

# **Study Guide for Introduction to Islam for Christians**

To be used along with the video of the same name on [www.ChristianfromMuslim.com](http://www.ChristianfromMuslim.com)

## **Summary and Notes:**

This lesson is meant to be an introduction to Islam for Christians who do not know about Islam, but would like to. Muslims taking this course, or Christians knowledgeable about Islam could skip this lesson. However, while presenting the basics of Islam, Dr. Cynthia does give insights and examples which might interest experienced Christians and Muslims.



In a study group, this lesson would also allow experienced members the opportunity to share their insights with the group.

## **THE 5 PILLARS OF ISLAM – Required Actions**

- 1. Creed, *shahadah*:** One becomes a Muslim by confessing this statement of faith in Arabic:  
“*There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah*”
- 2. Prayer, *salat*:** several times a day
- 3. Fasting, *sawm*:** fasting, mainly during the Islamic month of Ramadan
- 4. Alms, *zakat*:** giving, primarily to the poor
- 5. Pilgrimage, *hajj*:** pilgrimage to Mecca

## **More on the Creed**

Muslims believe that everyone is born Muslim, but due to influences like culture, many of us need to come back to Islam. We do this by reciting the *shahadah*. Notice that simply believing in God is not enough. Acceptance of the Prophet Mohammed is essential to be Muslim.

Words or faith? Ideally, the creed should be recited from the heart, agreeing with it. But this has not always been the case.

- For example, historically in mass conversions when large groups were instructed to recite Arabic words, unknown to them, or face death.
- One American Christian we know was asked to repeat the *shahadah*, word by word in Arabic, when he was overseas on a mission trip. Being encircled by Muslims, and wanting to cooperate, he did it, not knowing or meaning what he was saying. When he finished the recitation, the group cheered, proclaiming him Muslim. He felt they seriously believed they had converted him.

## **More on Prayer**

In the video lesson, although only half of the class had heard of the 5 Pillars of Islam, all had seen how Muslims pray. This reflects the exposure to Islam the West now gets through the media.

- Islamic prayers are formal, and with set movements. They consist of a series of bowing with head to the ground, kneeling, and standing, while saying memorized prayers in Arabic. (Note: The video lesson shows only a small portion of a prayer session.)

- They may be done alone or in a group.
- One should face Mecca. Often a special rug is used. Some rugs even have a compass in them.
- Shiites often use a special stone to tap their heads on when they bow.
- The traditional communal time of prayer is at the mosque at about 12:30 pm on Fridays. All able males are expected to attend. Devout men may attend daily.
- After Friday prayers, led by the *Imam* there is often a khutbah, or sermon by a leader. During this sermon Muslims are encouraged to live according to Islam.
  - (However, we have heard reports from some countries, and even regions in America, that mosques used the khutbah to incite hatred and violence towards the West, Christians and Jews. Sometimes these are broadcast with loudspeakers, but Westerners don't understand because the messages are in Arabic.)
- The number of times a day a Muslim prays is determined by their sect. It is not within the Qur'an itself, but in hadith. With Sunnis it is usually considered to be 5 times. The times range from before sunup to after dinner at bedtime.
- Men and women usually pray separately. Some small mosques only have a room for men's prayers.
  - (Dr. C has heard Muslims themselves, even men, complain that women's prayer rooms are absent or not as nice as the men's rooms.)
- Prayer times can be combined. If a Muslim misses a prayer time for some reason, they can add it on to another prayer time.
- Besides the formal prayers, some Muslims believe they can make special du'a' prayer requests for themselves and others. Other Muslims don't believe in these personal prayers.
  - (From Dr. C's experience, this practice seems to be more common in Western countries, where it reflects the society's idea of prayer, than in Muslim countries. *Not a scientific study.*)
- The fact that everyone in the class on the video lesson recalled seeing Muslims praying shows what a strong impression the externals of Islam make.
- At times, large numbers of Muslims pray together publicly in order to make a statement – or attract converts. You can occasionally see it on universities, and sometimes in public gatherings for political purposes
- Dr. C was even told by one convert to Islam,
 

*“When I saw Muslims, all praying together in unison, it really impressed me. I felt this is something that Abraham might have done. So I became a Muslim.”*

  - (Dr. C calls this “choreography conversion,” because it is based on appearance, not what Islam teaches or its truth. It's like deciding to be a swan after watching the ballet *Swan Lake*.)

