



*The Quran  
and the Four  
Spiritual  
Laws*

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## INTRODUCTION

The little booklet called *The Four Spiritual Laws* by Bill Bright, the president of the Campus Crusade for Christ, is probably one of the most popular and widely used tools of evangelism in the western world. Part of the reason for this tract's popularity is the fact that it is written by a westerner within a western context. In other words, it is contextualized to meet the need of a specific people group.

On the following pages, I have attempted to develop a *Four Spiritual Laws* that is contextualized in a way that can be used in introducing our Muslim friends to the Savior. In doing so, I have tried to stay away from directly using the Quran as a bridge. As an ex-Muslim, I am not sure that the best way to convey the truth of the Gospel is to use the half-truths in the Quran. Therefore, I will not try to convince our Muslim friends that, for example, they have had a wrong understanding of what *surah* 4:157-159 says about Christ's death on the Cross (I will talk about this more). Attempting to prove the above is to disregard what the Muslim has been taught all his/her life. And even more important, to do so, I believe, I have to first make a better Muslim out of the person I am sharing the Gospel with, i.e., first, teach him/her what the Quran teaches on this issue. This especially applies to the Iranian Muslims who for the most part know virtually nothing or very little about the Quran except what they have been told by their parents or religious teachers. Nevertheless, as you will see in the following pages, I do use the Quran in sharing the Good News with Muslims, but not directly.

The reader should be aware that the following contextualized *Laws* are written mostly with Iranian Muslims in mind. I believe with some minor adjustments this study could be used with any Muslim group. I will first state each one of the *Four Spiritual Laws* as mentioned in the Campus Crusade For Christ's booklet and then proceed to show its shortcomings as far as reaching Muslims are concerned. And finally, I will develop the contextualized *Laws*. For various reasons, I will deal with *Law Two* last.

## I. LAW ONE: GOD LOVES YOU AND OFFERS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Within the context of the Old and New Testaments and the context of historical theology, the above statement is true. The Bible declares, *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him*" (1 Jn.3: 1). And throughout Christian history many, if not all, theologians have expounded much about God's love for mankind. However, to the Muslim reader the above law has very little impact or value. In other words, although Biblical and historical theology bear witness to "Law One," because it is not within specific local contextual theology, i.e., the Islamic context, this Law is irrelevant to the Muslim.

It is not so much that Islam is a loveless religion, but that Muslims are not very concerned with the theme of love. And as the Muslim theologian Daud Rahbar says, "Unqualified Divine love for mankind is an idea completely alien to the Quran." (Rahbar, 1960:172 as quoted by Huffard, 1987:2)

But the issue goes much deeper than the subject of love. The issue is God Himself. What does the Muslim think about Allah? "No human language is good enough to describe God, for nothing else is like Him. God's nature is beyond conception" (Kateregga and Shenk, 1997:30). In other words, whatever you think Allah is... He is not! All *Surahs* (chapters in the Quran) except for *Surah 9* start with the phrase, *In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful*, and although Allah is supposed to be nearer to a Muslim than his jugular vein (*Surah 50:16*), He remains distant and impersonal. This is because in the Quran the stress is on revelation of Allah's command and his names to mankind.

In Islam God does not reveal Himself, for God is transcendent, but rather His will or guidance. Revelation occurs through the direct inspiration of prophets or through angelic intercession: 'God speaks to no human except through revelation, *wahy*, or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger [angel] and reveals whatever he wills...a straight path, the path of God. (*Surah 42:51-53*) (Esposito, 1991:22)

But in the Bible we perceive God as the One who reveals himself to humankind just as Shank says, *The biblical witness is that God has chosen to reveal Himself in personal self-disclosure with humankind.* (Kateregga and Shenk, 1997:34)

In Christianity God is the One who wants to be known, but in Islam Allah is the unique, unexplorable, and inexplicable One, the remote, vast, and unknown God. Everything we may think about Him is incomplete, if not wrong. Therefore, to say to a Muslim who believes that *overstressing of love in all aspects of the Christian life has at times, in Muslim eyes, rendered the Christian ideal of conduct more theoretical than practical* (Kateregga and Shenk, 1997:196), that "God loves you," especially when this unconditional love is directly related to the Cross, has little or no effect in introducing the Gospel to my Muslim friend.

