

# “Suggestions for Study Group Leaders”

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

## Lesson Summary and Notes:

### Quick summary:

These suggestions are to assist someone interested in leading a study group, Christian or Muslim, in how to use this site for group study.

### Dear Group Leaders – We want You!

This segment is especially for you. We welcome you and would like to assist you with ideas of how to lead a group using *Christian from Muslim Training*. It might seem like a lot of information, but don't let it scare you. We are simply trying to answer questions you might have about leading a study group, and to prepare you for situations that might arise.

Did you know that [www.ChristianfromMuslim.com](http://www.ChristianfromMuslim.com) was designed with the goal of creating a free video resource for Muslims with questions about the Christian faith, and Christians who want to answer them? On this site:

- **Muslims** have their questions answered, and the Christian faith explained with their viewpoint in mind.
- **Christians** find full training in Muslim evangelism and discipleship.

Being on-line, this website provides you flexibility. Training that was previously only available in big cities, or by paying for an out of town expert to visit a church, is now available anywhere for free at times that suit you.

Since there is unlimited access to a wide variety of topics, you can customize the training for your group. For example, you could present a single lesson on the basics of Islam, or the gospel for Muslims; or you could run an extended, complete course over several months or longer.

### Qualifications of leaders

Do you need special experience to lead a study group? No! That is another one of the flexible features of this training. Of course, if you do have experience with Islam in some way, that could be an advantage. But since the teaching is done by our experts, it's not necessary. And if you have leadership or teaching experience, that would be nice, but again is not necessary.

What we think is **most important** for a study group leader is to have:

- interest in the subject
- enough organizational skills to find an agreeable time and place for your group
- faithfulness to the project
- and a kind, welcoming attitude

Unless the group wants to do everything online, it would be good if you could print the downloadable study guides. Also, we hope that you will have prayer skills, and faith to endure through the obstacles that will confront you.

## Your Group's Composition

In speaking, writing, and leading, we must always consider our “audience,” meaning the people listening. In this context, we mean the composition of group you are leading. Some might say their *demographics*.

What are the ages, educational level, and cultural background the people in your group? In certain situations, your group might consist only of men or women. And importantly, what are the members hoping to accomplish by being in your group?

**For example, is your group:**

- perhaps just you, learning on your own?
- a Sunday School class that has superficial curiosity about Islam, but no contact with Muslims?
- in a church starting an outreach to Muslims?
- you discipling one or two former Muslims?
- a home group of new believers from Muslim background who want to become mature Christians?
- a group of Muslims who want to better understand Christianity?
- training missionaries to work overseas, or with Muslims in the West?
- taking a course for credit at a Christian college?
- serious students who will want to spend time studying the study guides?
- immigrants who barely speak English?

## Spiritual Goals for your Group

We think this verse can help you direct your group's spiritual goals in this study:

*'Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **mind** and with all your **strength**'. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

Mark 12:30,31

How do these goals fit into *Christian from Muslim Studies*?

- |            |   |  |
|------------|---|--|
| ▶ Heart    | - | care about Muslims   |
| ▶ Soul     | - | be inspired with ideas   |
| ▶ Mind     | - | learn about Islam ( <i>or Christianity if you are Muslim</i> ) |
| ▶ Strength | - | have tools to use  |

## Selecting the Best Lessons for your Group

### Know your options

As you might have seen in our video index, we have hundreds of videos. Even under our Lessons category, we will have over 30 half hour lessons. How can you decide which to show your group?

- **Watch** two short videos to familiarize yourself with the website and its uses:
  - the video introducing the website
  - and *Suggestions for Study Group Leaders*
- **Read** about what material is available, and how to lead a group:
  - the suggestions in this article
  - and the *Introduction to Christian from Muslim Lessons*

- Decide how many lessons you will need for the amount of time you have.
- Then consider what the interests and needs of your group are. Look over the list of lesson titles.
- If you do not have enough time to complete the entire course, you might ask your group what titles they are interested in. Then you, as the group leader could have the final say.

