

Study Guide for Jesus' Style of Teaching and Living

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

Summary and Notes:

Quick summary: In learning about the Christian faith, or as part of becoming a Christian, it is very important for Muslims, and others, to learn about Jesus. This video lesson and study guide are to help give people unfamiliar with Jesus, insight into the special ways he taught and lived.

(See also the lesson and study guide for *Jesus' Parables for Muslims*, which is a companion lesson to this one.)

Reality – getting attention.

Today's video lesson opens with Dr. Cynthia by the pool on a beautiful day. She is typing on a laptop, wearing earphones. Huda enters and tries to catch her attention. Huda wants to talk about Jesus.

In our electronic age, flashy things grab our attention; but such things did not exist in Jesus' day. He had to get attention by other means. One was miracles. Another was through his special teaching style.

Understanding Jesus Teaching Style

The setting changes. We see Huda and Dr. C entering a lovely gazebo surrounded by a lake in an urban setting. Here Dr. C and Huda draw analogies from the world around them, in a way similar to what Jesus did in his teaching.

It is important to understand the style of Jesus' teaching so we can:

- Fully absorb the point he was making
- Keep from being confused or finding it a stumbling block
- Not misapply what he says
- Explain these things to others
- Use Jesus' techniques when we share God's word with others

The Purposes of Jesus teaching

The purposes of Jesus teaching were to:

- draw attention
- challenge people's thinking
- touch hearts
- teach and to prophesy

To do this, Jesus used various teaching techniques, to make his points clear.

Techniques Jesus used in Teaching:

- Drawing illustrations from the environment surrounding him

- Using common everyday objects and activities
- Telling stories known as parables
- Using similes and metaphors (saying what things are like)
- Speaking plainly
- Occasionally speaking poetically (beatitudes)
- Exaggerating (hyperbole)
- Setting an example with his life

The Sermon on the Mount

Jesus' most famous sermon is called *The Sermon on the Mount*. In this sermon, recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7, Jesus uses these techniques to explain how to live for God's kingdom. The video lesson demonstrates several for us.

Rather than focusing on rules and condemnation, this sermon presents love and inner change. This was in contrast to the methods of the religious leaders of his time, who emphasized rules. Emphasis on the rules in Jesus day was similar to the emphasis on rules in Islam.

The Beatitudes, poetically phrased blessings, begin the Sermon on the Mount. They are famous in the Christian faith, and are worth being familiar with.

One beatitude is *Blessed are the peacemakers*. We happened to get a real-life video illustration of this: Kevin, a mature Christian, is shown being a peacemaker between arguing neighbors.

Also, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used nature, objects, stories, and exaggeration. Besides getting the crowd's attention, they illustrated his points and helped people remember them – that the Kingdom of God is more important than the physical world.

Worry is a trap that we all fall into from time to time, and for some of us it is a continual habit. Science has discovered that worrying is unhealthy. So in this, as in many other areas, Jesus is showing us the best way to live.

Jesus directed our attention to birds and flowers. For our encouragement, he suggests that we meditate upon them and what they are doing. They exemplify what is nowadays called "living in the moment," without worrying about the future.

***"I tell you do not worry.** Don't worry about your life and what you will eat or drink. And do not worry about your body and what you will wear. Isn't there more to life than eating? Aren't there more important things for the body than clothes?*

***Look at the birds of the air.** They don't plant or gather crops. They don't put away crops in storerooms. But your Father who is in heaven feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they are?...*

*And why do you worry about clothes? **See how the wild flowers grow.** They don't work or make clothing. But here is what I tell you. Not even Solomon in all his royal robes was dressed like one of these flowers. If that is how God dresses the wild grass, won't he dress you even better?...*

*But **put God's kingdom first.** Do what he wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you. So don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* Matthew 6:25-33 (NIRV)

Jesus also spoke plainly about prayer, fasting, money, and forgiveness. Let's compare his teachings with those of Islam:

Muslim Prayer

Muslims perform ritual prayers in Arabic several times a day. They can be done alone or in a group. They must be performed in a specified way. Those around you know if you are praying or not. Often, other Muslims judge how religious you are by watching your prayer life.
(For details on this, see Lesson on *Introduction to Islam for Christians*.)

