

Study Guide for “Lesson on The Christian Life”

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

Summary and Notes:

Quick Summary: Today’s lesson is on the Christian life – what it is about and how to live it. What a big topic for a single lesson! Although the content is not new for Christians, what is different is that we explain it for Muslim thinking. We hope that Muslims will see how Christian living is similar to and different from the Muslim way of living (*sunnah*).

Muslims tend to think that everything they see from countries which have been called “Christian” is Christian – including the bad and immoral. So we clarify what Christian living is NOT. Muslims get confused by Christian denominations, so we briefly discuss those too.



(Notes 1: We try to keep our content non-denominational.

2: *We like to be as complete as necessary yet concise. But since this topic is broad and the study guide long, your group leader might want select what to focus on and discuss.*

3: More details on some of today’s topics are presented in other video lessons and study guides.)

Reality: Discussing Jesus in the Airport

In the West, we can discuss Jesus anywhere freely without fear, even public places like an airport. It is good for people to hear us discussing Jesus and how wonderful he is. Jesus gives us joy! Even though life is full of hardships, he wants us to be filled with his Spirit and delight in the blessings he gives us. (Galatians 5:22)

In this reality video Huda, a new Christian from a Muslim background, comfortably shares with us in a public place some of the things she finds amazing about Jesus. She mentions prophecy about his birth. Dr. Cynthia adds that the Bible tells us it was just the right time when Jesus appeared (Micah 5:2, Galatians 4:4).

Huda tells us that she already shares these things about Jesus with her Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish friends, and they are surprised to hear them. That is why Jesus told us to tell his good news all over – people don’t know it. As the old Christian song goes, “Everybody ought to know who Jesus is!”

New Testament ADVICE on living the Christian life

The letters of the apostles in the New Testament contain theology and warnings of false teachers, but mostly focus on how to live the Christian life. Good summary passages include all of Romans 12, and Colossians 3:12-17.

It is important to recognize that Jesus promised us the abundant life – not the easy life. He did not want us following him under the false impression that everything would go well. Several places he clearly states that we will have problems and suffer in life, even if we follow him closely. The

blessing is that he will be with us through it all, and bring good from it. (John 10:10, Matthew 10:17-39 & 28:20, Romans 8:28)

We do teach that the Christian life is not easy. Nevertheless we have seen Muslims, and others, become discouraged as new believers when they find that things are not working out as smoothly as they expected.

A clue mentioned in the Bible is to keep our eyes on Jesus and things above. With his life and love in our sights, we are more likely to become like him, (Hebrews 3:1 & 12:2,3, Colossians 3:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18).

PHILOSOPHY of the CHRISTIAN Life

Ask Christians to summarize the Christian life and you are likely to get many answers. You may hear:

a walk with God
the abundant life

a servant's life
being the child of the King

discipleship
a spiritual journey

Let's start with a question: *Why do we exist?* A popular Christian response is the first in the Westminster Catechism,

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever.

Notice the two parts of this purpose statement: what we do for God, and what God does for us.

(Notes: 1. The Bible verses the catechism gives to support human purpose are:

1 Corinthians 10:31, Romans 11:36, Psalm 73:24-26, John 17:22-24

2. The word "man" is used in the old fashioned sense, meaning "humanity."

3. A **catechism** is a summary of the principles of the Christian faith in the form of questions and answers. It is used for the instructions of Christians, primarily in traditional denominations. The benefit of the catechism form is assurance that the teaching covers all the important basics. Many churches favor a more relaxed approach to teaching.)

Our way of putting the philosophy of the Christian life is similar to the Westminster Catechism's, but more specific:

PEACE and PURPOSE

We go into more detail on this in the study guide and *Lesson on the Fruit of the Spirit*, and other lessons. To summarize it here, we remind you that Christians can have:

Peace – with God, ourselves, and others

Purpose – something God has specifically called and gifted each of us to do

The Christian life is about balancing the two. The closer we follow God, the clearer and stronger our Peace and Purpose. Now let's look at some of the disciplines that can help further our Peace and Purpose.

The DISCIPLINES of the Christian Life

This one lesson cannot cover in depth everything it takes to become a mature Christian. However, if as a Muslim, now Christian, you make it through our entire *Christian from Muslim* program, you will be well on your way to understanding Christian principles. It is up to you to put them into productive practice. We hope the study questions help you reflect on ways to do it.

OUR GOAL as Christians is to become like Jesus, our Savior and Lord:

For God knew his people in advance, and so he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Romans 8:29 NLT

Dr. Mike Licona shares with that there are disciplines of the Christian life. This is not the same as working for salvation. Disciplines are things we do to please God and have a richer experience in the Christian life. They help us to become mature believers.

The 6 Disciplines of Christian Living include:

- Prayer
- Bible study
- Meeting with other believers
- Worship
- Serving others
- Evangelism - Sharing the gospel

Let's look at these six disciplines in greater detail.

PRAYER

The Importance of Prayer with Kevin and Dee

Prayer is one of the most important disciplines of the Christian life. Bible teachers Kevin and Dee share with us the importance of prayer in their lives. They have seen God miraculously answer many prayers. At times when things are not going well in their family life, they have stopped to remember that they have been praying less.

Kevin and Dee also explain the importance of prayer in helping adjust our attitudes to be godlier and in line with what he wills, not simply seeking our own way.

Muslim prayer

Muslims pray at certain set times of the day. During these times **specific prayers** are to be made in Arabic. The exact number and time of the prayers, and the prayers themselves are specified by the sects of Islam. You might be surprised to learn that these details are not specified by the Qur'an, but by the hadiths, or traditions of each sect.

(Note: We also discuss Muslim prayer in our study guide and video *Lesson on Introduction to Islam for Christians*.)

Usually, we think of Muslims as praying 5 times a day, since this is for the Sunni, the primary sect of Islam. The prayers are scattered at times from before dawn, until bedtime. The exact times vary throughout the year depending on sunrise and sunset.

It is sad for Christians to think of **what Muslims pray** every day. Several times they pray the first chapter of the Qur'an, which is known as *The Fatiha*. In it they pray that Allah will guide them in the right path, not that of those that turned away (the Christians) or those who earned God's anger (the Jews). Since they pray often not to be led to the gospel, Christians must pray even harder that they will be!

Group **prayer in the mosque** (masjid) is favored, especially on Fridays. Prayer is done in certain positions, which change during the prayer session. When done in unison, Muslim prayers can make a spectacular impression, like a form of choreography. At times these prayers are done publicly to make a statement. The attention they attract is known to assist in converting people to Islam.

Women are not allowed to pray at all during menses because they are considered "unclean" then. They also cannot then touch the Qur'an. They need to make up for these later. We do not have this in Christianity.

Probably the most striking difference between Christian and Muslim prayer is that in Islam, one must **pray in Arabic**. This requirement has been so difficult for non-Arabic speakers that some have questioned why it must be so.

Example of Muslim praying in Arabic: Ali, an African Muslim, wondered why Allah, who is much higher than people, required prayers to him be made in Arabic? Ali himself could speak three languages. Could he possibly be smarter than Allah? This quest eventually led him to become Christian.

Can Muslims make **personal prayers**? Some Muslims say no, that personal prayer was something that attracted them to Christianity. Other Muslims say that *du'a'* is the type of personal prayer in Islam, which can be inserted after the memorized prayers are recited.

