's the ISIS guys who follow the Quran and in between there's people who kind of follow it don't follow it wish they followed it suddenly follow it and now are radicalized as well it's a huge spectrum there so the division is actually harder than what you're suggesting in one sense but the reality is most Muslims are not interested in violence they're just interested in self-preservation like most human beings are and you can basically discern that I think from trying to understand who they are going back to what Paul said when Paul said to make the best use of the time and know how you ought to answer each person is that if you have friends with Muslims friends who are Muslims they'll have political views and you might not share those political views they'll have views on the Middle East they'll have views on Israel and Palestine they'll have views on these things it doesn't mean they're radicals it just means they have political views at some point when you get to know them who they are is revealed to you at some point now are there people who can mask it yeah of course there are that's personally now the question becomes nationally how do we weed them out how do we figure this out and the answer to that is I think through intelligence

I don't mean like being smart I mean like actual intelligence agencies and in some way I don't really know pretend to know how to do good law enforcement because I'm not a law enforcement guy I don't know that what I do know is this and this sounds incredibly trite and naive I realize that but the majority of Muslims by the way if you want to get a good look-see at the makeup of most Muslims

there's a video called Islam by the numbers by Muslims who are moderate Muslims who are talking about the problem of radicalism that Muslims need to fix it's called the Clarion Project C-L-A-R-I-O-N Clarion Project they have some great videos on these issues as well it's made up of Muslims Christians and agnostics they go through these issues I fundamentally think that when you take the vast majority of Muslims who are peace loving and you have those who are politically sympathetic a smaller subset who are politically sympathetic with ISIS or terrorist groups in order to prevent them from becoming radicalized

[74 : 47] I think you have to have a penetration honestly this sounds trite but a penetration of the gospel because it's hard to identify when radicalization actually happens it's hard to identify that and that's a human thing again take this Quebec shooter I don't know much about this guy no one really knows much about this guy but he was certainly not a Muslim and from all indications he was moderately conservative right wing not sort of alt right but he was moderately right wing somewhere along the lines became very much not that became like way on the other end when?

I don't know but it happened if there's an infusion of the gospel into that kid's life there's an infusion of the gospel into our lives when we act like it I think things change that sounds like a very oh be Christians and everyone will like us they won't in terms of your beliefs but they might actually like you particularly because of the way you actually act in love 1 Peter 3 15 says set apart Christ as Lord and always be prepared to provide a reason or a defense for the hope you have within you to anyone who asks but do it with gentleness and respect so that's the thing that I always want to know is this do we live a life so hopeful that people are like I gotta ask that guy why is he so hopeful what's interesting is that Peter actually said that in the context of persecution live a life so hopeful though you're persecuted that people will say what's with you I think that there are Muslims in the world who see the world the way it is and are reeling in despair but if they see you as hopeful maybe that's a way to affect them before they become radicalized how you identify those who are radicalized

I don't know I don't know but unfortunately they make themselves known eventually but that's for the intelligence communities to actually cipher out again don't be safe be faithful don't be silly either don't walk into the middle of the street in Riyadh and start saying Jesus is Lord in front of everybody who knows what's going to happen to you then but do in fact be faithful and don't be worried about your Muslim neighbors they probably aren't out to get you so there you go questions over here I don't know we have a little more time my question is a little more fundamental Franklin Graham posted today that the God of Islam is not the God of the Bible and so I'm I'm trying to reference how someone like yourself do you change gods because you change the book right good question in fact you know it's funny that you put it that way because when I was when I became a Christian I didn't say I suddenly believe in God now now I believe in God I was kind of an atheist or a pagan before I didn't think that here's how I describe this and bear with me for a moment because I think that we often want to dichotomize things it's either this or that it's obviously one of these two things and sometimes there's an either or but there's a way to get there a shade in the middle here's what I mean by that do Muslims and Christians worship the same God I think the answer to that is no when you talk with a Muslim about God are you talking about the same being the answer is yes and that sounds like a contradiction when I just said but bear with me for a moment when you're speaking to an atheist for example about whether or not God exists who are you talking about does the one God who is omnipotent omnipresent and all knowing omniscient actually exist you're talking about that the subtleties of what he's like that's a different story but you're referring to the one supreme being when you're talking to a

Muslim about what God is like or who is God or is there a God or is he the God as he described in the Bible or as described in the Quran you're referring to the same being in your talk with that person there's only one God to talk about you're not talking about is Zeus God or is Yahweh God you're not doing that with clear distinctions you're talking about whether or not what is God like because here's why Muslims believe because the Quran teaches and the Hadith which are the literature of Muhammad the sayings and traditions of Muhammad teach that Allah which just means the God that's all it means every Arabic Bible you'll ever read if you knew how to read Arabic it would say Allah when it refers to God it just means the God the Quran says and the Hadith say that Allah is the God of Abraham Isaac Jacob and Ishmael it includes Ishmael for reasons that aren't important for our purposes right now but it refers to that that Adam was the first man