Jesus way of Prayer

*“When you pray, do not be like those who only pretend to be holy...
They want to be seen by people...When you pray, go into your room.
Close the door and pray to your Father, who can't be seen.
Your Father will reward you, because he sees what you do secretly.”*

Matthew 6:5,6 (NIRV)

Muslim Fasting

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, where the entire community fasts during daylight hours. Eating in public is forbidden. Those not fasting are noticed and judged.
(For details on this, see Lesson on *Introduction to Islam for Christians*.)

Jesus way of Fasting

In contrast to the open show of Muslim fasting, Jesus says,

*“When you go without eating, do not look gloomy like those who only pretend to be holy.
They make their faces look very sad. They want to show people they are fasting. What I'm about
to tell you is true. They have received their complete reward.
But when you go without eating, put olive oil on your head. Wash your face. Then others
will not know that you are fasting. Only your Father, who can't be seen, will know it. Your Father
will reward you, because he sees what you do secretly.”*

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIRV)

Again, we see with this teaching that Jesus is emphasizing our inner life. Does this mean we cannot attend an *Eid al Fitr* party at the end of Ramadan? No. We have found it to be a good time make friends, and to talk about Jesus teaching on prayer and fasting.

Regarding ritual prayer and fasting

As we point out throughout these lessons, Muslims work very hard to gain merit with God. They feel that they need to earn forgiveness through good works. Our approach is not to belittle this effort. What we say is something like this,

*“God appreciates that we try to do good. But his standard is perfection. None of us is
perfect. We all need forgiveness for our sins. God showed us through his prophets that
his way is blood sacrifice for sin, but he accepts a substitute. Jesus is the prophesied*

final sacrifice for sin. His blood covers our sins and will substitute for us if we accept it.”

Loving our Enemies

Louis of Truth Defenders talks to us about loving our enemies, and money.

Loving our Enemies. One radical aspect of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ instruction to love our enemies. It seems natural to love our friends and hate our enemies. But Jesus told us,

“Love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you.” Matthew 5:44

Louis points out that in his view, this teaching is unique to Jesus. Jesus forgave his persecutors when he was on the cross.

“Father forgive them. They don’t know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34 (NIRV)

Love and forgive your enemies, like most virtues, is easy to say, but difficult to do.

Muslim refugees in the West have often faced atrocities. Perhaps all they owned was taken away, and family members were killed, raped or tortured. Can you imagine the challenges they might face with accepting and applying these verses?

The film “The Passion of the Christ” powerfully illustrates how Jesus forgave his persecutors from the cross. God used it to show Dr. C hardness in her own heart. After watching all the torture that they put Jesus through, she felt like screaming, “No! Don’t forgive them! They were too evil!”

Serving God or Money?

Louis tells us that surprisingly, the Bible speaks more about money than any other topic. Jesus also spoke about money. That is because the use of it reflects people’s hearts, and Jesus main goal in the Sermon on the Mount was to get people to look inside their own hearts.

“You can’t serve God and money at the same time.” Matthew 6:24 (NIRV)

How Jesus Exaggerates

Many people find it difficult to understand his message when Jesus exaggerates. For example, Matthew 5:30,

“If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.”

Yet, as Huda points out in the video, when she says her headache is “killing her,” she does not really mean that she is dying. She means that it is very severe.

Likewise, when Jesus talks about throwing away your eye or hand, he is showing us how serious an offense an eye or hand can cause. He wants to motivate people to guard their hands and eyes against sin.

It would be wrong however, to take exaggeration out of context and say that Jesus taught mutilation (meaning hurting our bodies to please God).

History's Greatest Speaker

Given near the beginning of his ministry, The Sermon on the Mount established Jesus as a great speaker, with an amazing gift of teaching.