## II. LAW THREE: JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY PROVISION FOR MAN'S SIN. THROUGH HIM YOU CAN KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE.

"How did Jesus Christ become God's only provision for me?" a Muslim would ask. "He died in our place," a Christian would reply. Upon which most Muslims would immediately quote the Quran saying, "They did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them." (*Surah 4:157*)

In his book, *Jesus in the Quran*, Parrinder tries very hard to show that *Surah 4:157* does not say what the majority of Muslims believe, i.e. Jesus was not crucified. He says,

How then can the passage, 4,156/157, be interpreted? In a penetrating article on this subject some years ago, E.E. Elder remarked that 'the verse does not say that Jesus was not killed, nor was he crucified. It merely states that they (the Jews) did not kill or crucify him. This is true historically, although the responsibility was theirs, the Romans soldiers actually did the work...' (Parrinder, 1996:119)

Yet Professor Kateregga, the Ambassador of the Republic of Uganda in Saudi Arabia, says,

According to the true belief of Islam, it would seem most inappropriate for the Messiah to die through a shameful crucifixion. God, who is just, would not permit the righteous Messiah to suffer the ignominy of crucifixion much as Allah also saved the seal of the prophets from ignominy following the Hijrah. (Kateregga and Shenk, 2997:175)

Regardless of what some Western scholars would like Muslims to believe, over and over again we hear the Muslims declare, "It was not honorable to Jesus Christ that God should have allowed Him to be

delivered to the Jews in order that they might kill Him” or “We refuse to believe that God would permit His holy prophet to suffer death on the Cross. Rather we believe God took Him up to heaven.” A Muslim, historically, morally, and doctrinally rejects the possibility of Christ’s death on the Cross. To him/her, protecting Christ’s honor (being taken up rather than dying on the Cross) is much more important than Christ’s death being God’s only provision from sin. In plain English, by presenting the Gospel through **Law Three**, we have defined our message in terms that the Muslim cannot accept. This is due to the fact that Allah has been so contextualized by Muslims, that He is limited by the Muslim’s cultural value system.

In Islam, law and justice are the basis for every action. Therefore, every sin and mistake demands compensation from the sinner. And, if the sinner is not personally held responsible, justice is not satisfied. “The Muslims do not understand the need for sacrifice nor that all demands of justice in God’s law have been fulfilled by Jesus, once for all time and for all people.” (Abd-Al-Masih, n.d.:54)

Allah is a God of retribution and a judge who mercilessly punishes each person for his/her iniquities. Commenting about *Surah* 82:19, which speaks of The Judgment Day, “(It will be) the day when no soul shall have power (to do) aught for another: For the command, that day, will be (wholly) with God, A. Yusuf Ali, the Muslim theologian, says “...no soul shall have power to do aught for another. This is full of meaning. **Personal responsibility will be fully enforced** (bolding is mine)...” (Ali, 1983:1701) He also says,

This, then, is the Muslim’s idea of salvation. It consists not in being saved from the consequences of our sin by the sufferings or the merits of others, nor in *Nirvana*, or annihilation or absorption, but in the achievement of a perfect personality, a bliss that grows up within us, and does not depend on external circumstances. It may require the utmost effort or striving (*jihad*) of a lifetime or more...” (Ali, 83:1469)

Therefore, for several reasons, a Muslim rejects the idea of Christ’s sacrifice as “God’s only provision for man’s sin.” First, death of an innocent, especially one as holy and sinless as Jesus, as the provision for sins of others would appear to be nothing less than a miscarriage of justice by Allah. And, since Allah is a just God, He would never allow such an action to take place.

