

FOR THE LOVE OF MUSLIMS

Lessons for Online Missionaries dealing with Muslims

Lesson 28: Should I Change My Name?

Some [Christian] friends are saying that Salman is a Muslim name and that I should change it.
-Salman

How would you respond to this new believer?

Some Muslims change their names when they accept Christ, but others don't. The Bible doesn't specifically say what to do in regards to this issue, although it seems that normally in scripture people keep their names after believing on Jesus. This is simply not an issue that is addressed very much. God leaves the decision up to us. It would be important for us to communicate this to a person such as Salman, who is getting pressure to change his name.

In the Old Testament, Daniel used his Persian name, Belteshazzar (meaning "protect the king"), for official business. He worked in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king who had no respect for God. Daniel's friend Azariah was renamed "Abednego," which means "servant of Nebo" (Nebo was a Babylonian god). Can you imagine your name meaning "servant" of a pagan deity? Both of these men didn't demand their names be changed back to something more "Jewish" or something less Babylonian. God honored these men and gave them amazing positions of authority as they witnessed to the power of Almighty God. From this, we can conclude that someone can follow Jesus with any name.

There are several reasons why it is probably good to suggest that the internet contact leave his or her name as it is:

1. It will prevent the people they know from assuming that they have abandoned their culture and heritage as a Muslim, especially the parents who named the person in the first place (Imagine how your parents would feel if you changed the name they gave you...).
2. It could allow the person to have a stronger witness *within* their community as they live out their faith with a Muslim name.
3. It allows Muslim friends and family to focus on the inward changes that the Holy Spirit is working in their life, instead of focusing on something superficial like a name.
4. Many people with "Christian" names are not true followers of Jesus – the heart is what matters.

The most important thing is that you encourage the new believer to pray about this decision and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Send comments/questions to flmcomments@navajeevan.org