

Study Guide for Fear, Persecution, and Spiritual Warfare

To be used along with the video of the same name on www.ChristianfromMuslim.com



Lesson Summary and Notes:

At times, everyone experiences fear. Muslims making the decision to follow Christ may face dire consequences. It is important for these new believers, and the Christians working with them, to be aware of and prepared for fears and possible persecution. This lesson addresses these concerns. It contains interviews people who have suffered real fears or persecution.

Reality – Cooking Middle Eastern Fish

In the Middle East hospitality is a virtue. That means good cooking is a virtue too! Former Muslim Huda loves to cook. As you see in the photographs, when Huda was wealthy, she traveled the world. She searched out recipes and met with chefs. Then she would return home - to Europe or the Middle East - and supervise her staff to cook them for international dignitaries.

Today Huda is casual in the kitchen. She teaches us how to make a simple classic – Middle Eastern fish. (You might want to jot down her recipe!)

Huda’s life has changed dramatically over the years, but she prefers the riches of Christ to the wealth of the world.

Facing Death from Cancer, with Mark Vyka

A common fear with everyone is cancer. Bible teacher Mark faces advanced cancer with a grim prognosis. He admits his fears with us, and gives spiritual techniques he uses to combat fear.

One thing Mark does when he is afraid is review Bible verses from memory. They give him strong support. He finds thousands of encouraging verses, but Joshua 1:9 is a top favorite of his,

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Follow-up. Sadly for us, about 17 months after this filming, Mark moved up to heaven. He was close to God until the end. He had used his last months to serve God faithfully: in prayer, in kindness, in teaching, with his family, and in sharing the gospel with many, including Muslims. His advice and life are worthy of our notice and imitation.

Where is God in Disasters?

Many people wonder how God can be good when natural disasters, the “Acts of God” can be so devastating. Bible teachers Kevin and Dee, and their neighbors, faced a number of natural disasters in one year. They explain how Christians can find peace in the literal storm: focus on God and place your hope in heaven.

Spiritual Warfare, with Dr. Cynthia

“Spiritual warfare” is what we call the battle in the unseen world, including for our own hearts and minds. Spiritual warfare is one of the most important skills a Christian can learn. The concept arises from Ephesians 6, which tells us that our enemies as Christians are not those of flesh and blood, but the powers of spiritual evil.

When we are afraid, face persecution, or are simply battered by the storms and waves of life, we have negative and discouraging thoughts. We get depressed. Sometimes we get angry or have doubts. The frustration can cycle round and round in our heads and nearly drive us crazy.

In order to recover, we need to fight against these thoughts. We need to change the channel of our thinking – like we would change a bad program on the television. It can literally feel like a battle in the mind and spirit. But defeating these negative and evil thoughts lifts our spirits.



Dr. Cynthia shares with us how thankfulness can be used as a weapon (*Philippians 4:6*). When times are bad, we should be even more alert to our blessings. By taking time to do or focus on something we like, we also can break the destructive cycle of negative thoughts.

Life is hard, unfair, and full of wrongdoing. Dr. C strongly suggests that we recite this verse every day as an antidote:

“Do not to be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
Romans 12:21

We do not take time to discuss all the spiritual weapons available to us as believers. Our narrator reads a few good verses. We also include a long list of Bible verses that are powerful for spiritual warfare – not only against our negative thoughts, but against the actual spiritual forces opposing us. You can grow spiritually stronger by meditating on these verses in your personal devotions, and putting them into practice.

Leaving Islam, with Luis of *Truth Defenders*

Traditional Muslims come from “shame and honor” cultures. The fear of losing their family, and shaming their community are forces that keep Muslims inside the stronghold of Islam.

Becoming an outcast. As Ayaan Hirsi Ali describes well in her book *Infidel*, once you became an outcast of traditional Muslim society, you step outside the protection of the group. You then become legitimate prey for anyone within that society. It is dangerous to leave the pack.