“When Jesus had finished saying all these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” Matthew 7:28,29

The Sermon on the Mount itself is a powerful evangelistic tool for Muslims and others.

We have found that distributing it, encouraging Muslims to read it, or even quoting a small part of it in the right setting, can open eyes to the dramatic difference between Jesus' teachings and those of Islam and other ideologies. It lets people taste that *God is good* (Psalm 34:8), and gives them hunger to know more.

Later in his career, Jesus clearly prophesied his own death, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, and the end times. And he confronted the religious hypocrites to the point that they did have him killed.

Living as Salt of the Earth

“You are the salt of the earth.” Matthew 5:13

You learned in this video lesson and study guide that Jesus would teach by using everyday life situations, and things in nature around them. That is exactly what we try to pattern in our daily life with Muslims, and the former Muslims that we are discipling.

You have seen many examples of using common things and events of everyday life in the reality sections of this video lesson series. We call this style **Out of the Saltshaker**, because it is an easy and practical way that we can be as Jesus says, salt of the earth. Often you might hear Dr. C saying, *“And that reminds me of...”*

In fact, once a Christian develops this skill, they can use it with everyone – from teaching their children to encouraging their friends and loved ones– and hopefully, they do it with love and wisdom.

Life is full of SALTSHAKER opportunities. Here's how to find them:

- Know God's word the best you can (he will use whatever you know) 2 Timothy 2:15
 - Ask God to open your eyes to see opportunities for salting Colossians 4:3
 - Once he does, you will start to see them everywhere John 4:35
 - Have courage and speak, remembering that, Proverbs 16:21
- “Kind words make people want to learn more.” (NIRV)*

Jesus' Lifestyle

Many people in the West have a vague idea of what Jesus' ministry was like. But it is unlikely that people from a Muslim background would know, unless they are one of the millions that have seen a film about the life of Jesus.

Even then, they might be confused about what he was doing, because his lifestyle was so different from that of the prophets they are familiar with. Muslims might be expecting Jesus' life to be like Prophet Mohammed's life, or perhaps like Abraham's. They might try to fit Jesus into their mold.

Muslims could be surprised to learn of the type of life Jesus lived, after he began his ministry at about age 30. He was neither village man, nor hermit, king, military leader, nor powerful man of influence. Jesus was a traveling teacher with students, a *rabbi*, of a type that was not uncommon in those days.

Rather than write out all of the Bible verses about Jesus in this study guide, we will let you do that on your own. Instead, here present here a summary of Jesus wonderful life, as brief as we can make it, while covering the important basics.

Brief Summary of the Life and Lifestyle of Jesus Christ

While always existing and still filling the universe, God once humbled himself by coming to earth in human form as the prophesied messiah. This was Jesus Christ.

On earth, Jesus spent time alone in prayer and meditation to confirm what he must do. He started by teaching about the Kingdom of God. It was now nearby, he said, and everyone could live in it! Anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, Jesus went around doing good, and healing everyone who came to him – Jews, Gentiles from the surrounding regions, and even Roman oppressors – the nation’s enemies.

Jesus touched people to heal them, including unclean people, like lepers. He was willing to enter the homes of unbelievers, considered unclean, in order to bring the grace of God to them. He was entertained in the homes of the wealthy. But he himself had no home of his own, no wife, no children, and little support from his family.

Emmanuel is one of Jesus’ special names. It means God with us. This thought is so surprising and unexpected, that Muslims have trouble accepting it. God lived with us, ate with us, slept and got dirty with us, and was even tempted as we are. But Jesus never sinned, as even the Qur’an recognizes.

Jesus taught us in ways that we would always remember. Mostly he taught in parables – stories that touched our hearts. But at times he gave examples from everyday life that made spiritual principles come alive. Once in a while he clearly told us what we needed to know.

Jesus was comfortable speaking to either large crowds, or to his select followers. Women traveled with his group, and in all but the most private occasions were taught by him, along with his male disciples. Some of the women were wealthy and helped support him and his work; yet he never used them sexually.