Secondly, Christ’s death not only would show Allah as an unjust God, but it also displays Him as powerless and not the almighty that He is. Like most people, a Muslim’s mentality is a worldly one. In the world man obtains power in order to use it. What is the power good for, if you cannot use it for the protection of the weak and the promotion

of your cause? In the Muslim’s way of thinking, which originated from a tribal system of life, there is no comprehension of a Jesus,

...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. (Phil. 2:6-8)

Christ’s meekness and gentleness, as well as His self-denial, are then regarded as weakness.

Thirdly, the pride of the Muslim does not allow him/her to even consider that someone else can pay the price in his place. I once heard Ahmad Deedad, the very popular South African Muslim debater, declare, “Christ’s provision for man’s sin is nothing but an attempt in trying to get to heaven by hook or by crook on behalf of the Christians.” In other words, in Islam every man and woman is responsible for his/her action. You cannot and should not expect someone else to become your provision for sin.

### III. **LAW FOUR: WE MUST INDIVIDUALLY RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD; THEN WE CAN KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE AND PLAN FOR OUR LIVES.**

I have already shown why it is difficult for a Muslim to accept Christ as his Savior. But what is even more difficult for our Muslim friend is to accept Him as his/her personal Lord. A while ago as I was sharing the Gospel with an Iranian Muslim man, he told me, “I accept everything about Christ except His Lordship. I cannot accept Him as God.” To my sadness, this is often the common response.

For the majority of Westerners the concept of the “Lordship of Christ” is not an issue (at least in theory). Even for the ones who come from a non-practicing Christian background, considering Christ as Lord is not an offensive thought. In fact, when you look at it, most Westerners celebrate the birth of Christ every Christmas. Almost all their lives, at least once a year, they hear or sing songs about the birth of the “King of kings” and the “Lord of lords.” This shows that, at least in their minds, they accept the possibility of Christ’s lordship. So when they are confronted with **LAW FOUR**, they have a much easier time responding positively to its demand.

But now put yourself in the place of the Muslim man I mentioned earlier. As long as he can remember, he has been taught to daily repeat that, “Allah is neither begotten nor he begets” (*Surah* 2:116:

6:110). He has been told that there is no Trinity and to make an equal for Allah is the greatest sin (*shirk*) he can commit. And, therefore, **LAW FOUR** is nothing less than a blasphemy to him and those like him.

### **WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

Can we have a set of **FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS** that would speak to Muslims? The answer is, “yes!” But to accomplish that, we need to change our Western approach to Muslim evangelism. We need a paradigm shift. We have to rethink our message of the Gospel within the Muslim context. Huffard believes that, “Western Christianity has made the theme of love the primary core, the irreducible, of the Gospel, and Muslims have rejected this paradigm for cultural reasons.” (Huffard, 1978:2)

In the West, authority in general is frowned upon. In broad terms the Western Christians live in a society where relationships are expected to be horizontal. People are to be treated equally. Teachers try to dress and act like students so that they can be liked and accepted by them. Parents want to be more of friends to their children than authority figures.

The Middle Eastern Muslim lives within a context where vertical relationships are predominant. The social structure is maintained by loyalty to the family and respect for authority. As a pastor, I counsel with many American wives who are married to Iranian Muslim men. Often the greatest problem of these women is their lack of understanding of the first element of maintaining the social structure by their husband, namely, the loyalty the men have for their families. The American woman is raised in a society where social relationships are maintained by love and shared interest. She expects her husband to first be loyal to her and then to his family. Whereas the Muslim husband was raised in a society where loyalty to the family comes first and then to the wife and then to outsiders. In his society, “*Fathers want to be respected and honored by their sons and people are treated on the basis of their status and age. The cultural theme most valued is honor and their greatest fear is shame.*” (Huffard, 1987:6)

It, therefore, should not be too hard to understand why the Muslim sees nothing but shame in a cross and will do all he can to defend the honor of Jesus as a prophet of Allah. As a response to this reaction, the Western Christian might reply, “What is the big deal?” The Christian is so taken by his paradigm of love, and the need for all men to accept this love in order to be saved, that he/she overlooks the fact that Muslims give priority to a different, but just as important, paradigm.

