

Study Guide on Being New in God's Family

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

Summary and Notes:

Quick summary. Several Christians welcome Huda, and all new believers in Jesus into the Christian family. This lesson has testimonies, including Huda's, and gives advice to help newcomers get started on the Christian walk. It talks about getting and giving "discipleship." For fun, we take a quick trip to Egypt.

Welcome to the Family!

In this lesson we introduce to you Huda, a new believer in Christ from a Middle Eastern Muslim background. We also meet Dr. Cynthia, a medical doctor and Bible teacher from America, who has been ministering to Muslims for over two decades. They are beginning on the special relationship between a new disciple of Jesus and her teacher, or "discipler."

Several Christian brothers and sisters welcome Huda to her new life, share with her what to expect, and a good way to get started. One brother welcoming Huda is MB, a former Muslim. He enthusiastically greets Huda and encourages her to read the Bible to help her grow.

Huda's Testimony:

Huda gives a little of her testimony at the start of each lesson, and invites us to join her on the reality of her new life. In this lesson she expands on her testimony. Huda found life under Islam very hard. She clearly states that Islam and its rituals brought no peace or comfort to her life.

Now as a Christian Huda has found that although she still has trouble in her life, she has "peace, and a sense of presence that lifts her above the world and keeps her safe." She quotes for us 2 Corinthians 5:17,

"If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come!"

In an Arabic segment with English subtitles, Huda shares with us her motivation for appearing on-screen, being disciplined for this program. To our knowledge, this has never been done before. It is rare for a former Muslim to admit on television that they are now a Christian, let alone be willing to film a reality series documenting their discipleship. We owe a great debt to Huda for being willing to participate in this series. She helps Christians see the difference in how Muslims approach Christianity, and what their questions are. With her help, we can bring the truth to Muslims, and to help Christians to share it with them

(Behind the scenes comment: The closing segment was filmed in the studio as voiceover to her walking in the yellow mustard blossoms. She did not know that a video component was being recorded. Her expressions so impacted the producers with their sweetness and sincerity, that we decided to dissolve to her near the end of her testimony.)

The Importance of Discipleship

Discipleship. Jesus commanded us to "make disciples" in every nation. We become Christians by faith in Jesus' death to pay for sin in our place. But Jesus does not ask us to simply "make converts." The lives of converts, and the societies they live in do not improve by conversion alone. They must go on to become disciples of Jesus, and to some extent of the Christians they know. That process is called "discipleship."

Jesus trained his followers, his *disciples*. In those days, students would attach themselves to a teacher, a *rabbi*, over a long period to learn from him and become like him. For about three years Jesus' disciples studied, traveled, and shared every aspect of life with him. When Jesus returned to heaven, they were prepared to change the world.

Jewish background believer, pastor and apologist [Rev. Bob Siegel](#) shares with us in the video lesson the importance of discipleship – putting effort into learning how live like Jesus, and following his ways.

Without discipleship, the pressures on any new believer – especially a former Muslim – make it nearly impossible to live the Christian life. Muslims, and others who convert, but do not become solid disciples have a greater risk of either leaving Christianity, or becoming nominal Christians.

Take for example, a 15-year-old high school student from an immigrant Afghan family. An American contact of ours was sharing Jesus with her. Only a week after she believed, she decided to tell her family she was a Christian. We were very uncomfortable with this and prayed. Then, immediately after she told them, she disappeared from America. There was no chance for her to be discipled and become strong in the Lord. Finally, word came to us that her family had sent her to Afghanistan. (This is not an unusual response by Muslim families.)

Fearing that this new believer might be killed, we prayed hard. Praise God, she did come back –but engaged to an Afghani. She was taken out of school, and lived under house arrest with her family in America for some time. Now, a few years later she is back in school, succumbing to peer pressure and secularism. Sadly, this shows us two risks of what can happen if a Muslim proclaims their conversion too soon.

Goals for Huda’s Discipleship with Dr. Cynthia

Dr. C is helping Huda to learn how to grow as a Christian. Much of what she is teaching Huda will be part of the reality of their lives together. That is likely how it will be with you, if you are in a discipleship relationship, as a student or teacher. Topics are often addressed as they come up – not by plan. We record some of these real-life interactions for you to learn by.