Louis of *Truth Defenders* discusses ideas about coming out of Islam, and the possibility of escaping and hiding from persecution. He gives advice to new Christians leaving Islam here:

4 steps for Leaving Islam:

- Be Bold but Careful – Hope for the best. Prepare for the worst
- Pray for Wisdom and Courage
- Find a Place where you could go if you are in Danger
- Take Refuge in Jesus

Louis encourages us with Jesus words in Mark 10:29,30,

“No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much...along with persecutions.”

and Paul in Romans 8:31,

“If God is for us, who can be against us?”

With the greater exchange of information over the internet, and the movement of immigrants and migrants, conversions are happening more than ever. Dr. Cynthia has interviewed and listened to testimonies of many people who have converted – not only from Islam to Christianity, but also to Islam.

Converts in both directions have experienced trials. Sometimes even “Christian” families have made converts to Islam feel rejection. But there is one experience commonly shared by converts to Christianity from Islam, that converts to Islam do not experience: the threat of death.

For Muslim apostates, the fear of being killed is real. At least two of our friends who became Christians delayed the decision for months because of this. Another suffered an attempt on her life before becoming a believer.

Why should Muslims be afraid to leave Islam? Simple. The Qur’an in Surah 4:89 tells Muslims to,
“Take hold of them and kill them wherever you find them.”

And the traditions of Mohammed, the hadiths, also tell them that Mohammed said to kill those who leave Islam, for example, *Sahih Bukhari 52:260 & 84:57*.

Openly confessing Christianity. When should a former Muslim “come out of the closet” and announce their faith to other Muslims? This answer to this varies with the individual situation. “Coming out” is a major decision that requires much prayer and wisdom.

New believers get very excited about their faith and want to tell people about the Lord. We encourage Muslims in strict environments to get strong in the Lord before they come out openly as Christians. Lacking training and familiarity with the scriptures, they are usually not be equipped to face the questions they immediately get, let alone possible persecution.

Even when mature in the Lord, former Muslims should take this step seriously, with much thought and prayer. They should be certain that is what the Lord wants them to do. (*You can read an example of coming out too soon in the Study Guide for “New in God’s Family.”*)

Examples. **Huda** became a believer in America. Although she does not discuss it in the videos, Huda actually did receive at least one death threat – from an overseas relative when he discovered she had become a Christian. This surprised and shook her. She and Dr. C had to assess the risk, and take comfort from God.

In America, Huda is free to openly share her new faith. She has gotten into the habit of it, even with Muslims. Once, Huda was at a glamorous dinner party in a luxurious Muslim home. The table was full of powerful Muslims visiting from the Middle East, having a good time.

Then one of them noticed she was wearing a cross. **“Have you become a Christian?”** they asked. All eyes turned to Huda. “Of course!” she quickly admitted – before thinking that she just risked her life! Fortunately, the event was in America, and no one felt radical enough to obey Mohammed that night.



Sometimes former Muslims don’t openly admit that they are Christians, but it comes out in other ways. Changed behavior and attitudes get noticed.

Some from the Arab Gulf that we have walked with becoming Christian from Muslim in America, let it leak out. Almost immediately they started posting Bible verses and Christian messages on Facebook.

While telling themselves that they were staying secret believers, they were soon found out by their Facebook contacts! So, if you are a former Muslim, or are discipling a former Muslim, think and pray about anything like this you might do too.

Others we know have felt it wise to stay secret believers. This can be difficult. Some do this not only for safety, but to sow light and truth into the lives of their Muslim contacts.

Christian Persecution and Imprisonment

Christians have always faced persecution. It is happening today around the world.

Dr. C discusses 1 Peter chapter 1, with new believer Huda. In it, Peter encouraged persecuted believers to remember their hope of heaven. This would give them courage during times of persecution, like they were experiencing.

