

Dr. Jay Smith is an American Christian missionary, educator, and apologist who specializes in Christian engagement with Islam. He is particularly known for publicly challenging traditional Islamic accounts concerning Muhammad, Mecca, the Qur'an, and early Islamic history.

Background and education

Smith was born in India in 1953 to American missionary parents and attended Woodstock School, an international boarding school in northern India. His grandparents were also missionaries.

His academic qualifications include:

- Bachelor's degree from Messiah College, now Messiah University
- Master of Divinity from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, now Palmer Theological Seminary
- Master of Theology in missiology, emphasizing Islam, from Fuller Theological Seminary
- Doctorate from the Melbourne School of Theology in Australia

His doctoral dissertation examined the life and work of Carl Gottlieb Pfander, a nineteenth-century Christian missionary known for debating Muslim scholars and employing apologetics and polemics in encounters with Islam. [Brethren in Christ U.S. biography](#)

Missionary and apologetics work

Smith and his wife, Judy, married in 1981 and began serving as full-time missionaries in 1983. They have worked among Muslim communities in Senegal, France, and England.

Smith spent approximately 25 years in London, becoming a prominent Christian speaker at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. Since 1995, he has participated in more than 100 formal debates with Muslim scholars, political figures, and Islamic apologists.

He describes his approach as combining:

- Apologetics, presenting a reasoned defense of Christianity
- Polemics, critically examining the historical and theological claims of Islam
- Evangelism, encouraging Muslims to consider Christianity

Current work

Smith leads the [Pfander Centre for Apologetics](#), which produces research and videos examining Islamic theology, history, and culture from a Christian perspective. Much of his material is distributed through the PfanderFilms YouTube channel.

He is also identified by Brethren in Christ U.S. as director of the Master of Arts in Apologetics and Polemics of Islam program at Veritas International University in California. He travels internationally, teaching Christians how to understand and engage with Islam.

Perspective and reputation

Smith is not a neutral historian of religion. He is an evangelical Christian missionary and polemicist whose stated objective is to challenge Islam's foundational claims and defend Christianity. His presentations frequently focus on:

- Questions about the historical location and development of Mecca
- The compilation and preservation of the Qur'an
- The historical evidence concerning Muhammad
- Islamic demographic and political expansion
- Differences between Islamic and Christian teachings

Supporters regard him as an experienced authority on Christian-Muslim apologetics. Critics, including many Muslim scholars, dispute his conclusions and describe his methods as selective or confrontational. His work is therefore best understood as Christian apologetics informed by historical research, rather than detached academic Islamic studies.

Dr. Smith and Judy currently live in the United States. They have three sons, Eli, Caleb, and Jason, and have served with Brethren in Christ World Missions for more than 40 years.