



## CROSSWINDS CELEBRATES TEN YEARS OF SERVING

As we continue to look back at Ten Years of ministry, in this issue we celebrate our ongoing support of our veterans, active service members and their families. As we are now 17 years post 9-11 we tend to forget there are Americans still deployed.

In this issue we reflect on 9-11 and some of its impact then and now. As you will see in Remembering 9-11, Seventeen Years Later and a special article by Lt. Col. Don Malin, the war caused by the events of 9-11 and its effect on our warriors and their families are far from over.

As part of our Ten-Year Celebration, we are also including an article from a past issue. Considering the subject matter I thought you might enjoy an article we did about Understanding Islam.

**I am counting on you to join us by praying and supporting our efforts.** Thanks for being with us for the first ten years. Stick around and join us for the next ten, as well.

Blessings,

Bob Waldrep

### REMEMBERING 9-11 by Bob Waldrep



Where were you when the world stopped turnin'  
That September day?

Were you in the yard with your wife and children  
Or workin' on some stage in L.A.?

Did you stand there in shock at the sight of that black smoke  
Risn' against that blue sky?

Did you shout out in anger, in fear for your neighbor  
Or did you just sit down and cry?

These words were penned by country singer Alan Jackson shortly after the events of 9-11 in his song Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning).

I imagine everyone who observed the events of 9-11 seven-

teen years ago can remember exactly where they were when this horrible tragedy occurred. Today many are sharing their story or recalling the events of the day. I was in Tallahassee, Florida with my friend Craig Thomas speaking at a week-long church conference.

That morning the pastor of the Church took us to breakfast and afterwards we returned to our hotel room, turned on the television to the Today Show and watched as reports came in that a plane had flown into the World Trade Towers. We thought it a horrible accident until a second plane hit the Towers. If you saw it, you remember the feelings you had as you watched the terror unfold.

Though it was happening in New York it reached into all our homes – could there be another attack, could it be in our area – we all felt the same helpless and hopeless feeling. I am certain you, like me, also reached out to your love ones just to hear their voice. It would be a long time before we would again find it appropriate to feel okay.

The church I was at decided to go ahead and continue the program that night. Naturally, attendance was about half

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what it had been as people stayed home to watch the latest news. Those who were there had a distance about them that was quite natural in light of the events. Craig and I just wanted to get home as quick as possible and hold our loved ones as so many did those days.

In the days that followed I began to notice a “new” normalcy was developing – at least temporarily. For example, in addition to family seeming more important, there was an increase in Church attendance throughout the country. Interestingly, during times of tragedy and/or suffering God becomes more real and desirable. Gallup has been taking an annual poll since the 1950s asking people how important religion it to them. In the year following 9-11 it reached a decades’ high that has not again been reached.

Another thing I observed is that the gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States was greater than I could ever recall it being. There seemed to be a growing fear and hatred of Muslims, as if every one of them was a terrorist. Many Americans began to view the religion of Islam as a terrorist religion. This fear was so great that President Bush even declared Islam as a religion of peace to try and help bring calm.

However, I noticed this fear cut both ways. As I encountered Muslims in our city I could sense a natural fear on their part as they walked with a noticeably quicker gait and would look away as they encountered non-Muslims. Since the early eighties I had been engaged in dialogues with Muslims in our community and had developed a friendship with a number of them. I could not help but think how horrible it would be find yourself being blamed

for or associated with a terrorist attack simply because of your religion.

Of course, 9-11 changed so many other aspects of our culture as new security measures were developed and put in place. Many of the things we took for granted, such as ease of travel, would no longer exist. However, there is one change that will continue to have devastating effects on our culture for generations to come.

For those who lost friends and loved ones in the Trade Towers, at the Pentagon or on United Flight 93 these events are probably still like they happened yesterday. They continue to experience the devastation of that day. But, let’s be honest, for the rest of us, does this day cause as much reflection or mean as much to us as it once did? Probably not, which is natural – life does go on.

There is another group of Americans who, like those who lost loved ones on 9-11, still remember the cost of the events of that day. For, the events of 9-11 also led us to war – a war that continues to this day. We have soldiers deployed in the Middle East today, many of whom, have no recollection of what happened on this day seventeen years ago as they were just infants. Some of these are children of those who were first deployed to fight this war.

For seventeen years our warriors have been returning with the scars of

war – both physical and mental. An estimated 25-30% will have Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome or Moral Injury. Based on the statistical data, we know that twenty-two, plus per day will commit suicide. Their families will suffer the effects of this for decades and generations to come.