### **Core Lessons**

Although you should customize the lessons selected for your study group, we venture to suggest some lessons of core importance. This is not in any way to suggest that you limit your training to these lessons, but to assist you in being certain that your lessons include important basics.

(Note: apologetics means defending Christian beliefs, especially the ones that Muslims doubt.)

#### **For Christian Groups:**

Introduction to Islam for Christians – *essential for those new to Islam*  
 Building Bridges with Muslims – *essential for connecting*  
 The Path of the Prophets – *essential for evangelism*  
 Easter: The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus – *essential apologetics*  
 Christmas: God Becomes Man and is Three in One – *essential apologetics*  
 Why Believe the Bible? – *essential apologetics*  
 What Makes a True Prophet? – *discusses Jesus and Mohammed*  
 The Bible and the Qur’an – *different ways followers use their books*  
 Introducing the Bible to Muslims

#### **For Muslim or former Muslim Groups:**

Being New in God’s Family – *essential for new believers*  
 The Path of the Prophets – *essential gospel for Muslim background people*  
 Easter: The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus – *explains Christian view*  
 Christmas: God Becomes Man and is Three in One – *explains Christian view*  
 Why Believe the Bible?  
 The Bible and the Qur’an – *different ways followers use their books*  
 Introducing the Bible to Muslims  
 What Makes a True Prophet? – *Jesus and Mohammed*  
 Jesus Style of Teaching and Living – *basics about Jesus*

### **Customized for Islam**

You will notice that some lessons have titles which make it obvious that they are covering aspects of Christianity and Islam, like “The Bible and the Qur’an.” Most however, look as if they were ordinary Christian topics. For example, “Inspiration of the Bible” and “Easter: The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus” sound like lessons you might hear any day at any church.

Bear in mind however, that regardless of how the titles sound, ***every lesson is customized to engage the Muslim point of view***. It directly teaches Muslims themselves, or shows Christians how to explain to them.

True, we think this fresh approach to Christian teaching would be of benefit to anyone, but we particularly direct it toward Muslim thinking. We want to make it easy for Muslims to learn about Jesus and the Bible, believe, and become mature Christians. And likewise, easy for Christians to know what Muslims are thinking and important things to share with them.

## Using the Study Guides

### Leader preparation

The purpose of the study guides is to review important points of the video lessons, and things your group may have overlooked. We also share the background of Muslims thinking about certain points and issues, so Christians can better understand and share with them.

Group leaders might benefit from reading the study guide in advance. This will familiarize you with the lesson points, and assist you in selecting which questions to discuss if your time is limited, or if your class does not have deep interest or ability.

### Study Guide Level

We want people who take our course to get what they need from it.

The study guides are aimed at the level of an adult who really wants to know how Christian teaching relates to Islamic thinking. But what if your group is not interested in doing the study guides? They might enjoy discussing some of the questions after viewing the video lessons. You could simply read them a few questions from the guides for discussion.

Some people taking the lessons will want a full course, so the study guides provide a solid understanding Christian-Muslim faith issues. They include material not presented in the videos, such as background information, examples, documentation and additional references from the Bible and Qur'an.

The length and depth of the study guides varies depending on the topic. In order to include enough material, the study guides for lessons dealing with very important topics will be longer and more in depth.

Since some viewers will be new to Christian faith and/or to English, we try to write simply and clearly. We define theological terms that might be new or misunderstood by Muslims. Still, this might be too much information for people who want only superficial knowledge. If parts of the study guides are too detailed for the needs of you or your group, simply use the parts you want.

The same goes for the study questions. These are included to help the viewers reflect upon and apply what they have learned. But if you or your group do not want to discuss the questions, or use the study guides at all, that is OK.

### Distributing the guides

You might want print in advance the guides for that day's lesson, so each person has a copy for the discussion period. Or, they can be viewed online without printing.

