

Study Guide for The Bible and the Qur'an

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

Summary and Notes:

Quick Summary: In this lesson we focus not on which holy book is true, but the different ways that Christians and Muslims approach the Bible and the Qur'an as their respective holy books. It is important for Muslims to understand this when they start to read the Bible, and for Christians who share with Muslims to be able to know what their Muslim friends would be expecting from past experience with their own holy book.

(Note: other lessons and study guides on this website overlap and expand on the Bible the Qur'an. For a fuller understanding, we recommend that you also review the video lessons and study guides on *Why Believe the Bible?* *Introducing the Bible to Muslims*, *Bible Study Tools*, and *Inspiration of the Bible*.)

Reality: Former Muslim Huda's Frustration with Islam (English, and Arabic with subtitles)

In a reality segment former Muslim Huda is driving Dr. C to a meeting about Islam. When the subject turns to Islam, Huda becomes animated. Dr. C grabs the camera to catch Huda's candid discussion. Huda relates how she feels she was deceived in Islam for many years because she lived in a Muslim country with no access to the truth. Huda is very glad that now, due to the internet and websites like this, Muslims across the world finally have access to the truth.

Huda gives an example of one way she has learned the truth: by watching debates. Huda says that Muslim debaters and leaders do not have good answers to the objections being put forth by Christians, atheists, and other critics of Islam. She says there are many ugly things about the Prophet Mohammed and Islam which have been kept hidden from Muslims. Because of this, Huda was far into adulthood before she came to America and discovered the truth about Islam.

Huda would like to see Muslims across the world learn about the truth, and she hopes they learn much earlier than she did. She challenges all Muslims to research through the internet, and every other way to find out the truth about Islam and Christianity.

Huda repeats much of what she said in Arabic, for the benefit of our Arabic-speakers. We include it with subtitles, because we think it is of value for English-speakers to hear her in her native language.

The Bible and the Qur'an

Worthy to touch a Holy Book?

The QUR'AN:

- Muslims: To pray or touch the Qur'an, one must be **ritually pure** (Qur'an 56:77-79).

"None can touch but the purified."

Hands must be clean. Other rules also apply. For example, women must cover and may not touch it at certain times of the month.

- Non-Muslims: Unbelievers are known as *kuffar*, or infidels (*kafir* singular). Infidels are considered unclean, and unworthy to touch a Qur'an in Arabic. It is *haram*, forbidden. The Qur'an in Arabic

is viewed as the true word of Allah as it is recorded in heaven. For this reason, American mosques may give English Qur'ans to visitors, but are reluctant to include the Arabic text. Even this practice is controversial with some strict Muslims.

If your Muslim contact lets a non-Muslim touch their Arabic Qur'an, you know that they are not very strict.

The BIBLE:

- In contrast, Christians are glad to have everyone touch and read the Bible!
- Although Judaism before Jesus had some forms of ritual purity, there is no New Testament rule that requires ritual purity to touch the Bible.

INTERNAL vs. EXTERNAL Purity

This would be a good place to discuss rituals and the idea of internal vs. external purity. The Old Testament, the scriptures written before Jesus, had many laws, which the Jews of Jesus' time on earth were expected to obey. We discuss the reasons for the laws in other lessons. However even in the Old Testament, the prophet Samuel told us that people look on the outside, but God looks on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)

Besides the rules sent by God in the Old Testament, by the time of Jesus the religious leaders had invented many other laws that they pushed people to follow.

In the New Testament, the **Gospel of Matthew 15:1-20** (*Injeel Mata*), there is an example of Jesus' disciples eating without following the washing requirements made by the religious leaders of the time. The religious leaders were quick to condemn the disciples. Jesus used the opportunity to point out the difference between external rituals, which make people look righteous, and the inner heart, where true goodness lies.

Jesus responded to their accusation by redirecting their attention. He said,

“The food that you put into your mouth doesn't make you unclean and unfit to worship God...but the words that come out of your mouth come from your heart. And they are what make you unfit to worship God. Out of your heart come evil thoughts, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, vulgar deeds, stealing, telling lies, and insulting others. These are what make you unclean. Eating without washing your hands will not make you unfit to worship God.” (Contemporary English Version)

The crowds looked on the outside of these leaders and respected them. Jesus looked inside and saw the ugliness of their hearts. After Jesus said this, his disciples pointed out to him that he had offended the religious leaders. That resentment was part of the discord between the leaders and Jesus, which eventually led them to have him arrested and condemned.