This is National Suicide Prevention month. If you are a veteran or service member who is contemplating suicide – or, if you know of someone who is considering it – please reach out for help. Find someone that you can talk to about what you are feeling. If you don’t know someone, reach out to the Veterans Crisis Center by doing the following:

Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, or  
Text 838255 from your cellular  
phone, Chat online at:  
[veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat](https://veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat)



To learn more about PTS and Moral Injury visit [warriorsonmission.org](http://warriorsonmission.org) and if you are a veteran, active service member or immediate family ask for a free copy of our films or stream them for free online.

Our warriors are a constant reminder of the vigilance we must have in order to be a free society. They are also a reminder of the high price we must often pay for that freedom. As Christians let’s be faithful to keep them in our prayers, honor their service, and when needed reach out to those who may need a helping hand along their journey.

**Cast a Net - Catch a Vet, Catch a Vet - Connect a Vet: CAST - CATCH - CONNECT by Lt. Col. Don Malin, USA, Ret.**

When we cast a net, we must use a net for the type of fish we are trying to catch. A big net to catch minnows will not work. A minnow net to catch cat fish will not work either. The net must fit the catch. In this case I want to cast a net to catch a vet. The reason is that there are 22 million veterans in our country. These are WW II vets to the present.

It has been pointed out that among all of these veterans 22 a day take their life. 22 a day! It is a shocking number. If you are not surprised, you should be!! So, I want to cast a net to catch the vet before he or she gets to that point where they take their life. How do we do that?

**THE VA SYSTEM**

First, we must realize there is already a net in our country. The VA system. There are 371,000 employees working within the three VA administrations.

There is the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). There is the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and finally the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

The VHA deal with the medical side. It is the hospitals and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) and the Vet Centers. You can go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and that will tell you about all three administrations and how to connect. Also, you can go to [www.explore.va.gov](http://www.explore.va.gov) to get an in-depth view of the benefits.

You will also find that these clinics are, for the most part, in suburban areas. Go to the big cities and you will find many resources from the VA. The problem is that the US is mostly rural. Not all veterans have access to the VA.

**ON BASE RESOURCES**

Second, active duty troops have access to resources on their bases. An

active duty soldier and family has access to medical help, mental health and spiritual help through the chapel program. As long as they are active duty they can find help if they need and/or want it.

My concern is for the Guard and reserve veterans and the active duty



Col. Malin Leading Prayer Service in Afghanistan

vets, whether they retired from service or left the military when their enlistment was up, who live in a rural country where the resources are not readily available. Even if you want help it could be a daunting experience to locate just what you need.

**THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Third, I want to encourage churches to help in engaging veterans and connecting them with resources that they need. The VA is a net for veterans yet many vets fall through the cracks. The VA is trying to deal with this but needs the help of the community and within the community the church. For, you see, the church is in every community.

I live in Mississippi where you have Hot Coffee Mississippi and Alligator Mississippi. These are small communities with little resources, if any, for veterans. Yet these communities have churches. What if these churches were knowledgeable about vet issues and how to connect them?

What if they could tell a vet was going through something and knew who

to call or how to provide help themselves? What if the veterans in those churches were encouraged to help other vets? We would be developing a better net for the vet.

Finally, I encourage all churches to consider developing an outreach to veterans. This would entail finding the veterans in your own congregation who would be knowledgeable about issues that veterans face. PTSD? Moral Injury? Traumatic Brain Injury? Are you familiar with these? How about homelessness of veterans or the stress that military families face?

A good starting point to learn about these are our films for PTSD (Invisible Scars) and Moral Injury (Honoring the Code). We can show the film and get the discussion going. The more churches that are knowledgeable about these issues and willing to reach out make a better net and maybe we could intervene and stop a vet from taking his or her life. Remember, cast a Net and Connect a vet.

In addition to our films, we are currently developing Centers of Hope, a program specifically designed to assist and enable the local church on how to help our veteran population. Through this program, veterans in the congregation will be trained how to reach and help other veterans.

If you want to know more about our films and/or Centers of Hope and how your church can get involved, contact us at [info@crosswindsfoundation.org](mailto:info@crosswindsfoundation.org) and one of our staff will get in touch with you. You can also visit our website [www.warriorsonmission.org](http://www.warriorsonmission.org) to learn more about what we are doing.

[Ed. Note: Col. Malin served two tours of duty as a Chaplain in the Middle East.]