### Historical note on prayer:

In the days before clocks were common in the Middle East, the prayer before sunrise was difficult to judge. One Westerner in a caravan during that era, described a series of clanging and banging on pans waking them several times during the night. The Muslim caravan guides were attempting to guess when the before dawn prayer should be, only to find that they were too early. So, they repeated the process several more times until dawn finally arrived.

### Praying with Muslims:

Sometimes there are reasons for Christians to pray in the mosques, with or without Muslims present.

- We suggest that you do this respectfully, probably near the back of the prayer hall, on the side for your sex.
- Dress appropriately (*see elsewhere*)
- You may use a variety of postures which indicate humility or glorify God.
- We suggest that you use this time to pray for:
  - blessing the people of that mosque
  - deliverance of Muslims out of the bondage of Islam
  - doors to share with them
  - God to use you to bring his love and light to them
- Praying in a mosque is a good way to get Muslim attention and build a bridge. They will probably ask you how you pray, and what you pray for. They will also ask you why you are in the mosque.
- We do not suggest that you directly imitate their poses and/or sequence. If you do, they might take that as a sign that you have converted, or are a poorly trained Muslim.
- Muslims who become Christians often continue praying with their family or group, assuming the Muslim rituals, but praying in their hearts to the God of the Bible. They may find it necessary to do this to survive.
- Are their prayers real? It is easy to suppose that since Islamic prayers are a required ritual in a language which most Muslims do not understand, that they are not real. Some however are sincere, especially when making requests with *du'a* prayer.
  - (*In another video lesson, former Muslim Huda shares with us that she found emptiness in Islamic rituals like prayer.*)

### More on Ramadan

Muslims have a strong tradition of fasting. Its practice is very different than Jesus suggests. Although there are other fasts in Islam, **Ramadan** is the Muslim holy month of fasting:

- You might be familiar with its requirements of refraining from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual relationships during daylight hours. Women should not wear make-up.
- The Qur'an is read nightly in the mosque, with the entire Qur'an covered in the month.

- *Iftar*, the daily breaking of the fast after sundown, is often a special event. Typically, Muslims gather together to do this, either with family and friends, or in the mosque.
- Eating a date is recommended to break the fast, as Mohammed did.
- Because Islam uses a lunar calendar, Ramadan rotates through the year. When it occurs during the summer months with its heat and long days, fasting is especially challenging.
- Because it is difficult to work while fasting, Muslim societies slow down this month. Vacations are taken.
- In Muslim countries, it is usually illegal to be seen eating in public during daylight hours.
- Because eating is allowed at night, feasting has become traditional all night long. Many special foods are made annually during this month only. More food is consumed during Ramadan than any other month.
- Connecting with your Muslim friends during Ramadan presents challenges.
  - If you meet them during the day, they can't eat or drink with you. Watching you eat or drink would be difficult for them (that's why it's illegal in Muslim countries) and feels awkward for you.
  - Plus, talking with you will dry their mouth and increase their thirst.
  - In the evening they might be gathering with their friends and family, and so unavailable.
- Ramadan does however open a door to discuss various kinds of fasting, and how the fasting Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount differs from Muslim fasting. It may possibly find them in a more spiritual set of mind.
- At the end of Ramadan comes *Eid al Fitr*, the biggest happy holiday of Islam. It is celebrated with new clothes, parties, and special foods – in that way like we celebrate Christmas. In fact, Christians might find themselves honored with a party invitation by their Muslim friends, or local Muslim group.
- Often, Christians use Ramadan as a time of regular prayer and fasting for Muslims.
- **In America, Islam uses Ramadan to recruit new Muslims.**
  - They take advantage of opportunities to teach its “cultural” practices in public schools. Whereas schools cannot teach what Christians believe about basic holidays like Easter and Christmas. In fact, during outreach, we meet university students born in other countries, but who raised here, that do not have a notion about what Easter celebrates.
  - This double standard is frustrating for Christians. It is also sad for us to see how easily students convert to Islam without really knowing it.
  - Universities and mosques have open events and “fastathons” during Ramadan. At one of these, Dr C heard a Muslim leader saying that *they expected seven new Muslims* from the event that night.
  - These practices could cause resentment to see this happen in “our own country.” But Christians need to look at it from a different perspective. We should:
    - Pray to overcome that frustration with love, as the Bible tells us to (Romans 12:21)

- Take advantage of the doors Ramadan opens to connect Muslims, and share the gospel with them
  - Continue to lobby the school systems until Christians regain the right to teach about Christian holidays and basic beliefs as well
- *Ramadan Mubarak* means “Blessed Ramadan.” Dr. C and some Christians believe in giving this verbal blessing to Muslims during Ramadan, but others disagree.
  - We give presents to Muslims for Eid al Fitr – personal things they would like, plus a gift bag that might include a DVD about Jesus or printed material.