We also record more formal teaching sessions, with information presented in an organized way. Sometimes the teacher will be Dr. C, and at other times guest experts. Dr. C assures us that if important topics do not arise in either of these settings, Huda will still be learning off screen as well.

From the beginning Dr. C has four goals in mind. These would be good goals for anyone new in God’s family, especially someone who is from a Muslim background. She shares with us what they are, and why they are important.

4 Goals for Discipleship

1. A solid understanding of what Christians believe and why
2. A strong personal walk with God
3. Be able to share and defend their new faith
4. Be able to withstand trials and persecution

The first two goals relate to the tremendous differences between the theology and practice of the Christian walk and Islam. The latter two goals prepare the new believer for situations they will encounter – especially as a former Muslim. Although, as Dr. C tells us, anyone who lives as a true Christian will be ridiculed or persecuted for their faith (*2 Timothy 3:12*).

Barbie’s Testimony

Barbie is a mature Christian sister with the spiritual gifts of encouragement and evangelism. Because of her inspirational style, she has been a favorite teacher of Dr. Cynthia and others. Every year for decades Barbie has divided her time between America and various places in the Middle East.

Her remarkable story includes backpacking and hitch-hiking from Israel to India, through Iran and Afghanistan back in the 1960s. True, it was a safer world then. Iran was under the Shah and more open to the West. But it was courageous for two young women to travel alone through Muslim countries. This was Barbie’s first big exposure to Islam. Fortunately, they were walking with God. Barbie has been sharing the gospel with Muslims, Jews – and everyone whose path she crosses from then until now.

Besides adventures around the world, Barbie has also suffered incredible hardships and losses. In this clip she shares with Huda, and with us all, a little about her life and her becoming Christian from an agnostic background. Through Jesus, Barbie has come to have peace. She shares with us the importance of reading the Bible and getting to know Jesus better.

Growing as a Christian, with Professor Daniel Scot

Professor Daniel Scot shares with us the acronym **GROWTH** as a way to remember how to grow in the Christian life. This makes it easy for new believers – it’s like a job description.

- **Grace**
- **Read the Bible**
- **Obey God’s Word**
- **Worship**
- **Teachable Spirit**
- **Holy Spirit**

We are saved by grace, not works. Professor Scot remarks how often in John chapters 14 and 15 Jesus tells us to obey his teaching. To grow we need to have a spirit of worship and a humble attitude, open to learning. Fellowship with other believers is important; we might put that in with worship and teaching. And finally, we need to yield our will to the Holy Spirit, and learn to follow his lead.

(Note: For many years Scot has been teaching the Bible, Islam and Mathematics in Pakistan, Australia, America and Great Britain. Formerly university math professor in Pakistan, he was nearly killed in that country for his faith. He shares more about this in the lesson on “Fear, Persecution, and Spiritual Warfare.”)

Growth Takes Time

Dr. C reminds us that a baby can not grow up overnight. Likewise, we need to accept that it will take time for a new believer in Jesus to become strong, not easily tossed back and forth. They need the “milk of the Word” and our patience.

It can scarcely be over-emphasized how important it is for anyone, especially those working with Muslims and former Muslims to be patient. Strongly different worldviews and patterns of living rarely change overnight. As a discipler, you might feel very discouraged. The new believer may lose interest or do something that truly shocks you. But be patient. You might need to back off for a while, but do not give up! Abide in Jesus and be filled with the fruit of the spirit. Then ask God to direct you how and when to re-approach the new believer. We should reflect the Father of the Prodigal Son in wisdom and patience. Remember, the Bible says,

*“Let us not become weary in doing good,
for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9*

Likewise, if you are a new believer, don’t be surprised by ups and downs in your growth. Be patient with yourself. If you fall, do not stay down. God is a loving heavenly father, and ready to forgive (*1 John 1:9*). Try to be tolerant of those teaching you; they might not have had your experiences or understand what you are coming from or going through. Perhaps you can explain it to them.

Whatever the case, do not let stumbling blocks – from either Muslims or Christians – keep you from being the mature, strong believer that God desires, or the discipler facilitating it.

