

Study Guide for Introducing the Bible to Muslims

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

Summary and Notes

Quick summary: The Bible is a large book which can be intimidating to those who don't know it. In this video lesson and study guide, we explain to Muslims, and Christians teaching Muslims: the purposes of the Bible, how it is organized, and good places to start reading.

(Note: for a fuller understanding, we recommend that you also view these video lessons and study guides:

- *Why Believe the Bible?* and *Inspiration of the Bible* for understanding the authenticity of the Bible and how it came to be
- *The Bible and the Qur'an* for aspects of the Bible which are different from the Qur'an, so Muslims can know what to expect with the Bible, and
- *Bible Study Tools* which gives assistance with how to study and meditate on the Bible.)

Reality – Washington D.C. and MAPS in life

This reality clip takes you to Washington D.C. with Dr. Cynthia and Huda. Besides seeing a few sights of the area, you are encouraged to think about the importance of a map, cell phone, or GPS in helping you find your way around a strange place.

In a way, earth is also a strange place. It is a planet we are attached to for “our life on earth.” Growing up, we learn how to live within the expectations of our families and cultures, to succeed or simply to stay out of trouble.

We should also all think about where we came from, what we are doing on earth, and where we are going when we die. What “map” guides our lives? Is it the Qur'an? The Bible? Or simply our impulse of the moment?

Read the Bible to nourish your soul, not for points with Bible Teacher Mark

As we discuss in another lesson, Muslims believe they get points toward paradise by reading the Qur'an – that is if they read or recite it in Arabic. The number of points they expect to accrue depend on factors such as the number of times they read/recite it, the time of the Islamic calendar in which they do it, and even the quality of their accent in Arabic.

Because each letter of the Qur'an is thus believed to counteract 10-40 bad deeds, you can see why a Qur'anic teacher once strongly insisted to Dr. C,

“No! I don't need a savior! I have been reciting the Qur'an since I was little!”

Understanding this, you can see that those reading the Bible who come from a Muslim background would likely have different expectations than those from a Christian or other background.

Bible Teacher Mark explains to Dr. C and our viewers that Christians do not read the Bible for points. He calls the blessing of reading the Bible, *“Nourishment for the soul.”*

Salvation and eternal life in heaven are gifts we receive by humble faith, not by effort. The benefit of reading the Bible is to let it purify our minds, and let hope, faith, and truth enter it. We then attempt to

live out the Word of God, not for points toward salvation or heaven, but for our own encouragement and to please the Lord.

Introduction to the Bible

The Qur'an says that the holy writings that came before them contain guidance and light. It says that Christians should judge by what is in the *Injeel*, or New Testament. We agree with that! We want to share that guidance and light, so that others will find eternal life.

As we discuss in another lesson, although Muslims know some about the Bible, they have different terms for portions of it, and those terms don't neatly fit with how the Bible is put together. So, they are usually clueless about the Bible's structure, and much of what it contains.

What is the Bible and how is it put together? Watch us explain it in the video lesson to former Muslim Huda, who wants to know about the Bible. Huda already knows that the Bible is the Word of God. Dr. C tells her that is true!

In learning about the Bible, Muslims are usually interested to find books written before Jesus, called the Old Testament, as well as books written after him, called the New Testament. Both the words "testament" and "covenant" mean "agreement." So, the Bible contains the writings under the old and new agreements of God with people. The Old Testament is generally considered the agreement of Law, and the New Testament the agreement of Grace.

The Bible is also:

- God's message to us
- the story of God and us
- God's love letter to us, and
- the book which explains the way of salvation

Like a news article, the Bible answers the big questions of life:

Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| • <u>Who?</u> | God and us |
| • <u>What</u> happened? | Bible stories |
| • <u>What</u> does God expect of us? | Walking with God |
| • <u>When</u> did salvation come? | With Jesus the Messiah |
| • <u>Where</u> did we come from and <u>Where</u> are we going? | Creation, heaven and hell |
| • <u>Why</u> are we on earth? | God's plan for us |
| • <u>How</u> should we live and get to know God? | New Testament letters |

You should know that Bibles include a table of contents before *Genesis*, the first book. This shows you the names of the various books within the Bible, and what pages they begin on. Until you learn the order of the books, you will probably want to refer to the table of contents often. That way you will gain familiarity with the books, and find what you want to read, such as the verses we refer to in our lessons.

There are a total of 66 books in the Bible: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Most books of the Bible are much longer than surahs of the Qur'an.

Introducing the Old Testament to Muslims

What's in the Old Testament?

If you are Muslim, you already know the names of some of the Old Testament characters, and call them “prophets.” You have heard that they received holy books from God. But not a lot is written about them in the Qur’an, and the Qur’an itself refers to the Bible for more details. So, it is a real blessing for Christians to be able to share with you Muslims that we actually have the preserved writings by and about characters you know!

