

**An Analysis of the Status and Evangelism Strategy  
of Muslim Wives in Saudi Arabia**

**By**

**Sharon Elizabeth Booyesen**

**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Bachelor of Theology (Honours)**

**at the South African Theological Seminary**

**May 2008**

**Supervisor: Dr Franklin Jabini**

## Summary

Western society at large is prone to conclude that the majority of Islamic wives are treated as inferior, second class citizens with few rights and insurmountable hurdles. By contrast, many Islamic scholars deny this, insisting that Islam brought emancipation for women. This mini-thesis seeks to conduct a literary analysis of the ideological tenets of Islam, and the subsequent implications for the economic, social and religious status of Muslim wives, in order to test this hypothesis. This mini-thesis argues that Islam as a patriarchal system legitimates and propagates widespread discrimination against women in general, and wives in particular. Saudi Arabia as the cradle of Islam practices Wahhabism, an austere form of Islam which subscribes to early Islamic ideologies. Thus the research scope will focus on the social, economic and spiritual status of the Saudi wife.

Segregation renders many Islamic wives inaccessible to Christians, and thus severely impedes avenues for evangelism and discipleship. Thus Christians must implement creative strategies in order to bring Muslim wives to Christ, showing insight, wisdom and respect. It is crucial that Christians engage relevant codes of practice for Muslim evangelism, so as to ensure success in winning them to Christ.

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this mini-thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1 Opening Remarks.....	1
1.2 The Study to be Conducted.....	1
1.3 The Value of the Study.....	2
1.4 The Aim of the Study.....	4
1.5 The Objectives of the Study.....	4
1.6 The Research and Subsidiary Questions.....	5
1.7 Methodology.....	5
1.8 The Current State of Scholarship.....	6
1.9 Definitions of Relevant Islamic Concepts/ Terms.....	6
<b>2. The Status of Wives in Pure Islam</b> .....	8
2.1 The Teaching of the Qur'an and the Hadith.....	10
a. Qur'anic Verses.....	10
b. Hadith Verses.....	13
2.2 Mohammad's Impact on the Status of Wives.....	16
2.3 The Spiritual Standing of Muslim Wives.....	20
a. A Toy.....	20
b. A Rib.....	20
c. A Stumbling Block.....	20
d. Coverings.....	21

2.4	A Wife’s Role as Mother.....	22
2.5	Equality of the Sexes.....	23
2.6	A Woman’s Rights Within Marriage.....	25
	a. Choice of Husband.....	26
	b. Chastity.....	26
	c. A Husband’s Property.....	27
	d. Inheritance.....	27
	e. The Eternal hereafter/ Paradise.....	27
2.7	A Husband’s Rights Within Marriage.....	28
	a. Polygyny.....	29
	b. Divorce.....	30
<b>3.</b>	<b>The Status of the Modern Muslim Wife in Saudi Arabia.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>The Church’s Evangelistic Response.....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1	Challenges for the Church.....	37
4.2	Principles for Ministering to Muslim Wives.....	40
<b>5.</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>52</b>

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Opening Remarks**

Islam is not just a religion, but a cultural view which has the power to affect all aspects of the life of the Muslim. Islam permeates and affects public, private, legal, spiritual, governmental and social life, blurring secular and sacred, and dictating how the Muslim should behave, think, dress and live. In short, it is a way of life (Al Araby 1995:15). This has great implications for Muslims, and for those who live in close proximity to those of the Muslim faith, as Islam by nature is a domineering religion which seeks to control and convert (Parshall 2002:98).

### **1.2 The Study to be Conducted**

Islam has been subjected to widespread demonisation and stereotyping in the West (Azumah 2002:1). One perception is that Islamic societies are prone to oppress, discriminate against, and treat as inferior the female gender. Many Muslim scholars such as Dr Farooq Hassan, Special UN Ambassador for the Family, and Dr Asma Barlas from Ithaca College, New York, assent that this is indeed the case in many Muslim communities (Hassan 2005:§5.21) and (Barlas 2005:1).

The Extremist Islamic movement seems to promote and enforce a doctrine that is seen by many as anti- woman, anti- intellectual, anti- progress and anti- science. Dr Hassan admits that women in many Islamic nations are given secondary status, little security, inequality, poverty and polygyny. He asserts that this state of affairs needs redress, and he proposes that education is the answer (Hassan 2005:§5.21). However these Muslim scholars maintain that the tenets of pure Islam do not condone such belief and practice. They insist that Islamic edicts are liberating and empowering for women. Goodwin quotes Dr Zaki Badawi of the Muslim College in London, as follows:

Very few Muslim countries have given women their full rights, and both Islamic law and the message of Islam have been violated. I am extremely concerned with what is happening to women, and such doctrine is also destructive to Islam (Goodwin 1994:27).

### **1.3 The Value of the Study**

The status of wives in Islam is not static, as change is a dynamic witnessed almost decade by decade in many Islamic countries. The resurgence of Extremist Islam is prominent throughout both the Islamic and Western worlds, with grave implications for society in general and Christianity in particular. Goodwin contends that the most important indicator of change within the Islamic world is the treatment of its women. It reveals much about a society's basic structure, because family honour is seen to reside in a woman's chastity and modesty. The treatment of its women also reveals a nation's view of sociological and political factors and basic human rights (Goodwin 1994:28).

In Islamic countries where extremist movements are gaining power, women must be seen to comply with the strict religious leaders in order to maintain this power. Dr Hassan sees this extremism as a defensive strategy for some Islamic sectors and as a powerful weapon against outsiders employed by others (Hassan 2005:¶10). There seems to be no easier way to visually demonstrate and enforce Islamic compliance than by using the status of women. Women's dress codes and their lack of public presence are a strong message of Islamic dominance in a society. Bradley quotes one Muslim woman on a "60 Minutes" current affairs show as saying:

The society force(s) it. And if you do something against the society, you will feel, you will have a problem. So it's better to go within the mainstream of the society, fit in, be conformist in a way, and be innovative in another way (Bradley 2005:21).

The lack of women's freedom is a key indicator of political and religious direction, and religion is used to legitimate power, with Qur'anic verses used or misinterpreted to suit political agendas (Goodwin 1994:9).

Because the treatment of women in Muslim countries usually reflects social, economic, educational and religious change in Islam itself, it is crucial for Christians to monitor these trends and developments.

Dr Hassan contends that any Islamic discrimination of women is a result of religious misunderstanding, history, cultural context or political "machinations". He insists that this directly violates the tenets of Islam (Hassan 2005:¶9). Yet the lowly treatment of women cannot solely be blamed on history, culture or politics. From its roots, Islam has propagated practices that have led to the degradation of women. It seems that Mohammad sowed seeds which have reaped many detrimental religious and social consequences where women are concerned, throughout the Islamic world down through the centuries (Nehls and Eric 1994:4).

I wish to conduct a literary study of the economic, social and religious status of Muslim wives in Saudi Arabia, in order to ascertain whether discrimination exists. The scope will focus on the status of the Saudi wife in Islam; her rights, restrictions and life challenges.

The inaccessible seclusion of many Islamic wives offers challenges for their evangelisation. Thus Christians must be creative in their strategies to bring Muslim wives to Christ, showing insight, wisdom and respect. It is important for Christians to formulate current codes of practice for Muslim evangelism so as to have more success in winning their wives to Christ. Much previous study has been conducted in this area by scholars such as Phil Parshall (1994), Dr John Azumah (2001), Gerhard Nehls

(1994) and others; however it is beneficial to keep abreast of new developments. The value of this study will be its investigation into new methods which have emerged in the past decade.

#### **1.4 The Aim of the Study**

This literary study will seek to explore this issue objectively, analysing various viewpoints, in an effort to draw correct conclusions. It will cover issues such as the spiritual and social status of wives in pure Islam and the Qur'an; legal rights within marriage and the family; the impact of Islamic Extremism upon wives; and practices which affect wives, such as segregation, the veil and polygyny. I will investigate the treatment of wives in Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam. Finally, I will explore the difficulties encountered with witnessing to Muslim wives, and how they can be effectively reached with the Gospel.

#### **1.5 The Objectives of the Study**

- 1.5.1 To evaluate the spiritual, social, and economic status of wives in the tenets of pure Islam, and the teachings of Mohammad in Muslim holy writings (specifically the Qur'an and The Hadiths), in order to ascertain their injunctions regarding wives.
- 1.5.2 To investigate the historic and modern social, economic and religious status of wives in Saudi Arabia.
- 1.5.3 To investigate challenges for the church when conducting ministry to Muslim wives.
- 1.5.4 To formulate methods for effective evangelism and discipleship of Muslim wives in Saudi Arabia.
- 1.5.5 **SECONDARY OBJECTIVE:** To formulate conclusions and recommendations for the Church.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the background information regarding Muslim wives, this mini-thesis will answer the main research question:

*“What evangelistic methods should the church employ in order to reach Muslim wives in Saudi Arabia, since they are largely inaccessible to the Gospel, and apparently hold inferior spiritual, social and economic status, in accordance with the tenets of pure Islam?”*

In order to answer this research question, the following Subsidiary Questions must be investigated:

- a. What are the tenets of pure Islam in regards to the status, spiritual standing and rights of Islamic wives? How do these affect the status of wives in modern Saudi Arabia?
- b. What challenges does the church face when conducting evangelism to Muslim wives? What general principles and strategies should the Church employ when evangelising Muslim wives in Saudi Arabia?

## **1.7 Methodology**

I will investigate the impact of Muslim tenets on the status, spiritual standing and rights of Islamic wives in chapter two by conducting a literary study of the Qur’an, Hadiths and academic works by scholars such as Dr F. Hassan (2005), al- Qaradawy (2002), Khan (1995), Azumah (2002), Nehls (1994) and Rafiqul-Haqq and Newton (1993).

In chapter three, I will investigate the status of the Saudi wife by conducting literary studies of academic works, religious writings, news bulletins and mission publications using Nehls & Eric (1994), Gabriel (n.d), Al Munajjed (1997), SIM (n.d), P and J Parshall (2002), Dalacoura (2003), Nasreen (2008), Goodwin (1994), Koolmees (2004), Human Rights Watch (2007), the Qur’an and the Hadiths.

I will identify the ministry challenges encountered when conducting evangelism of Muslim wives in chapter four, by conducting a literary study of the Hadiths, Azumah (2002), Parshall (1980), Eck and Jain (1986), Koolmees (2004) and Warraq (2003).

I will also suggest evangelism strategies after consulting academic works, two tentmaker missionaries to Saudi Arabia, mission works and internet articles such as Mallouhi (2003), Musk (1989), Warraq (2003), Fry & King (1980), Parshall (1980) and Nehl (n.d.).

### 1.8 The Current State of Scholarship

Various studies by scholars such as Goodwin (1994), Parshall (various), Samuel Huntington (1993), Mernissi (1991) and others have been conducted in the past, often focussing on a general approach to Islam. However, given the dynamic nature of the modern Muslim world, and the resurgence of Extremism and “*Jihad*”, recent studies are always beneficial. Missiological strategy must keep abreast of these changes so as to maximise ministry relevance and effectiveness.

### 1.9 Definitions of Relevant Islamic Concepts/ Terms

**Allah:** An Arabic word, literally meaning “the God”. The name of Islam’s God.

**‘Awwrah:** A Latin term, meaning a thing to be ashamed of. The parts of the woman’s body which must not be seen by strangers.

