

# **Muslims and Christians at Prayer**

## **Resources taken from Vivienne Stacey course – Women in Islam -**

Devout Muslims and Christians are people of prayer and people of faith. Therefore the challenge for the Christians is to be seen as people of prayer and to pray with and for Muslims whenever appropriate.

Ambition or Goal for a Missionary amongst Muslims:  
***Whenever you hear the call to prayer, pray for Muslims.***

### **I. Introduction:**

Piety and devotion are part of everyday Muslim life. One is always aware of the daily ritual. The dawn call to prayer before the noise of the city has properly started will linger as a memory with anyone who has lived in a Muslim area. It is chanted in Arabic by the muezzin (the one who gives the *azzan* or call to prayer). The text varies a little according to the rite of school of Islamic law prevalent in the area. Here is one translation of the call to prayer:

*God is most great (Allahu Akbar), (four times = 20 times a day)*  
*I testify there is no god but God (twice)*  
*I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God (twice)*  
*Come to prayer (twice)*  
*Come to success (twice)*  
*God is most great (once)*  
*There is no god but God (once)*  
*Prayer is better than sleep (at dawn only)*

As a Christian I can never pray this prayer together with my Muslim friends, because I can not give Muhammad the honour of prophet hood. The prophet of Islam is not my prophet...

### **II. Ritual Prayer of Salat**

*Salat* is the second of the five pillars of Islam. From puberty on, after the prescribed ablutions, all Muslims are required to offer the five daily prayers. Ritual prayers can be said in private or in a mosque or special prayer area. Usually women say their prayers at home. (Women shall not show off and disturb men at their prayers!) If we have Muslim guests we should make provision for them to pray if they wish. We can also indicate that we too will spend the same time praying. Wait till they have finished their prayers...

The first surah is recited as part of their ritual prayer all over the world.

*Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds,  
The Beneficent, the Merciful.  
Owner of the Day of Judgment,  
The (alone) we worship: Thee (alone) we ask for help.  
Show us the straight path,  
The path of those whom Thou hast favored:  
Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger  
Nor of those who go astray.*

Muslims ask: How do you pray? As Christians we can share how and when we use the Lord's prayer and how it is similar and dissimilar from this opening sura of the Qur'an. We can talk about our personal communion with God in prayer... Muslims sometimes want to know our Christian Creed, which is quite long... You can use John 17, 3 as a shortened creed: "This is life eternal, to know You ..."

Pilgrims recite the following invocation in Arabic thousand of times during the first days of the pilgrimage and before going to Mount Arafat. (It might be useful to know what they pray on the pilgrimage...)

*You call us, we are here, O God! We are here!  
We are here, there is none beside you.  
Praise and good deeds belong to you, and the empire!  
There is none but you!*

Christians in a Muslim dominated area you should be seen as a people of prayer. Pray with open windows, pray in the Garden... pray where people can sometimes see you. Tell them when you pray, when you have your family devotions.

### **III. Personal, informal prayer, or Du'a**

It is important to distinguish between ritual prayer or *salat*, and *du'a* or informal personal prayer. Du'a consists of invocations, requests, intercessions, memorized and extempore prayer. The literal meaning of du'a is a ***cry or call***. Many of these prayers are written down in prayer manuals and books of devotions. Individuals will also supplement these with their own personal prayers in their own words and language. One of my Muslim friends, telling me of her family problems said: "If it were not for prayer I do not know how I could have coped."

Most Muslims will be grateful, if we tell them we are praying for them and will also nearly always welcome an offer for us to pray for them in their presence esp. in times of illness, family crisis, help in examinations.

### **IV. Guidelines for praying with Muslim women**

9 times out of 10 it is appropriate to pray with Muslim women.

1. Praise God greatly at the beginning of the prayer (God is Creator, Provider, Redeemer, but they do not call Him Father!) Muslims are high on praising God. Pray in the Name of Jesus – the Messiah.
2. Name the person for whom you are praying to God (sick child, mother)
3. Make the request, perhaps also quoting Scripture (particularly a prophet – Isaiah, Jesus) although avoid using Scripture as an evangelistic tool in prayer.
4. Conclude the prayer in the name of Jesus, the Messiah, or Jesus the Son of Mary.
5. Choose your vocabulary carefully throughout the prayer – don't use religious jargons, which puts them off.  
It's daring for Muslims to call God Father...

## **V. Sample prayers for women**

Muslim women are naturally very nervous of the dangers of childbirth, but they are also fearful because of the superstitions and practices, which are part of their culture. Often these mothers ask their Christian midwives to pray for them. That is a great chance to show our trust and relationship in times of anxiety and need.

Make a point to visit a mother with a new baby and use the opportunity to teach along the following lines during several visits to the home:

*“You are now the mother of a new baby. God has brought him or her safely into this world and has kept you safe too. Let us thank God for his love and Goodness to you and for bringing this new life into your family. Jesus the Messiah, the eternal Lord and Saviour of this world, was born as a baby just like your baby. His mother Mary experienced the pain of labour as you have, and rejoiced in the birth of her baby as you have. Jesus, sons of Mary came into this world to save us from sin and to make us righteous before God. God has given physical life to you and your baby by the process for natural birth. He also wants to give spiritual life. This is his gift which comes through faith in Jesus the Messiah.”*

Here is suggested prayer for use at the birth of a child:

*“O Creator God, we thank you that through your goodness this child has been safely born and that the mother has been freed from suffering. Now we beseech you that after you have given them physical life, they might also obtain eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah.”*

## **VI. Personal Example**

My friend Ruhila remarked: “When you pray, I feel the nearness of God”!

Prayer is not evangelism, but it is standing in the presence of God, which touches people.

I was able to give her a Bible.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Let us use this most wonderful privilege that Muslims will so often grant us to pray, Praying silently or publicly.

We recognize each other as people of prayer and devotion.

We are close in our desire to speak with God and to come before God.

Let us use the opportunity to pray with Muslim women.

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