Muslims and Christians from Muslim countries. We don’t discuss this on screen, but it is worth considering: the complicated relationships between Muslims and Christians in nations dominated by Islam, impact the way Muslims think about and approach Christianity. This includes evangelism and discipleship. Muslims converting to Christianity may have had negative or positive experiences with Christians overseas.

Although even nominal Christians are admired in the Middle East for their integrity, when a Muslim claims to be a Christian and wants to enter their church, it is a different story. This sad situation is understandable. Proselytizing, and even allowing Muslims to attend church is illegal in most Muslim nations. It is not unusual for government or radical groups to send “spies” into Christian churches to try to entrap them into breaking the law.

Until recent years, it was so unusual for a Muslim to become a Christian, churches assumed any newcomer to their church was a spy. In fact, some of them were and harsh punishments resulted. So, churches in Muslim countries have been wary to accept outsiders unless they are known to be Christian in background.

Often, Muslims overseas have had to be persistent to get Christian training. Some have had a dream, or come across something in the Qur'an that stirred their interest in Jesus. They wanted to learn more. But they had to search or travel to find a Bible, a pastor willing to teach and baptize them, or a church that would accept them.

Because of this, we hear stories of Muslims being turned away from church after church in their quest for Christ, like Mary and Joseph from the inns of Bethlehem. This sounds incredible to the Western ear. Even when this is not the case, since Muslims know the law, and have experienced this relative segregation, they can be as wary of approaching Christians as Christians are of them.

Sharing Christianity in the Middle East is dangerous, because Islam calls not only for death of those who leave Islam, but also for those "leading them astray." So Christians who are close to Muslims usually don't say much about Jesus. One of the first things Huda did after she became a Christian was to contact Christians she had known in the Middle East. She rebuked them for not sharing the gospel with her. Although she had known them for years, it was not until she came to America and met Dr. C that she heard the gospel for the first time.

In the West, attitudes learned in Islamic cultures can persist. We know amazing pastors and congregations from Muslim countries with a big heart for Muslims. But there are also churches composed of immigrant Christians who still live in fear – or apathy. They are happy to be where they can finally worship freely, and express their views. They really enjoy it, and that's great! But they don't see that knowing the language and culture of Muslim immigrants is a gift. It could be used to serve God in ways unimaginable in their homeland. But like most Americans, they simply want to live the American dream.

Here is an example of overseas attitudes impacting Muslim discipleship in America: Dr. C was introduced to secret Christian "R" from a Muslim country. As a new believer, R was too afraid to connect with Christians in her homeland. When she escaped to America, R did connect with Christians from her country. But she was so displeased with them, that she decided Christians, at least from her culture, were fake.

A Muslim friend of R's knew Dr. C and had an idea. She took R to meet Dr. C, to investigate whether American Christians were also "fake." R was very nervous, almost resentful. She related her bad experiences as a challenge, and awaited Dr. C's comments. R's story of the insensitive treatment she had received surprised and disappointed Dr. C. At one event, the "Christian" women even tore the *hijab* off her mother's head! (*Note: the hijab is a headscarf. Dr. C never encourages anyone to take off their scarf. She considers that to be their own decision, between them and God and their family.*)

Obviously, that church did not know how to treat Muslims – let alone how to act as Americans. What they had done could be considered the crime of "assault" in America! Dr. C Prayed for wisdom. She does not like to criticize what she did not experience, and she tries to preserve Christian unity; but obviously these Christians had gone too far.

At Dr. C's answers, R warmed up a bit. Nevertheless, she withdrew into her fear and disappointment. Dr. C tried to reconnect with, her but without success. The last we knew, she was spiritually starving with Muslim friends and family, and no Christian fellowship.

Too close for comfort? If you are an American or European, you probably think that you are not the best person to evangelize or disciple a Muslim from another country. That could be true. But in other cases the opposite could be true. Studies have shown that if a form of cultural rivalry exists, people are often more comfortable learning from someone from an entirely different culture, than from someone in their own or neighboring culture. Dr. C's experience confirms this. Take this into consideration if a Muslim from another culture expresses interest in studying with you. (*You might have heard of this if you have taken the international "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement" class.*)

Reality – Quick Trip to Egypt

“Come join us!” says Dr. Cynthia from Egypt. Take a whirlwind tour of the ancient and Islamic sites of Egypt, as you travel from Cairo, beyond Aswan to Abu Simbel in only 3 minutes! Besides remarkable tourist sites of colossal columns and statues, you will peek into Al Azhar University – the ultimate authority of Sunni Islam, where Dr. C had a chance to share the gospel. Then Dr. C shows you the view out of finely latticed windows in old Islamic Cairo. Beautiful, but sadly the only view of the world Muslim women in seclusion would have had.