**Baya:** Muslim wives.

**Burqa:** A scarf worn to cover the head, leaving the face open.

**Caliph:** A successor to Mohammad.

**Chador:** A garment which covers the whole person, leaving only a slit of netting for sight.

**Exogamous:** Marriage between nationals and foreigners.

**Haraam:** Ritually unclean or forbidden to Muslims.

**Hijab or Abaya:** The veil that covers the face and entire body, leaving only an open slit for the eyes. From the word *hijaba*, which means to conceal or render invisible by use of a screen.

**Jihad:** Islamic Holy War.

- Jinn:** Arabic for demonic spirits.
- Kaffir:** The term used by Muslims to refer to any infidel or non- Muslim person.
- Majlis:** The Council where senior members of the Saudi royal family hear citizen complaints and proposals.
- Mujahedeen:** The term for Muslims fighting in a war or any other struggle, from the same Arabic root as *Jihad*.
- Mut'a:** A state of temporary marriage which can be easily dissolved.
- Mutawwa'in:** Saudi Arabian religious law enforcement agency. The 'Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice'.
- Nushuz:** To be disobedient, to rise, to gain advantage, to be elevated above.
- Polygyny:** A national or tribal custom in which a man has more than one wife.
- Pure Islam:** The Islamic religion, as taught by its holy writings, The Qur'an and The Hadiths.
- Sharia:** Muslim judicial law.
- Sufism:** Folk Islam which explores the mystical dimension with an ascetic emphasis.
- Sunnah:** Following the example of Mohammad in all aspects of life; literally "the way".
- The Hadiths:** The collection of traditions and sayings of Mohammad.
- The Qur'an:** The holy book of Islam.
- Wahhabism:** An austere form of Sunni Islam which follows the Qur'an literally, rejecting practices and beliefs which developed in ensuing centuries since the Qur'an was compiled.
- Zar ceremony:** An occultist Muslim ceremony which invokes communication with spirits.
- Zina:** A legal term, meaning to engage in illicit sexual conduct.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Status of Wives in Pure Islam**

Muslim women are granted varying degrees of status across the globe. Some Muslim societies legally uphold the equal status of men and women, while others practice systematic discrimination against women in political, educational, employment, social and religious arenas (Saeed 2003:158). Islam's perspective of wives is no simple matter, as Islam is not homogenous. It contains varying viewpoints, ranging from denial to blatant insistence that women are inferior.

Some scholars such as al- Qaradawy contend that women are constitutionally "different" and therefore only capable of certain roles within the home (al-Qaradawy 2002:§5.3). Others like Dr Farooq Hassan (2005:§3.4), assert that Mohammad respected women, and instituted reforms to ensure that they may be fairly treated. They insist that any deviation from this is not pure Islam, incompatible with Mohammad's teaching and thus a distortion for political, social and religious control. Khan also ascribes to this view:

The status of women in Islam is the same as that of man. Injunctions about honour and respect enjoined for one sex are enjoined equally on the other sex. In so far as rights in this world, and rewards in the Hereafter are concerned, there is no difference between the sexes. In the organisation of daily living, both are equal participants and partners (Khan 1995:2).

Women are not seen as inferior, but their biological dispositions dictate that different tasks must be assigned to them (al-Qaradawy 2002:§5.3). The home is the cohesive unit for society, and women play an essential role because they are seen to be naturally endowed with the physical and emotional abilities needed to build a home (Khan 1995: 20, 21).

To the Muslim, the division of labour is not discriminatory, but preserves the distinctive characteristics of both sexes. The talents and skills of each gender are allegedly utilised in the most socially useful manner when the husband works and the wife remains at home. Chopra maintains that any alienation and segregation enforced upon women is not Islamic (2008:1). In addition, Dr Riffat Hassan insists:

The Qur'an is the Magna Carta of human rights... to free human beings from the bondage of traditionalism, authoritarianism, tribalism, racism, sexism and slavery... The rights that it has given to women are, indeed, impressive (1995:4, 9).

In the Qur'an males are the protectors and maintainers of women (Surah 9:At Tawbah:71). However this apparently does not infer a superior role to males, though it does hold rewards. Due to a man's role as provider, he requires greater financial resources than a woman, thus accounting for unequal distribution of inheritance (al-Qaradawy 2002:§5.4,5). Both genders seemingly enjoy the same status, and are equal participants of rights and blessings. Yet many Muslims maintain that men possess additional attributes, and are consequently superior to women. Women's roles may be viewed as inferior, thus leading to the debasement of women in society, with less rights, share in family property, female infanticide and a lower status (Khan 1995:21).

The segregation of women is strictly enforced in many Islamic countries. Dr Riffat Hassan maintains that Arabic culture has "infiltrated" Islam in this regard, thus preventing the Qur'an from liberating women, as was originally intended. Although segregation was originally a punishment for unchastity, it was never intended to be a normal way of life (Hassan 1995:10). Al-Qaradawy holds a similar view. He insists that segregation did not exist in Saudi Arabia in Mohammad's era. Women attended group

prayers, teaching and religious celebrations with no dividing partitions in place. They also served alongside men as cooks and nurses in the *mujahedeen* army (2002:§6.5,9).

Dr Farooq Hassan, the Special UN Ambassador for Family, agrees with this stance. He contends that restrictions against women in some nations are goal oriented, and the result of history, not Islam. He admits that women in many Islamic societies are given secondary status, with little security, polygyny, poverty, and inequality to contend with (2005:§5,21). Dr Riffat Hassan goes a step further to declare that Muslim wives are erroneously treated as “puppets... slave- like creatures whose only purpose in life is to cater to the needs and pleasures of men” (Hassan 1995:11). He is concerned that Muslim wives experience marriage as minors, with little rights in divorce. He insists that teaching ascribed to Islam which discriminates against women is not Islamic at all.

Let us now explore Qur’anic and Hadith verses in order to evaluate this position.

## **2.1 The teaching of the Qur’an and the Hadiths**

### **a. Qur’anic Verses**

The Qur’an, literally meaning “recite” is the holy book of Islam. To the Muslim it is above reproach, and its validity is unquestioned. It is deemed as Allah’s final and superior revelation to man, and is the benchmark for which Muslims must aim to aspire. Thus it is obeyed with reverence (Parshall 1994:ch 1).

The Qur’an has much to say regarding the status of women, and does not always portray a consistent view. Dr John Azumah, an African Christian scholar, suggests that Islam has two faces which can confuse the issue. The Meccan revelations are “pacifist, inclusivist, liberative, peaceful and moderate”. Conversely, Mohammad’s revelations from Medina are “triumphalist, exclusivist, oppressive, militant and extremist” (Azumah 2002:1). Nehls and Eric support this view and contend that Mohammad’s change in disposition and attitude was the cause of this dichotomy. After experiencing religious opposition, Mohammad became more aggressive upon relocation to Medina. Indeed,

they assert “the humble, quiet, faithful man became a powerful potentate” (Nehls and Eric 1994:4). This change affected Mohammad’s teaching regarding women.

In order to avoid paraphrasing, this thesis will directly quote the Qur’an, so it may speak for itself. A wide range of verses regarding women has been cited, to ensure objectivity.

*Divorced women remain in waiting (ie do not remarry) for three (menstrual) periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this (period) if they want reconciliation. And due to them (the wives) is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men (husbands) have a degree over them (in responsibility and authority). And Allah is exalted in Might and Wise. Surah 2: 228*

Mohammad instituted strict controls for divorce and re-marriage. He gave women a certain degree of justice, but men were ascribed higher status and authority over women.

*And call in to witness two witnesses, men, or if the two be not men, then one man and two women, such witness as you approve of, that if one women errs the other will remind her. Surah 2:282b*

Women are given the authority to provide testimony equal to only half that of a man’s. The reason being, that if the woman is mistaken regarding the facts of the case, the other woman can remind her. Apparently male witnesses do not make mistakes, as they do not need reminding.

*If you fear that you cannot treat orphan girls with fairness, then you may marry other women who seem good to you: two, three or four of them. But if you fear that you cannot maintain equality among them, marry one only or any slave girls you may own. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice. Surah 4: 3*

Mohammad gives men the right to marry up to four wives, and have sexual rights to an unlimited number of concubines or slave girls, who were usually prisoners of war. Women are not given this right.

*Believers, it is unlawful for you to inherit the women of your deceased kinsmen against their will, or to bar them from re-marrying, in order that you may force them to give up a part of what you have given them, unless they be guilty of a*

*proven lewd act. Treat them with kindness; for even if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike a thing which Allah has meant for your own abundant good. Surah 4:19*

Mohammad banned levirate marriage and made it unlawful for men to take back the dowry paid upon marriage without the wife's consent. He entreats men to treat a woman with kindness, however still refers to her as a "thing".

*Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because God has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, refuse to share their beds, and beat them. Surah 4: 34*

Men are given authority over women because they are "superior". Women are to be obedient and chaste to God and to their husbands. Failing the success of the first two disciplinary measures, husbands are given the right to beat their wives on the subjective suspicion alone that they are disobedient.

*The true believers, both men and women, are friends to each other. Surah 9: 71a*

Men and women should be friends to each other, with kindness and respect.

*We shall reward the steadfast according to their noblest deeds. Be they men or women, those that embrace the faith and do what is right. We will surely grant a happy life; we shall reward them according to their noblest deeds. Surah 16:97*

Islam promises to reward both men and women for their faithfulness and noble deeds.

*Enjoin believing women to turn their eyes away from temptation and to preserve their chastity; not to display their beauty (except such as are normally displayed); to draw their veils over their bosoms and to not display their finery except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their step sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women-servants, and their slave girls; male attendants lacking their natural vigour, and children who have no carnal knowledge of women. And let them not stamp their feet when walking so as to reveal their hidden trinkets. Surah 24: 31*

Women are to practice modesty by veiling their bosoms. Given the wide range of relatives to whom they may display their "finery", it seems that the verse does not just speak of private body parts, as it would be inappropriate to display nakedness to male

relatives such as uncles, fathers-in-law and older sons. The ambiguity of this verse has given grounds for veiling in the Muslim world. Women are taught to practice discretion, and to never draw unnecessary attention.

*And among His signs is this; that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts). Surah 30: 21*

Mohammad taught that peace, love and kindness should be characteristic of marriage.

*O wives of the prophet...Abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as was the display of the former times of ignorance. Surah 33:32a, 33a*

Mohammad commanded his wives to stay in their homes, thus promoting segregation.

*Prophet, enjoin your wives, your daughters, and the wives of true believers to draw their veils close round them. That is more proper, so that they may be recognised and not be molested. God is ever forgiving and merciful. Surah 33: 59*

Muslim women are told to veil themselves so as to promote chastity and avoid molestation.

*Those that do evil shall be rewarded with like evil; but those that have faith and do good works, both men and women, shall enter the Gardens of Paradise and receive blessings without measure. Surah 40: 40*

Both males and females will reap eternal rewards, either evil or good, according to their deeds.

## **b. Hadith Verses**

Although the Qur'an is purported as the primary source of Muslim knowledge, it does not address all problems of life. During Mohammad's lifetime, he would often produce a revelation to address arising daily issues (Al Araby 2008:§6). This will be discussed later in this thesis. However, following his death no further prophets were available to give revelations, as Mohammad was held as the final and greatest prophet (B.I.S.A. Lecture Notes 1997). To overcome this obstacle, Mohammad's followers began to use his life as the prime, sole example for perfect conduct and thinking (Surah 3:31; 33:21). Strict adherence to his sayings, behaviour and deeds was required. Thus the Hadith comprises everything Mohammad said, what he did, and what he approved, by not

objecting to that which he witnessed. It was compiled in a collection of writings about 300 years after Mohammad's death (B.I.S.A. Lecture Notes 1997).