[79 : 45] Eve was the first woman Noah was a prophet of God and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph it's like the only story that has a beginning middle and end in the Quran it's the story of Joseph which is very similar not 100% similar Solomon is mentioned David is mentioned Zechariah is mentioned Ezra is mentioned John the Baptist is mentioned Jesus is mentioned throughout the Quran and so they'd say as messengers of God and therefore they believe that because that all is the similar line of prophecy ending in Muhammad it's the same God so a Muslim would tell you it's the same God you just got him wrong you don't understand him you got him wrong you attribute partners to God when you shouldn't be doing that and that Jesus is God and you shouldn't be doing that the analogy I would say is this if you and I were having a discussion about our friend let's say our friend's name was Alexander okay if there's an Alexander room I'm terribly sorry I had to insult you in a minute but you said that Alexander is a lying dirty cheat who cheats on his wife left right and center and is a terrible business person

I happen to think Alexander is absolutely honest as the day is long and he is faithful to his wife and does right by everybody we're talking about the same person we both recognize that this is a guy named Alex that we both know at least we think we know but we believe in the existence of the same human being named Alex what we believe about Alex is very different one of us is right and one of us is wrong and it matters it very much matters who's right and who's wrong that's in the discussion phase of the discussion with Muslims now do we worship the same God the answer I think there is a little bit difficult because it's actually no here's why a Muslim worships God because God is one in his nature and one in his person because God does not condescend to be with humanity and would never sacrifice himself on a cross as I've already described because God has a his character is what is revealed in the Quran a Christian worships him for all the opposite reasons because he's triune because he's self-sacrificial because he's incarnate that's why Christians worship him so if those are the characteristics of God and they're very different then how exactly could it be that the objects of our worship are the same see what I'm getting at talking about God is one thing worshiping is different right and this is what I'm saying is that when we come to a discussion with our see I'm always curious as to why people ask this question I mean it's a valid question but I'm always curious I'm an evangelist at heart so I'm an apologist which means I defend the Christian faith by the way apologetics you know that's what it means a defense of the Christian faith have you ever heard the word apologetics before if you haven't apologetics just means from the Greek word apologia defense but often times I know plenty of apologists who are just want to beat you over the head with how much they know in which case apologetics becomes the art of making someone sorry they asked but I often wonder why people want to know this distinction because if

I'm sitting across the table from a Muslim and I start talking about your God this and your God that and your God this they immediately get insulted because they think what do you think I'm a pagan like I worship multiple gods or I believe in Zeus or Artemis or something like this what is this why are you saying this I am gracious enough to extend the fact that I believe in the same God you do you're just mistaken about who he is I offer that grace to you but you're the one who's building the wall you see the problem in the conversation now if you talk about different gods you've built a wall that doesn't need to be there it does not help evangelistically at all so because they're going to get insulted by this and I understand why but if we talk about we both believe that there is one being that that being is incomparably great now the question we have between the two of us is what is he really like because we worship for very different reasons that goes back to the Imam Ali quote if you want to worship him in a free and noble way then you would worship the God who extends grace by doing something about sin not just talking about it and that's a very different characteristic so that's what I would say to you is that if we're talking about are they the same God I know what our zeal is to make sure that we're not syncretizing we're not compromising the gospel we're not compromising the gospel if we're talking to our Muslim friends about what is God like and we give them the gospel we harp on the differences there are big deep differences and never let it tell you there aren't big differences there are but what is God like not are they different gods altogether that's the real question that's the real I would just like to make a comment I was very pleased to hear you endorse the clarion project because I followed it regularly for a long time and I find it's very informative but I think it's also important for people and they have an admirable and very diverse board of directors with people from all kinds of spectrum including

[85 : 07] Muslims who really want to get away from this idea of Islamism people try to eliminate his speaking at places sometimes because I think they may be listed as a hate group by certain organizations that's interesting is that one of the speakers who's a Muslim was called Islamophobe one of the Muslim speakers was called an Islamophobe why would you call somebody who I don't understand that exactly they call them Islamophobes because they're speaking out against the radical form of Islam even not Muslims extremely informative I don't agree with everything they say but I don't have to I can notice what they say and how they say it's very informative so like I said if you want to learn a little more go to clarionproject.org I believe it is also I would also recommend something to if you want to understand the current climate with ISIS and what ISIS really wants

ISIS unlike most Islamic terror groups is not a political group it's an apocalyptic group they're not interested in changing American foreign policy they're interested in the end of the world great article not a short one very good article though by a guy named Graham Wood G-R-A-E-M-E in the Atlantic was called What ISIS Really Wants if you want to understand what they believe and why they act the way they act then go to that title and it will come up the whole article oh yeah great stuff is that it or we got one more time for one more man if we do this in one minute we'll have you exactly on time well it's not a question it's a comment too it was very interesting to me and kind of opened my eyes a couple years ago I but the question from the