Decide whether you would like to hand study guides out a week in advance to prepare for the next week's lesson, or have them for review of the current week's lesson.

*(Note: we give permission for the Study Guides to be printed for personal and group study, but they are copyrighted and not to be used for publication.)*

## **Home Study**

Because of the extra information included, the students in your group will learn best if they review the study guides at home. This could be done before or after the class. If you are giving some kind of credit for the course, home study could be required.

## **Leading your group During the Lesson Times**

### **Watching the Videos**

Your group will probably want to watch the selected videos together; although in some settings the group might want to watch the videos at home and use the time together for questions and discussing the study guide.

### **Discussing the Study Questions**

Schedule time to discuss some or all of the questions after watching the video. If you have time during your group setting, it might be good to allow time for skimming or reading the study guide before answering the study questions together. With enough time, you might find it of benefit to have a few good readers read aloud parts of the study guide before discussing the questions.

Another possibility is that your group might prefer to write out their answers to the study questions, instead of discussion. This could especially be true if they are getting course credit. Or they might want to do both.

### **Selecting the Questions**

Perhaps your group stays on task and you can get through all the questions. If time or the group's interest is limited, you might not be able to discuss them all. In that case, choose those which fit best with the goals of your group.

As leader, you have the ability to select which questions you would like the group to discuss. Try to avoid questions and topics which you know will lead your group into non-productive arguments.

### **Leader as Facilitator**

As a leader, your purpose is to assist your group in learning spiritual, practical, and intellectual skills. As much as possible, try to create an atmosphere where the group is comfortable, one that they look forward to being in.

Ideally, you will not do most of the talking. The teaching will be done by the experts on the videos. After viewing the videos, you will want to encourage your members to join in discussion of the study questions. Try to resist jumping to correct answers you consider to be wrong. You might simply ask the group for other opinions. The group's progress is your goal, not showing off what you know.

Try to avoid the discussion getting side-tracked into unrelated topics. If you think that the direction a discussion is going is adding to the group's understanding of the topic, you might let it continue that way for a while. But if the discussion gets too far off the day's topic, or into an argument, you have the right to interrupt and say something like, "That was interesting, but let's get back to the study question now..."

If you have class time remaining after discussing the questions, you could use the time for general comments, or refer to someone in your group to share their experiences with the topic of the day.

### **The On-time and the Late**

With this lesson series we are intentionally multicultural. Traditional Americans value being on-time. In the Middle East, promptness is a virtue that ranks behind others, like hospitality. If your group is totally one or the other, you likely have an idea of how to start the session.

If you are leading a group with mixed cultures you will face challenges, one of which will be the start time. If you start on time for Americans, the Middle Easterners might miss something they should hear. If you delay starting until all the Middle Easterners show up, the Americans will get restless. You might not cover all the material.

Perhaps you have noticed that most of the video lessons start with the same introduction by a former Muslim. Usually this is followed by a reality clip. We arranged it this way partly to allow classes to start, while assuring that latecomers to still get the most from the lesson following. But that alone might not allow adequate time for latecomers.

Try to think of ways to have everyone there before starting the video such as:

- serve refreshments
  - discuss questions from the lesson of the week before
  - ask if anyone has had a chance to apply what they learned in last week's lesson
  - read some of the current week's study guide before showing the video lesson
- This last suggestion would not only allow time for latecomers to arrive, but also give the group some idea of what to look out for in the video lesson about to be shown.*

### **The Shy and the Bold**

Groups almost always include a mixture of shy and bold personalities. Pray for wisdom. It would be great if you could get shy people to share. But you might need to respect their silence.

On the other hand, big talkers, pushy folks, and those with much experience can end up dominating the group. Although you will want to respect the knowledge of experienced people, and at times even refer to them for comments; ideally you will create an environment in which all feel comfortable to join in the discussion.