The Old Testament contains the Torah, which includes the first five books of the Bible, and is known to Muslims as the *Taurat*. These five books of the Torah include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Sometimes the Torah is called the Law, or the Books of Moses, since he is most closely associated with them. Since Muslims know of the Torah, it is relatively easy to explain to them that part of the Old Testament.

Genesis, called *Taqueen* in Arabic, means “Beginnings” in both languages. It tells us how people were created and the beginnings of society groups and practices. For example, here we meet Muslim “prophets” Adam, Noah (*Nuh* in the Qur’an), Abraham (*Ibrahim*), and Ishmael (*Ismael*). In *Exodus* we find Moses (*Musa* in the Qur’an), Miriam, and Amran (*Imram*), whom Muslims know of.

Muslims are also aware of Sarah, Joseph, David, Solomon, and a few others in the Bible. Both the Qur’an and the Bible have a book called *Jonah* (*Yunus*).

Several Old Testament characters are actually common personal names for Muslims. Dr. C has found that a good way to spark interest in Muslims to read the Bible, is to present to them a passage discussing their namesake. We can also interest Middle Easterners by sharing positive Bible stories set in their country – like the repentance of Nineveh for Iraqis, Darius and Esther for Persians, and the Wise Men of the East in the Christmas story.

Muslims also know the Psalms of the Old Testament, which they call the *Zabur*. But the Old Testament has many other books that Muslims don’t have and haven’t heard of. These include books of history, wisdom books, and the prophets.

Although Muslims in general know that there were many prophets, in our experience they are not familiar with the Old Testament books of the prophets or history, so these will be new material for them. It is wonderful that the Bible preserves the words of so many previous prophets.

The books of the prophets are divided into the “major,” and the “minor” prophets. This distinction is based on the length of their writings, not their importance. These books give messages to people like kings, warnings to the people in general, and prophecies of things we see come to pass, such as the destruction of wicked civilizations.

Especially important are the Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ. We discuss the prophecies of Jesus in more detail elsewhere, but here are a few of the best ones: Isaiah 9:6,7 & 11:1-5 & 53, Psalm 22, Micah 5:2, and Jeremiah 31:31.

Now let’s look at an important passage from the Old Testament.

Psalm 23 with Rev. Bob Siegel

The video lesson presents to you a well-loved psalm. Psalm 23 is one of the all-time favorite Bible passages of Bible-believers, both Jews and Christians, who are known together in Islam as *People of the Book*.

This poem, or “psalm,” is from what Islam calls the *Zabur*. Psalms are a type of poetry which does not depend on rhyme – that way the poems work in any language. Among other techniques, psalmists used are word pictures. That is what prophet and king David (*Daoud*) did in Psalm 23.

Psalm 23 is one of the many poems and songs to God which were written by David while he was still a shepherd boy, watching his father’s sheep in the hills above Bethlehem.

In the days of David and beyond, in Bible times many of the population were familiar with raising sheep and could easily identify with this psalm. Our culture is out of touch with the life of a shepherd; yet modern day shepherds have pointed out that every detail of the psalm relates to the real-life experiences of sheep and shepherds.

Psalm 23 draws a simple, yet profound word picture. David, as he writes under the power of the Holy Spirit, describes himself as a sheep, and God as his good shepherd. When we read or recite it, we also visualize ourselves as a helpless sheep, cared for by its master.

It is interesting that prophecies of the Messiah spoke of him as a shepherd (Isaiah 40:11, Ezekiel 37:24-28). Jesus called himself The Good Shepherd. He taught that the Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep. That is exactly what he did for us! (Read what Jesus said about this shepherd in John 10:1-18.)

The message of Psalm 23 is that God cares deeply for those who follow him. He actively provides for and protects us throughout all the seasons of our lives. When we die, it will not be the end, for our shepherd will take us to live with him in his heavenly home.

Because its words are comforting, this psalm is commonly read at Christian funerals, or recited in times of trial. For example, Dr. C recites it in her mind while in the dentist chair!

Apologist Bob Siegel, of Jewish background now a Christian pastor, shares with us that Psalm 23 is one of his favorite Bible passages. During his journey from Judaism to Christianity, Siegel has faced many challenges. The words of this psalm have comforted him. He is especially glad to know that surely goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life and he will live with the Lord forever.

Siegel recites for us from memory Psalm 23 in an old-fashioned translation of English. If you are new to English, you might find it difficult to understand. Here it is in the simple, New International Reader’s Version:

*The Lord is my shepherd; he gives me everything I need.
He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me besides quiet waters.
He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths for the honor of his name.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid.
You are with me.
Your shepherd’s rod and staff comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me right in front of my enemies.
You pour oil on my head.*

*My cup runs over.
I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.
And I will live in the house of the Lord forever.*

Now that you know more about Psalm 23, perhaps you also would like to memorize, in a translation that speaks to your heart?