Example of Muslim feeling distant in prayer: A Turkish university student asked Jay, a missionary in Turkey, if he could really pour out his heart to God in prayer? In Islam, he said could not. Jay said, "Yes, he could and did pour out his heart to God!" That difference opened up a line of ongoing spiritual discussions between the two men. Some months later the student became a Christian

A distant feeling of prayer in Islam might be part of what accounts for the prevalence of "folk Islam," and other occultic practices in the Muslim world. These provide a way to direct powers to answer their needs. The distance can also make Muslims hungry to know the personal God of love that the Bible reveals to us.

(Note: We go into greater detail in the study guide and *Lesson on Islam and the Occult*.)

Example of Christian influence on Islamic prayer: Christianity seems to be influencing Islamic prayer in the West. In America there are now Islamic prayer seminars in English for how to feel closer to God through prayer. Previously only the small Sufi sect would claim this kind of closeness to through prayer.

Types of Christian Prayer

Personal – prayers from the individual to God. Usually when we pray alone we pray silently. But there are times that praying aloud can help us focus on our prayer, keeping out distraction.

You can pray silently wherever you are at almost any time that you do not need to be focused on something else. It can develop into an ongoing conversation with God.

Collective – prayers are read or recited by believers together at the same time. Some denominations do this every time they meet, especially those with a liturgy. Praying together can give us a sense of unity, and that our prayers are magnified.

(Note: The liturgy establishes set prayers and Bible reading and messages throughout the year. Catholics, Lutherans, and Orthodox are noted for this.)

Group – prayer is when Christians pray in a group but not saying the same words at the same time. This is a common form that prayer meetings take, and so is good for new Christians to learn about. In fact, any time that a few Christians are together is a wonderful opportunity to pray. Jesus said,

“Where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them.” Matthew 18:20

In group prayer usually one person starts out with prayer and another closes with prayer. In between usually anyone in the group is free to pray. But there are times when everyone is quiet, praying silently together in their hearts.

Sometimes group prayers are for a specific purpose, for example: an event, an outreach, church needs, ministry, Muslims, or sick people. And sometimes prayer meetings are for any need on the participants’ hearts.

Written – prayers that were thought through and set down in advance of being prayed. They could be from the Bible, a prayer book, devotional, liturgy, or one written for a special occasion or personal use.

Recited – Jesus told us not to “babel” in prayer by simply repeat phrases over and over. However, sometimes we find it valuable to memorize certain prayers. This can help guide our prayer life when we feel blank, or inspire us to remember specific requests. When done right, reciting prayers is not simply a ritual, but reminds us of what our prayers should be, and makes them deeper.

For example, many Christians pray the **Lord’s Prayer** daily,

*Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored.
May your kingdom come.
May what you want to happen be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins, just as we have also forgiven those who sin against us.
Keep us from sinning when we are tempted.
Save us from the evil one.*

Matthew 6:7, 9-13 NIV

Others memorize the prayers of Paul in the New Testament. (Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-13)

With recited prayers, we might be encouraged by the feeling that we are sharing in prayers with others who have come before us and prayed the same words.

(Note: when recited in a group in English, the old King James Version of the Lord’s Prayer is usually spoken.)

Spontaneous – many people yell “Oh God!” when they are trouble, whether or not they believe. Spontaneous prayer is something like that: it comes out of a believer’s spirit as a result of the situation that they are in at the moment. It might be a problem, challenge, or temptation that we need strength to face (“Lord please help me!”). Certainly there are many times during our week, even day, when we should remember to say, “Thank you Lord!”

Meditative – These are prayers made in a relaxed state, usually alone, when we focus on a meaningful Bible verse or phrase, and let its divine truth seep into our soul. In some ways this is like Eastern Meditation: it releases the same relaxing hormones through what is scientifically known as “the relaxation response.” But it is not identical to Eastern meditation. Eastern empties the mind, Christian meditation gently fills it.

(Note: we say more about meditation in our study guides and video on *Lessons on Looking for Truth in World Religions*.)

Conversational – this very personal form of prayer is a lifestyle which senses the presence of God with the believer in every action of life. And so, the Christian communicates with God on a moment by moment basis, as if a friend were present.

(Note: There is a good example of this with our ministry sister Joanna and former Muslim Huda in our study guide and *Lesson on the Fruit of the Spirit*.)

Components of Christian Prayer

How do we pray?

If we only pray about our problems without praise and thankfulness, we do a disservice to both God and ourselves. Dr. C discovered this when she would pray in the morning about everything that could go wrong at the hospital that day. Finally she realized that with this practice she started the day already exhausted – worried about problems that hadn’t even happened! So, although we pour out our hearts in prayer it is good to think positively, trusting that God knows our needs.

What do we say in prayer? Well, that partly depends on which of the above 8 types of prayer we are doing at the time. But in general, these are what most Christian teachers would suggest for our prayers:

Praise – honoring God for who he is: his majesty as shown in nature, his faithfulness, and his plan of salvation for us through the cross. This could be a time of silence and “centering” in who God is and the wonder of his glory. *Centering* washes away our earthly thoughts and distractions.

Thanksgiving – thankfulness should be part of the daily life of Christians. Although there is no set rule, it is good to thank the Lord for 5 things he has done for us every day. This practice not only honors him, but lifts our spirits as well. It helps us realize God’s ongoing care for us. Thankfulness releases hormones which help us feel that care and be contented.

Confession – we need to recognize our imperfections and sins and confess them to God. It is only reality to recognize that we are neither perfect nor worthy.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. James 1:9

Confession assists us in being humble.

God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. James 4:6

Intercession – is where we petition God on behalf of other people, nations, causes, religions – things outside of ourselves.

What should we pray for the world? For peace, for relief in disasters, persecution, or famine, for honest governments that uphold human rights, and for missions.

Example of Prayer for National Peace: During times of distress and wars, individual prayers and group prayers have made a difference. For example, a Silent Minute of prayer was established during World War II. The chiming of the Big Ben clock in London was broadcast by radio at 9 pm nightly. People across the country, in battle zones, and even America would pray then for the end of the war and peace. After the war, a high-ranking Nazi official credited their loss of the war to this collective prayer movement. He said it was a secret weapon which they could not counter.

What should we pray for people? We pray that God will work in their lives, for comfort of their sorrows, for their earthly needs, and that the Lord will open doors for us to bless, encourage, and share with them the gospel. (Romans 13:1, Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 4:3)

Petition – is where we lay our own needs and desires before Jesus. Some leaders have said that we should not pray for ourselves, to expect God to act on behalf of something as unimportant as our needs. We don't agree. We believe that God cares about everything in our lives.

You do not have because you do not ask God. James 4:2

What should we pray for ourselves? The Bible tells us to *pour out our hearts to God*, and to cast our cares upon him because he cares for us. (Psalm 62:8, 1 Peter 5:7)

There is one prayer that God has guaranteed to answer positively, and we should take advantage of this every day:

*“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you.
He will not rebuke you for asking.”* James 1:5 NLT

Note that in context the advice to pray for wisdom comes right after James telling us that we will have trials. So we should especially remember to ask for wisdom when we are going through trials.

Holy Spirit intercession – the Bible tells us that we don't always know what to pray, or how best to phrase it. This should be comforting to us, because we don't know all the details of the situations and people that we lift in prayer.