[Ed. Note: The first online issue of *Crossing Currents* was published in February, 2009. Prior to that our newsletter was simply an e-letter that was emailed to our founding donors. Below is the article that appeared in that 2009 issue. We have definitely made progress since then

## UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

by Bob Waldrep



Prior to September 11, 2001, most Americans were well aware of terrorist acts having been committed by Muslims in other countries. Some had even drawn the inference that this meant Islam was a terrorist religion and/or that Muslims are terrorists. Muslims in the West were very conscious of this. I know this to be true from personal experience.

I had my first encounter with Islam during the 1970s when I befriended two Muslim brothers from Iran who were in the United States pursuing college degrees. Through them, I met others in the Muslim community who were also from Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. All of them seemed sympathetic to the cause of the people of Iran who were trying to overthrow their ruler, the Shah, and replace him with a religious leader.

It was a quite prevalent belief among Americans in that era that Iranian Muslims were at the center of numerous acts of terrorism being committed in various parts of the world. Politically, America was also favorable towards the Shah and opposed efforts being made to overthrow his regime and replace it with an Islamic government. Needless to say, there was considerable distrust among Americans, if not outright hatred, for Iran.

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In this context, I noticed that whenever one of my Iranian friends was asked where he was from, the reply was Persia, which is where modern-day Iran is located. This answer was indicative of their fear of being "outed" as Iranians (When I why they did not identify themselves as Iranian, they candidly expressed it was from concern for their safety - better, it seemed, to be identified as Middle Eastern than Iranian). They realized that most Americans had no idea where or what Persia was and this provided them a better opportunity to avoid the issue of terrorism, or being labeled a terrorist because of their nationality, or religion.

In the early 1990s, I reconnected with some Muslims in my community and found that some twenty years later Muslims here still felt the need to try and distance themselves from being labeled terrorists. Many conversations began with their explaining Muslims are not terrorists or that Islam does not promote terrorism. Clearly, in their minds, Americans still held a false

perception of Islam that needed to be corrected. As we entered a new Century, the events of September 11, 2001 again renewed, and broadened, the debate about Islam and terrorism.

In fact, after September 2001, there has been an effort to redefine the very meaning of the word Islam. It is not uncommon for Muslims in the West to promote the idea that "Islam" is the Arabic word for peace. Shortly after 9-11, President Bush even defined Islam in this manner after holding meetings with Muslim leaders. I find this interesting considering that, prior to 2001, every Muslims I ever dialogued with defined Islam as meaning "submission" or, more particularly, submission to the will of Allah. A Muslim was therefore, by definition, "one who submits."

So, what is Islam today and what does it really teach? The short answer is, Islam means many things to many people; it really depends on the Muslim with whom you are conversing - which is true of religions, in general - and, to some degree, the culture and era that has most shaped their theological understanding of Islam. A Muslim's beliefs will primarily depend upon which sect of Islam he belongs to and how knowledgeable or devout he is, to the beliefs and practices of that sect. And, while there are a number of sects in Islam, two of them, the Shi'a and the Sunni, comprise over 90% of Islam with the Sunni being the predominate of the two (some estimates place them as high as 80% of all Muslims). Today, most of the Shi'a are found in Iran and Iraq.

These two groups developed shortly after the death of their prophet Muhammad, in 632 A.D. They essentially parted over a disagreement as to who should be Muhammad's successor in leading. The group that would become the Shi'a believed Muhammad's successor should be a descendant of Muhammad. The majority opinion was held by those who became known as the Sunni. Favoring a less restrictive criteria for their selection, they

chose Muhammad's close friend, Abu Bakr, as their leader.

Each sect of Islam believes they alone represent "true" Islam. Since they developed independently of one another, each with their own leaders, they have developed divergent beliefs through the centuries. Therefore, not all Muslims fully agree on the teachings of Islam. Having said that, there are some basic beliefs and practices of Islam upon which most Muslims would agree. Before considering these, let's first get an overview of Islam as we find it in the United States.

There are no hard and fast figures as to how many Muslims there are in the United States. On the high end are those who estimate it is more than 10 million; conservative estimates are 1.5 to 3 million. Most favor a number somewhere in between 3 to 10 million (considering that estimates also indicate there are only some 3,000 Mosques, or centers of worship, in the U.S., I tend to favor the lower estimates). These numbers include both immigrants and converts.

Concerning converts, Carl Ellis and Larry Poston, in their book *The Changing face of Islam in America*, estimate the African-American community comprises some 40% of the converts to Islam. Many of these belong to the American Society of Muslims, a primarily African-American segment of Islam, founded by Warith Deen Muhammad, the son of Elijah Muhammad, who led the Nation of Islam until his death in 1975. (After replacing his father as the leader of the Nation of Islam, which is regarded by Muslims as a cult, W.D. Muhammad gradually moved the Nation into mainstream Islam. Eventually, it became the American Society for Muslims; however, some members did not like these changes and reconstituted the old Nation of Islam under the leadership of Louis Farrakhan.)