Thus the Hadith is held as very important in giving a proper interpretation of the Qur'an, and as the primary source of Law after the Qur'an. It gives an important basis of Islamic jurisprudence and theology, although some Muslims disregard it as contextually outdated (B.I.S.A. Lecture Notes 1997).

*Everything in this world is a piece of property, or a possession. The best possession in the world is a pious woman.* An- Nasa'i Sunan, Kitab an-Nikah, 6/68

A woman is seen as a possession.

*Only a man of noble character will honour women, and only a man of base intentions will dishonour them.* Kanz al-'Ummal 16/ 371

Honourable men treat women with honour and respect.

*No believing man should hate a believing woman, for if there is any habit of hers that displeases him, there will be some other habit of hers that pleases him.* Muslim, Sahih, Kita bar-Rada 2/ 1091

Muslim men are not to hate Muslim women, but are to appreciate their admirable qualities.

*The most perfect man of religion is one who excels in character. The best among you is he who gives the best treatment to his womenfolk.* Al- Tirmidhi, Sahih, Abwah ar-Rada 2/ 1091

The most devout Muslim men treat women well.

*According to Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet considered a woman good if she was a delight to her husband's gaze, obeyed his wishes when something had to be done for him, and placed her person and her wealth entirely at his disposal.* An-Nasa'i, Suran, kitab an- Nikah, 6/ 68

Mohammad considered a woman to be good if she is beautiful, obedient, generous with her wealth and totally at her husband's disposal in all regards.

*Shall I not tell you what the best form of wealth is? It is a pious woman who is a delight to her husband's eyes, who obeys when asked to do anything, and who*

*looks after his interests when he is away.* Abu Dawud, Sunan, Kitab al-Adab, 4/ 338

An enterprising, obedient wife is seen as a possession of wealth.

*If a man to whom a girl is born neither buries her alive, humiliates her, nor gives his sons preference over her, he will be allowed to enter heaven by God, as a reward.* Abu Dawud, Sunan, Kitab al- Adab, 4/ 338

Mohammad discouraged female infanticide, female neglect/ abuse and son preference.

*The witness of a woman is equal to half that of a man because of the deficiency of the woman's mind.* Hadith vol 3.826

A woman's intellect is deficient, so her witness is equal to only half that of a man. This implies that women have half the intelligence of men.

*Fear God in respect of women.* Ibn Majah, Sunan, Kitab al-Manasik, 2/ 1025

A God- fearing Muslim will show respect for women.

*I have not seen any one more deficient in intelligence and religion than women.* Al Bukhary vol 2:541

Women are on the lowest level of society when it comes to intelligence and spirituality.

*When a woman comes she comes in the form of a devil.* Hadith No. 3240

Women are like devils.

*The Prophet said: "I have not left any calamity after me more detrimental to men than women."* Hadith No. 33

Women have the potential to cause the greatest destruction to men.

*"O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell fire were you"* Hadith No. 301

The majority of the occupants of Hell are women, implying women are more evil.

*Amongst the inmates of Paradise the women would form the minority.* Hadith No. 6600

Women form the minority in Paradise, as they are apparently less virtuous than men.

*Had it not been for women, God would have truly, truly been worshipped.* Hadith No. 825

It is the fault of women that God is not truly worshipped.

*The woman is 'awrah. When she goes outside (the house), the devil welcomes her.* Vol 2 Kitab Adab al- Nikah

The woman is unclean and something to be ashamed of. If she leaves her house she embarks on evil with the devil, thus it is better she be kept indoors.

Despite Muslim assertions to the contrary, it can be fairly concluded that pure Islam does in fact postulate a view that is discriminatory to wives. It may be true that Mohammad improved women's rights before Europe instituted such changes, however this has failed to be practically realised in the daily context of many Muslim wives (Barlas 2005:1). Islamic texts and modern law prioritize males, thereby assigning women unequal status and inferior personhood. Muslim literature seems to have portrayed a consistent view of women down through the centuries. As written by Rafiqul- Haqq and Newton:

We can see that the Qur'an, the sound Hadith, the commentators of the Qur'an, Muslim scholars, ancient and modern, are consistent in teaching the superiority of men over women (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:43).

## **2.2 Mohammad's Impact on the Status of Wives**

It is evident that the Qur'an and Hadiths have much to say concerning the affairs of women. As they represent Mohammad's teachings and daily example, he had great impact on the lives and status of Muslim wives. In many respects, these teachings ascribe worth and honour to women, urging men to treat them with justice, respect and kindness. Historically, we know that Mohammad instituted reforms which helped women.

Before Mohammad's birth in AD 570, sixth- century Arabia was known as the "Times of Ignorance", with the majority of the nomadic Bedouin tribes being polytheists. They believed in one Supreme God, yet worshipped many lesser deities and spirits (*jinn*) (Gabriel n.d:3). An annual pilgrimage was conducted to the Ka'ba in Mecca, which

apparently housed 360 idols. Idolatry, fatalism and occultism were widespread, and even Mohammad's grandfather is said to have consulted a witch regarding the birth of Mohammad's father (Nehls & Eric 1994:3). Although Christians and Jews were present in the land, their influence was negligible and largely associated with foreign domination and repression. It seems that Mohammad was exposed to some Biblical stories, but had no great understanding of the Gospel (SIM n.d:2).

At that time Arabia was a society in religious, moral and cultural decay. Alcoholism, gambling, and prostitution were rife (Lochhaas 1990:11) and many women were treated as chattel, having little protection or status (Hassan 20005:¶29). Mona Al Munajjed claims that incest was legitimate, with fathers allowed to marry their own daughters. A wife "was an object to be inherited like money, but she could inherit nothing from her husband or her son" (Al Munajjed 1997:13). However, powerful, influential women were also to be found. Mohammad's first wife, Khadija was a wealthy widow and the respected businesswoman for whom he worked before their marriage (Profitt n.d:2).

Phil and Julie Parshall concede that women were disadvantaged in pre- Islamic Arabia, but they assert that this was common in most cultures throughout history. It seems the Muslim portrayal of Mohammad as the great emancipator of women is aided by giving pre- and post- Islam viewpoints which are extreme and inaccurate. Thus Mohammad's disrespect towards women becomes admirable compared to the "shocking" way they were previously treated (P & J Parshall 2002:22).

Mohammad discouraged female infanticide, slavery and levirate marriage, and introduced policies which enabled women to inherit and bequeath property, and control their own wealth. He also allowed some women to vote, when the *baya* (wives) were asked to endorse political leadership ("*The roles and status of women in predominantly Muslim societies*" 24 May 2005:1). He seems to have formally validated women's rights to some extent, and sought ways to protect them, even if these were not always obeyed in the ancient and modern context of Islam.

However, it must be noted that many of Mohammad's teachings alienate and degrade women. Although Mohammad paid lip service to women's rights, he often denied these rights by his words and actions, and promoted the degradation of women. For instance, Surah 24:33 reads:

But force not your (slave girls) to prostitution when they desire chastity, in order that you may gain in the goods of this life. But if anyone compels them, after such compulsion, Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. Surah 24: 33.

Mohammad discouraged men from forcing their slave girls into prostitution, but does not abolish this slavery per se. He even condones the enforced prostitution of slaves by saying that God will forgive the master's sin after the fact.

Similarly, Surah 4:3 reads:

If you fear you can not treat orphans (girls) with fairness, then you may marry other wives who seem good to you; two or three or four of them. But if you fear that you can not maintain equality among them, marry only one or any slave girl you may own. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice.

Ironically, in order to "avoid injustice" Mohammad encouraged men to own an unlimited number of slave girls for their own sexual gratification. This was advocated even if children from the union were born into a life of slavery, because it allegedly constituted a lesser evil than adultery (Hadith No. 142, 268). Islam thus seems promotes male selfishness at the expense of the welfare of common law or legal wives.

Mohammad was a staunch advocate for polygyny and child marriage, and these are consequently widespread in the Muslim world today. Muslim tradition teaches that he had nine wives and numerous concubines at the time of his death. He is reported to have married thirteen wives over his life time. Mohammad's favourite wife, Aisha was only six years old when he married her (he was 53), and tradition teaches that she came to the marriage with her dolls. The marriage was consummated when she was nine years old, thus advocating paedophilia (Sahid Muslim Vol III: 716 in Nehls & Eric n.d:4). It is widely held that Mohammad loved Aisha more than his other wives (P & J

Parshall 2002:29) and was not fair in apportioning equal time and money (Razi on Q 4:129).

Although Mohammad taught against divorce in Hadith No. 137 when he is purported to have said “The most detestable of lawful things near Allah is divorce”, his actions taught otherwise. Zaynab Bint Jahsh was married to Mohammad’s adopted son when Mohammad developed a liking to her. Mohammad’s son divorced Zaynab so Mohammad could marry her (Al Araby 1995:18). Surah 33: 37 quotes Allah as saying:

Then, when Zaid had dissolved (his marriage) with her we joined her in marriage to thee, in order that there might be no difficulty to the believers in marriage to wives of their adopted sons.

It is interesting to note that Mohammad’s actions did not always follow his teachings (Al Araby 2008:§6). For instance, although he decreed that other men could only have a maximum of four wives, he permitted himself many more. Surah 33:50 excuses this by stating “This privilege is yours alone, being granted to no other believer”. In one Hadith, Anas bin Malik said, “Any of the female slaves of Medina could take hold of the hand of Allah’s Apostle and take him wherever she wished” (8:62; 72.61.97). It seems that he had free access to slave girls with impunity. This Hadith also describes how Mohammad repeatedly visited a married woman, with whom he had close physical contact, even though he denied this liberty to others (9:108; 87.12.130).

Mohammad permitted a number of practices, without speaking out against them when he had opportunity, and these are now practiced or even enforced in many areas of the world (P & J Parshall 2002:123). As previously discussed, other practices such as polygyny, divorce, wife beating, segregation and the veil were specifically encouraged by Mohammad, and are subsequently a way of life in many Muslim countries. These will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis. At best, the rights Mohammad often ascribed to women were those one would ascribe to a child, or a valued possession, but not an equal. One could argue that Muslim women, and in particular, Muslim wives, have no significant rights at all.

### **2.3 The Spiritual Standing of Muslim Wives**

We shall now look at a number of view points that Islam holds concerning wives, as they each adversely affect the spiritual standing of wives in Saudi Arabia.

#### **a. A Toy**

Omar, one of the Caliphs, was once said to be talking when his wife interrupted him. He turned to her and said “You are a toy, if you are needed we will call you” (Rafiqul-Haqq & Newton 1993:7). Even Mohammad is quoted as saying “The woman is a toy, whoever takes her let him care for her (or do not lose her)” (Rafiqul-Haqq & Newton 1993:7, 8). It seems that these founders of Islam considered a wife to be a plaything to be used and enjoyed at a man’s whim, and not an equal companion for man.

#### **b. A Rib**

Rafiqul-Haqq and Newton assert that Islam likens a woman’s character to a rib, which is crooked by nature, unable to be straightened. It is thought that a man must accept that a virtuous woman is very rare. They quote Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali as saying:

The woman’s... deception is awesome and their wickedness is contagious; bad character and feeble mind are the predominant traits... Mohammad said “The likeness of a virtuous woman amongst women is like a red beaked crow among a hundred crows (Rafiqul-Haqq & Newton 1993:11).