### **More on alms**

*Zakat* is required to be given by those who can afford it to those in need.

- The exact amount varies by sect. Usually it is in the range of 2.5% of “excess wealth,” which is different than income, so the calculations can be complex. It can be called a “tax.”
- Required alms is usually given once a year, often at Ramadan. But additional and special alms are encouraged, such as food at the end of Ramadan.
- Besides helping the poor, alms can be used to fund those “working in the path of Allah” including soldiers fighting for Islam.
- Many mosques are being built in the West and in poor countries, and it is thought that this required, and voluntary giving is funding them.

### **More on the Hajj pilgrimage**

In the video lesson we see a clip of people walking around the Kaaba in Mecca during the hajj. Dr. C explains to us that every healthy Muslim who can afford to go on hajj, must do it at least once in their lifetime. Important things to know about this are:

- A similar trip can be done at other time of the year, and is called umrah
- Although not required, usually people wear white. One reason for this is that it erases distinctions based on the races, classes, and cultures represented at the hajj.
- Don’t be surprised if you hear from those who have done hajj or umrah that they sense a wonderful feeling of peace and unity with other Muslims there.
  - Their description may sound like the Christian experience in church, when we sense unity and a presence of the Lord.
  - Dr. C has even heard them say that this feeling confirms to them that Islam is correct.
  - Don’t let this shake you. It is simply a human reaction to fellowship with people we agree with – like sports enthusiasts when their team wins. (Psalm 133:1)
- The costs of making these pilgrimages is more than you might expect. If you are very close to Muslims, you could hear them complaining about price gouging for what is supposed to be a spiritual event.

- The most important aspect of the hajj is that after the devotee has gone around the Kaaba seven times, all **their sin has been removed**, and it is they are **like a baby again**.
- In the video, Dr. C shares with us a good challenge we can make to Muslims in the right setting.
  - She reminds them about *shirk*, giving Allah a partner in their salvation. She says that Christians do not shirk, because we believe that Jesus, as God, died for our sins and saves us – not we ourselves.
  - However, if a Muslim believes that ***walking around the Kaaba seven times takes away their sin, they are the ones who are giving God a partner*** – themselves. They shirk, and are not true monotheists.

### **Comments on the Pillars in General:**

As we point out in many of our lessons, ritual and appearance are of great importance in Islam. Especially consider Islamic prayers, fasting, and hajj. Compare these to Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. (See also *Lesson on Jesus Style of Teaching and Living*.)

Consistently practicing these pillars is a lot of work! As a result, Muslims tend to be proud of their accomplishments. We know that this is difficult and do not belittle their work. That would just sidetrack them into telling us how very, very, good they really are.

Rather than belittle, as we share the gospel with them, we reveal to them that God's standard is perfection. He appreciates it if we try to do good, but no matter how hard we try we can not be perfect. This is why we need a savior.

Because these disciplines create the obligations and structure of Muslim lives, it can make their lives unpleasant as well as difficult. Those of us who have lived or spent much time in a Muslim country know how the calls to prayer from the muezzin from before dawn until late at night, and fasting for a month at Ramadan can make it difficult to be productive in business. This should give us sympathy with them, as well as respect for their discipline.

There are exceptions to the requirements of certain pillars for those ill, breast-feeding, menstruating or traveling, etc. However, one of the reasons we are told that there are more women than men in Muslim hell is because they were never able to catch up on their religious duties.

Many Muslims are sincere and dedicated in their desire to please God. During Ramadan, hajj, and other Muslim holidays and practices, some of these are truly seeking God. It is not unheard of for God to reveal himself to Muslims during these times, in dreams, visions, and other ways. Dr. C asks us to pray that more of these miraculous revelations will occur.

