



**February  
2016**

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**Birthdays  
This Month**

- February 11 Phyllis Moore
- February 15 Pat Neubauer  
Tim Anderson
- February 18 Delores Swanson
- February 19 Todd Meyerdirk
- February 20 Wayne Hussong
- February 23 Hunter Evans  
Paul Jacobsen
- February 24 Cindy Neubauer

If we have missed your birthday or someone else's, please contact the office to inform us.

**Do Christians & Muslims Worship the Same God?**

Some of you are going to be tempted to quit at the title of this article, but let me challenge you to think about the importance of this issue with a few thoughts. I will acknowledge these are my initial thoughts, and as I process more, I will add to these ideas on my blog: ihgg.net.

At the suspension and now in process dismissal of a professor at Wheaton College, many are asking this important question about whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God with different names. At the heart of this lies the real question: Is there more than one way to God? Or, do all monotheistic religions worship the same God, just using different names and terminology?

Also at the heart of this discussion/debate is the question of the nature of "God's Word." What is God's Word, and is the Bible and/or the Koran the "Word of God"? To make things more complicated add in the claims of other groups as well, i.e. The Book of Mormon and many other claims to be revelations of God. Is the Bible uniquely the sole "Word of God"? Or is God speaking in many ways to many people.

Let's tackle the starting question: Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?

There seems to be two options in answering the question.

**POSSIBLE ANSWER #1. We worship the same God, but one group or the other dishonors God as He reveals Himself in the "Word of God".**

**Updating Phone Directory**

We are working on updating the church phone directory. Please check the Proof Copies on the Foyer Table

Or

You can email or phone Pastor Mitch with any additions or corrections

We are trying to collect as many email addresses as possible, so please supply your email or update it.

Also, please check to make sure we have your birthday, as we are including them in the back of the phone directory.

There seem to be such differences in what Christians and Muslims believe about God that Christianity and Islam are undeniably incompatible. One has to be right and the other wrong. Even with the claim by Muslims to value the Bible as the Word of God, the disparity of God's character and actions in the two do not seem to be compatible on any level.

As Christians, we claim God exists eternally as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Charitable Muslims will not use the word blasphemy, but they would certainly say this belief about God does not match what they believe at all. If pressed, they would have to admit this doctrine of the Trinity is wholly incompatible with their belief that God is One. They do not accept our claim that Jesus is God incarnate (in the flesh). Again, this would be

**Weekly Schedule**

**Sunday Morning**

- 9 a.m. Sunday School
- 10 a.m. Fellowship Time
- 10:25 a.m. Worship Service

**Mondays**

- 9:30 a.m. Ladies Bible Study

**Wednesdays**

- 5:30 p.m. Meal
- 6:30 p.m. AWANA
- 6:30 p.m. Adult Bible Study

**Saturday**

- 8 a.m. Men's Prayer Group

blasphemy to the teachings of Islam. Their accommodation is to say Jesus was a prophet of God, but he was just a man. Which as a Christian, I find their denial of Jesus' deity to be totally unacceptable, because the Bible teaches Jesus' deity is essential to His ability to effectively die for the sins of every believer.

*"...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; <sup>10</sup> for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."* **Romans 10:9-10**

The very identity of God and the truth of His Word are at stake in how we answer this question. It does not seem logically possible let alone theologically possible to hold the position that the God of Christianity and the God of Islam are the same being.

## **ANSWER #2. Christians and Muslims worship different gods, only one being God.**

This is the position I hold, because the basic tenets of Islam claim that the Bible is not accurate from the very early chapters of Genesis. Their claim that Abraham was called to offer Ishmael, not Isaac, on Mount Moriah is a very fundamental difference (see Genesis 22). In my mind, if their claim is true, then the rest of the Bible is untrustworthy. How could Christians put their faith in a direct deception like that?

The other side of that argument then leads me to say, if the Bible is correct about Isaac being offered instead of Ishmael, then how can we trust the claims of the Koran?

I would argue, one is the "Word of God" and the other is construct of a man or men. Both cannot be the "Word of God," so there is an unavoidable conflict.

What shocks me is how hard it is for people to see the clear conflicts between the two. If Christianity and Islam are so compatible, why are Muslims persecuting and seeking to exterminate Christianity and vice versa? Only those who see religion as a human construct can hold such a viewpoint, and such a viewpoint is a fundamental misunderstanding of the claims and call of Jesus Christ. Every true believer in Jesus Christ hears a call to a restored relationship with our creator by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, which was done on our behalf because we cannot save ourselves. As believers in Jesus Christ, we should also be hearing His command to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

## **IMPLIED QUESTION AND ANSWER #3. What about Jews and Christians, do they worship the same God?**

I do not believe there is a conflict between accepting the Old Testament as the "Word of God" for Jews or Christians. In fact, as Christians we believe Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah. I would insist that Jesus has to be consistent with the teachings about God in the Old Testament or He cannot not be God. Be careful, I am not saying He has to match the expectations of the Jews, but He does have to match what God said in the Old Testament.

The conflict between Jews and Christians is whether Jesus is the Messiah. I would suggest this makes us believers and worshipers of the same God, but Christians believe Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises. This makes us very consistent in our beliefs up to the identity of the Messiah.

This is a critical point, but I would hold out hope and pray the Lord opens the eyes of the Jews to see Jesus as Messiah. Also believing, the Jews do not have to abandon their faith in the God of the Old Testament. They may need to modify assumptions or expectations based on their interpretations of the Old Testament, but they do not need to modify the words of the Old Testament to embrace Jesus as the fulfillment of the its promises.

My prayer for Muslims is different. I pray for them to come to known God for who He reveals Himself to be in the Bible, including Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews as well as Isaac being the child of promise instead of Ishmael. They must come to hold the Old and New Testaments as the only Word of God.

### **Contacting Pastor Mitch**

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This is just the starting point for this issue. There are many more implications that rise out of this beginning point, but it is critically important for us to begin to think carefully about this and its implications.

In His Grip  
Pastor Mitch