The last week of Jesus' life on earth, he continued to draw attention to the difference between external and internal cleanliness. In doing so he further aggravated the religious leaders by telling them,

“You are like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” Matthew 23:27,28

Our Muslim friends might be surprised by these harsh words from Jesus. **But Jesus' words against hypocrites are important because:**

- They show how strongly Jesus feels about hypocrites. Fake religious leaders are the main people that Jesus spoke to harshly. Even today hypocrites are stumbling blocks that keep people from wanting to follow God. That is bad. We hear, "If that's religion, we are better off without it!"
- Many people in every culture try to appear good on the outside, but are not good inside.
- Jesus kept drawing people's attention to the condition of their hearts.
- This actually encouraged the common people. They felt they could not really please God, because they did not have the time and money to devote to being "religious" like the leaders that Jesus rebuked.
- Jesus came to earth to die for our sins. In order for that to happen, those in power had to be angry enough to kill him. That definitely happened.
- After Jesus arose from the dead and ascended to heaven, we know from the book of *Acts* in the New Testament, that a large number of priests came to believe in Jesus. They joined the Christians. This shows that Jesus words confronting leaders were believed by some, and they repented. (Acts 6:7)

Note: Sometimes doubters say, "If it was so clear that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah and died for our sins, why didn't the Jews believe him?" They did! Acts tells us that many, in fact most of the early Christians were Jews – but then they became identified as Christians. The "Jews" of today are the ones descended from the unbelieving Jews.

- Jesus was like a mirror. He showed the religious leaders of the time the conditions of their hearts. Doing that was not "nice." It was what we call in America "tough love," saying or doing something difficult so that the future will be better.
When parents see their children doing wrong, they should correct it. Jesus was doing this, showing the righteous-looking hypocrites that they were sinners in need of a Savior. The same happens with religious people of today.
- Jesus words apply today. Muslims live under a complex system of laws, similar to the situation in Jesus' day. Muslims who are successful at following the rules may become proud, thinking of all they have done through their own good deeds. Jesus would want to show them that following the law is not enough to please God.

Other Muslims find all these laws a burden. Jesus would want them to know that to him, the condition of their heart is most important. He calls us all to him for spiritual rest. (Matthew 11:28)

We are not meaning to say that Islam does not care about the internal aspect of a Muslim. What we are pointing out is that in Christianity, there is more of an emphasis on the internal, the personal relationship with God.

The Value of Words

The QUR'AN:

- Most Muslims across the world do not speak Arabic. Nevertheless, the **Arabic language** is of great importance in Arab culture, and also in Islam. It is almost a “chick and egg” relationship to decide which came first in priority.
- Why did Mohammed and the Arabic Qur'an come to prominence when they did? From passages in the Qur'an and expert opinions, it seems that there was sadness among the Arabs of Mohammed's day that they did not have a holy book revealed in their language.

“Verily we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that you may understand.”
Qur'an 12:2 (Surah Yusuf or Joseph)

The Jews and Christians had holy books in their languages. This feeling might even have developed into a resentment. To make it worse, there were no translations of the Bible available in Arabic at the time of Mohammed. This setting is believed to encourage the development and receptivity of the Muslim holy book in Arabic.

- The Qur'an must be read and memorized in Arabic for spiritual merit. This is a reason that reading and writing in Arabic is so important in Muslim lands, regardless of the national language. In fact, translations of the Qur'an into English and other languages will be called, “a translation of the meaning of the Qur'an,” rather than “The Qur'an.”
- Another significant difference between the Bible and the Qur'an is that the actual Arabic words of the Qur'an are believed to have **supernatural power** in themselves. Depending on the accent with which they are spoken, and the time of year, they accrue spiritual merit, or *thawab*, to the Muslim reciting or reading them (10-40 points per letter).

The BIBLE:

- There is a strong difference in the worth of words between the Bible and the Qur'an. With the Bible, it is the message that holds the power, not the words. There is no special merit for reading the Bible in the original Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic.
- A benefit of this is that the Bible has the same power in any language. To us this makes sense because God understands all languages, and according to the Bible is “the God of all humanity.”
- We do not receive points, or *thawab* for reading the Bible. The benefit is the encouragement we receive from it.
- Besides many translations of the Bible in English, there are several in Arabic, for example called: the *Kitab al Hyat* (The Book of Life), *Kitab as-Sharif* (The Noble Book), and Van Dyke Arabic Bible.

A conversion connection? To question Islam is forbidden to Muslims,

“Oh you who believe! Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, would cause you trouble.” Qur'an Surah 5:101

Compliant or fearful Muslims follow this. Yet some Muslims have been unable to resist disobeying this command. In our experience, the requirement for the Arabic language in Islamic practices, and the treatment of women in Islam are two of the main things that have started some Muslims questioning Islam. This is especially true for non-Arabic speakers, and women respectively.

Example of a Muslim who questioned:

*“Why must I pray and read the Qur’an in Arabic? I speak several languages.
Am I smarter than God?”*

Ali, a Muslim Dr. C knows, asked himself this. He kept asking questions. Ali knew it was dangerous to question Islam. A classmate of his had started questioning Islam openly, and ended up dead – murdered.