### **The 6 ARTICLES OF FAITH – Required Beliefs**

You will note that most of these are in common with Christianity, just tweaked into the Islamic viewpoint:

**1. One Creator God** – *Tawhid*, Islamic monotheism, is considered to be their most **important** belief. It denies the idea that God could have more than one aspect, or be in more than one person. In other words,

it is strongly against the Trinity. As we describe elsewhere, to believe in the Trinity, or Jesus as God, is seen as ascribing a “partner” to Allah. It is *shirk*, the worst and unless repented, the unforgiveable sin.

**2. Prophets** – hundreds of prophets are believed to have come, to bring Allah’s message to every nation. Some brought books. All had the same message, “Return to the worship of Allah.”

**3. Holy Books** – were brought by the prophets recording the messages, as above. Some, but not all of the holy books mentioned are in the Bible. However, over time, all these messages got lost or became corrupted. So, eventually Allah sent Mohammed to again preach the message of one God, and bring a book which is free of corruption.

**4. Angels** – are recognized, and have a variety of functions ranging from divine messengers, like Gabriel, to recording the good and bad deeds of people. There are good and bad angels, and demons converted to Islam, the *jinn*.

**5. Extreme Fate** – Sunni Islam believes everything, including whatever you do, say, or think, is predestined by Allah. This is why whatever happens, good or bad, they say, “Alhamdulillah,” meaning “God be praised.” In the video, Dr. C says that the West generally has a less all-encompassing view of pre-destination. For example, when a building falls on people, we are more inclined to blame faulty construction and look for a solution, than glorify God.

In spite of being predestined, in the theology of Sunni Islam, Allah judges your every act, word, or thought, and punishes you for what displeases him.

Shiites agree that Allah judges, but see it unfair and unlike God to cause people to act and then judge them for what they do. So, Shiites do not believe that Allah predestines human actions.

**6. Judgment Day** – Jesus, the just judge, returns to judge the world - *although with a twist*:

**Most Sunnis believe at Jesus’ return he will:**

- *break cross, meaning destroy Christianity*
- *and kill the pig, meaning kill the Jews*

**Most Shiites believe at Jesus’ return he will:**

- return with Muhammad al Mahdi, *The Mahdi* or “12<sup>th</sup> Imam,” as his assistant.
- Those who believe this are called “*Twelvers*.”
- You will often hear mention of the Mahdi’s return in Shiite speeches – a longing for the return of “the Mahdi,” such as in the opening of Iranian President Ahmadinejad’s speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2011.
- Those who believe this doctrine should hope for the return of the Mahdi, like devout Christians await the return of Jesus.
- Since Jesus and the Mahdi will return at a time of world chaos, there is no motivation for peace, in fact the opposite. That is why it is difficult to negotiate with a government such as Iran’s – since their top motivation is return of the Mahdi.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT BELIEFS:**

- **one life** – then judgement; no reincarnation
- **morality** – of a kind (*different from Christian*)
- **personal responsibility** (*in spite of predestination*)
- **eternity**
- **paradise as heaven** – different from Christian heaven
- **hell** – for Muslims it is more like purgatory; eternal for others
- **Satan** (*Iblis or as-Shaitan*)

### **Comments:**

- ▶ Notice that the major beliefs of Islam are remarkably similar to Christian beliefs. Christians can use these to relate to Muslims.
- ▶ Recognize that some words have different meanings in Christianity and Islam, like paradise and heaven.

### **Other IMPORTANT ASPECTS of Islam:**

1. **MUSLIM** means “*in submission*” to God. This extends to every aspect of life, not just faith.

2. **The QUR’AN** is the Holy Book of Islam.

- It is believed that its exact words are preserved on a tablet in heaven. (Qur’an 85:21,22)
- The words Mohammed spoke after his trances were recorded by his followers for about 22 years, and were compiled into the Qur’an after his death.
- The chapters or books of the Qur’an are called *surahs*, which also means “pictures.” The names also often sound like a picture of something. Westerners tend to quote the Qur’an by the surah number; but often Muslims quote it by the name of the surah and might not know the number. Some names translate to:
  - Objects and creatures: The Opening or *Fatiha*, the Cow, the Table, the Women, the Clot, the Ant, the Whale, the Elephant, the Light
  - People: The Women, Miriam, Jonah, Imran
  - Ideas: The Repentance, The Spoils of War
- Modern English translations soften parts that Westerners find distasteful.
- (For more information on the Qur’an, see lessons on *The Bible and the Qur’an* and *The Qur’an and the Occult*)

3. **MOHAMMED**, the prophet of Islam, is called by Muslims “the Seal of the Prophets” – meaning that he is the last prophet and supersedes all others.