It is no coincidence that according to Islam, woman is taken from the left side of man, as the left side is said to represent the physical/ animal side. Thus these characteristics are said to be stronger in woman than man. By comparison, man is said to be dominated by the right side, meaning his spiritual and angelic qualities are greater. Thus a man is more important in religious life at the mosque, while a woman is unimportant (Musk 1989:162). Indeed, throughout history wives have been largely excluded from public worship and training, so it is little wonder their spiritual knowledge and lives may be somewhat lacking.

#### **c. A Stumbling Block**

Women are perceived to have the most destructive power in the Muslim social order, thus that power must be subjugated. This control, through segregation, veiling and

male guardianship, is used to prevent the distraction of men from their religious and social responsibilities. As a result, “the entire Muslim social structure can be seen as an attack on, and defence against, the disruptive power of female sexuality (Mernissi 1975: 45). This is very evident in Saudi Arabia, where women are veiled and segregated, so as to prevent male vice.

This control is taken a step further however, so that women are believed to enjoy and welcome this subjugation. Aqqad is quoted as saying:

Women’s energies are vested in seeking to be conquered, in wanting to be overpowered and subjugated. (Women have a) hearty appetite for suffering (and) enjoy surrender... their only source of pleasure and happiness is subjugation (Aqqad in Mernissi 1975:33).

It may true that, by nature, some women may be less aggressive than men, but it is grossly inaccurate and even perverse to insist that women find great pleasure in suffering, control and subjugation.

#### **d. Coverings**

Due to the view that women are seen as temptresses, many Islamic societies have instituted the veil (*hijab*) over the face and/or body (*chador*, *abaya*). Whenever a Saudi wife steps out of her home, she is compelled to cover herself. Surah 33:59 contends that the veil is a check against promiscuity for both genders.

Women’s dress is used to give a sense of Islamic nationalism and identity. It seems that the *hijab* is promoted for reasons of culture, ignorance, religious pride, or social and political power. Extremists and conservatives wanting to use Islam as a disciplinary system of control insist on women’s modesty, thus effectively excluding them from public life (Eck & Jain 1986:93). El Saadawi calls it an attempt at imprisonment (Eck & Jain 1986:251). One woman is quoted as saying:

I found that when I covered a little bit, I was told I needed to cover more, and then, to cover my face. And when you do that, they tell you that you shouldn’t drive, or go out, or take your kids out anywhere, or work. It gets out of hand, becomes never-ending (Ghalib in Goodwin 1994:204).

Muslim scholar Takim insists that the *hijab* is “liberation for women” and gives them “an aura of respect” which frees them from male scrutiny. In addition, he contends that the *hijab* gives women an escape from societal pressure for physical attractiveness and is a means of protection (Takim 1993:22). While this may be so, it does not solve the ills of society which cause women to seek the hijab’s protection in the first instance. Additionally, it is stiflingly hot and leads to vitamin D deficiency disease such as osteomalacia, eczema and ulcers (Goodwin 1994:56).

#### **2.4 A Wife’s Role as Mother**

Islam places strict expectations on wives as the pillars of the family. It is the domestic imperative of every Muslim wife to organise her own life, and those of her family in such a way that they are free from problems. The wife is to avoid causing difficulties for her husband and children, and must strive to maintain peace in family life. Obviously this view has negative implications for the Gospel, as it creates great social pressure to prevent female conversion, and to restrict a convert from actively practising Christianity.

The Muslim mother must always adhere to Islam by observing the following requirements, and is to teach her children to do likewise: a) she is to display true belief in Allah, and obedience to his commands, b) practise justice, c) withdraw from temptation, d) pay a proportion of wealth to Allah and the poor, e) prioritise the Hereafter over the present world, and f) she is to apply Islamic ethics and codes in family life (Khan 1995:129).

Islam sees different work roles and therefore different spheres of life. Khan says that wives outside the home create “perversion in society” (1995:48). He maintains that if she is permitted to venture outside the house for employment, the result is divorce, delinquency of children and pornography. Divorce is seen to increase dramatically when wives support themselves financially, because women make “hasty, ill-considered decisions” based on “emotionalism” (Khan 1995:53). As a result, Saudi women are segregated and encouraged to stay in their homes.

The free mixing of men and women is believed to promote immorality, with women continually seen as the downfall of men. Rather than require men to take responsibility for their own lust and temptation, women bear the burden, and are relegated to the house for the majority of their lives. Although Islam grudgingly acknowledges that women have made advances in many levels of Western society, women's liberation is seen as requiring too great a price.

## **2.5 Equality of the Sexes**

From an early age a Muslim girl is taught the art of submission and self denial. The birth of a male child is met with wild jubilation, while a girl may be ushered in with mourning and whispered condolences. In some Muslim countries, such as Pakistan, women have a lower life expectancy, and girls have a higher malnutrition rate because male family members are constantly favoured in terms of food and medical care. Young boys are even dressed as girls as a form of protection because females are considered less valuable, and therefore less likely to attract the evil eye or evil spirits (OMSA World Bytes Aug 1997:8).

In Saudi Arabia, all females are under a system of male legal guardianship, whereby they must obtain the permission of their closest male relative or husband before undertaking study, marriage, health care, travel, and access to legal or government agencies (*France/ Saudi Arabia: Sarkozy should raise Human Rights Issues in Saudi Arabia* 2008:¶11). They are subjected to widespread discrimination in religious life, employment, education, judicial cases and land grants (n.a 2008:¶6).

Muslim girls are apt to receive less education and are relatively uninvolved in official mosque activities across the Muslim world. This participation will rise with age, yet will generally be surpassed by males (Fry & King 1990:19,20). Her place is in the home, and she may not be allowed to play outside or mix freely with her peers, therefore her social life is very restricted. Some girls experience relative freedom until puberty is reached- at which point they may be veiled and/or segregated (Goodwin 1994:45).

The Muslim girl is constantly reminded that males are more important and are to be treated with respect and honour. Her life revolves around attending to the needs of her male family members, and then her husband, once she is married (Goodwin 1994:45). The wife is to be docile, obedient and self-sacrificing, with the needs of the males holding first priority, for this is the Muslim ideal of female beauty (Sabbah in Eck & Jain 1986:88, 89).

Men and women do not enjoy equal worth in Islam, as “men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other” (Surah 4:34). Women are perceived as deficient in their relationships with others, self and God, because of their inadequacy as persons. Because of their reproductive function, women are labelled as very emotional, forgetful and unreliable. Men are said to be more perfect in creation, intelligence and religion. For instance, the witness or testimony of a woman is only worth half that of a man, “Because of the deficiency of the woman’s mind” (Hadith Vol. 3:826). This greatly affects her worth in legal, financial and religious matters.

One Muslim theologian, Razi, said

Women... are a useful thing (and) not created for worship and obeying of divine commandments... the woman is weak, silly, ... like a child... but for the grace of Allah upon us to be complete, women had to be charged so that they may fear the torment of punishment and so follow her husband, and keep away from what is forbidden, otherwise corruption would be rampant (Razi in Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:5).

Of course, not all Muslims hold so strong a view, yet it cannot be denied that Islam does hold women to be inferior to men in many respects.

“Women are excluded from religion, philosophy, politics and economics. They are outside these realms” (el Saadawi in Eck & Jain 1986: 249) and relegated to the lower level of the hierarchical order. Some even hold that women are excluded from the attributes of God, such as authority and “sacred, ritualised and collective” knowledge, and so must be also excluded from decision making and law making. One Muslim writer said:

Woman is equal to the man in Islam before the Law... but... (she) is not equal to the man with regard to her social worth and her subjective rights, for how can the commanding and the commanded, the great and the small, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the sane and the mad, the just and the unjust, the honourable and the insignificant, the able and the unable, the working and the lazy, the strong and the weak be equal? We must not then mix between equality before the Law and the social worth of the human being (Tuffaha in Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993: 47).

This writer seeks to draw a distinction between Islamic Law and personhood, yet it is not clear that Islamic Law makes such a distinction. Furthermore, it is highly speculative as to whether that Law does indeed ascribe women equal status.

## **2.6 A Wife's Rights within Marriage**

As mentioned previously, a woman's virtue rests in her role as wife and mother. As she is obedient, pleasing, chaste, sexually satisfying and attractive to her husband, she protects him from temptation, and thus protects his eternal destiny (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:42). Wives are given the awesome responsibility of protecting the eternal destiny of men, and are thus coerced into conforming to the standards of Islam. They are said to have the "power to deceive and defeat men, not by force, but by cunning and intrigue" (Ghazali in Mernissi 1975:33). They are considered a dangerous distraction, and therefore should not receive the emotional investment and attention that belongs to Allah alone. If women fail to be virtuous, "their most important task", they cause men to stumble, and often bear the blame for the downfall (Ghazali in Mernissi 1975:33ff).

'O Messenger of Allah! What right has the wife of one among us got over him?' He said: 'It is that you shall give her food when you have taken your food that you shall clothe her when you have clothed yourself, that you shall not slap her on the face, not revile her, nor desert her except within the house.' (Sunan Ibn Magah, Kitab a-Nikah, Hadith No. 1850).

Thus it seems that a woman always comes second in marriage after her husband's needs and wants are satisfied. The institute of marriage holds different rights for the Muslim husband, as opposed to the wife. Depending on individual preference, nationality, religiosity, education, personality and social status, some Muslim marriages will give wives much more rights than others. However, as seen in the above quotation from the Hadith, it is clear that Muslim husbands may take selfish precedence over their wives, who are considered the less important partners.

**a. Choice of Husband**

Mohammad gave woman the right to choose their marriage partner (Saeed 2003:163) however it remains common practice for a woman's closest male relative to hold this right in nations like Saudi Arabia. Many Muslim women have no free choice, and Muslim marriages may still be arranged, even in Western countries. Fratricide can occur in nations like Pakistan if a woman resists familial pressure to marry. Some women spurn their family's choice of husband and marry the partner they wish. However this action carries a risk, as under Sharia law, parents have the right to lodge an adultery charge against their own daughter if she goes against their wishes. In nations such as Saudi Arabia, adultery carries a death penalty (Hughes 2005:1).

**b. Chastity**

A bride is to be a virgin when she enters marriage, and as in Old Testament culture, proof of her chastity is required. If this is not forthcoming, even for legitimate physiological reasons, honour killings by the girl's own brothers may be carried out even on the suspicion alone that a violation of Islamic law has occurred. Honour killings are a common practice throughout the Islamic world. In Iran a man may receive as little as six months imprisonment for confessing to the honour killing of his female relative ([www.wluml.org](http://www.wluml.org): 29/11/2007). A young girl was recently killed by her father in Saudi Arabia when he caught her chatting on-line to an unrelated male on Facebook (Jowan 2008:¶1). Dr Ali Al-Hanaki, the director of the Social Affairs Ministry in the Western Region, reported the honour killing of another Saudi girl, who was murdered by her male relatives because she was allegedly found in the presence of an unrelated male. Although she had sought protection in a women's shelter, Saudi authorities returned the girl to her family, who then secretly murdered her (Kawthar 2008:¶1,3).

Virginity is seen as such an important issue that many girls have surgical procedures to restore their hymens. In many Muslim nations such as Saudi Arabia, there is no minimum age for marriage, so young girls under the age of ten are subjected to sexual relations that are regarded as paedophilia in many modern nations ([www.afp.google.com](http://www.afp.google.com): 5/2/2008).

**c. A Husband's Property**

Bride price still exists in Muslim nations, and is often regarded as payment for sexual services rendered, establishing that a woman is the property of her husband. Once married, every aspect of her life is dictated by her husband, and she must be completely submissive and obedient to him in all areas. A Saudi wife is under the guardianship of her husband, and all activities, friends, outings, issues of motherhood, travel and employment will be subject to his permission (Goodwin 1994:32). In addition, there is no community of property between spouses (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:40).