So, it is a good idea in every prayer of length to pause and let the Holy Spirit pray for you. In this pause you might simply remain silent, or you might say something like,

“Lord, I don't know all that's going on in this situation, so I ask your Holy Spirit to pray for me that your will be done.”

At a time that you simply have a burden to pray, but you don't know why or what for, you can pray, *“Holy Spirit, wherever there is a need in the world, with believers or unbelievers, I ask you now to intercede.”*

Perhaps you will find this amusing, but some have prayed, *“...and anything else I should have prayed, Holy Spirit pray for me now.”*

(Note: Some denominations put much weight on “prayer in the Spirit,” especially if it is done in **tongues**, meaning in a different language. Many Christians believe in and practice tongues fully. Others deny that it is valid in the present age. Still others recognize that it might exist, but to avoid controversy pray in tongues privately only, or not at all. Since this denominational issue has led to much conflict in the church, we will not take a position here either way. We encourage you to seek unity with your family in Christ, recognizing that we will not be in agreement in everything. As was said by Christians in the Reformation:

Unity in essentials, liberty in particulars,

meaning we stand united in the basic doctrines of Christianity, but allow each other freedom to believe as we will on other issues and doctrines.)

Committing in Faith – is closing our prayers with recognition that God is in control. We trust him to answer our prayers according to his power and grace, and in wisdom of what is best for us and others. a popular example is, “...for yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

(Note: *Amen* might be a new word to you. It is an affirmative word, meaning, *So let it be.*)

Does God ANSWER our prayers?

Prayer does make a difference!

“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”
James 5:16 (NLT)

James tells us that because of wickedness, by prayer Elijah stopped the rain and caused drought, and by prayer he started it again.

Everyone has a tendency to think that if God is real he will answer prayers according to our desires. That is not true. Many factors are involved in whether or not God will answer our prayers: the reason we are asking, the spiritual condition of our heart, what is actually best for us, what is best for others, etc.

If we truly have accepted Jesus as our Savior, we are adopted into the family of God and he will hear our prayers. **God answers every Christians’ prayers in one of these 3 ways:**

Yes

No

Wait

We should believe when we pray, and not waiver – meaning flipping back and forth in our faith. We believe that God hears and will answer according to his wisdom and power. That does not mean that we need to have faith that God will do exactly what we ask in every situation. The Bible is clear that our motives must be unselfish, and we must want God’s will more than ours. (James 1:7,8)

Will God save others if we pray? There are various theologies on this. Some say that God has predestined people and so prayer makes no difference to them, it mainly changes us. Others say that God will work harder to influence someone to come to him if we pray for them. Both groups encourage prayer for others.

What about prayer for healing? This is certainly one of the most common prayers. Many people have become discouraged and even left the faith because they prayed for a healing that did not happen. On the other hand, many people have become Christians because God miraculously healed someone in their family. How can we view these opposite situations?

Here are **3 important Things to Remember Regarding Healing:**

1. Ultimately **it is God’s decision who gets healed and who does not.** His ways are not our ways. Many wonderful things have come through not only healing, but the testimony of someone who is not healed.
2. **We will all die** sooner or later. We will not always be healed. It is good to accept that there is a time for us to go to the home of our Heavenly Father.
3. **All Christians will be fully healed eventually** – if not on earth, in heaven. That is a great encouragement to us when we or those we love suffer.

We must pray believing that God will act through our prayers for good. If it is not according to our will, we must accept his decision and way – whether it is Yes, No, or Wait.

(Note: see also our study guide and *Lesson on the Place of Miracles*.)

Can anything Block our Prayers?

Yes.

1. **Intentionally sinning** can,
If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Psalm 66:18
2. **Mistreating others** can. You must treat people with kindness and respect,
... so that nothing will hinder your prayers. I Peter 3:7
3. **Selfish motives** can,
You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:3
4. **Not being in relationship with God** can block your prayers. Sometimes he does hear and answer the **prayers of unbelievers**, especially if it is something that will help them recognize who he is and assist them in going the right way. But just as an earthly father is not obligated to help a stranger, so God does not need to respond to unbelievers.

Prayer as a Weapon

Ephesians 6:10-18 tells us that we are in a **spiritual battle** and should pray constantly.

Prayer and Fasting is often paired together in the Bible. The main benefit to this is that our hunger pangs can serve as a reminder to pray. Some leaders feel that our prayers are actually more powerful if we are fasting.

Turnabout prayer – one unusual way to turn a trial into good is by praying this way:

when we suffer pain, heartache or other trial, besides praying for ourselves, we can immediately turn it into a prayer for others who are suffering the same thing. For example:

Problem: physical pain,

Lord help those who are suffering pain.

I pray for my friends with cancer.

Strengthen and deliver those being tortured for you.

Problem: unmet needs,

Lord, provide for those who are suffering hunger, or need shelter.

Help me Lord, as I study for this exam. And help others who do not feel up to what life is throwing at them today.

I lift to you others who need what I need.

Problem: family stresses,

I pray for my brothers and sisters who are also having marital problems.

Give wisdom to other parents with wayward children.

Problem: grief,

Lord comfort others who have lost a loved one, like I have.

Comfort refugees and provide for their needs.

BIBLE STUDY

Learning the Muslim holy book

Muslim schools, called *madrasas*, emphasize learning the Qur'an, especially through rote memorization. Devout Muslims start their children memorize the Qur'an at a very young age. Children of about 5 years old have recited Qur'anic surahs for Dr. C.

Muslims love to say that the Qur'an has never changed, and that it is the same on earth as it is on a tablet in heaven. This belief encourages them to honor their holy book. If you are Muslim you probably believed that, and if you are Christian working with Muslims you will have heard this insisted.

But don't let their insistence shake you. The Bible is much better preserved, and deserves a high place of honor in our lives.

Actually, there are many printed variant Qur'ans in existence today, with the two most commonly used being the *Hafs* and *Warsh*. They have over 5,000 differences between them. Plus, the handwritten manuscripts which have survived show variations and changes.

(Note: we discuss this more in other lessons. If you are interested, new evidence is constantly coming out on the Qur'anic variants and can be researched on the internet and YouTube.)

Learning the Bible

Considering the dedication that Muslims have for the Qur'an, it should not be difficult for them to recognize the importance that the Bible has in the life of Christians.

2 Timothy 2:15 & 3:15-17 tell us,

*Do your best to present yourselves to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles **the word of truth...the Holy Scriptures** which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly **equipped for every good work.***

To be a mature Christian it is essential to know and follow what the Bible teaches. In many places the Bible tells us this, like: Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and the letters of Paul to the Colossians, and Timothy and Peter's first letter.

Throughout his ministry Jesus sets us an example of applying Scripture to his life, for example, by quoting it when he was tempted. He told us that to bear fruit we must let his words live in us. (Matthew 4:1-11, John 15:5)

Daily Bible Reading, with Kevin and Dee

Bible teachers Kevin and Dee share with us the importance of daily Bible reading in their lives. It is one of the most important disciplines of the Christian life. Through daily Bible reading we stay in touch with God's way, our minds renewed and receptive to what God would show us.

(Note: We have several other lessons about the Bible, its composition, its inspiration, how to study it, and meditating on it. For more on the topic please see those videos and study guides.)