- He is considered a gift to humanity and our example for all time.
- His “flight” from Mecca to Median in 622 A.D. is the beginning of the Muslim calendar.



- Beginning in 610 A.D., Mohammed began to receive revelations, and continued to do so for about 22 years until he died.
- You might remember the controversies and killings over drawings of Mohammed. A depiction of Mohammed, any biblical character is forbidden to strict Islam.
- One must be aware and cautious speaking of Mohammed not to insult him, for this is a form of blasphemy to Muslims. In some areas can result in capital punishment. Christians should choose their words carefully, bearing in mind whether they want to avoid or start conflict.
- There is a view, based on academic research, which denies that Mohammed existed, at least as we know him today. They claim that in the 300 years intervening between his life and when the events were recorded, legends about him grew, like with Robin Hood. We do not find this a profitable basis for discussion with Muslims. It would be offensive to Muslims, and sidetrack gospel discussions.
- (For more information on the Prophet Mohammed, see also the lesson and study guide on *What makes a True Prophet?*)

4. **ISLAMIC SECTS exist, and have important differences.** The two largest are Sunni and Shiite.

- In the West, in communities where there are not many Muslims these sects coexist peacefully and often share the same mosque.
- In cities with larger Muslim populations, Sunnis and Shiites have separate mosques, and do not always get along well. In the Middle East, as the news records, they have had bouts of fighting for centuries, including bombing each other's mosques.
- Both sects have sub-sects. Both have sects with practices that the West would consider terrorist. Basically:

**Sunnis** –

- Predominate at about 85% of Muslims, over most of the Muslim World.
- They believe the leaders should be elected.
- They do not believe in intercessors. Since Shiites do accept intercessors, Sunnis tend to call them unbelievers, almost as bad as Christians who accept Jesus, and persecute them.
- Their hadith collections and beliefs have traditionally been easier to come across in the West than those of Shiites.

**Shiites** –

- 10-15% of Muslims. Predominate in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, and parts of Lebanon
- believe that leaders should be related Mohammed (called “family of the house”)
- Saudi Shiites have told us that at times they have heard threats against them by leaders of the majority Sunni sect, including in elementary school.
- Although only a few percent of Saudi Arabia, they tend to be a higher percentage of Saudis studying in USA. This is especially true of women students.

- Claim their women have more liberty, accounting for their relatively higher percentage in higher education
- Are known for practicing “temporary marriage,” which Sunnis reject as having ended with Mohammed.
- Believe that their “saints” blood can intercede for them
  - *(Note: an easy way for Christians to remember this distinction, is that like Catholics, Shiites use intercessors; whereas like Protestants, Sunnis do not.)*
- Traditionally Shiites find it easier to accept Christianity than Sunnis, since they do accept saint’s blood on their behalf. The challenge then becomes getting them to see that only the blood of Jesus, God himself, is adequate to intercede for us.
- ***Ashura*** – an important annual holy day for Shiites, when they literally mourn the death of Hussein, the grandson of Mohammed.
  - He was killed at the Battle of Karbala in Iraq, for which they hold the Sunnis responsible.
  - Their mourning includes wailing, and at times self-injury with blood-letting. These prove their devotion to Hussein, in hopes that he will intercede for them with Allah.
  - It is not unusual to find pictures of Hussein, as a handsome man, looking like Jesus, in a Shiite home. Such pictures would be forbidden to Sunnis.
  - In Ashura gatherings, they read/sing traditional poems promising that they will never forget what happened to Hussein, and will never forgive the Sunnis. *(Note: during Ashura, a Saudi Shiite sent one of these to Dr. C. This opened a discussion about if it is really good to never forgive, and what Jesus said about loving our enemies and forgiveness.)*

**5. The HADITH.** Many remembrances of Mohammed’s life were recorded by his followers in several collections called *the Hadith*. They tell of the actions, lifestyle and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed.

- For Sunnis, the most respected of these is *Sahih El Bukhari*, meaning the sayings confirmed by an Islamic scholar named El Bukhari. They were collected by assembled about three centuries after Mohammed’s death. These are fairly easy to find in stores, as well as on-line.
- There are several other respected Sunni collections, but also ones which are less reliable. When quoting or discussing hadiths with Muslims, it is important to use only the most reliable, *sahih* hadiths. Otherwise Sunnis will deny them, so you lose your point.
- If you quote Sunni hadiths to Shiites, they will say, “That’s why we don’t like the Sunnis, they say bad things like that about Mohammed and his family.”
- Because of the strange stories in some hadiths, some Muslims in the West say they do not accept the hadith, especially converts. These are called **Qur’an only Muslims**. However, you can not truly be considered a Sunni or Shiite Muslim unless you follow their hadiths.