The crowds found Jesus’ teaching amazing and his miracles astounding. He was nothing like any religious leader they had ever met. Love and honesty were balanced in his gracious teaching.

Although he told us we could live like birds and flowers who trusted in God’s provision, he knew when people needed to be confronted for their own good: like the dishonest tax collector Zacchaeus, and the religious leaders whom he rebuked for their pride and hypocrisy.

One day he met a Samaritan woman, an outcast for her race, gender, and lifestyle. He reminded her of her past; but then he offered her “living water,” fresh, and more satisfying than her failed love affairs. God’s grace had come to her, and through her to entire village.

Jesus and his followers had frightening experiences in which they were almost killed by nature and by humans. In these dangers, Jesus had confidence in God that they would be fine, because he knew it was not yet his time to die. To his disciples' surprise, he simply slept or calmly walked away.

The time came however when Jesus began to predict his betrayal, trial, and cruel death. Being human as well as God, just before his arrest he prayed in agony to avoid the coming torture. He knew the extent of the suffering he would and did face. But Jesus willingly endured it in order to accomplish the plan of God. He kept his eyes on the goal that was the ultimate purpose of his life – taking upon himself God's full anger for the sin of the world he had created.

But as Jesus had predicted he did not stay in the grave! He willingly laid down his life on Good Friday, and took it up again on Easter. After appearing to about five hundred of his followers, encouraging them and reinforcing his teaching, Jesus returned to heaven.

Jesus gave his followers, then and now, last instructions to accomplish before his return to judge the world. They should go throughout the world, peacefully teaching his gospel to everyone – the good news of repentance, forgiveness, and eternal life in God's kingdom, which they could start living in right now!

Jesus' life is his greatest teaching example. Let's look at passages in the Injeel (New Testament) various aspects of it that we should try to reproduce in our own lives.

Jesus showed us how to live:

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|--|-------------------|
| • Take time to be alone with God | Mark 1:35 |
| • Be tempted without sinning | Hebrews 4:15 |
| • Don't worry | Matthew 8:24-26 |
| • Be responsive to the needs of others | Mark 5:23,24 |
| • Associate with people lower than us | Luke 5:12,13 |
| • Treat all people as equals | Matthew 8:5-11 |
| • Serve humbly | Philippians 2:6-8 |
| • Help the ill and needy | Acts 10:38 |
| • Teach what we know in a way that others can understand | Matthew 5-7 |
| • Tell people the truth they need to know | John 4 |
| • Obey laws, pay taxes | Matthew 22:17-22 |
| • Be willing to confront evil and hypocrisy, in love,
even when it makes us unpopular | Matthew 23 |
| • Lay down our lives for the kingdom of God | John 10:18 |
| • Suffer for doing God's will – when it is unavoidable | Matthew 26:38 |
| • Have faith that something better awaits us as a reward | Hebrews 12:2 |

(See also the lesson and study guide on *What Makes a True Prophet?*)

Reality - Lessons from Surfing

The current lesson includes a reality segment filmed at a famous surfing beach in Santa Cruz, California. Huda and Dr. C have fun watching surfers catch waves, and sometimes loose them. It's a great place for imitating the way Jesus taught, by drawing lessons from nature and human activities.

Notice that first Dr. C talks about how good it is to catch a wave in life – either literally or figuratively. We feel like we are sitting on top of the world! But as we watch surfers either loose the wave, or even crash, we are reminded that life is a ride of ups and downs. God is our foundation whether we are doing well, feeling left out as life passes us by, or when the waters sweep over us.

Our attention is also drawn to the tremendous physical effort it takes not only to catch and surf the waves, but also to simply carry a surfboard up and down the rocky cliffs to reach the surfing ground. This reminds Dr. C of **1 Timothy 4:8**. In this verse Paul tells Timothy,

“Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.”

Although physical exercise is of value, it is of much greater value to put effort into praying, reading the Bible, serving others, and be close to God.