Within the Western culture the paradigm of love seems to be the starting point for almost any relationship. For example, a couple meets for the first time. They are attracted to each other, so they decide to date. After a while, they realize they have fallen in love, and decide to

get married. Five years later, when they find each other no more in love with one another, they file for a divorce in order to follow the same process with another mate.

The Middle Eastern Muslim family structure has a different paradigm. Right or wrong, the relationship begins with the respect for the parents of the couple who decide that they should get married. Initially, love might play very little or no part at all in bringing this couple together. For example, at her birth, my mother was appointed to be her first cousin’s, my dad’s, wife. She married my father at the age of fifteen and I am happy to say that after over 50 years they are still happily married. Like most Iranian couples, they decided that for the sake of honor of the extended family, they must live in harmony, and divorce is out of the question. Although, I am sad to say, that often this structure falls apart once the couple enters Western societies.

If “contextualization,” i.e., whenever possible local forms should be used to convey the Gospel, is crucial in introducing the Gospel to the Muslim, then is it possible to contextualize the Four Spiritual Laws to the Muslim’s understanding? I believe it is possible. But we must first switch our paradigm of love and sacrifice to the paradigm of honor and shame; one that would speak to a Muslim within this context. We can still use the Four Spiritual Laws but with a distinct variation. In this context **LAW TWO** states—

### **V. LAW TWO: MAN IS SINFUL AND IS SEPARATED FROM GOD. THEREFORE, HE CANNOT KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE AND PLAN FOR HIS LIFE.**

In his short yet excellent paper, *Christology and Cultural Themes*, Huffard asks,

Must a relationship with Christ begin with love? Is there a biblical basis for the application of other themes, such as blessing or honor in interpreting the Cross? If so, could one initially respond to a message of the honor of God and grow in Christian love? (Huffard, 1987:8)

There is no doubt that love plays an absolute and important role in Christian life and beliefs. It was the power of love that moved the Father to send His Son into a dying world (Jn. 3:16). It is the power of love that motivates the followers of Christ into obeying their Master. But are there other motivations? As Huffard asks, what about honor?

In the Middle East one maintains honor by living without shame and blame. Often, after a few minutes of speaking and describing the nature of sin, almost any Muslim I have talked to has agreed that, at least in the eyes of God, he/she is a sinner. I accomplish this by referring

to passages such as Matthew 5:21-30 along with some personal illustrations.

I usually ask the Muslim, "Do you think you are a sinner?" The immediate response is, "I have never stolen, killed anyone, or committed adultery; therefore, I am not a sinner." In Islam, the concept of original sin does not exist. With the fall of Adam came his expulsion from heaven, but not inherent guilt that entails punishment or requires redemption.

The Biblical and Quranic stories about the consequences of the Fall reveal the basis for the divergent doctrines of Christianity and Islam. The former views the Fall as the cause of man's flawed nature and existence; the latter finds here the story of sin, God's mercy and repentance. In the Bible, the Fall brings a life of shame, disgrace, and Lordship. In sharp contrast, the Quran teaches that after Adam disobeys God but repents, God extends to Adam His mercy and guidance. (Esposito, 1991:29)

In Islam in general, humankind is not sinful by nature but rather, a Muslim sins out of weakness, and sometimes the all-powerful Allah *...unto whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heaven and earth; and ye have not, beside Allah, any friend or helper (Surah 2:107)* might cause him/her to sin. Kateregga says, *The firm belief in the all-powerful nature of God can help man to give the best possible explanation of many mysterious things that can happen in life (1997:32)*. In this way, Allah could even be an explanation for Muslims committing sin. Consider the following:

It says in Hikam of Ibn Ata Allah: Sometimes He (Allah) opens the door of obedience for you but not the door of acceptance; or sometimes He condemns you to sin, and it turns out to be a cause of arriving at Him. There is no minor sin when His justice confronts you. (Glasse, 1989:372)

However, the question here is not what the Muslim believes the Quran or tradition says about sin, but what he/she believes about himself/herself. So I ask my Muslim friend, "My friend, have you ever looked at a woman with lust in your heart?"