- Shiites have their own hadith which are less easy to come by, but include the sayings of Ali (*Nahjul Bulaghra*), and a collection called *al Kafi*.
- Because he is so admired, and because they are taught to do so, many Muslims seek to follow Mohammed's way of life, as well as his teachings. This lifestyle is called ***sunnah***. What food one eats, how one dresses, and the order of dressing, how one bathes, where one holds hands and how one bows during prayer, even personal words spoken before sexual contact are part of the *sunnah*.
- These rules and laws are very detailed and must be studied to be understood and practiced correctly.
- In this way, there is a similarity to Old Testament living.

When in the West, if you encounter a Muslim man who wears a beard, a flowing white robe, a cap, and especially if he has a dark prayer mark on his forehead (called a *zabiba*), you can know he is very devout and closely follows the *sunnah*.

Not many non-Muslims know about the *zabiba*. Now that you do, you have a clue into detecting strict Muslims, and potential terrorists. (*For more on this, see the notes with the references.*)

6. Besides hadith, there are Islamic **COMMENTARIES** on the Qur'an, such as those by Ibn Kathir, and al Sayuti, which help us understand under what situations the revelations of the Koran were received, and what they mean.

- Many Muslims believe that the Qur'an cannot be interpreted without traditional commentaries.
- Translations of these classic works are available in English, as are several translations of the Qur'an.

7. **ISLAMIC LAW** interprets how a Muslim should live, and updates this over time. A Sunni Islamic institute in the USA, where Dr. C attended some lectures said,

*“It is incumbent upon every Muslim to study Islamic law. If you have the opportunity and do so and do not study, Allah will hold that against you at the day of judgment.”*

## **Important DIFFERENCES between Islam and Christianity**

### **Different Theological beliefs**

#### **The BIG FOUR:**

1. Jesus didn't die on the cross – so no salvation
2. God has no “partners” – so no Trinity
3. God would not become man – so Jesus isn't God in the flesh
4. The Bible has been corrupted – because it differs from the Qur'an

Other different theological beliefs include - no female prophets, hell can be temporary, fate.  
(*Note: We give details on The Big Four in other lessons.*)

## Salvation

Islam teaches that angels record our good and bad deeds to be weighed at the Day of Judgment. One struggles in the way of Islam, believing that Allah is merciful, and hoping, but without assurance, to find favor in his sight at the Day of Judgment.

- The saddest theological difference between Christianity and Islam is that the greatest, in fact unforgivable sin in Islam is associating partners with God (*shirk*), which they consider that Christians do by saying that Jesus saves us. For Christians, this is the essential of our faith.

**Sin** – is more a matter of breaking a rule, than of doing something morally wrong; since what Christians consider sin is allowable under certain circumstances in Islam (e.g. women offering themselves to Mohammed for sex, denying the faith to promote it, etc.)

**Women** – is a large subject in and of itself. At this point we simply state that, contrary to the common claims in the West that the unfavorable treatment of women in Islam is based on cultures, it is actually based on the teachings of Islam. The cultures grew out of these teachings. Principles = Practices. (*See other lessons for details*)

**God's Character** – is discussed at the beginning of our Path of the Prophets video and booklets, because we want to explain to Muslims the biblical view of God, as different from Allah of the Qur'an. (*See the Lesson on God's Character*)

(Warning: A controversy exists in the church around **using the word Allah for God**. However, this is not a problem for us and Arabic-speaking Christians who say *Allah* for God. Likewise, in English people of many different faiths use the word *God*. *God* is a word of pagan Germanic origin, with entirely different understandings of his character, for example with Christians and Buddhists. The same happens with the word *Allah*. We look for bridges and avoid unnecessary controversies. So we define the character of the Creator God, rather than focus on a word.)