**d. Inheritance**

Although Islam makes provision for Muslim widows, it does not ascribe equal distribution of wealth among the sexes. Surah 4:11 reads, "To the male a portion equal to that of two females". Thus a male inherits double the wealth of a woman, and a Muslim wife does not inherit the entirety of her husband's wealth. If she has no children, she receives a quarter; with parents, brothers and uncles of her husband also benefiting. If she has children, a wife receives only an eighth. The children inherit the remainder; with sons receiving double the portion of daughters. Non- Muslim wives inherit nothing, and converted widows very little (Surah 4:12). After the massacre of the Banu Qorayza Jewish tribe, Mohammad's wives requested a larger share of the loot than was usual. Conveniently, Mohammad produced the revelation Surah 33:28,29, that the wives must be content with their share, or face divorce (Al Araby 2008:§6).

**e. The Eternal Hereafter/ Paradise**

One Hadith states that a woman's piety is useless if she disobeys her husband, because this would be unlawful and irrational. If her husband is dissatisfied with his wife, her prayers will not be accepted, and her eternal destiny is vulnerable (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:13). Marital obedience is a prerequisite for Paradise and proves a wife's piety. Mohammad said "Had I ordered anyone to prostrate before anyone, I would have ordered women to prostrate before their husbands on account of men's rights over the woman ordained by Allah" (Hadith No. 70).

It is interesting to note that a Muslim view of the Hereafter is decidedly male oriented. Heaven is said to be a wonderful Paradise with good food, luxury and many perpetual virgins for each man for sexual relations. This is hardly a woman's idea of paradise, given the pain associated with initial sexual experience. It illustrates the quest for power and domination that is inherent in many Muslim males.

## **2.7 A Husband's Rights Within Marriage**

The status of the husband is seen as so far higher than women, that a wife can never attain it, regardless of her sacrifices. Similarly, a wife can never totally fulfil her obligations to her husband because his is a noble sacrifice, to allow a woman to share his life, and she can never repay this "great" honour (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:15-20). By comparison, the husband has many rights which he can demand within marriage. His physical desires are to be met immediately, regardless of his wife's wishes, health or current activities. "The Prophet of Allah said: "When a man calls his wife to satisfy his desire, let her come to him though she is occupied at the oven." (Hadith No. 61). If she refuses, one Hadith states that the angels curse her until morning and Allah is angry with her until she pleases her husband. The husband's sexual needs are considered more important, because physiologically the male's pleasures are more easily satisfied. Thus it is postulated that the woman is created for the man and must submit whenever her husband asks (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:12).

Given their subservient role, it is a great surprise that women wish to marry at all, however greater honour is bestowed on wives than spinsters. The unmarried state is viewed with contempt, suspicion and pity, thus women seek marriage. The Qur'an teaches a husband to treat his wife with kindness, yet it is his duty to admonish her, and he has a right to desert her sexually or beat her if she rebels against him (Surah 4:34). Muslim scholars interpret varying degrees of severity to the word "beating". Some maintain the beating must be light, with a toothbrush (Tabari) or folded handkerchief (Razi) (Asad 2008:Q4:34), while others such as Mohammed Pickthall and Rodwell translate the word '*edrebouhon* - beat them' as 'scourge them' (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton

1993:15). The consensus seems to suggest that this must be a firm beating if sexual desertion is unproductive, yet it must not cause physical injury. In 1987 an Egyptian court ruled that it is the duty of the husband to educate his wife, thus he may punish her. The wife has no such right, but must be obedient and diplomatic (Surah 4: 128, 34) (Rafiqul- Haqq & Newton 1993:15-20).

Thus sacred Islamic text promotes domestic violence and offers protective sanctions for the physically abusive husband. Ravelo- Höerson asserts that this directive “creates an environment in which violence against women flourishes with social approval” (Ravelo- Höerson 2006:8).

### **a. Polygyny**

One Muslim theologian, a- Qaradawy wrote:

The missionary... invasion of the previous age focussed its attack on two issues meant to decry the Islamic attitude concerning woman. These are divorce and polygamy, though in fact they are two of the good things Islam is proud of (al- Qaradawy 2002:§9.1).

Islam allows men to marry up to four wives on a number of conditions; a) he must gain permission from his first wife, b) he must maintain equality between them in terms of time, love and money, c) he must have the economic means to support multiple wives, and d) polygyny is only allowed in societies which have a greater proportion of women to men, in order to protect orphans and widows (Parshall 2002:162). These are the rules given by Mohammad, to which he himself did not adhere, and they are often disregarded in the modern context. Men marry more wives without their wife’s permission, in countries where women do not outnumber men. Numerous cases abound throughout the Islamic world, including Saudi Arabia, of older wives being replaced without permission by a younger woman, who then receives preferential treatment. This can be traumatic, and polygyny jeopardises the wellbeing of a wife and her children (Goodwin 1994:33,199). Many Muslim wives despise polygyny and are haunted by it, as it erodes self esteem and security. Yet it is seen as salvation for the sick or barren wife, because there is less chance of divorce (Goodwin 1994:198).

**b. Divorce**

Divorce is a relatively simple procedure for a husband to obtain, and it has become the habit of many Arab men to marry a second or third wife for a short-lived “fling”, and then to divorce when the novelty wears off. Many Saudi wives are not even informed of the divorce until many months later, and they have no rights to children or possessions after the divorce (Goodwin 1994:199). Throughout Islamic history it has been a common occurrence for divorced women to be cast out of their homes, without protection or provision (Khan 1995:208). Upon divorce, the husband is often given custody of the children, even if they are born of a Western mother, and she has no recourse to appeal.

This chapter has focussed upon the situation of the Muslim wife in general, as taught by pure Islam. Saudi Arabia practices *Wahhabism*, a strict doctrine of Islam which seeks to follow pure Islam as taught immediately after the time of Mohammad, and rejects all subsequent beliefs and practices that developed over ensuing centuries. Thus most of these issues apply to Saudi wives. Saudi Arabian women are severely restricted in their freedom and rights regarding marriage, dress, divorce, access to public places, education and employment. We will now investigate their plight in further detail.

## Chapter 3

### The Status of the Modern Muslim Wife in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy with no Constitution, and has been described as “an economy- based authoritarian theocratic dictatorship” (Nasreen 2008:1). Islam is interpreted authoritatively as an “instrument of power and legitimation for the ruling elite” (Dalacoura 2003:3). Saudi Arabian Basic Law is based on Muslim *sharia law*, which claims to safeguard the rights of all Muslims, including wives (Dalacoura 2003:56).

Historically Saudi wives have never enjoyed high freedom or status. The treatment of women improved somewhat with the coming of Islam, and into the modern age, but it remains restrictive. Yakin Erturk, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, reports that although progress has been made in the modern kingdom with regards to the status of women, more action is needed, as Saudi Arabia lacks any law which criminalizes violence against women (2008:1).

Despite the trend of increased freedom for Muslim wives all over the Gulf, Saudi Arabia remains a staunch advocate for conservative Islamic law. As a result, the *mutawwa'in* (religious police) conscientiously enforces Islamic law, and women are consequently severely restricted (Koolmees 2004:118,119). Human Rights Watch maintains that:

Women in Saudi Arabia continue to suffer from severe discrimination in the workplace, home, and the courts; and from restrictions on their

freedom of movement and their choice of partner (*World Report 2007: Saudi Arabia Events of 2006*:¶21).

In Saudi Arabia women must wear the black *abaya* when venturing outside (Nasreen 2008:1). Veiling was not required before the discovery of oil, but was initially an elitist fashion to distinguish aristocracy, and not the norm until the eighth decade of the twentieth century. Women are also forbidden to use cosmetics, perfume, attractive veils and tight fitting or transparent coverings in public (Goodwin 1994:30). Human Rights Watch reports that a fire broke out in a public girl's school in Mecca in 2002. Girls fleeing the building without their *abayas* were restricted by the *mutawwa'in* (religious police), who hampered rescue efforts by obstructing the evacuation. The *mutawwa'in* were incensed that the girls were uncovered, and even blocked entry of rescuers such as parents and civil defence officers. As a result, there was a reported increase in casualties and fourteen girls died (*Saudi Arabia: Religious police role in school fire criticized 2002*:§1).

All mixing with unrelated males is forbidden, thus public entertainment such as cinemas and theatre are banned (Koolmees 2004:26). Employment, mosque, banking and dining facilities are all segregated, to prevent the mixing of unrelated men and women. In one recent case, a woman and her male colleague were arrested and imprisoned for dining together at a business luncheon in a public café. Despite having permission from her husband, she was detained for some time and threatened with adultery charges ([www.afp.google.com](http://www.afp.google.com): 5/2/2008).

Females only gained access to education in 1960 when the government introduced a national education program. By the mid 1970s, about half the population of girls was attending school. Free education was made available, but not compulsory to them in the 1980s (*Role of women in Saudi Arabian society 2008*:1). In 2000, about a third of Saudi women were illiterate, as opposed to 13 percent of boys (Kenninmont 2006:§2). Even though Saudi women are permitted to study at university, their subject choices are restricted, and they are banned from subjects such as law, engineering and architecture (Pejman 2004:¶3).

Saudi women make up over half the number of university graduates, but only five percent are involved in the workforce (Nasreen 2008:1). Participation of Saudi women in the work force had always been limited, but the 1980s saw more women seeking employment amidst heated religious debate. This trend continues to the present day. Women work mainly in self-employment, education, health, administration and social services, yet they are prevented full participation in the economy (Al- Rasheed 2002:152,153). Of the 600 000 women in the Saudi workforce, 400 000 are expatriates (Koolmees 2004:109). In addition, a huge disparity exists between professional women and their uneducated counterparts, who never attended school and spend most of their time at home (Kinninmont 2006:11).

Saudi women are not permitted to travel without the permission of a husband or male guardian. They are also forbidden to drive a motor vehicle in urban areas. In 1990 forty five educated women violated the ban on female driving and staged a demonstration in Riyadh. They were imprisoned but later released (Al- Rasheed 2002:166). This type of action has been repeated in recent years, without achieving reform.

Although a wife's property rights are protected within marriage and a wife can retain her maiden name, she has less rights regarding divorce and child custody than her husband (Erturk 2008:1). Husbands can easily seek divorce without justification, and may not even inform their wives of the divorce. In comparison, wives have a far more arduous process, and may not be granted divorce if the husband is opposed (Koolmees 2004:184). Women are considered unsuitable guardians, and the husband or his parents generally gain custody of the children from the age of two years. Adultery is punishable with flogging and stoning (Goodwin 1994:113-115). In reality, Saudi wives are vulnerable to financial destitution upon divorce, because they seldom hold employment. The dowries meant for their long term support are often inadequate, or are taken by their families. As a result, wives feel obligated to please their husbands, and endure unhappy marriages rather than face destitution (Koolmees 2004:184).

From the 1970s women were prohibited from exogamous marriages, while men practiced it in large numbers. There was a reluctance to issue women with overseas educational scholarships for fear they would marry non- Saudis (Al- Rasheed 2002:128). Marriage at the age of thirteen years of age was quite common, and still occurs. Almost all Saudi marriages are arranged, and girls have little input regarding their marriage partners (Koolmees 2004:173-175). Thirty nine percent of marriages are between first cousins (Koolmees 2004:180).

