
HIS WORD MY WITNESS 7

"I have stored Your words in my heart." Psalm 119:11

Pictures of God

Acknowledging the Muslim's view of divinity that's reflected in Allah's 99 names provides a natural point of contact to relate meaningfully about God to your Muslim friends.

Many of Allah's names are very similar to qualities of God that are expressed in Scripture. The rich imagery they represent provides a familiar platform for sharing small glimpses of the God you know. Because of what heaven has done in sending Jesus, and through the personal work of the Holy Spirit, God is able to touch those around you through His real-time, personal relationship with you. They do not need to understand Him as He reveals Himself in Scripture in order for them to meet a personal God in you.

In spite of the grandeur and beauty of many of the 99 names of Allah, the Muslim does not claim the benefit of relating to Him. Allah is unknowable, inaccessible and, in the final analysis, not in relationship with to us. While many can recite Allah's attributes, no one expects Allah to demonstrate those attributes to humanity. In fact, Allah does not possess the personal attributes we often use when we talk about God; he does not have a voice, hands, face, or engage in human activities such as hearing, seeing, talking, or listening. To refer to Allah as having human characteristics is offensive. But you can give simple testimony of the God you know who demonstrates the attributes of Allah that your Muslim friend knows.

A quick look at Allah's names (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Islam) reveals several categories of transcendent attributes: Unsurpassed power, overwhelming greatness, ultimate judgment and decision, and more. But you will also notice a handful of Allah's attributes that can only be expressed in relationship and even closeness: The Compassionate, The Merciful, Granter of Security, The Forgiving, The Kind, The Generous, The Responsive, The Loving, The Dependable, The Helper, The Beneficent, The Pitying, The Benefactor, The All-Knowing One.

These relational attributes provide a **bridge** you can assume exists any time you speak of God, because Scripture is filled with references to many of the same characteristics. The striking *difference* is that the Bible provides a detailed record of a God who *demonstrates* these qualities—and many more—as He acts, interacts, speaks, holds, promises, reasons, teaches, heals, and dies.

To talk like a human being can relate to God is foreign, even offensive, to your Muslim friend. That's why a point-on-point discussion of the natures of God and Allah is not usually productive. But many biblical passages that describe God in similar word pictures as the Qur'an also contain the **building concept** that God relates in love and invites us to relate to Him. You can't find too many places in Scripture where He does not pair His transcendence with His closeness. Your simple references to a personal God gives permission for the Holy Spirit to affirm that and, at the appropriate time and place, to touch them personally too.

The texts below are only two examples that show the scriptural **bridge** that may be familiar to your Muslim friends (**bold**) and the **building concept** the passage introduces (*italicized*):

But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he *understandeth and knoweth me*,
that I am the LORD which exercises **lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness**, in the earth:
for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:24)

Search me, O God, and *know* my heart; test me and *know* my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me and **lead me** in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23)