

Kevin Greeson, *The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ!* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Monument, Co.: WIGTake, 2010.

Kevin Greeson has served as a missionary church planter with the International Mission Board since 1993, after earning a Masters of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Having primarily worked among Muslims in South Asia, he spends much of his time training people in Muslim evangelism and church planting, drawing from the material he wrote in *The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ!* He describes how God is using dreams to awaken Muslim to Christ, the importance of finding “persons of peace”, and the need to take seriously the context and concern of Muslims (45). The word “camel” is simply an acronym highlighting key teachings in the Koran in parallel with the Bible.

Greeson’s *The Camel* introduces a method used by many Christians to help Muslims gain an interest in reading the Bible and ultimately accept the gospel of Jesus. *The Camel* does not claim to be anything more than a “bridge” by which a person begins with the Koran in order to see how it directs its readers to Jesus and the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, Greeson’s singular focus means that he does not greatly delve into a range of theological or ecclesiological questions relevant for ministry among Muslims. To be clear, it is neither a kind of gospel presentation nor a Christian apologetics book. He rightly warns, “If a Muslim listens to you through the entire Camel presentation, keep in mind that he has still not head the Gospel” (113).

This second volume clearly intends to assist the practitioner. It grows originally out of his *Camel Training Manual* (WIGTake, 2004). Therefore, it is peppered with suggestions for application and testimonies of its effects in Muslim contexts around the world. The main objective of the book is to show Christians how they can use various passages from the Koran to illustrate to Muslims the importance of knowing Jesus and studying the Christian texts. As a result, his takes a step-by-step approach, anticipating possible objections and strategies along the way. Yet, *The Camel* largely avoids becoming mere pragmatism. This is most likely due to his insistence to remind the reader that God is the one at work among Muslims, prayer is primary in this ministry, and the methodology presented is nothing more than a bridge. He makes clear in fact that *The Camel* method aims at removing barriers to Muslim’s coming to faith. Therefore, it is only the beginning of a process that includes evangelism and church planting (113, 175).

Thoughtful consideration is given and qualifications are made to ensure that no one confuses the Koran as having biblical authority (172–73). He bluntly states, “So if a Muslim insists on clinging to the Qur’an, he will never be saved, because he will never understand that Jesus is the Son of God who died for his sins” (144). He also affirms that ultimately, one wants to teach “exclusively from the Bible” (104). At the book’s most essential *theological* points, Greeson is sure to reinforce what the Koran says about Jesus with the Bible’s own testimony. Further, when applying *Korbani* Plan of Salvation, we see Greeson more densely integrate the Bible with the Koran, so as to allow the former to ground the gospel presentation. However, careful attention must be given to not blurring these lines, as if the Koran contained the gospel. It is noteworthy that he emphasizes, “we want to avoid arguments and keep the focus on the main goal of lifting Isa by pointing to His holiness, power, and ability to lead us to heaven” (131).

Greeson is also helpful to make a number of necessary cultural and missiological distinctions. For instance, he includes a letter from well-known missiologist Phil Parshall to clarify that *The Camel* method is not to be automatically lumped in with C5 and C6 ecclesiologies, where Muslim background believers remain hidden and undistinguished from the larger Islamic community (161–62). Similarly, he acknowledges the limitations of starting with the Koran, such as when we says, “Your goal is not to prove Christ’s divinity through the Qur’an. The Qur’an is incapable of doing that;” (134). Similarly, he highlights key ambiguities and nuances, such as when he comments, “It is important to note that the Qur’an does not state that Isa did not die” (142), “. . . the Qur’an never says that Mohammed is the greatest prophet;” (146), and even turning a common Muslim objection into a bridge to the resurrection (142–44).

Finally, Greeson shows a keen sensitivity to the Christian reader and the unbelieving Muslim. For instance, he repeatedly appeals to Muslim sensibilities by posing questions that noting that Allah’s sovereignty could overcome tradition objections to Christianity, like the possibility of the incarnation (134–35) or the notion that someone might be “strong enough to overcome Aland and change His words,” (142). Further, he wittingly highlights the character of Jesus in precisely those areas where Mohammed is glaringly weak, yet never explicitly mentioning Mohammed by name (109–110; 134). He advocates one respectfully “use leading questions” to avoid undue provocation (104), expose misconceptions (141), and point out the plain illogic of “a works-based religion” (135). One might say that Greeson’s approach amounts to a *reductio ad absurdum*, exposing how the Koran eventually points to Christ and contradicts itself. All the while, Greeson is sure to keep a pastoral mind, as when he asserts, “The number one cause for missing persons of peace is a busy schedule. Take your time and be patient” (105).