Yet, Islam’s focus on Arabic, its forbidding questions, and its way of dealing with dissent were issues led Ali to leave Islam and investigate Christianity. Eventually, while still living in a Muslim community in Sub-Saharan Africa, he made the risky decision to become a Christian.

What Does Injeel Mean?

Injeel is an important word used by Muslims to refer to part of the Bible; but unfortunately, there is confusion about which part. This section of the lesson attempts to clarify the distinctions between the various ways Muslims apply the term *Injeel*. The goal is to clarify communication between Muslims and Christians when they discuss the Bible.

In the Qur’an, *Injeel* refers to the book revealed to Jesus, and means, roughly, “The Gospel.” The Qur’an affirms that the *Injeel* is from God. In practice however, there are problems applying this term. Technically, Jesus did not directly bring a book called the *Injeel*, as it is described in Islam. The New Testament was written after his death by his followers as the Holy Spirit led them to write. (See also the lesson and study guide on *Inspiration of the Bible* and *Why Believe the Bible?*)

Muslims have no words for:

- The Bible
- The Old Testament
- The New Testament

That’s a problem: these are the three most common terms Christians use to refer to parts of the Bible.

The Muslim terms for the recognized revelations from God before Mohammed are:

- *Taruat* – referring to the “Books of Moses” or as Jews and Christians call them, the Torah or Pentateuch.
- The *Zabur* – the Psalms of David
- The *Injeel* – the book that Jesus supposedly brought
- The *Kitab*, or *Book* – meaning the prior revelations, and loosely could mean the Bible. Christians and Jews are called “People of the Book.”

From this you can see the challenge. Both Muslims and Christians recognize different categories of books that came from God before Prophet Mohammed. They cover much of the same material. But we are talking apples and oranges in trying to match them up.

The Old Testament of the Jews and the Christians includes more than the Torah and Psalms. There are books of history, wisdom, major and minor prophets which are not covered in the Islamic terms.

Besides the gospels, the New Testament includes history and letters to the churches on theology and how to live the Christian life. Since God/Allah would have known what was in the Bible at the time of Prophet Mohammed, this fact alone makes the Qur'an a questionable revelation. (For more, see lesson and study guide on *Why Believe the Bible?*)

When Muslims say *Injeel*, they mean to refer to a book Jesus brought, similar in style to what they believe happened with Prophet Mohammed. Because of their incomplete understanding however, Muslims apply the term *Injeel* inconsistently. When they use the word *Injeel* it could refer to the four gospels, an individual gospel, the New Testament, or even the entire Bible. Christians have different words for all of these.

So, when Christians and Muslims communicate, a Christian may speak of the New Testament or the Gospel of Matthew, neither term of which is familiar to Muslims, so they might not even know that the Christian is talking about the Bible! In turn, it is not easy for a Christian to be sure what book a Muslim is referring to when they say *Injeel*. This leads to misunderstandings on both sides.

Parts of the Bible, all of which might be referred to as *Injeel* by Muslims:

- “The gospels,” referring to all four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ which are included in the New Testament
- individual gospels, like *Injeel Yuhanna* for the Gospel of John
- the entire New Testament
- the entire Bible, which includes all of the above: writings in the New Testament, plus the Old Testament

Time to Learn!

If you are a Muslim: try to learn the differences between the Muslim and Christian terms for the Bible. See also the lesson and study guide on *Introduction to the Bible for Muslims*.

If you are a Christians working with Muslims: try to understand their thinking on these terms. Then, you can make clearer explanations to Muslims when you refer to the Bible, and not be confused by Muslims' terms in return. It might be necessary at times to ask them to clarify how they are using the term *Injeel* in a certain context, and likewise clarify your own terms.

Practical application:

For example, in speaking with Muslims, Dr. C will usually do this:

- **Old Testament:** She uses Muslim terms if she is talking to them about the first five books of the Bible (Taruat) or the Psalms (Zabur). If she is referring to other books of the Old Testament, she usually lets them know that they are from writings of other “prophets” that we have included in the Bible, from the time before Jesus, that they don't have.
- **New Testament:** When speaking of the New Testament, she will often simply say, “The *Injeel* says...” hooking onto their general conception that the information came through Jesus. In general conversation, she does not take the time to clarify what part of the *Injeel*, unless it is essential or she is teaching. Depending on your relationship or the nature of the conversation, it might be worth the effort to explain to which portion of the New Testament you refer.

How Many Prophets Wrote the Bible?

Islam considers any male who receives a message from God to be a “prophet.” In contrast to Islam, which preserves only the revelations from its Prophet Mohammed, the Bible contains the works of many writers

over centuries. For example, the book of Job (*Ayyub*), which might be the oldest of any book in the Bible, is considered to be several thousand years old.