Saudi women are exposed to judicial discrimination in a number of ways. They are generally excluded from giving witness in criminal court, and are only allowed to testify if it pertains to a private matter which was unobserved by a man. Their testimony is worth half that of a man's (*Saudi: Why we punished rape victim* 2007:§1). In violence against women and sexual assault cases, the onus is on the victim to prove that a crime did in fact take place, without extramarital sexual relations or "illegal mingling". This constitutes an obstacle for women seeking justice, as they may find themselves charged with an offense or demonized by the Press. Needless to say, this discourages women from reporting rape. In a recent case, a young victim of gang rape was sentenced to six months jail and 200 lashes because she was in a car with an unrelated male before the attack took place. Despite video and forensic evidence, her attackers were only charged with kidnapping. The victim was eventually granted a royal pardon, but the case serves to illustrate the disparities that exist in the Saudi justice system (*Saudi Arabia: Rape victim punished or speaking out* 2007:¶1-5).

Women hold only 3.5 percent of seats in parliament in Arab countries, compared with 11 percent in Sub- Saharan Africa and 13 percent in Latin America (Hughes 2005:1). In Saudi Arabia women are excluded entirely from parliamentary positions (Colp Rubin 2007:§3). They were excluded from the right to vote in recent elections, although two women were historically elected to the Board of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce in November 2005 (Kinninmont 2006:§6). Another positive development occurred in 2004, when women were allowed participation in their first public event. Although segregated, they were included as delegates to the Jeddah Economic Forum Conference, despite

denouncements from the grand mufti (Kinninmont 2006:§10). In addition, women are banned from attending the weekly *majlis* (council) where royal family members hear citizen complaints and proposals (*Events of 2006*. 2007:¶21).

The UN Statistics, Social Indicators cites the gender ratio of women to men in Saudi Arabia was 86 in 2006 (Vision of Humanity 2006:§89). Similarly, Saudia Online cites the following statistics:

Below 15 yr	1.04 male/female
15- 64 yr	1.43 male/ female
Over 65 yr	1.18 male/female
TOTAL	1.24 male/female (Saudia-online.com 2008)

Because scientific data on the prevalence of infanticide is difficult to obtain, indicators such as population gender ratios, birth sex ratios and child mortality rates are used for evidence of son preference in a society. The World Health Organisation (WHO) confirms that Saudi Arabia is one of the nations in which son preference is most prevalent. The low incidence of females in the nation is likely to be the result of female neglect, sex-selection abortion, son preference in terms of nutrition and medical care and female infanticide. Given the statistics above, and the decline in the phenomenon in existing children, it may be proposed that modern parents are less likely to prefer their sons (*Son Preference* 2006:¶4).

Thus it is fair to conclude that wives living in Saudi Arabia have less freedom than many of their Western, and even Muslim counterparts. The entire life of a Saudi wife is regimented in accordance with strict codes of religious and social constraints, which govern all aspects of life. Given the greater freedoms, decision making and influential roles afforded to males, it can be concluded that they enjoy superior status over their wives. Although many wives are doubtless content with their lot, there are many individuals who are frustrated with the isolation, restrictions and expectations placed upon them (Koolmees 2004:189). A 2006 King Saud University study on suicide conducted by Salwa al-Khatib was very telling in this regard. The study found that of 96 cases of suicide in Saudi Arabia during the preceding year, 92 of the victims were

women. It was concluded that “tremendous social pressure” caused by isolation and forced marriage was the chief cause of the phenomenon (Hassan, Hammond & Nakhoul 2007). It is therefore apparent that many Saudi wives are unhappy, and have a strong desire for reform, freedom, emancipation and meaning in life. Thankfully, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has the ability to fulfil each of these needs in the spiritual sense.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Church's Evangelistic Response**

#### **4.1 Challenges for the Church**

Islam, as a group-oriented culture, holds a fear of individualism and any insistence upon interests, views and opinions different from the group. Any blatant show of independence is viewed as a deadly crime, resulting in group pressure to conform, and eventually the alienation or even death of the nonconformist (Warraq 2003:97). Islam claims to be a theocracy, with Allah as the legitimate source of authority and the giver of religious law. Thus authority works from the top, downwards and each individual is integrated into the system, with defined duties and rights given according to age, sex, wealth and knowledge. The strong sense of identification and belonging found in Islamic society originates from this integration (Eck & Jain 1986:90).

The goal of Muslim society is the survival of the group, not individual happiness. Conformity to the law is paramount in orthodox societies; however, this can be problematic, as Muslims differ in their interpretation of Islamic law. Any form of disobedience has serious implications, but in the case of female obedience these are magnified because the sexes play an important role in symbolising obedience and authority. Males are the masters of women and “slaves” of God. Women are merely “slaves”, and cannot initiate, or they jeopardise the whole hierarchical order. Thus, equality of the sexes threatens the patriarchal power system, and must be discouraged

at all costs (Eck & Jain 1986:90-92). This communal push for conformity constitutes a huge challenge or obstacle for the Church, but it can be overcome by creative means, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Apostasy is viewed as a serious crime because it “brings great shame and social disgrace on the family of the apostate” (Warraq 2003:90). The greatest perceived tragedy in Islam is to cause one's family name to be dishonoured (Parshall 1980:70). In the Middle East conversion is secretive and relatively rare because it requires such great personal sacrifice. Given that the very nature of Christian conversion includes an outward confession of faith (Romans 10:9); this presents a challenge for the Gospel. The faith of converts may be tenuous at best, and thus insufficient to withstand the protracted persecution that is often inevitable upon conversion. An apostate may be required to forfeit family, friends, children, wealth, personal safety, marriage and even one's own life. Hadith Vol 9:57 reads “Mohammad said “Whoever changes his Islamic religion, kill him.” Because apostates are often subjected to extreme persecution and even death in nations such as Saudi Arabia, it is imperative that networks (either physical or cyber) be established to offer support. This is a challenge which has not been adequately addressed by the Church, to date.

As previously discussed, Saudi wives are largely excluded from the mosque's religious life and other public activities, with many adverse implications for Christian ministry. Firstly, segregation has caused many wives to become involved in occultist practices, in an effort to express spirituality. Many attend celebrations and devotions at shrines of local saints, and engage in folk Islamic rituals. One such ceremony is the *Zar* ceremony, which invokes communication with *jinn* (spirits). These jinn may possess the invoker, and give a form of counterfeit spirituality which may assist the individual to deal with one's problems, boredom, and lack of meaning in life. These are often very real issues to a Muslim wife, and therefore she may go to dangerous lengths to gain some form of spiritual meaning to fulfil her spiritual needs (Musk 1989:113).

Islam teaches a totally different concept of God to Christianity. Allah is remote, angry, tyrannical and capricious. He is not the accessible, loving, protective and forgiving Father of the Bible (Warraq 2003:92). Muslim women may thus become *sufists*, or mystics, in an effort to have a personal relationship with God (Fry and King 1980:92). Although wives are secluded, they still hold a strong influence over their families, and through occultism, may gain certain authority in their communities. This is especially the case in times of crisis or rites of passage, when Muslims have real needs to be met (Musk 1989:118). However “early *Sufists* were inspired by Christian ideals” and many modern *sufists* have rejected the orthodox law of Islam. This makes them very receptive to Christianity, provided it is based on a dynamic relationship with the living, knowable God (Warraq 2003:59, 60). Muslims may be attracted to Jesus, or *Isa*, as He is named in the Qur'an. Christ represents the unconditional love of God and forgiveness which is lacking in Islam (Warraq 2003:92).

Secondly, since Muslim wives are secluded, there are limited opportunities to meet them and develop meaningful contact for the Gospel. Many are uneducated, and unlikely to practice deductive, logical reasoning. They may be less knowledgeable about the outside world, and therefore more narrow-minded, and resistant to outside ideas. Muslim women are taught to be passive in their thinking and behaviour, and this decreases their receptivity to the Gospel. Even if wives are given the rare opportunity to hear the Gospel, they may be reticent to evaluate and adopt another world view which goes against the societal norm.

Muslims may not differentiate between Christians and Westerners, and as such, often hold that the secular, immoral standards portrayed by Western society are synonymous with Christianity. As a result, Westerners may be categorised with Muslim stereotypes and viewed with suspicion or even contempt (Azumah 2002:1). Koolmees experienced this as an expatriate in Saudi Arabia. She reported that devout Muslims were prone to isolate themselves from foreigners. When greeted, their children often displayed suspicious, fearful disdain for her *kaffir* (infidel) status, and refused any offer of friendship (Koolmees 2004:28). The stress and restrictions associated with expatriate

life in Saudi Arabia can place great pressure on individuals and marriages, testing both to breaking point. However, given the Saudis great affection for children, young Western families have the otherwise rare opportunity to establish friendships with locals (Koolmees 2004:32, 33).

#### **4.2 Principles for Ministering to Muslim Wives.**

Mallouhi, in her book "Miniskirts, Mothers and Muslims", stresses that it is essential that Christians conform to appropriate Muslim values, such as right conduct, decency, hospitality, and community responsibility. To fail to act accordingly is to risk the censure of Muslims, who judge that the Christian has fallen short of the excellence of the Muslim family. Wrong impressions are thus formulated of Christians, whose life styles, belief systems and Gospel are consequently deemed unworthy. This has a disastrous impact on Christian evangelism (Mallouhi 2004:23). The peace, hospitality, love, prosperity and family stability of a Christian family can act as a great witness for the Gospel (Mallouhi 2004:35, 37).

Perhaps the most important principle for reaching Muslim wives is that it must be undertaken by women only. In many Islamic cultures it is dishonourable for a man to speak to a woman who is not a relative. In some cases it is even considered dishonourable for a man to enquire of another man the name of his wife. Thus women's evangelism is definitely not a task for men. Likewise, evangelisation of Muslim men is strictly a male occupation.

Women gain great security from community-based Islam in many respects, and may be reluctant to lose what little status they have by becoming an apostate. Upon conversion, Muslim wives may face serious problems, such as family break-up, death threats, law suits, no civil rights, imprisonment, beatings, destitution and death (Warraq 2003:97). In a very real sense, converting women go against everything they have been taught about their religion, family responsibility, the status of wives and the very nature of woman (Parshall 1980:70).

Given the difficulties associated with apostasy, it is imperative that converts experience a personal or power encounter with Christ, and establish a deep relationship with Him. Thus it is imperative that missionaries be vessels of the fruit, power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Many Muslims have been converted as a result of answered prayer, divine visitations of Christ and dreams (Warraq 2003:94). Christ subsequently offers support and faith during times of intense persecution. Many of the most courageous converts are women (Parshall 1980:224). Wives are often forced to obey their husbands, even after conversion, and may be forbidden personal ownership of a Bible, or permission for church attendance. Thus Christian converts may lack legitimate opportunities for growth to spiritual maturity in the Christian faith. Many wives keep their conversion a secret, for fear of their husband's wrath (Warraq 2003:ch7). Backsliding is common, so discipleship through relationship is essential.

During the course of researching this thesis, the author had personal contact with Fatima, an Arab convert living with physical disability. Upon accepting Christ, Fatima's husband rejected her, and she was thrown out of the family home and denied access to her children. Her parents also disowned her. She lives alone without any financial support from family, and relies on the emotional, spiritual and financial help given by Christians and missionaries. Thus it is also crucial that Christians and churches offer discipleship, friendship and regular support to Muslim converts by employing practical and creative means.

Christian women are able to enter Muslim countries in professional positions, such as medical work, and use their daily contact with women to build friendship. Wives are forbidden access to male doctors in many nations like Saudi Arabia, so female tentmaker missionaries have a huge role to play. Even if a tentmaker lacks personal contact with wives, then s/he can still play a valuable role. One tentmaker missionary known to the author lived in Saudi Arabia and housed a printing press ministry in his home which produced thousands of evangelistic pamphlets and Bibles on a monthly basis.