GATHERING TOGETHER

“Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another.”

Hebrews 10:25 NLT

Muslim Gatherings

Muslims are to gather collectively in the mosque every Friday for prayers and a message. It is their weekly holy day. Participation, like everything in Islam, is based on law and provides benefit to the participant. In addition, Muslims gather throughout the lunar year for various holy days.

Men and women gather separately in the mosque. Larger mosques have a separate prayer room for women. In smaller mosques, women pray behind the men. This is for convenience, since women may have children with them, and modesty since praying involves deep bowing which exposes one's bottom to those behind.

Women are excused from gathering if they are: menstruating, have small children, or otherwise are kept home. However, they must make up the prayers and devotion that they miss during these absences. Being unable to keep up with these obligations is one of the main reasons that according to Islam, there are more women in hell than men.

Christian Gatherings

As Mike shares with us, gathering together with other believers is a discipline of the Christian faith. It helps make us all stronger. Usually Christians gather on Sunday*, as they have since the days of the early church. We sing together, pray, share scripture, and usually have a message from a pastor or special speaker.

(*Note: Seventh Day Adventists agree with other Christians on most doctrines except which day to rest and worship on: Saturday not Sunday.)

God made people needing a weekly day of rest. In the Old Testament he also told us to honor that day for the Lord. But Christians are not under that law.

So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. Colossians 2:16 NLT

In most Muslim countries Sunday is a work day, which makes it difficult or impossible for Christians there to join services. Even in America many of us need to work on weekends. If we must work on Sunday, we need not feel excluded from fellowship.

Now multiple weekend worship services are common in city churches. Many offer online services, and zoom meetings where the sick and elderly can participate from a distance in the safety of their own home. These offerings blossomed into popularity during the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing a silver lining for many stuck-at-home Christians.

Some American churches have always been very active, offering different activities nearly every day. Dr. C grew up in a church like that.

If we cannot gather together, we should recognize that it is going to have an impact on our faith. We should seriously try to schedule time together with strong believers.

Example: overseas working Christian. Jordan, one of our volunteer overseas national workers has a very responsible position which requires working on Sunday. She watches services online and fellowships with Christians when she can. She realizes this is not ideal, and it is difficult for her to get the encouragement she needs. But living in a Muslim country it is the only option available if she is to work.

Isolation of Christians from Muslim background

Being a Christian by yourself, makes the Christian life more difficult. You have no one to encourage you, share a positive word, pray for you, or provide an encouraging testimony. This is the unfortunate reality for many Christians of Muslim background.

In America when Muslims become believers they often have more opportunity to find a church. Some choose an ethnic church from their background. But many do not feel comfortable in them because of the different cultures of Muslims and Christians within the same country overseas. Each side suspects the other. This attitude can carry over to America.

In Muslim countries, if churches are allowed at all, they are forbidden to convert or welcome Muslims into their midst. If a Muslim shows up at church the Christians fear he is a spy. They could get turned in to the authorities and lose their church or even their freedom.

Frequently the new believer is not allowed into the church. Can you imagine how discouraging that would be? You finally find that Jesus is the way, but your new Christian family rejects you! You might end up wondering if what that the Bible says about Christian love and fellowship is real at all.

If they persist, these new believers can often find someone to baptize them or fellowship within their country. But not always. We have seen believers grow weaker in faith when they return home to Muslim countries. We must always lift them in prayer.

Example of overseas contact seeking fellowship: Raffy of Saudi Arabia contacted us after watching our video lessons. He had studied in America and was hoping to visit again for baptism and discipleship training. But the Covid-19 pandemic cancelled that. He still lives in Saudi, without fellowship and in fear. Raffy needs our prayers.

Although we communicate with other believers we know in Saudi, due to fears we cannot ask them openly about their faith and fellowship.

Good news however! There are now **online churches for Muslim background Christians**. In the safety of their homes, if the signals allow, overseas Muslims who have become Christians can now connect. They can sing together and fellowship with other Christians who like them are stuck in Muslim countries or families.

*A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer.
Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*

Ecclesiastes 4:12 NLT

Even in America, some Christians from Muslim background cannot freely gather with other Christians because they are in Muslim families.

Example of formerly Muslim woman in America: Nelly's parents and husband's family are strict Muslims from North Africa. Because of this, although now a Christian, she still wears her hijab, and does not go regularly to church. She fears that her relatives will discover she is no longer Muslim and take the children from her. This is their right in Islam.

However, Nelly has more freedom since her adulterous husband left her. She has been able to arrange a week off for discipleship training conference for former Muslims. Occasionally she meets with Dr. C or other Christians in person or online.

Please pray for Nelly and believers like her to find more fellowship.

WORSHIP

Muslim Worship

Muslim worship involves reciting portions of the Qur'an, praying in a ritual manner with changing positions – both alone or in unison with others, and on holy days like Fridays, listening to a khutbah, or sermon.

You might be surprised that **music** is not traditionally part of Muslim worship. In fact, strict Muslims avoid music entirely, as something that is evil because it touches the emotions. This is why you may have heard of the Taliban shooting people at weddings which have music.

Example of Muslim response to Christian Music: The first time Dr. C heard that music was wrong for Muslims, was at an outreach many years ago at one of America's biggest mosques.

Dr C and Joanna were visiting from out of state, investigating Muslim neighborhoods for outreach potential. They had brought Jesus DVDs and tracts to distribute somewhere that God directed. Having investigated and prayed, they were determined to go to this particular mosque. A local missionary called shortly before they left and warned them not to go there, that it was too dangerous. They were afraid enough already, and this call did not help! But in faith, they decided not to look to the right or to the left, as the Bible says, but to stay to the path God had called them to.

During the outreach, white-haired imam came out to speak to Dr. C, either to distract her from distribution or to try to convert her. One of the several challenges he gave to her was why Christians had music in church? That seemed wickedly sensual to him!

While Dr. C answered this and other challenges, Joanna finished distributing the remaining items to the eagerly receptive cars. Hallelujah! Over 200 went DVDs and tracts went out that day, despite the attempts of the missionary and the imam to stop them!

(Note: After a Christian life well spent, Joanna has now joined Jesus in heaven. You can see her enthusiastic advice to Huda on how to practice the presence of God in our video *Lesson on the Fruit of the Spirit*.)

Christian Worship

Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Psalm 105:2

Worship services

Usually when we speak of Christian worship, we are referring to services where Christians join together. Most often these are weekly.

Christian Worship Styles

What we are used to largely determines how we react to the worship styles of others. Dr. C received another challenge over the internet from a **Muslim who was shocked** at the music and variety of Christian worship. He said,

“Christians do all kinds of things in their worship services, like singing, clapping, shouting, lifting their hands, and dancing. How can you justify this? Where did Jesus teach this?”

Dr C answered, defending, “All of those forms of worship are mentioned in the Zabur – the Psalms of David and others. They were already accepted at the time of Jesus. He did not need to teach them.”

Differences in worship styles, especially musical styles, are some of the most obvious ways in which **Christian churches differ**. Some more traditional churches sing old hymns from traditional hymnals accompanied by traditional instruments, like the organ and piano. Some are even in ancient languages.

Nowadays, more and more churches opt for modern songs with lyrics projected on a screen, accompanied by guitars, keyboards, and drums. Rather than a choir they have a worship team of 3-5 people performing, without an official director leading the congregation to keep in time. A few denominations refuse all instruments.