It is difficult enough to collect and preserve the words of one prophet. It is a far greater challenge to collect the writings of many prophets over hundreds of years, and be sure that they are all true prophets. The Bible has over 40 authors. Isn't it wonderful that we can read and know what God revealed to his men and women going back more than 4,000 years?

(See also lessons and study guides on *What Makes a True Prophet?*)

Dr. Cynthia Summarizes the Bible and the Qur'an

This segment reminds and reinforces the lesson's points. These are some, but not all, of the important differences between the Bible and the Qur'an. By understanding these approaches to the Bible and the Qur'an, we can better communicate, and understand each other's religions.

Differences in Approaching the Bible compared to Approaching the Qur'an

With the Bible:

- Ritual preparation is not needed to touch the Bible
- There is no need to cover the hair
- Women can touch and read the Bible at any time of the month
- Sick people can touch and read the Bible
- Unbelievers may touch and read the Bible
- The Bible may be read in any language, especially one's heart language
- The Bible contains the words of many authors or "prophets"
- The power is in the message, not the original words
- Although we respect the Bible, it is acceptable to mark and make notes in your personal Bible

Former Muslim Huda on the Bible and the Qur'an (Arabic/English)

Right after this lesson, new believer and former Muslim Huda summarizes what she has learned about approaching the Bible and the Qur'an. She basically reviews the points we have listed above. Even though she presents it in her native language of Arabic, we share it with you, adding subtitles, because we think you will find it inspiring.

Scripture References: New International Version, unless otherwise stated

II Corinthians 5:17

Matthew 15:1-20, and 23:27,28

I Samuel 16:7

Acts 6:7

Matthew 11:28

Jeremiah 32:27

Qur'anic references:

Qur'an sent in Arabic – Surah 12:2

Don't question – Surah 5:101,102

Only pure may touch Qur'an – 56:77-79

Why Arabic – 41:44

Study Questions:

1. Regarding ritual purity:
 - Having learned some of the requirements Muslims must fulfill in order to approach their holy book, what thoughts might you have regarding how you approach the Bible?
 - Discuss the differences between external and internal purity, or external and internal righteousness.
 - Which sort of righteousness does Jesus want?
 - Can you see any value to externally appearing to be good? Godly? Righteous?
2. Dr. C knows a missionary to Muslims who wraps her Bible in a silk scarf and treats it with reverence.
 - Why do you think she does this?
 - Do you think this is ever necessary? or advisable?
3. Do you speak more than one language?
 - For Christians and Muslims: How might you feel if you were told that in order to truly follow the Bible, you must be able to read the New Testament in Greek and the Old Testament in Hebrew?
4. Asking questions. Have you ever gotten the feeling that you were not supposed to question your religion? If so, how did that make you feel?
 - Do you think it is wrong to question Christianity?
 - As you learned today, Muslims are not supposed to question anything that might lead them to doubt. What if you were an American-born Muslim Pakistani that spoke Urdu at home. Would you find it frustrating to be required to perform all your rituals and reading/recitations in Arabic from the time of childhood on?
 - Would you be tempted to question? If so, what would you say, and what answer would you expect to receive?
5. The “gospel” means good news. In French, the New Testament is called *L’evangile*. The English name Evangeline means “bringer of good news.”
 - Do you see any relationship between these words and the Muslim word *Injeel*?
 - How might you use this relationship to share the good news of the gospel with a Muslim?
6. How do you feel hearing former Muslim Huda summarize the differences between the Bible the Qur’an?
 - How would you summarize the differences?
 - Which differences are most important to you?
7. What is Huda’s opinion about how she was taught Islam?
 - How does she feel about it?
 - What does she challenge Muslims of today to do?
 - How might you present this challenge to Muslims without offending them?
8. The study guide goes into some detail about how Jesus confronted those who wanted to appear religious, but were actually sinful inside. He called them hypocrites.
 - Have you ever known someone you thought was a hypocrite?
 - How have you behaved with them?
 - Do you think it does any good to confront a hypocrite (meaning tell them what you think)? If so, in what setting might that be appropriate?

- Look at yourself honestly. Do you see any hypocrisy in yourself? Is there a way in which you want people to think you are better than you are? If so, what could you do about it?

9. In the study guide we discussed the possible impact that not having the Bible in Arabic seems to have had on the development of Islam.

- Could this have been due to a failure of the church not to translate the Bible into Arabic sooner?
- If you are Christian: 1) How would you feel if you could not read the Bible in a language you understood? 2) Does that influence your thinking about the importance of bringing the gospel and Bible into languages that do not yet have it?
- If you are Muslim: what do you think about that possible relationship? Have you been able to read a Bible in your own language yet?

by Christian from Muslim, 2019
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