

ABSTRACT

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Humans have the potential, as bearers of God’s image, to relate to one another as God intends. Husbands and wives who live out a Trinitarian-style relationship, including self-giving love, selfless service, promotion of the “other,” and mutual honor, can provide the basis for Christ-like attraction and challenge to the worldview of North Indian Islam. In this study I compare factors considered central to the husband-wife relationship among North Indian Muslims and propose a biblical view that reflects a Trinitarian perspective of the *imago Dei*.

In the first part, I address some of the main theological foundations for both Christianity and Islam. From the Christian perspective I examine intra-Trinitarian relationships and some subsequent implications of *imago Dei* on the husband-wife relationship. Then I survey the sacred texts of Islam and examine the majority patriarchal perspective and the minority perspective which emphasizes equality between husbands and wives.

In the second part, I focus on the cultural realities of the North Indian Islamic context. In these chapters I look at the heritage of Islam in North India, while maintaining a focus on the implications for the husband-wife relationship. To close this section, I present data from my ethnographic interviews with North Indian Muslim leaders.

While the first two parts examine theological and cultural data, in the third part I integrate the data, draw missiological implications, and offer recommendations. Essentially I find that

Muslim husbands and wives: engage in a search for peace, desire to preserve their identity, agree that God is the creator of people, follow a gender-based hierarchy, perceive differentiation based on fixed gender roles, and stress the harmony and equity of both male and female in marriage. I compare and contrast categories of theology, history, and cultural practice with regard to the husband-wife relationship, and I correlate this comparison with its impact on the Great Commission. Finally I begin to develop a model of relationship which points toward God's own Trinitarian character and God's original intent for relationships. In the process, Muslim Background Believers can examine theological and practical elements of contextualization related to husband-wife relationships, and Christian missiologists and cross-cultural workers can think through the type of marriage relationship they value, promote, and demonstrate.

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