Since the Bible's Psalms talk about a wide variety of worship styles and body worship positions, they should all be valid for today as well. But the Psalms do not include musical notes. This is actually good because it leaves every generation and culture free to develop their own musical style, rather than relying on what was fashionable 3,000 years ago in the Middle East.

You might prefer a church with a solemn worship style, one which emphasizes quiet contemplation of the awesome majesty of God. On the other hand, perhaps you enjoy shouting out to the Lord in joy, clapping or raising your hands in praise, or at times even jumping a bit for joy. There are excellent churches which engage all of these worship styles.

There is a debate now about how much music in churches should entertain, versus be simple. Dr. Cynthia tells us in the video that she actually enjoys nearly every style of worship. But she realizes not everyone does. She suggests that you find a church with sound doctrine and a worship style that blesses you.

Personal worship

This may occur in an individual Christian's quiet devotional time with God, reading and meditating on his word. For your personal worship, besides reading the Bible you could also listen to worship music on the radio, internet, CDs or downloads.

Each of us is unique in our experience in life and music, so it should not be surprising that some music touches us more than others. To increase your sense of worship, try to find music that encourages your heart and Christian growth.

There may also be times throughout the day that your heart adores or rejoices in the Lord. Both of these become more natural when we become fully aware of God's goodness and presence. Memorizing some meaningful Christian songs and Bible verses that you can take with you everywhere is a worthwhile contribution to your personal worship and encouragement.

*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit.
Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord. Ephesians 5:19 (NIRV)*

Worship experiences

The act of worship can involve a person's entire being. When we sing a song of worship to God, or meditate on a meaningful Bible verse our focus shifts. Our everyday existence with its problems and cares can fade away as we renew our mind with thoughts of God and his power.

Worship experiences encourage us that we are not on our own. They confirm in our spirit that God is in control of the universe and yet cares about us. Washing our brains with these positive thoughts has the beneficial result of releasing positive chemicals that strengthen and cheer us.

Singing together with others adds another component to the experience. Even secular music groups often feel fulfilled or unified when making music together with others. Likewise and beyond, when Christians

sing together there is the opportunity for group bonding. In group worship, there can be an experience of being alone with God at the same time as we are united with others. This is especially true with music that touches our hearts.

Mystical experiences can also happen during private or individual worship. Believers may report unique feelings or visions. These mostly bring individual encouragement. But as with human relationships, we need to remember that the person is more important than the pleasurable feeling they give us. We must not elevate the experience above our devotion to God. And we must not allow it to make us proud.

Everyday worship

You might look at worship as something that people do to honor God when they are gathered together. But on a deeper level, how an individual lives their life overall is also considered their worship. For example, mosque outreach like the one in the example above is a form of worship, if we do it unto God with love in our hearts for him and others. It is a sacrifice to God. Romans 12:1 tells us to,

...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

The verse following that gives us an idea of how to live as a sacrifice,

Do not copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Romans 12:2 NLT

SERVING and SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Jesus told us that he came as a servant. We should imitate that. The greatest of his followers is the servant of all. (Mark 9:35)

Every Christian has been given spiritual gifts to serve and strengthen the church, or bring others into it. Mike Licon shares with us types of Christian spiritual gifts.

There are three good New Testament passages on spiritual gifts. They list a variety of gifts, with no one list being complete.

So we know that there may be unusual spiritual gifts not mentioned, perhaps because they fit with a later culture. For example, people with strong computer skills are now much needed for Christian work. (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:4-13).

Some of the gifts we will look at are: hospitality, serving, counsel, giving, mercy, teaching, and a variety of practical gifts.

The Body of Christ

Every believing Christian is a member of the *body of Christ*. The Bible passages tell us that different people have different gifts, just as a body has different parts. But all the parts work together in a body to benefit the whole. Ephesians tells us that the purpose of the gifts is to,

...equip God's people to do his work and build up his church, the body of Christ... so that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

The Bible warns us against being proud about how we have been gifted. At the end of 1 Corinthians 12, it tells us to seek spiritual gifts, but to know that **love** is more important than all the gifts. We can all have love from God as a fruit of his Spirit.

The Gift of HOSPITALITY

In Islamic cultures, hospitality is extremely important. Western Christians cannot, and possibly should not match the hospitality of Muslims and the Middle East. With much of the region engulfed by deserts, hospitality became a survival necessity for everyone. It also became an art form and source of pride.

Example of Middle Eastern hospitality: a Palestinian in America became notable for hospitality. He entertained many Arab visitors – even ones that he scarcely knew or even disliked. They would not consult him on what was a good time for him, as Westerners usually do. They would simply announce that they were coming. In order to be a good host he would take off work for days, even risking his employment and financial stability.

Dr. C would advise him, “Just tell them that you have to work! That’s what I do. They can’t expect you to drop everything for them.” But he could not violate his ingrained hospitality standards.

Hospitality advice. We encourage Western **Christians** to keep in mind the hospitality expectations of Muslim culture. In our relationships with Muslims we must be hospitable and not stingy. We don’t advise that you risk your job or finances to be hospitable. But you will probably be expected to give and receive more hospitality than you are used to.

And former Muslims especially in the West, please accept that lesser hospitality from Christians here reflects their culture. Also, know that the Lord can deliver you from burden of excessive hospitality. (Luke 10:41,42)

Serving meals is nevertheless a longstanding tradition in the Christian church, going all the way back to its beginning. Licona’s discussion about hospitality and serving meals includes reality footage of Dr. Cynthia and other volunteers preparing a ministry event. Other places Christians serve food is for the homeless and poor, for fundraisers, for group meetings and social gatherings.

The Gift of CHRISTIAN COUNSEL

Muslim counsel. Imams, who serve like pastors for local mosques, are often consulted for interpretation of Islam and advice. On the whole however, you might recall that everything in Islam has already been thought out and turned into a law. In the modern world there are times where Muslims struggle to apply Islamic Law to new situations. So *fatawa* (plural of *fatwa*), official Islamic decisions are still being made.

Examples of Muslim counsel: Dr. C has books of *fatawa* for women which apply Muslim Law to contemporary life. For example, they tell women that because Islam is against the depictions of living things, they cannot collect family photos. Neither can they have birthday parties, because there is no record that Mohammed did.

Christian counsel. Being human, Christians have problems. Like Barnabas with Paul and later John Mark, this gift of Christian service encourages others. It helps coach them to find where God really wants them.

Wise and experienced Christians routinely give counsel to those in trouble. Often pastors do. It is important for anyone giving advice to know when the situation requires professional psychological or medical help.

The Gift of MERCY

Some people are compassionate and are gifted at **showing mercy**. They help those who have gotten themselves into trouble, often by not following God's ways. This is also considered a spiritual gift.

The Gift of GIVING

Finally, Mike mentions the gift of giving. Although some are financially blessed, all Christians should give money to church and charity.

Muslim giving. As with other aspects of Muslim life, giving to charity is an obligation. The exact amount varies by sect. With the tremendous wealth now within the Muslim world, this practice is funding mosques, *madrasas*, and university departments of Islamic Studies worldwide.

Christian giving is not under obligation. In general though, teachers, especially pastors, point to 10% of our income to be given to the Lord's work, since that is what was specified under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 27:30).