What you will not see are the persecuted Christians Dr. C visited with in Upper Egypt. One was literally trembling at the memory of his cousin’s murder when a church was attacked by terrorists. Although Egypt has one of the oldest Christian church traditions, extending back to the early mission work of St. Mark (associated with the gospel of his name), and still has about 10% Christians, there has been increasing persecution over the past few decades.

Television and internet ministry is rapidly impacting the faith of Egypt. Perhaps surprisingly, during these same years, through the broadcasts of Coptic Father Zakaria and others, thousands, some say over a million Muslims have left Islam. Many of these are walking into the Kingdom of God.

(Note: the lessons you are taking have also been broadcast on an Egyptian Arabic channel, for educated Egyptians who speak English as a second language.)

Please take a moment to pray for new believers in the West, like Huda, Christians throughout the Muslim World, and those given as examples in this lesson.

Scripture References:

II Corinthians 5:17
Ephesians 2:8,9 & 4:11-14
John 14:15
II Timothy 3:12
Proverbs 15:31
I Peter 2:2
Galatians 6:9
I John 1:9

Study Questions:

1. The theme verse for this series is 2 Corinthians 5:17.
 - Why do you think that is?
 - What do you think from the photos Huda’s life might have been like before she became a Christian?
 - How might 2 Corinthians 5:17 be especially true for Huda? *(You could imagine how that might be, then check other lessons to see if your ideas were accurate.)*
2. This episode begins and ends with parts of Huda’s testimony.
 - How does Huda describe her life as a Muslim?
 - How has it changed, “become new,” since she has become a Christian?
3. Sister in Christ Barbie gets a spotlight in welcoming Huda to the Christian family. Since Barbie was an influential Bible teacher in Dr. Cynthia’s past, she wanted to share Barbie with Huda.
 - Looking back is there someone who was influential in bringing you to the Lord or helping you grow in him?
 - Is there a way you could be an influence for Jesus in someone else’s life?
4. Both Barbie and Brother MB emphasize reading the Word of God.
 - What are some reasons for this?

5. Dr. Cynthia described her four goals for Huda's discipleship, as listed below. Explain what each goal entails:

- Solid understanding
- Personal walk
- Share and defend the faith
- Withstand trials and persecution

6. Professor Scot tells us about Christian GROWTH, and bases it on Ephesians 4:11-13.

- What does GROWTH stand for?
(*Hint: Grace, Read, Obey, Worship, Teachable, Holy Spirit*)
- Name ways that one of those has worked in your own life.
- How have you seen it practiced – or not practiced - in the lives of others?
- Are there ways in which you also need GROWTH?

7. Did any of the welcome comments from mature Christians speak to you?

8. Both Huda and Dr. Cynthia have traveled extensively around the world. You will be visiting many places with them as part of their lives and to illustrate Biblical truths.

- How do you think travel affects a person?
- How might travel be of benefit or a detriment?
- What did you think of the Egypt travel segment?
- Have you been to the Middle East? If so, share ways in which you think the culture there differed from what we have in the West.

9. Rev. Bob Siegel welcomes Huda. He shares with her that some of his background, in coming from Judaism to Christianity might resemble hers.

- What might be similar?
- What might be different?
- How do their experiences compare to yours?

10. We mention in the study guide how the situation between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East can impact their evangelism and discipleship in America or Europe.

- Had you thought of that previously?
- How might a Muslim feel if they became interested in Christianity, but their overseas experience with Christians was one of these examples we know of:
 - Drinking alcohol with secular Christians in Palestine
 - Well-behaved Pilipino Christian servants in Kuwait
 - Having admired Armenian co-workers
 - Sharing Christmas with Christian neighbors in Iraq
 - Being refused entrance to Christian churches
 - Receiving relief aid from Americans which was distributed by local Christians

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