Muslim young lady just went wow she said basically she said how come you have so many different bibles she said we have one Quran and she basically was making the argument that I can't believe in your God because you don't really believe in your God because you have so many different bibles it was just an interesting conversation that made me realize that that was a stumbling block to have NIV ESV did you know right here's the interesting thing there's this thing called the American Muslim Academy or the informal American Muslim Academy what happens is that people boys and girls are sat down by their parents and their uncles and their grandparents and are told why you shouldn't be a Christian the Bible is not trustworthy they have every version you can possibly have you name it there's a different V or B that comes out every five seconds according to Muslims what they don't tell you is that there is not just one

Quran this is simply not true it's factually false when you look at the Islamic sources this is not Christians saying this is Muslims saying this when you look at the Islamic sources through the Hadith literature through the traditions!

the Quran was unsophisticated there weren't markers what biocritical little dots and dashes that tell you how to pronounce certain words very rudimentary then but language was developed orally quite well and people memorized the Quran and most of those who memorized the Quran were killed during that so they found themselves losing the memorizers of the Quran so those who had written it down it began to be copied in mass and it was sent out throughout the empire the problem was there were different versions of it and it was called ahruf or different readings of the Quran because there's no vowels and no diacritical marks you could actually read the Quran in different ways and there are multiple statements even during Muhammad's lifetime where there was different readings something like 70 or 80 of them different readings of the Quran so a guy named

[89 : 35] Usman who was the leader of the Muslims the Khalifa the Caliph commissioned a guy named Zayd ibn Tabit to go and find all the different versions of the Quran compare them to the one that Usman thought was the right one and other friends of Muhammad didn't think was the right one and he burned all the variants and standardized it this happened again decades later where it happened again it was standardized but the problem was all the readings were still out there there were like seven or eight different readings that remained and eventually they got codified into Quran as well and got sent out to this day there is what's called the Kyireen or the Warsh text is different than the Kyireen edition it's used by a very small number of Muslims in Africa but it does in fact exist the Kyireen or the Cairo edition was based on what scholars said this is the standard edition do you know when it version this is an unfortunate word we keep using the word version

I'm not sure why we do that in a day and age when version used to mean something else it used to mean translation and there are gosh multiple translations of the Quran there is the Arbery translation there is the Pikhthal translation there is the Yusuf Ali translation there is the Asid translation there is the Shakir translation I in other languages there is dozens of versions of the Quran if by version you mean translation so I don't want to hear that this is an ignorant statement the reason why it's ignorant though is because we live in a day and age when you have Apple OS X 10 or iOS 9 and then version 9.1 comes out which adds to it so it makes it a different thing

altogether or iOS 10 is not the same as iOS 7 it's a different version which means it's got more information or better stuff the versions of the

Bible have zero to do with adding information as opposed to actually translating it more accurately based on the linguistic prowess of the translators so here's an example of something King James Bible this is the King James only church am I going to get in trouble if I say this okay I get hot in a minute the King James Bible is based on it was a good translation based on the manuscripts available in the 15th century okay in hundreds of years ago it was based on that the King James into English was based on that we now have uncovered more manuscripts that are even earlier than what they had then we're discovering them all the time and we can see the quality of the families of the translations when you compare them to everything else you begin to see there's a family of text that is actually even better than we had before we're getting closer and closer to understanding the original and best translations based on that so we have the King James version then you have a new King James version which isn't like we updated and changed things we just understand the text better than we used to then you have the NIV NASB ESV NRSV these are all translations based on what we see in the text there's one called the NET the new English translation best name for a Bible ever by the way I'm just saying it's the best name new English translation because what it does is it says we're looking at the text the best manuscripts and we're figuring out what's the best translation it has I think something like 60,000 footnotes just to go through and say the reason we picked this word is because of this and this word because of this if you want to do a word study of the Bible use the NET ESV is great I use the ESV for preaching and for study NASB and RSV as well but because I want to draw from the scholarship of the best translations if you have a Quran worth its salt the Yusuf Ali Quran is two volumes this thick the

Quran in Arabic it would be that big that big the translation makes it thicker but the commentary he has something like 4,000 footnotes in this thing maybe even more than that because he's got to explain what it means over and over again why did I pick this English word well that's the same thing so when I hear a conversation like that it frustrates me and part of the reason is because I used to say the same things you got so many versions and isms and schisms and your own views why should I believe it then I came to realize version is an unfortunate word given what it means now if you use the word translation it's different it's in the same text just translated by different scholars to reflect what they think is the real translation and the Quran has the exact same thing so that's what I think that's it right thank you so much for giving me some time here and for all the graciousness you've extended me I think obviously we could have gone on and on with the questioning and

[95 : 01] I know you still have a lot of questions and sorry we have to cut it off at some point I think we may even have some parents in here need to go get their kids from I don't know but this has been very good and good for me and I know it has been for you very informative you know I learned some things tonight I don't know about you I think you did and so a real blessing and perhaps you know in the next week or so who knows you may come in contact with someone of the Muslim faith and you may have an opportunity to share with them the truth of the gospel and you got a little ammunition here tonight hopefully you did let's stand together and have a word of prayer as we close Thank you.