### **Protecting the group from Shame**

In group settings, Dr. C has found that traditional Americans are more likely to share their thoughts than those from a Muslim background.

As leader, you should find a way to protect your group from shame. You might find that some people do not want to speak during the discussion. This is especially true if some of your group are former Muslims or others from Asian and "Shame and Honor" cultures.

### **Language and literacy**

If you are working with a group of immigrants, or teaching overseas, you might find that some of your group is illiterate in English, or perhaps even in their first language. They might not be able

to read the study questions. Try to discover if this is a problem for any in your group and avoid embarrassing them. For example, avoid having them need to read.

### **Group safety**

Depending on the nation you are in or the homelife of group members, you might need to consider the safety of your members. Perhaps an attendee does not want to reveal who they are or share anything about their lives. Try to respect that and find a way to make them comfortable.

In some situations, it might not even be safe for your group to gather in person. In this case, consider setting up internet study groups. In these, members can watch the video lessons on their own, and then discuss them with the group on-line.

### **Practical Experience**

If your group is Christian, it would be great if they could obtain some practical experience talking to Muslims, and vice versa. This is not required. But if the group does not already have contact with their Muslim or Christian counterparts, it would enrich the experience if the members could visit a mosque, or a church, or perhaps an ethnic market, restaurant, or festival to gain experience.

### **Success**

If you see accomplished all or some of your members' goals, create a welcoming atmosphere, carry through the class to its end, show the videos, distribute study guides, and encourage discussion, that would be wonderful! Well done. But being as this is earth, and our enemy Satan does not want us to succeed in shaking his stronghold of Islam, that might not all happen.

If the course does not work out as you had hoped, do not be discouraged. Do not give up. Give thanks for what good has been accomplished, and keep on going. Consider offering the course again or in another setting.

As Christians, our main source of accomplishment should come from knowing that we are following the Lord's guidance, whatever the result. We are not looking for glory. In a sense, we are not even expecting to accomplish our own earthly goals. We simply want to please our Lord by forwarding his purpose on earth. He has promised not to forget it.

### **Scripture References for this Lesson:**

II Corinthians 5:17

Mark 12:30, 30

Hebrews 6:10

I Corinthians 1:29 & 15:58

### **Group Leader Planning Questions:**

1. Consider your group. What are their backgrounds in:
  - Religions
  - Cultures
  - Languages
  - Ages
  - Learning goals

- Educational level
  - Future plans
2. How long will the class sessions last? How many classes will there be?
  3. What would you personally like to see accomplished with this study group?
  4. Selecting lessons:
    - Will the group be able to take all of the lessons, or need to select those most needed?
    - Will you use be using the “Core Lessons” plus additional lessons?
    - What lessons best fit the needs of your group?
    - Will you select the lessons yourself, or ask group members opinions regarding lessons or a combination?
  5. How will you handle the “study guides”?
    - Not use them
    - Make them optional for home study
    - Print out and distribute at each meeting
    - Use them for discussion in each meeting
    - Print out and distribute in advance of each meeting
    - Print out all the study guides for the selected lessons and make notebooks for each group member at the beginning of the course
    - Do everything on-line, including reading the study guides and answering questions
    - Make each member responsible for printing out their own study guides
  6. Is this a one-time study group? Or do you plan to repeat the for another group, or add a second, more advanced course?
  7. Is this class for credit for a college or Bible School? Or a prerequisite for a mission trip?
    - If so, will you collect the answers to the study questions for credit?
    - Will you have exams, assign papers, or have other ways to give credit?
    - Will you require members of the group to practice what they learn in relationships with Muslims?
  8. Examine the amount of time allotted for the lessons.
    - How do you plan to divide up the lesson time?
    - Do you have a strategy that can handle different cultures’ priorities?
    - How can you assure that latecomers get the most out of the lessons?
  9. Will you be able to provide to your group situations for practical experience using what they learn with Muslims?

by Christian from Muslim, 2019  
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