Scripture References:

II Corinthians 5:17

Matthew 5-7

Luke 23:34

Psalms 34:8

II Timothy 2:15

Colossians 4:3

John 4:1-42

Proverbs 16:21

Matthew 23 & 24

John 13:34,35

Mark 10:43-35

John 13:12

Hebrews 2:10

Mark 1:35

Hebrews 4:15

Matthew 8:24-26

Mark 5:23,24

Luke 5:12,13

Matthew 8:5-11

Philippians 2:6-8

John 13:4,5

Acts 10:38

John 4

Matthew 22:17-22

Matthew 23

John 10:18

Matthew 26:38

Hebrews 12:2

I Timothy 4:8

Qur'an reference:

Jesus sinless – Surah 19:19

Study Questions:

1. Jesus taught from the surrounding environment. His style fulfilled the Old Testament commands of Deuteronomy 6 and 11 to teach our children about God's word wherever we are and in everyday situations.

- Give an example of an everyday setting or thing that Jesus taught with.
- Can you think of a situation or object in your life in which you could similarly find a lesson for yourself or to share with others? Share this example with the group and see if they too find it meaningful.

2. When time allows, read the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). In this and elsewhere, Jesus taught from nature.

- Give an example of something from nature Jesus used as an example in this sermon
- There are months' worth of discussion topics in this sermon, but name one or two points that especially touch you.

3. Read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. Kevin exemplifies for us being a real-life peacemaker.

- Can you give an example of someone who fits one of the other beatitudes?
- Is there one you feel you come close to exemplifying?

4. Some of the more difficult to understand of Jesus' teachings involve exaggeration.

- Give an example of where Jesus exaggerates
- Can you think of an exaggeration you or a friend said to emphasize your point?
- Can you see how Jesus exaggeration could cause people to take something he said too literally?

5. In this lesson, apologist Louis of Truth Defenders spoke about money. Much of our lives has to do with the getting and spending of money.

- What did Jesus say about money in the "Sermon on the Mount?"

6. Consider Jesus' lifestyle:

- Is there anything about what you learned today that surprised you?
- What parts of Jesus' lifestyle are you currently sharing?
- What parts of Jesus' lifestyle might you like to accomplish more in your life?

7. The lesson illustrates Jesus teaching us humility through serving others, for example washing his disciples' feet (John 13:4,5). If you have read enough about Jesus to know how he lived, share one or two examples of how he taught through his example.

8. Regarding the surfing segment:

- Have you ever surfed? If so, can you share with the group what kind of physical effort is involved?
- What other sport might you have participated in? Does having done this help you relate to the scripture verse from I Timothy?
- Not shown in the video lesson because of poor quality audio, was a reality segment with Huda saying that the ocean waves reminded her of God's blessings. They come new every day. Dr. C said that since the waves reminded her of new trials every day, Huda had the more positive spiritual outlook.
 - Which do you tend feel come more your way each new day: blessings or trials?

9. Forgiving our enemies:

- Have you ever felt that there is someone you don't want forgiven? Someone who has mistreated you? A political enemy? A monstrous dictator?
- Does loving and praying for our enemies mean that they should not face justice for their crimes?
- Think about someone now that you would not be pleased to see in heaven with you. Ask God to soften your heart. Then pray for them to hear God's voice and follow his ways.

10. Encouragement from Nature: Liliias Trotter has a fascinating life story. She left a life of Victorian wealth and a promising artistic career to become a missionary to Muslims. Liliias gave her money and health to set up missions in North Africa.

Rather than gain her fame and money, she used her artistic skill to illustrate spiritual truths. Liliias had a heart condition. She found her work very stressful. One thing that helped Liliias relax was to look at nature, meditate upon it, listen for God to speak through it, and paint pictures of it.

- Was there a time in your life when you were encouraged by something in nature?
- Can you remember how it made you feel? Or what message it gave you?
- Do you think it would be of benefit to meditate on nature regularly?
- How might you incorporate nature into your life? Perhaps taking a daily walk? Planting a garden? Getting a pet? Simply looking up at the sky when you walk to work? Other ideas?

by Christian from Muslim, 2019

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