Introducing the New Testament to Muslims

Why the New Testament?

The Qur'an tells us that Jesus brought a book. Actually, the *Injeel*, as Muslims call the New Testament, was written not by Jesus, but by his followers in the decades after his death and resurrection.

We learn in the New Testament how the Old Testament's teachings and predictions were fulfilled. The New Testament does not cancel or "abrogate" the Old Testament, rather it fulfills it. (We discuss the Muslim *Doctrine of Abrogation* elsewhere.)

Jesus told his followers that having his new teachings alongside the Old Testament was like adding new treasures to old,

*"Every Teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven
is like the owner of a house.
He brings new treasures out of his storeroom as well as old ones."* Matthew 13:52 (NIRV)

Some Muslims and other unbelievers say that it is bad that Jesus did not write the New Testament himself. Muslims believe that the book that Jesus wrote, the true *Injeel*, has been corrupted and basically lost.

If Christians don't know better, this criticism can worry them that somehow a mistake was made. They might think that Jesus should have written it himself, or that the New Testament is not accurate because it was written after Jesus went to heaven. They might develop unnecessary doubts. (See also *Why Believe the Bible?*)

Actually, it is good that Jesus did not write the New Testament himself. Here's why:

In the Old Testament, the prophecies about Jesus the Messiah as God, and his sacrifice for our sins were so strongly stated, that the church began with Jesus' followers teaching from the Old Testament. By teaching from the Old Testament, the disciples were referring to existing scripture that people respected, rather than simply giving their own opinion.

Before his death, Jesus referred to the Old Testament prophecies as one of the three greatest witnesses confirming who he was and what he was doing (see John 5). After his resurrection, Jesus instructed his followers in how these prophecies applied to him in detail.

*"Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the scriptures.
He began with Moses and all the prophets."* Luke 24:27 (NIRV)

So, the disciples were trained, and prepared to use the prophecies correctly once the Holy Spirit had empowered them. There was no need to wait to write new material. New material would not then have had the same authority that the Old Testament scriptures did.

People in Jerusalem and Israel already knew that Jesus did amazing miracles and then died on the cross. Building upon this, the disciples explained that it had happened in fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The entire city witnessed the fulfillment of those prophecies. The disciples' task was simply to remind them of all that had happened, and explain how it fit with the scriptures they knew. Then they testified that Jesus rose from the dead to prove who he was and what he said.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the church began, the Apostle Peter preached a sermon quoting Old Testament prophecies. He ended by saying,

“*God has raised this same Jesus back to life. We are all witnesses of this.*” Acts 2:32

Another original disciple of Jesus, the Apostle John also emphasized that they were witnesses of the fulfilled prophecies. (1 John 1:1-3).

The prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31 that there would be a New Covenant or Testament explains why Jesus teaching of a new way of living was accepted by his disciples, and later by those who joined the church. It makes way for Christianity and the New Testament. Without the old prophecies, there would be no sound basis for Jesus to introduce a new agreement with God.

By the time the New Testament actually was written, the church had grown. People believed the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. Many miracles had happened through church leaders. By then, Christians honored the words of the disciples and apostles of Jesus. They wanted to read about their lives with Jesus – the gospels. And for its health and future, the church needed the specific instructions and theology originally written in the letters of Jesus disciples, now saved in the New Testament.

What a unique and wonderful beginning! There is no other religion that began with such power and proof as the Christian faith. That includes Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, Sikhism, the Moonies and atheism, (which functions like a religion).

What is in the New Testament?

The New Testament contains the holy writings that came after Jesus Christ. It is much smaller than the Old Testament. The New Testament is similar in size to the entire Qur'an.

The New Testament contains 27 books:

- Four gospels, those of *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*, which tell of the life and teachings of Jesus by his early followers.
- The *Acts of the Apostles* is the story of the early church.
- There are, 21 *Letters* to the churches, also known as “Epistles,” that were written by apostles like Peter and Paul. They talk about theology – God and his grace and salvation through Jesus – and how to live a Christian life.
- Simple summaries of some of the New Testament letters: If you are looking for-
 - the theological basics of Christianity, you might want to read *Romans* or *Hebrews*
 - the relationship of law and grace, *Galatians*
 - a positive outlook on faith, *Philippians*
 - an eternal perspective, *Ephesians*
 - a view of Christ in us, *Colossians*
- The final book, *Revelation*, is composed of prophecies from visions given to the Apostle John while he was in exile on the island of Patmos. Besides messages to 7 specific churches in Asia

Minor, it touches on the end of the world, Christ's return, the final judgment, and what heaven will be like.