Similarly, expatriate Christians can have regular access to women even if they are not professionals. Muslim women in many Eastern societies have devised social networks, such as social, birthday and savings clubs in an effort to cultivate relationships. A Christian woman living in a block of flats or high- population density area can thus socialise regularly with many Muslim women whenever the group meets, to celebrate a member's birthday, for example. This not only fosters close female friendships, but also opens the door for relationships to be initiated between husbands and extended families.

In addition, Christian women can make contact with Muslims by involvement in local community projects, such as life skill classes, study, sewing and cooking groups. These provide an excellent avenue to befriend women, and enable the missionary to discover and address the particular contextual felt needs and problems of a particular community. The missionary also gains credibility, respect and trust through selfless service in a community.

The Christian woman should seek to get to know Muslim women intimately, and to learn their culture, worldview and religion because she CARES. Love should be freely and genuinely extended in culturally sensitive ways. Muslims value hospitality very highly, thus the missionary should invite them home, or to church, prayer or Christian fellowship meetings, if possible. Missionaries have reported that some Muslims have met a Christian fellow national for the first time ever in this way. Every opportunity should be utilised effectively, as they are rare.

They work within our environment or live nearby; they sell goods to us or we meet them socially. A loving and concerned Christian will constantly be aware of opportunities to share his faith... but we should be careful not to be obtrusive (Nehls n.d:38).

If friendships are built, then natural ways to share and pray with the Muslim will become available, without the need for theological debate or pressure.

It is also important for the Christian witness to be willing to adapt to the host culture, and to accept that women are not equal to men in the Muslim culture. Rather than fighting

against the system, the missionary should “accept” it and seek to work effectively within its constraints. One should not react against the Muslim dress by insisting on wearing western clothing, which could be offensive and give the impression of loose morals. In Saudi Arabia dress codes are very strict, and the missionary should dress as one of the locals, so as to avoid the wrath of Muslim authorities or husbands, who may ban their wives from further contact. It is sometimes necessary to endure personal inconvenience and discomfort rather than cause cultural offence. Thus the Christian should dress appropriately. One Muslim man is quoted as saying “Look how the missionary loves and respects his wife. He is having her dress in our veil.” Such contextualisation is usually appreciated by nationals and aids the Gospel (Parshall 1980:115).

It is important to bear in mind that Muslim women in general are not opposed to the Good News of Jesus Christ; they have simply never heard it presented properly (OMSA World Bytes Aug 1997:9). It is the responsibility of the Christian to communicate the Gospel in terms that are meaningful and relevant to them, without causing unnecessary offence. Ibn Warraq, an apostate from Islam and noted scholar, documents that the majority of Muslim apostates are well educated, computer literate, with access to the internet and the ability to think rationally. He reports that many Muslims convert when they are educated regarding the irrational and immoral facts of Mohammad and the Qur'an (Warraq 2003:111). Thus the internet is a development that can be a useful evangelistic tool. Although it is unwise and offensive for evangelists to argue with Muslims and cast aspersions on Mohammad, it may be acceptable to steer them to the numerous web sites available (see Appendix). Since Saudi Arabian women are increasingly educated and computer literate, this offers a great opportunity for the Gospel. However need exists for additional web sites in Muslim national languages such as Arabic and Persian.

The most effective witness is that which comes naturally, through daily life and personal relationship. However this can be difficult if Muslim wives are secluded. Broadcasting on radio and satellite television is reported to be very effective in closed areas of the

world such as Saudi Arabia. Radio programmes have played a great role in Algeria, leading to many conversions (Warraq 2003:94). Many younger wives are becoming more exposed to outside influences such as Western television and music, and are questioning their traditional roles, and searching for alternatives.

Literature or Bible distribution is also an effective method. Various ministry organisations have engaged in this form of evangelism in North Africa and the Middle East with great results. Clandestine distribution of "*The Jesus Movie*" in vernacular languages, with correspondence follow-up conducted from European offices has seen many thousands of converts since the 1990's. Likewise, the screening of the Mel Gibson film, "*The Passion of the Christ*" was hailed by some as the most effective tool of Muslim evangelism ever deployed (ADL & Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ' 27/3/08:¶6). It fascinated Muslims throughout the Middle East (Alford 6/1/2004:1).

Although many obstacles impede the path of evangelism where Muslim women are concerned, it is evident that many open doors also exist for the Gospel. Because of the social pressures and isolation experienced by many Muslim women, a great need exists for avenues which aid women to gain personal, spiritual and social meaning in life. Christ is that ultimate path to fulfilment and meaning, and fortunately He has put creative and relevant measures in place whereby Saudi women can find Him.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations.

Thus it can be seen that Pure Islam, Mohammad and many modern Muslim nations do indeed class women as secondary citizens, with inferior value, status and personhood. Although this statement cannot hold true for all Muslim wives, it cannot be denied that women are generally afforded less rights and privileges in many nations which base their legislature and society on Orthodox Islamic law. Dr Nawal El Sa'dawi, a Muslim female academic, said:

It is probably not accurate to use the term "rights of the woman", since a woman under the Islamic system of Mohammad has no human rights unless we consider that a slave has rights under a slave system. Marriage, in so far as women are concerned, is just like slavery to the slave, or the chains of serfdom to the serf (El Sa'dawi 1980:139,140).

Many Muslim wives around the world are subjected to male guardianship, veiling, segregation, domestic violence, discrimination and insecurity, in accordance with the tenets of Mohammad and Muslim religious leaders. Although this is strenuously denied by many Muslims, the facts speak for themselves. The plight of Muslim wives and their discrimination in realms such as economics, education, marriage and employment cannot be solely blamed on factors such as culture, politics and history. Islam as a religion blatantly advocates the inferiority of women, domestic violence against wives, segregation, veiling and polygyny. Consequently, these all have a detrimental effect on Muslim wives as a direct result of Islamic teaching.

Islam presents a monumental obstacle to the Great Commission, as it controls the lives of some 20 to 25 percent of the world's population at this time (Islamic Web 27/3/2008:1). As a result, most Muslims are unreceptive or even hostile to the message of Christianity. This is even more pronounced when we consider Muslim wives, who are often rendered inaccessible to the Gospel due to physical, educational and religious constraints. However, the task of Muslim evangelism is not an insurmountable one. With unconditional love, creativity, sensitivity and zeal, Christians can effectively reach out to Muslims with the love of God, and see many wives won for Christ. Many avenues are available for effective evangelism, both at home and overseas, if Christians will only heed Christ's call and make the effort to reach out.

Islam proudly claims to be the fastest growing religion in the world, and is experiencing unprecedented growth in previously unaffected areas such as Europe and Australia (Islamic Web 27/3/2008:1). Orthodox Muslims are often zealous and sacrificial in their propagation of Islam. Sadly, the same cannot be said for many Christians, despite the fact that Christianity may be considered a better system for communion with God, based on better promises, with better status and opportunities for women. Greg Livingstone wrote:

The most loving action is to go where we are not initially wanted and to persevere until officials realize that the living Christ can empower their citizens to be noble and help them to accomplish worthy national aspirations (Livingstone 1993:228).

He contends that, with determination, every Christian can overcome natural and spiritual obstacles in order to produce fruitful ministry results amongst Muslims (Livingstone 1993:230). Due to recent developments in technology, the internet and the media, it is becoming increasingly easier to reach Muslim wives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The question is: do we care? Do we care if Muslim women are living in fear, isolation and despair? Do we care that over a billion people are cut off from the love of God by a religious system that misrepresents Him? Do we care that this religious system hates Christians and seeks to drive them to oblivion? Do we care that Muslims are often more obedient to their God than Christians are to theirs? I challenge all who would read this

thesis to consider these questions, to evaluate your stance, and to take concerted action to befriend Muslims, and to show them the better Way. Muslim wives CAN be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ if Christians will only make the effort.

## Works Cited

- Al Araby A 1995. *Islam unveiled*. Los Angeles: The Pen Vs The Sword.
- \_\_\_\_\_ [2008]. *God of Christianity Vs Allah of Islam*. Internet article on [www.islamreview.com/articles/godvsallah](http://www.islamreview.com/articles/godvsallah) [7/4/2008].
- Alford D 6/1/2004. *Fascinated with the Passion: Gibson draws big Muslim crowds*. Internet article on [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)
- Al Munajjed 1997. *Women in Saudi Arabia Today*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Al- Rasheed M 2002. *A history of Saudi Arabia*. London, UK: Cambridge.
- Al-Qaradawy Y [2002]. *The Status of women in Islam*. Internet article on [www.witness-pioneer.org](http://www.witness-pioneer.org) [27/2/2008].
- Anti Defamation League [27/3/2008] *ADL and Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ': Frequently Asked Question* on [www.adl.org/Interfaith/gibson\\_qa.asp](http://www.adl.org/Interfaith/gibson_qa.asp).
- Asad M [2008] *Quran Search: An- Nisa (The Women)*. Internet article on [www.Islamicity.com/mosque/Quran](http://www.Islamicity.com/mosque/Quran) [7/4/2008].
- Baried B 1986. "Toward women's power, nationally and internationally". In Eck D L & Jain D 1986. *Speaking of Faith*. London: The Women's Press.
- Barlas A. 2005. *Women's rights and roles in Islam*. Theological talk for Muslim Society at De Paul Law School. Internet article on [www.asmabarlas.com/TALKS/20050307\\_DePaul.pdf](http://www.asmabarlas.com/TALKS/20050307_DePaul.pdf), March 7 2005.
- Bible Institute of South Africa 1997. *Certificate in Ministry to Muslims lecture notes*. Cape Town: BISA.
- Bukhari S, Arabic- English Translation, Volume 7, Hadith No. 142. Volume 1: Hadith No. 268.

- Bradley E. March 24 2005. *Women speak out in Saudi Arabia*. Internet article on [www.cbsnews.com](http://www.cbsnews.com).
- Chopra S.J. [5/2/2008]. *Liberation by the Veil*. On [www.al-Islam.org](http://www.al-Islam.org).
- Colp Rubin J 2007. *Lagging far behind: women in the Middle East*. Internet article on [www.meria.idc.acil](http://www.meria.idc.acil) [5/4/2008].
- Dalacoura K 2003. *Islam, liberalism and human rights*. London, UK: I.B. Tauris.
- el Saadawi N (n.d.) "Muslim women and social change in Indonesia: The work of Aisyiyah" in Eck & Jain. 1986. *Speaking of Faith*. London: The Women's Press.
- Eck D. & Jain D 1986. *Speaking of faith: global perspectives on women, religion and social change*. Philadelphia: New Society.
- El Sa'dawi N 1980. *The Hidden Face of Eve*. London: Zed Press.
- Erturk Y [2008]. *Saudi Arabian women need support to help advance society- UN expert*. Internet article on UN News Centre [www.un.org](http://www.un.org), 13 February 2008.
- Fry C G & King J R 1980. *Islam: A survey of the Muslim faith*. Michigan: Baker Book.
- Gabriel M (n.d.) *Evangelising Muslims*. Academic Centre International: Brixton.
- Goldsmith M 1982. *Islam and Christian Witness: sharing the faith with Muslims*. Illinois: Inter Varsity.
- Goodwin J 1994. *Price of honour: Muslim women lift the veil of silence on the Islamic world*. London: Warner.
- Hassan Dr F 2005. *Women in Islam: Distinction between religious & fundamentalist approaches*. Synopsis of Paper presented at Paris International Conference on Women 27 August 2005 on [www.greaterdemocracy.org](http://www.greaterdemocracy.org).
- Hassan I, Hammond A, Nakhoul S 2007. *Saudi Arabia: Women choosing suicide over social pressure*. Internet article on [www.wluml.org](http://www.wluml.org). 16/1/2008.
- Hassan Dr R 1995. "Are Human rights compatible with Islam? The issue of the rights of women in Muslim Communities" in *The religious consultation on Population, Reproductive Health & Ethics*. Internet article on [www.genevahumanitarianforum.org](http://www.genevahumanitarianforum.org). [27-2-2008]
- Hughes J June 29, 2005. *Islamic women rise up*. Internet article on [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com).