Rather than as obligation, the Lord wants to give out of thankful appreciation.

*...whoever sows generously will reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8*

As is common knowledge, families and individuals have become busier over the last two generations. Previously most households had one income, and there were fewer entertainments to distract us. Now many, if not most American households have two or more incomes.

The result of increasing employment is that volunteering has greatly fallen. Charitable organizations have suffered and some have closed. With donated time decreasing and productive work increasing, sincere Christians should consider giving more money to make up for it.

Example of working and giving balance: Although very active in ministry now, there were years in Dr. Cynthia's life when between her medical work and family duties, she had very little time for Christian service. During these times she was reduced to serving through giving money and intercessory prayer. These are ways of contributing that busy working people can do with limited time.

The Gift of CHRISTIAN TEACHING

In the mosque. Through mosque and madrasas Muslims are taught Islam; however much of the Muslim lifestyle they learn is through living in a Muslim community.

In the church. Licona mentions that some people have learned much about the Bible, and are gifted in teaching it. Mature and older Christians are encouraged to teach the newer and younger Christians.

Christian teaching is through sermons, Sunday School, Bible studies, Christian schools, seminaries, and discipleship programs.

Several guests we have on our series, like Mark Vyka and Kevin, although not famous as others of our guests, are gifted Bible teachers and serve in their local churches.

In seminaries pastors and other clergy are taught not only the Bible, but its original languages, cultures of the time, commentaries, and ways to understand and analyze the Bible.

At Home. Muslims are told that “*Paradise is at the feet of your mother.*” This means Muslim mothers should raise their children to be devout Muslims.

Christians are encouraged to bring up our children as believers. We cannot leave them to secular school teachers, thinking that they will grow up neutral. Yes, we believe that everyone needs to choose for themselves what they believe personally; but it is the duty of parents to teach children what Christians believe, and train them in Christian behavior. (Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 22:6)

Teaching important Life Skills:

Finally, teaching skills that will benefit others and the church is important. An emphasis on teaching **reading** has been part of Western Christianity for about 500 years, since the Reformation. The priority was for Christians to learn to read the Bible themselves. Sunday Schools were started to give the working children a chance to learn to read. As a result of more people reading, all education flourished in these countries.

A wonderful gift that Americans and some others have is being able to **speak English**. Most of us did not need to go to a foreign language school to learn it – it was just part of growing up in an English-speaking country. That gift alone opens doors for Christians to serve – maybe even you!

Examples teaching English overseas:

Dr. C’s first overseas trip was as an English language coach in Christ College, Taipei, Taiwan when she was 19 years old. Taiwanese students, most of whom were Buddhist, would eagerly come to the college to practice English. They would also have the chance to live and eat with Christians from America. And they heard the gospel in groups meetings twice a day. For decades after, the students kept in touch with Dr. C, often having spiritual discussions.

Sometimes teaching English is the only door for getting into countries closed to the gospel. Our contacts serve within mainland China, Arabia, and Central Asia teaching American culture and language.

Example of immigrant preference: With so many immigrants in America now, many churches and Christian-run friendship centers are offering English as a Second Language courses (ESL). A North African Muslim in Colorado told Dr. C that of all the ESL classes she had attended, she preferred the one at the church.

Other PRACTICAL GIFTS

Example of Muslim Practical skills promotion: At a Muslim student meeting that Dr. C attended, the Muslim leader told the young people that they should choose careers not for their own sake, but those that would benefit the ummah, or people and influence of Islam.

Christian Practical Gifts: Teaching is a practical gift. In a way all gifts are practical if they help with the goal of building up the Body of Christ.

Skills like that acquired with training, that are useful in secular life, can also be considered spiritual gifts as well when used in Christian service. Practical gifts have been part of service since the beginning. For example, Dorcas making clothes for the poor.

Other examples of practical gifts: are administration, accounting, and helping. Without these the church would be disorganized, and without organization we would lack the tremendous worldwide impact that Christians have to this day. Teaching practical skills is also a part of church ministry: reading and writing, sewing and farm skills, and healthcare.

Because **music** is part of Christian worship, singing and playing instruments are gifts that can be developed for Christian service.

Example of Christian immigrant centers teaching practical skills: Shaheen directs International Friendship Centers throughout America that not only teach ESL, but skills like sewing, and provide support groups. These assist immigrants accommodate to life in America and provide some support for their families. Gathered together, the classes occasionally hear the gospel as part of devotionals and special events.

New Christian mission emphasis on practical skills: Mission organizations for the past 50 years have changed from the “mission station” model to one more grounded in local participation. For this to work, outsiders help or teach them practical things on a temporary basis, like: developing computer systems, digging wells, and organizing schools.

Medical Ministry

Healing the sick through medicine and prayer have been functions of the church since it began, developing into the early hospitals. Many hospitals in America originated from Christian outreaches of compassion.

Overseas missions often got their start by bringing medicine to areas where there was none – or only a witch doctor or shaman. Even today mission hospitals are the best in some corners of the world.

Short term medical mission trips deliver healing to isolated areas in Jesus’ name. Often while the patient and their family are awaiting treatment, someone shares with them how God can heal their hearts as well as their bodies.

Example of mission teaching practical medical skills: Volunteer Eithne and her friend Sister Frieda shared the dream of a nursing school in a remote area of Kenya. That dream came true, and Eithne became the dean of Nzoia School of Nursing.

Eithne, while still living in America, visited this remote region of Kenya several times, to set up a nursing curriculum tailored to their needs in Africa. Within a few years they received the award for the best nursing school in the country. Praise God for fulfilling this beautiful dream in a powerful way!

Volunteering

One serving area America does lead the world in is volunteerism. Christians are encouraged to give back by serving alone and with groups.

Examples of how/where our associates volunteer: outreaches, ministry boards, church boards, mission committees, drama teams, translators, medical teams, charities, community committees, driving, babysitting and teaching.

MIRACULOUS Gifts

Everyone can pray for healing, but some people seem supernaturally gifted in this. Sadly, there are also fakes. Again, those with flashy gifts need to guard against pride and showmanship.

Miraculous gifts are abilities not natural in people. They include:

- Healing
- Special “word of knowledge”
- Speaking languages or “tongues” that one has not studied
- Prophecy, which includes:
 - speaking or preaching about God through his Spirit
 - at times future prophecy
- Dreams and visions are especially common with Muslims coming to Christ

Even without special gifting in miracles, most Christians can recount where God has intervened in their lives in ways that they consider miraculous.

(Note: See also study guide and video *Lesson on The Place of Miracles.*)

EVANGELISM: Sharing the Gospel, and the Gift of Evangelism

Do Muslims “Evangelize” for Islam?

Yes, they do! This is called *da'wa*, or the invitation to Islam. In America it is practiced on essentially all sizeable university campuses where they have weekly informational tables, and open events. Fastathons for Ramadan, and wear-a-hijab days are ways that they gain interest of students.

Other ways Islam reaches out are open mosques events. In almost every walk of life in the West now, we can see how Islam is spreading its message and gaining acceptability.

According to Islam, **Muslims should not live under the authority of a non-Muslim country.** Muslims in the West, if sincere, need to justify being here. It is acceptable if they are gaining knowledge, or doing something that benefits Muslim people or spreads Islam.