Invariably the answer is, "Who has not? Especially in Los Angeles where there are thousands of billboards with portraits of naked men or women."

I then continue, "Do you know Jesus said, 'But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart?'" (Mt. 5:28).

"Why is that?" he asks.

"Because God looks at your heart and not your appearance. You might not openly commit adultery for, if it is exposed, it will bring shame and dishonor upon you and your family. But, how about God's honor? If God knows our innermost thoughts, do you not stand guilty before Him when you commit adultery in your heart? Have you not brought dishonor upon God?"

At this point my friend usually agrees that in the sight of God, he/she has sinned. I usually use the concept of lustful eyes and adultery with men, and anger and murder, cheating and stealing with women.

In light of the above example, I propose that if we are going to use some spiritual laws with Muslims, let's make the first law read:

## **VI. LAW ONE: YOU HAVE SINNED AND BROUGHT SHAME (DISHONOR) UPON GOD.**

Once the Muslim admits to his sinfulness, he/she might simply declare that, "If I repent, Allah will forgive me." In Islam repentance is simply remembering or returning to God's path, the straight path of Islam. There is little or no emphasis on feelings of shame and disgrace or guilt. Therefore, we have the following Hadith:

And the Prophet Mohammad said of God (in Hadith Qudsi): "So long as you call upon Me and hope in Me, I forgive you all that originates from you, and I will not heed, O Son of man, should your sins reach the horizon of heavens, and then you asked my pardon and I would pardon." (Glasse, 1989:372)

However, there are several *surahs* in the Quran which give the impression that pardon from Allah does not guarantee the Muslim's entrance into heaven. Regarding the Day of Judgment, the Quran says,

Then he whose Balance (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy, will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction. But he whose Balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light, will have his home in a (bottomless) pit. And what will explain to thee what this is? (It is) a fire blazing fiercely. (*Surah 101:6-11*) (Ali, 1983:1778)

As a Muslim, according to the above *surah*, I was taught that on the Judgment Day my good deeds will be weighed against my sins, and depending on which one outweighs the other, I will enter heaven or hell. This is a common belief among many, especially Iranian Muslims. Now, if this is the case, and our Muslim friend has already admitted to having sinned by dishonoring God, then how many good deeds does he/she have to perform in order to outweigh every sin he/she has

committed? You will find out that most Muslims have no answer to this question. And those who do have answers, usually sound like this: "It is not so much that I have to perform good deeds, but rather repent and stop doing the bad deeds."

A Muslim is morally responsible and accountable. It is the response of the believer who knows what he or she must do and who lives life ever mindful of the eternal consequences that await on the Last Day. The duties and obligations of Muslim life, as well as its rewards and punishment, fall equally on men and women. (Esposito, 1991:30)

It is at this point that I tell my friend the following story:

"One day a friend and I had the discussion you and I are having now. He also gave the same answer you just gave me: 'I do not need to perform any good deeds, but to stop my bad deeds.' Upon which I poured my friend a tall glass of water and asked him if he would drink the water. He said, 'Yes.' But before handing him the glass, I put a drop of ink in the water, and then offered him the glass. He immediately pushed the glass back and refused to drink the water.

'Why?' I asked.

'This is poison!' he replied.

'But, it was only a drop of ink in a tall glass of water,' I answered.

'That was enough to contaminate the water,' he said.