- Jowan J 2008. *Woman killed for chatting on Facebook*. Internet article on [www.stophonourkillings.com](http://www.stophonourkillings.com) 31/3/2008.
- Kawthar 2008. "Honour killing" raised at lecture on society and abuse cases. Internet article on [www.stophonourkillings.com](http://www.stophonourkillings.com) 2/3/2008.
- Khan M W 1995. *Woman between Islam and Western Society*. New Delhi: The Islamic Centre.
- Koolmees J 2004. *My desert kingdom: finding a life in Saudi Arabia*. Sydney: Bantam.
- Livingstone G 1993. *Planting churches in Muslim Cities*. Michigan USA: Baker Book House.
- Lochhaas P H 1990. *How to respond to Islam*. St Louis, U.S.A.: Concordia.
- Mallouhi C 2004. *Miniskirts, Mothers and Muslims: A Christian Woman in a Muslim Country*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Monarch Books.
- Mernissi F. "Femininity as subversion: reflections on the Muslim concept of Nushuz". In Eck et al. 1986. *Speaking of Faith*. London: The Women's Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1991. *Beyond the Veil*. Cambridge: Schenkman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1991. *Women and Islam: an historical and theological enquiry*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Musk B 1989. *The unseen face of Islam: sharing the Gospel with ordinary Muslims*.
- Nasreen [2008] *My life in Saudi Arabia: Abla*. Internet article on [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) 28 February 2008.
- Nehls G (n.d). *The Great Commission: You and the Muslims*. Cape Town: Life Challenge.
- Nehls G & Eric W 1994. *Reach out: A guide to Muslim Evangelism (Student Handbook)*. Life Challenge (Africa): Nairobi, Kenya.
- Operation Mobilization August 1997. *World Bytes*. OMSA.
- Parshall P 1980. *New paths in Muslim evangelism: Evangelical approaches to Contextualisation*. Michigan: Baker Book.
- Parshall P & J 2002. *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions: A guide to Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Pejman P 2004. *Saudi Arabia: Women say religious radicals block their rights*. Internet article on [www.religiousconsultation.org/News](http://www.religiousconsultation.org/News) 30/3/2004.

- Profitt A n.d. *Islam and its early Beginnings*. Cape Town: ACF.
- Rafiqul-Haqq M R & Newton P 1993. *The place of women in Pure Islam*. New South Wales, Australia: Willwick Books.
- Ravelo- Höerson N 2006. *Islam and domestic violence against women: collusion and collision*. Article in *Missionalia* 34:1 (April 2006) p 77- 102.
- Saeed A 2003. *Islam in Australia*. New South Wales Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Takim L 1993. *The Islamic and Muslim View of Women*. Shia International.
- The Koran (Dawood Translation)*. London, UK: Penguin Books 1999.
- Warraq I (Ed) 2003. *Leaving Islam Apostates Speak Out*. New York: Prometheus.
- No author 15/3/2002. *Saudi Arabia: Religious police role in school fire criticized*. Internet article on [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).
- No author 24/5/2005. *The roles and status of women in predominantly Muslim societies*. Internet article on [www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org).
- No author 31/8/2006. *Son Preference*. Internet article on [www.brokendreams.wordpress.com/category/female\\_infanticide](http://www.brokendreams.wordpress.com/category/female_infanticide), 31/8/2006.
- No author 17/11/2007. *Saudi Arabia: Rape victim punished or speaking out*. Internet article on [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) 17/11/2007.
- No author 20/11/2007. *Saudi: Why we punished rape victim*. Internet article on [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com). 20/11/2007.
- No author 5/2/2008 *Saudi woman's café plight highlights rights problem*. Internet article on [www.afp.google.com](http://www.afp.google.com).
- No author 2008. *World Report 2007: Saudi Arabia Events of 2006*. Internet article on [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) [3/4/2008].
- No author. *Saudi Arabia: Global Peace Index*. Internet article on [www.visionofhumanity.com/rankings/show\\_country/89](http://www.visionofhumanity.com/rankings/show_country/89). [7/4/2008].

## Appendix

### Websites for Witness to Muslims

1. Injil.org  
[www.injil.org](http://www.injil.org)
2. About Isa (Jesus)  
[www.aboutisa.com](http://www.aboutisa.com)
3. Al Nour  
members.aol.com/alnour/index2.html
4. Answering Islam  
[www.answering-islam.org](http://www.answering-islam.org)
5. Answering the claims of Islam  
usr.ijntb.net/thickman/islam.html
6. Apostates of Islam  
[www.apostatesofislam.com](http://www.apostatesofislam.com)
7. Behind the Veil  
answering-islam.org/BehindVeil/content.html
8. Committee to defend Women's Rights in the Middle East- CDWRME  
[www.eclipse.co.uk/women](http://www.eclipse.co.uk/women)
9. Critical Analysis of Islam  
debate.org.uk/topics/coolcalm/
10. Crusaders Club  
[www.faithdefenders.com](http://www.faithdefenders.com)
11. Dr Homa Darabi Foundation  
[www.homa.org/](http://www.homa.org/)
12. Into the Light  
[www.itl.org.uk/](http://www.itl.org.uk/)
13. Islamic Studies in Christian Perspective  
[www.rim.org/muslim/islam/htm](http://www.rim.org/muslim/islam/htm)
14. Light of Life  
[www.light-of-life.com/](http://www.light-of-life.com/)
15. Islam-On-Line  
[www.islam-on-line.org/](http://www.islam-on-line.org/)
16. Islam Review  
[www.islamreview.com/](http://www.islamreview.com/)
17. Jesus is Lord  
jesus-is-lord.com/islam
18. Let us Reason  
[www.letusreason.org/Islamdir.htm](http://www.letusreason.org/Islamdir.htm)

## **Assignment Checklist**

Students please note that this must be filled in every time an assignment is sent in for marking

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1	Is my introduction stimulating and does it start off well?	√	
2	Does the introduction state clearly what the aim of the assignment is?	√	
3	Does each paragraph link logically with the previous and subsequent paragraphs?	√	
4	Have I refrained from quoting one source repeatedly?	√	
5	Did I use my own words?	√	
6	Have I avoided repetitions and padding?	√	
7	Does my conclusion rest on facts mentioned in the assignment?	√	
8	Are all my findings the result of my own insight and research?	√	
9	Is my assignment clear and does it make sense?	√	
10	Have I checked for spelling and punctuation mistakes?	√	
11	Have I quoted my direct quotations correctly?	√	
12	Is each use of source material properly referenced?		
13	Did I indent longer quotations and are they typed in single spacing?	√	
14	Is my bibliography correctly compiled?	√	
15	Did I number my pages correctly?	√	
16	Did I receive a Reader for the subject? (from second year)		√
17	Did I receive 'How to write a Good Assignment'?	√	

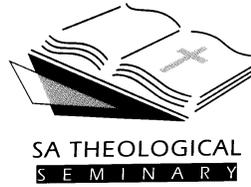




## TIME LOG

Month and Year:  
November 2007

Name: Sharon Booysen  
CHL 4400 Mini Thesis



DATE	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3
3	3	2 ½	3 ½
5	3	1	
6	2		
9	1		
10	3	2	½
11	¾	2	
14	2	3 ¼	
15	3	3	
17	1		
18	½	2 ¼	3
19	2	3	
21	1 ¼	1	
22	3	2	
23	1	2 ½	
26	3	2 ¼	
27	2	2	3 ½
28	3	1 ½	
30	¾		

TOTAL TIME TAKEN TO STUDY THE SUBJECT

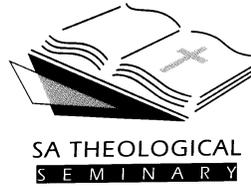
76

Record the hours (i.e 3 or 3 ½ etc.) for each study period each day and add together for a monthly total.

## TIME LOG

Month and Year:  
January

Name: Sharon Booyesen  
CHL 4400 Mini Thesis



DATE	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3
7	3	3	2 ½
8	2	2 ½	3 ¼
9	½		
11	2 ½	1	1 ¼
12	3	3	1
13	2 ½	1	3
14	3 ¼	1	1 ¼
15	2		
16	3 ¼		
19	3	1 ½	2 ¾
20	2	2	½
21	3	1	
22	½		
25	3	2	
27	½	1	2
28	3	2	½
29	3	2 ½	4
31	2 ¾	2 ½	1

TOTAL TIME TAKEN TO STUDY THE SUBJECT

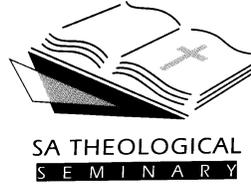
89 ¾

Record the hours (i.e 3 or 3 ½ etc.) for each study period each day and add together for a monthly total.

## TIME LOG

Month and Year:  
February 2008

Name: Sharon Booyesen  
CHL 4400 Mini Thesis



DATE	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3
1	3	3	2 ½
2	3		
4	2 ½	1 ¾	½
5	1	1	2 ½
8	2 ½	2	3
11	1	½	2
12	3	2 ¾	2
13	3	3	
14	4		
16	1	1 ½	
18	3	2 ½	2
19	2		
20	½		
21	3	3	
22	2 ½	1	3 ½
23	2 ¾		
26	3 ½	2	2 ½
27	1	1/2	
28	3	3 ½	
29	1	2	

TOTAL TIME TAKEN TO STUDY THE SUBJECT

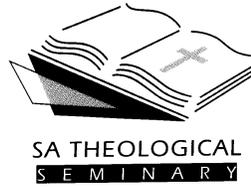
97 ¾

Record the hours (i.e 3 or 3 ½ etc.) for each study period each day and add together for a monthly total.

## TIME LOG

Month and Year:  
March 2008

Name: Sharon Booyesen  
CHL 4400 Mini Thesis



DATE	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3
1	3	2 ½	3
3	1	3	
4	2 ½	2 ¾	
5	3	3 ¼	2
7	2	2 ½	1
10	3	3	2
11	2 ½	3	½
12	3	2	
15	3		
16	1		
17	½	3	1
18	3	2 ½	
25	3	2	3 ½
26	2 ½	4	1
27	3 ½	½	4 ½
31	2	3 ½	4

TOTAL TIME TAKEN TO STUDY THE SUBJECT

98.5

Record the hours (i.e 3 or 3 ½ etc.) for each study period each day and add together for a monthly total.



**FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE**



**SA THEOLOGICAL  
S E M I N A R Y**

**Name:** Sharon Booysen

**Subject:** CHL 4400 Mini Thesis

**1. The subject material is:**

Clear  Unclear

Relevant  Not relevant

Manageable  Too difficult  Too easy

The correct length  Too long  Too short

**(1 credit = 10 hours of work)**

**2. Kindly comment on any other aspects which you feel are important, e.g. assignment topics, markers' comments, etc.**

---

---

---

---

**3. The total number of hours you spent on reading, research, assignments and the exam was 427 ¼ hours.**

**4. What questions, if any, would you like to ask about the material in this subject?**

---

---

---

---

---

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. We