Example from the New Testament, Romans 8

For those unfamiliar with the Bible, here is a lovely sample of encouragement from the New Testament. It is a favorite of Dr. C and others, who memorize it to help them in times of trials.

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him... What shall we say then? Since God is on our side, who can be against us? God did not spare his own son. He gave him up for us all. Then won't he also freely give us everything else?"

Who can bring any charge against God's chosen ones? God makes us right with himself. Then who can sentence us to death? No one. Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also praying for us. He died. More than that, he was raised to life.

Who can separate us from Christ's love? Can trouble or hard times or harm or hunger? Can nakedness or danger or war? ... No! in all these things we are more than winners! We owe it all to Christ, who has loved us.

I am absolutely sure that not even death or life can separate us from God's love. Not even angels or demons, the present or the future, or any powers can separate us. Not even the highest places or the lowest, or anything else in all creation can separate us. Nothing at all can ever separate us from God's love. That's because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done." Romans 8:28-39 (NIRV)

Where to start reading the Bible?

Huda, like most new believers, asks in the video, "Where do I start reading the Bible?" This is an important question. The Bible is a very large book, and although every part is important, some places are definitely better for a new believer to start reading than others.

Old Testament. For many Muslims a good place to start reading the Bible is the first book, Genesis, because its characters are already familiar to Muslims.

New Testament. It is also important for seekers and new believers to learn about Jesus, and how to live a Christian life.

In the New Testament, the *Gospel of John* is great favorite among Christians for its beautiful and spiritual analogies of Jesus. But the refreshingly powerful *Sermon on the Mount* is in the *Gospel of Matthew*, where it fills chapters 5-7. Muslims should not miss it, so that would also be an excellent place to start. And Matthew also points out how Jesus fulfilled prophecies.

Or you could start reading the Bible with the *Gospel of Mark*, which being the shortest gospel is very fast-paced and gives a quick view of the life of Jesus. Since it is thought to be the earliest gospel, it is one that Muslim critics of Christianity are most likely to accept: yet even it shows the remarkable and unique person of Jesus Christ and portrays his god-like attributes.

And finally, as Dr. C points out in the video, you can start reading the Bible based on what is being studied at your church or in your Bible study group, or with the person that is discipling you. Or you can look up passages which encourage you for whatever you are going through in life at the time.

You might have noticed that at the end of each of our study guides there is a list of the scripture references used in the video lesson and study guide. Reading through this list would also be a good way to start studying the Bible. It would also have the added benefits of reinforcing and helping you remember what you learned in the lessons, and give you experience in finding your way around the Bible.

Scripture References:

II Corinthians 5:17

The Bible's Table of Contents

Genesis

Exodus

Jonah

Isaiah 9:6,7 & 11:1-5 & 53

Psalms 22

Micah 5:2

Jeremiah 31:31

Psalms 23

Isaiah 40:11

Ezekiel 37:24-28

John 10:1-18

Matthew 13:52

John 5:31-40

Luke 24:27

Acts 2:32

I John 1:1-3

Revelation

John

Matthew, especially 5-7

Mark

Romans 8:28-39

Qur'an:

The Bible has Guidance and light – Surah 5:46

Christians should judge by what is revealed in the New Testament (*Injeel*) – Surah 5:47

Study Questions:

1. Do you see the Bible as a map for life?
 - What guides for life might people use who either don't believe the Bible, or don't bother to read and follow it?
2. Reflect on the concepts presented above, of the benefits of reading the Bible versus reading the Qur'an. What thoughts do you have?
3. Are you surprised to know that Muslims are familiar with Biblical characters?
 - Do you know any Muslims with names of Bible characters?
 - Think about them now and pray for them.
 - You might want to write down their names and come back to the list often to pray.
4. What parts of the Bible do Muslims know exist and have names for? (review if necessary)

- What books are essentially unknown to them?
5. Bob Siegel recounts the blessing Psalm 23 has been in his life.
 - Is there a special Old Testament passage that has been meaningful to you?
 - Can you think of a way that you might some time share it with a Muslim?
 6. What New Testament passage might you use to introduce a Muslim to the Bible?
 7. Brainstorm: what ways can you think of to use Muslims' knowledge of Biblical characters and books to interest them in the Bible?
 8. How would you explain to a Muslim, or a new believer in Jesus, the importance of the Bible in a Christian's life?
 9. Would you be able to explain to someone a relationship between the Old and New Testaments?
 - If not, consider how you understand it yourself, and what you might need to learn to comfortably explain it.
 10. Are you surprised that the Qur'an says that the Bible contains "guidance and light?"
 - We go into the reasons for this in other lessons,
 - but for today's lesson, can you think of any way that you could use that claim of the Qur'an to help introduce the Bible to Muslims?

by Christian from Muslim, 2020
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