Perhaps you are a strong Christian. Would it be easy for you to be locked in solitary confinement, have your Bible taken away, and face hardships and beatings? Probably not. Even John the Baptist (known as *Yahia* in Islam) got discouraged in prison. Imagine how difficult it is for a new believer from a Muslim background, who might have misunderstandings about God's character, who hasn't yet had a chance to memorize comforting passages like, Hebrews 13:5,

"I will never leave you or forsake you."

Several Muslims who have studied with us have returned to their countries as secret believers. They have not all wanted to go, but had no choice because their visas ran out. At times we have reason to fear for their lives. We have even made rescue attempts. Remember to pray for those who are persecuted, imprisoned, or at risk (Hebrews 13:3).

Facing Family Persecution, with Iliana

Nearly every Muslim who becomes a Christian experiences persecution. One of the most common types is family persecution. Many new Christians live with pain in their heart that those they love most are disappointed, or even violent, about their conversion.

Iliana shares in the video lesson, how she was persecuted by her family when she became a believer. Her family was not Muslim, but much of what she experienced was similar to what Muslims face. She says that Psalm 68:5 comforted her, because it says God is "*a father to the fatherless.*"

(Note: In another episode Rev. Bob Siegel shares the persecution he received coming from a Jewish background.)

Fear of the Unknown

Suffering for others. In Mark 8:34,35, Jesus told us,

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and the gospel will save it."

In ancient and medieval times, many in the church interpreted this verse as calling believers to suffer for the sake of suffering. Esthetes spent years atop poles in the Egyptian desert. Monks self-flagellated. They believed that this was the way we should follow Jesus in suffering, or even paying for our own sins. Thomas a Kempis in his admirable classic, *The Imitation of Christ*, falls into the same trap of suggesting suffering for the sake of suffering.

But let's look closer at this verse above and ask ourselves, "Why did Jesus take up his cross?"

What do you think? Was it for himself? Did Jesus need to suffer to for his sins? Is his example for us to suffer for ourselves?

No! Jesus did not suffer for his sins. He was already the perfect, pure sacrifice – the Lamb of God. Jesus took up the cross for us. He has made us pure through his death.

So why do we take up the cross of suffering? Is it to purify ourselves or impress God? No! There may be spiritual benefits to the suffering that we experience. But if we are following in the steps of our master, **the main reason we take up the cross and willingly suffer is to bring the gospel to others.**

An example. The truth of this verse was driven home to one of our group while on outreach. It was the end of the holy, fasting month of Ramadan. Many Muslims were entering a banqueting hall for a Ramadan feast. Our volunteer was standing alone on the public sidewalk, giving excerpts from the “Sermon on the Mount” to Muslims as they entered the event. She thought it might be a good time for them to read the beautiful words of Jesus on fasting and life.

People went in and out of the banqueting hall taunting the volunteer; but she stood her ground, smiling and handing out messages from Jesus. One Muslim, whom she had met previously came out and spoke harshly to her. Then, it occurred to this volunteer,

“This is suffering. I am carrying the cross for these people. I willingly carry it. They don’t know it, and don’t appreciate it. I am suffering for them, in a small way as Jesus suffered for me.”

The fact that in suffering for them she was a little reflection of Jesus, gave this volunteer courage to carry on through the event.

Doing outreach is not easy for most of us. A lot of times it does feel like carrying a cross. If it were purely fun, by now entire world would be evangelized!

Another Example. Some people like to travel and have adventures. Frankly, even many who go on short term mission trips do so to see something new, or for the adventure. Not so Teresa. Teresa, another volunteer, shares an experience in the video part of this lesson.

Teresa is a mature Christian who wants to serve God. Her church was taking a group to Nicaragua to dig a well and train a village in hygiene. She wanted to join them, but was afraid of what she might face so far away from the comforts of home.

The Lord showed her that he would be with her anywhere (*Hebrews 13:5,6*). She could trust him! In faith, Teresa stepped out of her comfort zone. As a result, she had the joy of seeing what God could do through her, and the rich experience of meeting appreciative people from another culture.