I then asked him, 'Then, how can you expect God, who is so holy, to accept all your good deeds which have been contaminated with even one drop of sin in your life?'"

It is usually at this time that the earnest Muslim seeker begins to recognize the fallacy of salvation through good deeds. So it is here, when along with verses such as Romans 6:23, we can introduce **LAW TWO**.

#### **VII. LAW TWO: BECAUSE YOU HAVE BROUGHT SHAME UPON GOD, YOU ARE IN DANGER OF ETERNAL DAMNATION.**

It is at this point that we can introduce the Muslim to the Cross, not just as a theological abstraction expressed in terms of propitiation and reconciliation, but the fullest expression of God's generosity.

As recipients of God's generosity (grace), the cultural code of reciprocity in an Arab village requires an honorable response. To deny the Cross is a refusal to accept the generosity of God and dishonor the giver. As Paul put it, "You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your bodies." (1 Corinthians 6:20) (Huffard, 1987:12)

To drive the point home, I usually give another example:

A young man was arrested for a traffic violation. He was taken before a judge who was most well known for his just verdicts. Upon reviewing the man's records, the judge passed his judgment, "\$5,000 or five months in prison."

Upon hearing the verdict, the man began to cry. People gathered around him and wanted to know why he was crying.

"I have no money, therefore, I have to spend five months in prison."

As the people were attending to the young man, the judge took off his robe of authority, removed himself from the bench and his seat of authority, came down from his bench, went to the clerk and paid the young man's penalty and he asked the bailiff to set the young man free. In amazement, people asked the judge why he did such an act of mercy.

The judge said, "This young man is my own son. My justice dictated that I pass my judgment upon his action. But because I love him, and I know he could not pay the penalty, I came and paid it in his place."

"Now, my friend," at this point I ask my listener, "what do you think the young man should do? Should he accept his father's generous gift of grace and embrace freedom? Or should he reject the gift and bring dishonor and shame upon himself by going to prison?" Often the answer would be, "he should accept the gift." In response I say, "This is why God allowed the sinless Christ to die on the Cross. He saw our sin and His justice dictated either a penalty for it or eternal condemnation. But he also knew we could not pay the penalty, therefore, He sent Jesus in our place so that we will be provided with a generous gift of grace, and be set free from the penalty of our sin. Now, what are you going to do about this gift? Will you receive it, or dishonor God by rejecting it?" This brings us to **LAW THREE**.

#### **VIII. LAW THREE: THE CROSS IS GOD'S GIFT OF SALVATION TO YOU, AND BY REJECTING IT, YOU BRING DISHONOR UPON GOD AND YOURSELF.**

When people ask me if it is necessary to tell a Muslim, who desires to become a follower of Christ, that Jesus is Lord? My answer is always a definite "Yes!" After 25 years of being a follower of Jesus, I have not been able to get around explaining the Lordship of Christ in any easy way. I suppose there are some theological truths that are to be accepted only by faith. The bottom line is "Jesus is Lord." Having said this, however, at least initially, Jesus can be referred to as Owner or Master, instead of the Lord. These two phrases are much more acceptable to the Muslim. Therefore, **LAW FOUR** could say:

**IX. LAW FOUR: YOU MUST ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR MASTER.**

**CONCLUSION**

Was the Quran used as a bridge in the above pages? Yes, but not directly. I believe in this sense it is appropriate to use the Quran as a bridge in evangelizing Muslims. While reading this pamphlet, you might have noticed that the Quran was not referred to as an authority, and neither for that matter, was it discredited as such. Yet, the Muslim's knowledge of the Quran was used to bring him/her to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important for the reader to know that neither the above method nor any other method is a sure way of directing the Muslim to the Cross. Muslim evangelism is 99% relational and maybe 1% methodology and that is what makes Muslim evangelism difficult. The key for the believer is to spend time befriending the Muslim, methodology is secondary. May the Lord continue to show us more effective ways in reaching our Muslim neighbors and friends for the Kingdom.

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