Most Muslims consider peaceful voluntary conversion to Islam preferable. However, both the principles and historical practices of Islam testify that violent and involuntary imposition of Islam is acceptable. It is also required to offer conversion and submission to their enemies before attacking them.

Examples of Muslim evangelists: include imams, international students, taxi/shuttle drivers, YouTube testimonials and pleasant presentations of Islam.

- Muslim students have told Dr. C that they had planned spread Islam here.
- After a few long discussions with a shuttle driver, Dr. C connected him with Arab evangelist Brother E. The two spoke about the gospel for two hours, during which time the driver admitted he had come to America as a missionary, and so far had converted several to Islam.

- Not surprisingly, Arabic speaking Muslim leaders have told Brother E that they came here to evangelize.

CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM - Sharing the Christian Gospel, with Kevin

There is a gift of evangelism, in Christians who seem especially gifted and sharing the gospel and bringing others to Christ. But there is a general sense in which **all Christians are to be involved** in sharing the gospel.

Bible teacher Kevin, in this video shares with us that being a Christian involves walking as Jesus walked, doing the things Jesus did. We call this **sharing the gospel in word and deed**. (1 John 2:6)

We share the gospel by showing love to believers and unbelievers, both friends and enemies. The other thing we need to do is share the gospel story in word – God’s way of salvation through forgiveness of our sins by Jesus’ blood.

We can share the gospel by several means, including:

- making sure that **all of our family and friends** and work or school connections know the hope we have found in Jesus
- **wide scale distribution** of tracts, DVDs, and Bibles
- purposely **making new friends** with whom we will share the gospel (which we call small scale outreach)
- using the **internet and television** (which can be personal or ultra-large scale outreach)
- meeting and talking to people in **public places**

Our associates do all of these. Above we gave an example of wide scale distribution at a mosque. For additional illustrations, the video includes photographs of ministry volunteers active in outreach, including campus and various ethnic events, and Dr. C sharing the gospel with Muslims in Hyde Park in London.

All Christians are called to spread the gospel with love and words. We encourage you to find a way that you are comfortable with and pursue it!

(Note: See also the study guide and *Lesson on Baptism and the Great Commission*)

YOUR SPIRITUAL Gifts?

Think about what we wrote above about spiritual gifts, and how you might fit into it. If you haven’t already found your spiritual gift or gifts, why not **pray now and ask the Lord** to reveal them to you?

Christian HOLINESS

The word Christian means “little Christ.” So, Jesus Christ should be seen in us more and more as we seek to be like him. What do Muslims see when they look at Christians? Christians have freedom, but we are told not to use our freedom as a stumbling block. (1 Corinthians 8:9)

(Note: we discuss more about this in the study guide and *Lesson in Liberty or Laws*)

Holy Living

The Bible says,

Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. 1 Peter 1:15

No one is or can be perfect, but Christians are to try to please God. To be a holy person is to be Godlike – as perfect as possible.

Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way. Colossians 1:10

In this lesson we emphasize the disciplines, or positive goals of living a Christian life. But there are also **things we should avoid**. Several places in the Old and New Testament there are lists of behaviors that displease God, like, sexual immorality, drunkenness, gossip, lies, theft, violence, rage, unclean language, disobedience, unkindness, selfishness, greed and refusing to work. Sometimes these negative deeds are called the *works of the flesh*.

One thing that Muslims are especially attuned to is the way Westerners dress. We do not suggest that Christians in the West dress like Muslims. But we should remember that although we have liberty, the Bible does instruct us to dress modestly and to avoid being a stumbling block. Modestly is a relative term, we realize that. For this reason we suggest that Christians dress as the most modest people of their own culture. (1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Peter 3:3,4)

(Note: We go into more detail on this in the study guide and *Lesson on Liberty or Laws?*)

In contrast to the works of the flesh, we are encouraged to abide in Jesus and let the Holy Spirit bring forth the works of the Spirit in our lives. (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-8, Colossians 3:5-8, 2 Timothy 3:2-4)

Christian DENOMINATIONS

Many Muslims and others are confused about why there are different Christian denominations.

First, Dr. C explains that it is not only Christians who have many denominations – **every large religion has branches with different beliefs**, for example Islam and Buddhism. It is human nature to want to do things in a variety of ways.

REASONS for Christian Denominations

It is not in the human character to agree on everything – just as preferences vary on everything from food to favorite colors – people vary in their understanding and practice of the Christian faith.

Doctrinal Differences: In general, those considered “Christian” agree on certain beliefs as set forth in “creeds.” Beyond these, some of the reasons for Christian denominations are on other beliefs, or *doctrinal* differences.

Although there are numerous smaller doctrinal differences between Christian denominations, some important or noticeable differences are:

- size, organization and authority structure
- beliefs regarding the communion service, or *eucharist*:
 - if it is symbolic or the actual body and blood of Jesus
 - how frequently the service is performed
 - if it is required to keep us connected to Christ
- whether a priest is needed to intercede between Christians and God, or if rather, there is a priesthood of all believers with Jesus as the high priest

- whether or not the head of their church holds the authority of Christ on earth
- prayer only to God, or to God and saints who intercede with him
- the degree of devotion given to saints
- the understanding and practices of baptism:
 - infant, without understanding
 - adult, with understanding and voluntary commitment to Christ
- formal or informal styles of worship service
- the spiritual gifts emphasized

Non-doctrinal Differences: With few exceptions, worship services in all denominations include music, prayer, scripture reading, and a message from a pastor or other trained leader. Some reasons for denominations besides doctrine are:

- language or culture based, reflecting the region in which they arose.
- emphasis on certain aspects of the Christian life, like missions, service, or social justice
- personality and education
- diversity in styles of worship and music.

Categories of Denominations: Individual churches fall into these broad categories:

- **Liturgical**
 - Traditional – having historic roots, such as: Catholic, Coptic and other Orthodox churches
 - Early Protestant – examples: Lutheran, Anglican (Episcopal/Church of England)
- **Evangelical** – Protestant traditions emphasizing personal commitment to God through Jesus Christ
 - Examples: Baptist, Evangelical Free, Christian Missionary Alliance, independents
 - Note: some liturgical churches are evangelical in teaching and outlook
- **Charismatic** – a form of Protestant, usually evangelical church, which
 - Emphasizes spiritual gifts, especially miraculous
 - Examples: Pentecostal, Assembly of God, Church of God, Foursquare, independents
- **Cultic** – churches developed around a leader who emphasized their own teachings over those of the Bible,
 - usually have a new holy book
 - usually have a different view of the deity of Christ than that of the creeds (for example, that he is not God).
 - because of these extreme differences, many do not consider them Christian
 - their thinking and lifestyles are usually closer to Christian than Buddhist, Hindu, or pagan, and usually see and present themselves as Christian.
 - examples: Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, Christian Science, Moonies

Christian ministries also tend to fall into these same four categories.

We feel that all who believe in and follow Jesus Christ as their Savior are part of the Body of Christ, the church, regardless of their denomination. Some denominations strongly state that only they have the truth, or exclusive way to heaven. We disagree.

God saves us, not our perfect theology.

No Christian or denomination has perfect understanding. Only God is perfect and has full understanding. Having come from a tradition where perfect theology seemed to be part of salvation, it took Dr. C decades to realize that.