For all its strengths, a few weaknesses must be addressed. With regard to *The Camel*’s treatment of Scripture, what problems do exist are not essential to the book’s thesis. Most troubling is Greeson’s appeal to Paul’s use of the Old Testament as precedent for using “the scriptures sacred to those we are trying to reach” [i.e. the Koran for Muslims] (101). Despite his unequivocal statement that “Muslims are not Jews, and the Qur’an is not the Old Testament” (101), his argument is an unfortunate “bait and switch,” first using the comparison as a premise for his conclusion, only finally to negate that premise. This point could have easily been made by instead appealing to Paul’s use of Greek literature. Likewise, when discussing the *Korbani* Plan of Salvation, his hermeneutic is suspect in that he treats the Old Testament sacrificial system as a “redemptive bridge” rather than a type to be fulfilled (115–16).

At times, Greeson’s comments come across presumptuous or unnecessarily provocative. For example, hanging a lot on one approach listed in Luke 10, he posits, “Sowing the Gospel without looking for persons of peace may reveal our lack of faith that God already prepared persons of peace to receive our message” (76–77). In addition, he issues strong rhetoric against using “my strategy, not God’s strategy” (his emphasis; 57; cp 58, 61), yet he later adds, “Understanding church-planting movements can help inform and guide our strategies toward that goal,” (128). Thus, he comes off as implying that the methods of David Garrison (whom he cites often and is the editor to *The Camel Workshop* (WIGTake, 2009)) are God’s methods in contrast to anything contrary.

A number of Greeson's points need defense or elaboration. For example, speaking of Muslim-background churches, he suggests that missionaries "... avoid entering into a formal working relationship with the [national] church as a whole. Instead, establish working relationships with like-minded individuals within the church," (183). This is because "... they will often try to stop evangelism efforts . . ." (183). Yet, two pages later, he has no qualms with missionaries forming partnerships with churches in the West (185ff). This is inexplicable given that churches from any culture can potentially be "hindrances," even if for different reasons. It is frankly a non sequitur that because some churches may be problematic, therefore, as a policy, it is inadvisable to partner with whole churches. This is all the more perplexing given the sporadic, but clear offhand criticisms of western influence (e.g., 129). Ironically and without logical defense, he asserts that a movement "seemed to leapfrog over contextualization directly to indigenization . . . because it was led by Muslim-background believers," (41). The scope of this claim is too large to be left undefended. Also, he sometimes speaks of the use and need for "a contextualized version of the Bible for Muslim readers" (126) and "Muslim-friendly" language (69). This needs to be addressed more specifically, in particular given the critical cross-referencing of the Koran with the Bible.

Finally, the Greeson's writing style can sometimes be more distracting than anything else. The book is filled with enthusiastic sentences ending in exclamation marks, exasperating the reader raising suspicions the author offers more propaganda than reasoned exegesis and argument. He is also not helped by overplaying the "camel" motif, calling evangelists "Camel Riders" (187). Stylistically, this can sound too "cheesy" such that one is less inclined to take the book seriously.

Overall, *The Camel* is a valuable and recommendable resource. His treatment of Muslim culture and the Koran is respectable. At the most critical points in the book, he demonstrates a high regard for Scripture and the humility to admit the limitations of the Camel methodology. Aside from this central point, the book is helpful in describing some of the ways God has worked among Muslim populations throughout the world. His pastoral reminders keep the reader from remaining at the level of theory. He offers countless, practical ideas how to engage Muslim populations at different levels and in different ways. In short, Greeson shows respect for the complexity of cross-cultural ministry, particularly among Muslims. In his efforts to give a simple approach to Muslim evangelism, he resists the temptation to become overly reductionistic or formulaic. The book's weaknesses do not undermine the core of the book; nevertheless, the reader needs to remain aware of unfounded presupposition and of uncritical applications.