## Lifestyle

- a personal *relationship* with a loving God living under grace, vs law
- internal vs. external morality
- *specifics* such as dress, polygamy, separation of the sexes, male authority over women, death to apostates and blasphemers, diet, repetitive expressions

**Means of promoting the faith** Jesus' command was to:

- Go – take the gospel around the world
- Talk about it – share and preach
- Choice vs. Force – no command to spread faith by force, as Mohammed gave

## Scripture References:

II Corinthians 5:17

Matthew 6:5-8, 16-18

I Samuel 16:7

Romans 12:21

Psalm 133:1

Ephesians 2:8,9

John 14:2

Matthew 28:18-20

### Islamic References:

Qur'an preserved on a **tablet in heaven** - Qur'an 85:21,22

Jesus will return to break the cross and kill the pig – Sahih al Bukhari Vol 3 Book 34 #425

**Zabiba** mark on foreheads - Qur'an 48:29

#### EXTERNAL SIGNS of RELIGIOUS DEVOTION

Note 1: The word “zabiba” is an adaptation of a term that means “raisin,” denoting the brown discoloration on a devout forehead. The mark may be either dirt, pigmentation from bruising or long-term injury, or a combination.

Note 2: On a trip to Egypt once, Dr. C did a visual survey of men's foreheads in both the cities and more rural areas, and found that about 10% of men were hitting their heads while praying hard enough to result in marks. Having seen that percentage of men being extreme enough to injure themselves, she was not surprised, and even predicted the rise to political power of the extremist Muslim Brotherhood.

Note 3: Some devout men wear these forehead marks as a badge of religious honor, like fringes on the shawls of Pharisees in Jesus days. They want people to see them and know they are religious. As a result, they tend to be more respected and trusted than men without zabibas, and can gather votes or investors. However, scandals have sadly shown that this external mark does not always signal internal integrity.

Note 4: That verse, 48:29, also tells us that these followers are distinguished by being merciful to other Muslims, but harsh with unbelievers.

### Study Questions:

1. If you are from a Christian background, what things that you learned about Islam most struck you?
2. If you are from a Muslim background or a Christian experienced with Islam, did you learn anything new in this lesson? If so, what?
3. If you are from a Muslim background, have you or anyone you were close with, gone on hajj to Mecca?
  - If so, had you ever previously thought that walking around the Ka'ba at hajj expecting to wash away sins was *shirk*?
4. Regardless of how you feel about disciplines like the 5 Pillars, we can respect the effort Muslims devote to trying to please God.
  - What if all Christians put that much effort into trying to please God by accomplishing his work on earth?
  - Can you imagine what would happen?
5. What do you think of the similarities between what Muslims and Christians believe?
  - Can you think of ways you can use the similarities to connect, or bridge, with Muslims you know?
  - Can you think of ways to use the differences between Christianity and Islam to share the gospel or at least some Biblical truth with Muslims you know?
6. There is a lot in this lesson about external versus internal religion. Both Christians and Muslims complain about hypocrites – people who talk about religion or look righteous, but do not have the internal attitude to go with it.

- Have you come across hypocrites in your faith or the faith of other religions? (This question applies to both Muslims and Christians.)
  - What do you think is the best relationship between internal and external faith?
7. If you are from a Christian or secular background, have you ever considered making fun of or drawing a cartoon of Mohammed?
- Do you think that is a good bridge to connect and share the gospel with your Muslim contacts?
  - Should such cartoons should be illegal because they offend Muslims, or do you believe they should be allowed as part of freedom of speech?
  - Does freedom of speech mean the freedom to offend, or should a government protect people from being offended?
  - Can you see a situation in which you might have the right to do something offensive, perhaps even think it was funny, but restrain yourself for a higher cause?
8. If you have watched Muslims praying, what did you think or feel?
- Do you think that an impressive sight, like a group praying together or other performance is adequate basis for converting?
  - What do you think is an appropriate basis for converting from one faith to another?
9. Are you surprised to hear that people going on hajj or umrah have a wonderful experience of unity?
- Have you ever experienced such a sensation?
  - How would you answer a Muslim who shares with you that they had an experience like that?
10. Name at least two differences between the Sunni and Shiite sects of Islam.
- Explain at least one situation that has led to Sunnis and Shiites attacking each other.
  - How does understanding the reasons for Sunni and Shiites attacking each other and their places of worship make you feel about the way Muslims attack Christians?
11. To you, what are the most important similarities between Christianity and Islam?  
 What do you see as the most important differences? (Note: these questions are not meant to have a right or wrong answer, but what strikes you thinking about it today.)

by Christian from Muslim, 2019  
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