Muslims in the West are especially interested in engaging non-Muslims in conversation. This is often done through an open house at the Mosque (particularly during Ramadan - the Holy month of Islam) and through public presentations, generally held on a "neutral" site. This practice is known as dawah (literally, "invitation"). In a

sense, it is the equivalent to what Christians would call evangelism.

The purpose of dawah in the West seems to be two-fold. First, to acquaint the non-Muslim with Islam in a way that will break down any misconceptions the person might have about Islam; particularly as relates to terrorism (In recent years, I have noticed attention also being given to address concerns that Islam denigrates women - probably brought on by the treatment of women by the Taliban in Afghanistan). Secondly, dawah is intended to be ongoing with further discussions intended to convince the person to convert to Islam.

### **Beliefs and Practices of Islam**

The essence of Islam is found in five practices known as the Five Pillars of Islam. There may be some variation among sects as to form but, generally, most Muslims embrace these Five Pillars:

#### **Shahada**

The shahada consists of an Arabic phrase that roughly translates to, "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger". To say the shahada is equivalent to a profession of faith or belief in the truth of Islam. No one can become a Muslim without reciting this. To illustrate this, recently, I spoke with a young man who told me, that while serving in the military in the Middle East, he converted to Islam. When I asked how this conversion had occurred, he replied that Sunni Muslims, who had befriended him there, led him in reciting the shahada. He now attends a Mosque here in the States where his training in Islam continues.

#### **Salat**

Salat is the Muslim obligation to pray, at the appointed times, five times a day (Some Muslims offer more prayers): at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset, and two hours after sunset. Each of these prayers are to be completed within a set block of time and should be done with the proper preparation and form, including: facing Mecca in the right position, with ones shoes removed and having properly washed (ablutions). The prayers typically come from the Quran but may vary from Mosque to Mosque and sect to sect.

#### **Sawm**

Sawm is the fast required from sunup to sunset during each day of the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This most holy month for Muslims celebrates the giving of the sacred scriptures of Islam, the Quran (which translates to, "recitations") to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Muslims believe that over a period of many years, the angel Gabriel recited the message of the Quran to Muhammad who, in turn, recited it to his followers (Muhammad did not put the recitations into written form as he, allegedly, did not know how to read and write). It wasn't until after his death that these words were written into book form divided into chapters known as surahs.

Unlike our Western calendar, the calendar of Islam is based on a lunar calendar; therefore, the beginning of Ramadan varies from year to year. Muslims determine its starting point as the evening when the moon first enters the crescent phase during the ninth month. It seems most likely this is the reason one of the most recognizable symbols for Islam is the crescent shaped moon.

I think it important to note that there are those who point to this symbol as proof that Muhammad worshipped the moon god; however, I think this is a bit of a reach. Even were it true, I see no real value in introducing a moon-god into a discussion of Islam with a Muslim, who will never accept it as being true.

#### **Zakat**

Zakat is the responsibility of every Muslim to give alms, equal to 2.5% of their income, to the poor and needy. If a Muslim is not able to give zakat in currency, based upon his finances, he should give in some other way, as he is able. Zakat is not an obligation or tax paid to the Mosque; it is solely intended to be for the benefit of the poor.

#### **Hajj**

The fifth pillar of Islam is the hajj. This is the obligation of every Muslim, who is able, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his lifetime. While some Muslims may go at other times, the hajj is officially to be made during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar, which typically falls during

the month of December; however in 2009 it falls on November 25-29.

There, dressed in the ihram (white garments), millions of Muslims (over three million in 2008) participate in the rituals associated with this week-long pilgrimage. These rituals include marching counter-clockwise around the large, black, cube-shaped structure known as the Ka'bah. This ritual predates Muhammad to a time when it was believed the Ka'bah was the home to hundreds of idols. Today it is the center to which Muslims worldwide face in prayer.

### **The Question of Jihad**

Though not "officially" one of the Five Pillars, another important practice of Islam is jihad. The idea of jihad for most non-Muslims (Westerners, in particular) is a "holy" war. However, Muslims tend to think of jihad as having two forms - a "lesser" and a "greater". This concept is especially verbalized by Muslims in the West when explaining jihad.