Many of us have discovered this – the truth from Mark 8 above: what we have willing sacrificed in our lives, has made them the most worthwhile.

Facing Violent Persecution, with Professor Daniel Scot of Pakistan

You have probably heard of violent persecution of Christians in association with Islam. The Taliban, ISIS, and the Muslim Brotherhood provide extreme examples of torture, and graphic executions of Christians in the Muslim world.

Daniel Scot is not a former Muslim. But he was persecuted for teaching things that offended Muslims. This is a risk that all of us who share with Muslims may face.

Islam has blasphemy laws for speaking against Mohammed and the Qur'an, which can call for death. For example, Pakistan's Law 295-C is based on these Islamic teachings. It has led to much persecution and even death of Christians there. Even in the West we have examples of Muslims punishing what they consider blasphemy, for example with the Charlie Hebdo publisher attack in Paris.

In this segment Scot shares how many university students tried to kill him when he was a mathematics professor in a university in Pakistan. In spite of nearly losing his life, he decided to follow Jesus' example and forgive.

"Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

Subsequently Scot immigrated to Australia, where he faced a prolonged court battle for teaching, in a church, what Islam's documents say about the treatment of apostates. He was finally acquitted. Professor Scot testified before the Parliament of Great Britain about Sharia Law. As a result of his bold stance and persecution, he became a *World Magazine* "Daniel of the Year."

Scripture References:

II Corinthians 5:17

Joshua 1:9

II Corinthians 5:8

Psalms 68:5

I Peter chapter 1

James 4:7,8

Ephesians 6:10-18

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Psalms 50:14,23

James 1:2,4,5,12

Psalms 27:14

Psalms 35:1

Psalms 68:5,19

Proverbs 3:5,6

Lamentations 3:21

Romans 8:28-31 & 12:21

Romans 15:4

Galatians 6:2

Ephesians 5:19

Philippians 4:6,13

Mark 10:29,30 & 8:34,35

Hebrews 12:2 & 13:5,6

Mark 8:34,34

Colossians 3:13

Qur'anic references:

Surah 4:89

Study Questions:

1. What do you fear? Things like spiders, closed spaces, the dark, flying, strange food? Disappointing your family? Or social settings like speaking in public or being humiliated?

- Can you share it with the group?

- What fears might be holding you back from serving God in a bigger way?
 - What fears might be keeping you from ministering to those from other faiths like Islam?
2. Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be imprisoned for your faith?
- To keep from going crazy in dark, solitary confinement, one man in Alcatraz prison created a game. He took a button off of his shirt and tossed into the room. He searched for it following a grid in his head. When he found it, he tossed and hunted all over again. What might you do to keep entertained?
 - Would you find it spiritually discouraging to pray and not be rescued? Or fed? Or wallow in filth with no bodily comforts? How would you encourage yourself?
 - If you haven't already done so, you might want to read Richard Wurmbrand's classic book *Tortured for Christ*. In it he shares how years of prison, torture, and solitary confinement had broken him down to the point where he could not even effectively pray. Yet God somehow comforted him with a sense of his presence.
3. Dr. Cynthia has done hundreds of autopsies, so it is harder for her to deny that we are going to die than for most of us. She tells us that Mark Vyka lived and died well.
- Have you ever thought you were going to die?
 - What passed through your mind then?
 - What might you want to accomplish if you knew you were going to die?
 - As the current saying goes, "What's on your bucket list?"
4. Do you agree with Dr. Cynthia that thanksgiving is important in spiritual warfare?
- How might it affect your attitude about a problem you have now?
5. Take time to review some of the many verses provided to assist you with spiritual warfare.
- How do these verses encourage you?
 - What new practices might help you remain stronger in your personal life when hard times come?
 - Time allowing, in a group setting let each person share which of the verses strengthens them for spiritual battle and why.

by Christian from Muslim, 2019
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