They would say the greater of the two jihads is the struggle everyman must wage to bring himself into submission to Allah. The lesser then is the struggle to bring others into submission to Allah, or the teachings of Islam. Without question, it is this idea of lesser jihad that is used to fuel and justify terrorist activities related to Islam. I think it is for this reason that Muslims in the West generally steer any discussion of jihad away from the "greater" and to the "lesser".

In addition to these five common practices of Islam and jihad, there are certain beliefs that Muslims generally hold in common. Following are a few of these that can be contrasted with beliefs commonly held by Christians.

### **Concerning Scriptures/Authoritative Writings**

While Muslims accept certain portions of the Bible as being true, they believe that overall the Bible has been abrogated - corrupted - and therefore much of it contains an inaccurate account. The writings of the Apostle Paul are particularly distasteful to and discounted by Muslims. In Islam, the only truly authoritative scripture is the Quran.

### **Concerning God**

In Islam, there is only one God - Allah.

Muslims believe that, like Jews and Christians, He is the God of Abraham.

However, Muslims do not believe He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but, the God of Abraham and Ishmael - a major deviation from Judaism and Christianity. While the Bible establishes God as a personal and relational being, even describing Him as a Father, the God of Islam is more akin to a task master. Muslims are quick to point out that God is not a father and does not have any sons.

### **Concerning Jesus**

Muslims have a very high regard for Jesus, whom they know as Isa. Though not on par with Muhammad, they believe Isa was a great prophet. However, they do not believe he is God, as do Christians, nor do they believe he died on the cross. Muslims do not discount the crucifixion occurred but what happened there. As such, they find they must come up with alternatives to Jesus dying on the cross.

One popular explanation offered is the "substitution theory", in which they maintain someone other than Jesus was crucified (a widely held view is that in the confusion of the arrest, Judas was mistakenly taken and crucified). Probably even more popular is the so-called "swoon theory" in which Jesus only appeared to have died on the cross but recovered when placed in the tomb and removed the stone, overcame the guards and escaped (usually, the story goes that he ended up in Egypt).

### **Concerning Sin and Future Judgment**

Islam does not really have a concept of sin, as understood in Judaism and Christianity. For the Muslim, the real issue is how one chooses to live their life. If one follows his own way his life will have no meaning and in the end he will have Allah's disapproval in the judgment. However, if one follows the way set by Allah, then he may, perhaps, have Allah's approval at the end of his days.

As in Judaism and Christianity, Islam teaches that the final destination of a person is either heaven or hell; the former being described as a place of unimaginable delight and the latter a place of unimaginable suffering. The determining factor as to which of these a Muslim will find himself at the end of his life, depends upon the degree

to which he was submitted to Allah.

However, even if ones good deeds outweigh the bad, Allah may yet reject him. Thus, according to Islam, no matter how numerous ones good works, there is no assurance of being permitted into heaven - with the notable exception of those who die in the name of and for the cause of Islam. (This promise is one of the appeals for those who give their lives in acts of terrorism which they have been convinced are committed for the cause of Islam.)

This stands in stark contrast to the Christian message that a person's ultimate destination is not determined by how good, or bad, they are; but, whether or not they have accepted Christ's saving work on their behalf. The gospel of Jesus teaches that all have sinned - there is none that are "good" enough to earn their way into heaven, or to tip the scales in their favor through their good works. So, our hope is not placed upon what we can do but, upon what Christ has done on our behalf. He shed his blood on the cross as an atonement for our sins that we might be forgiven and enter into a restored relationship with the Father.

Now that is good news, and news worth sharing. Christians must not let their fears of terrorism, or the prejudices they hold toward Muslims, that have come about from a lack of understanding, keep them from sharing this good news with their Muslim friends and neighbors. The Christian message is one of hope; hope for the present, and hope in the future. It is a sure and certain hope.

So, go ahead - engage in dawah. Extend the "invitation" to enter into a relationship with the God who loves them through the person and work of His son, Isa.



Bob Waldrep is the President and Founder of Crosswinds Foundation. Bob has written numerous articles related to cultural apologetics, coauthored *The Truth Behind the Secret*, and is a contributing author to: *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics and The Complete Evangelism Guidebook*. [bob@crosswindsfoundation.org](mailto:bob@crosswindsfoundation.org)

[For general tips and ideas on sharing with Muslims, including answering their objections to the Bible and their view of the crucifixion, email us at [info@crosswindsfoundation.org](mailto:info@crosswindsfoundation.org). Put "Tips for Sharing with Muslims" in the subject line. Please include your first and last name in the message.]