If it were important that each detail be fully understood, the Bible would have clarified them. But many details are not clear. So, although the Bible emphasizes that we should endeavor to know God well, we are to walk humbly with him, in recognition that we do not have full understanding. (Jeremiah 9:24, 2 Timothy 2:15, Micah 6:8, Deuteronomy 29:29, Ephesians 2:8)

Under persecution denominations become of little importance. Richard Wurmbrand, a pastor arrested by Romanian communists said, “**In prison there are no denominations.**” Himself a Lutheran, he shared in fellowship and communion with all the believers there, including Catholic, Romanian Orthodox, and Protestant.

In some ways having a variety of Christian denominations could be a good thing. It allows freedom and diversity of understanding and style of worship. For example, some people are distracted by congregational shouting or speaking in tongues in church, while others are encouraged by it. It is good to have a choice so everyone can find a church where they feel comfortable.

WARNINGS:

1. Be sure that the church you attend truly does teach the Word of God, the Bible. Many no longer do.
2. Also, beware of any church that places a different holy book or the teachings of another “prophet” above the Bible – even if they do lip service to accepting the Bible. This is what Islam and the cults do. Indeed, there are experts who consider Islam a cult of Christianity because they, like Mormonism, claim to accept the Bible, but put the teachings of their prophet and his book above it.

REAL CHRISTIANS

What is a Real Christian?

In Islam, religion and culture and the political systems are closely intertwined. Although a few Muslim nations claim to be secular, there is really none that has successfully separated the three. Commonly their countries are called “Islamic Republics.” Therefore, it is natural for Muslims to assume that this is the relationship between every:

religion political system and culture.

In the West however, this close relationship is not the case. Yes, Christianity has influenced Western culture, for the better, but it lacks the kind of strong association of Islam with politics and culture. The West allows personal freedom in choice of religion and behavior. Islam provides a system of Sharia Law which creates the culture and limits personal choice.

For those coming from a Muslim culture, where everyone is considered to be Muslim, it is an easy jump to consider everyone in the West to be Christian. This leads to significant misunderstandings. For example, Christians frequently find themselves blamed for the sins promoted by Hollywood. They often need to employ apologetics to defend mistakes of some American and European civilizations of the past.

And so, we have found that new Christians from Muslim background often do not use the best discernment in deciding:

- what Christian to use as an example
- or take as a good friend

Sometimes, merely wearing a cross confirms to a Muslim that someone is a true Christian. That this is because, as the Bible tells us, people look at the outside, but the Lord looks on the heart (I Samuel 16:7).

So What does make a Real Christian?

Dr Cynthia explains to us in the video lesson what it takes to become a Christian:

- We must decide **personally**.
- We are all **sinners**. We must admit that we are not perfect.
 - No one is perfect and deep down we know it, so this shouldn't be difficult, but somehow it is.
- We must understand that God our Creator is just and **punishes** wrongdoing.
- But as a father takes responsibility for his child's errors, in his compassion our heavenly Father became human and **took that punishment** himself.
 - Believing this saves us and makes us part of God's family!
- Why not pray now, and **tell God that you believe it** - this is for you!

Then, once we believe we start on our journey of the Christian life. We should find out God's way and live it day by day. Perhaps by following the guidelines in this study guide.

Come near to God, and he will come near to you. James 4:8

We are praying that this lesson is a blessing to you, and helps you grow in the faith and grace of the Lord. Following the Christian disciplines we discuss here would go a long way toward making God's presence more real in your life.

Scripture References for this Lesson:

2 Corinthians 5:17	Matthew 4:1-11 & 10:17-39 & 28:20
Galatians 5:19-22 & 4:4	I John 2:6
Micah 5:2	Psalm 62:8 & 73:24-26, & 119:11
I Corinthians 10:31	Colossians 1:9-13 & 3:5-8,12-17
Romans 11:36 & 8:28	Philippians 1:9-11
John 17:22-24	
I Peter 1:15, 2:2, 5:7	Romans 12:1-21
James 1:5,7-9 & 4:2,3,6,8 & 5:16	1 Corinthians 12:1-31
Deuteronomy 6:6	Ephesians 2:8 & 3:14-21 & 4:4-13
Jeremiah 9:24	Ephesians 5:3-8,19 & 6:4
2 Timothy 2:15 & 3:2-4,15-17	1 Timothy 2:9
John 15:5 & 10:10	1 Peter 3:3,4
2 Corinthians 9:6-8	Mark 9:35
Psalm 105:2	Proverbs 22:6
Leviticus 27:30	Micah 6:8

Deuteronomy 29:29
I Samuel 16:7
Luke 10:41,42

Hebrews 2:10
John 3:16

(Notes: 1. New International Version is used unless stated otherwise. Additional translations used in this lesson are: the New International Reader's Version, and the New Living Translation
2. For their safety, names have been changed.)

Islamic References

Paradise under mother's feet: Hadith *Sunan al Nisai* 3104

Prohibited prayer during menses contributing to women in hell: *Sahih al Bukhari* DuS # 304 & 5197 (and 8 other places in this source)

Study Questions:

1. This lesson is designed primarily to **explain to Muslims what it is like to live as a Christian**.
 - What is a Christian discipline?
 - Review the disciplines we discuss in the video and/or study guide.
 - What that we covered do you think is of essential importance?
 - Did we leave out anything you consider important?
2. Dr. C mentions the close **link between religion, politics, and culture** in Islamic countries.
 - Review how Islam sees this connection.
 - How does this affect the Muslim understanding of America and Christians?
 - Discuss examples of this relationship you have seen in cultures that you are familiar with:
 - Christianity's impact on America?
 - any others?
3. **Hospitality** is important in Muslim cultures.
 - What are examples of how you could be hospitable to Muslims?
 - To others?
 - How might what they appreciate be different from you?
4. **Evangelism** is extremely important to us, especially Muslim evangelism. That is why we do these videos.
 - What are several forms of evangelism that our associates are involved in?
 - How do you feel about evangelism?
 - What might you be able to do yourself to help bring the gospel to others?
5. Most dedicated Christians consider **Bible reading** to be of essential importance. How do you think it should be practiced? How often?
6. **Prayer is powerful**. It is a topic so important that many books have been written about prayer. The study guide covered what we felt were the most important aspects for you to know.
 - What types of prayer did we mention? Do you think you understood them?
 - What are the parts that should be included in prayer?
 - In your previous life did you pray? If so, how did the kinds of prayers and what they included differ from what you learned today?
 - Do you believe that prayer changes things, or us, or both?

7. Regarding **Denominations**:

- Have you heard Christians being criticized for having many denominations?
- Before this lesson, had you heard that other religions also have denominations?
- If you are a member of a denomination, do you consider yourself first a member of that denomination, or first a Christian?
- How do you feel about Christians in other denominations?
- If you are a Muslim, consider what denomination you are and how it differs from others in Islam.

8. As you saw in the video, Dr. C thinks that having a **variety of denominations and worship** styles is acceptable within the Christian faith.

- Do you agree?
- If there is time, and the group leader thinks it is beneficial, discuss your feelings on denominations and worship styles.

9. We talk about **spiritual gifts** in this study guide:

- Had you heard of this before?
- What are some practical spiritual gifts?
- What are miraculous gifts?
- What gifts that might be useful now were not around 2,000 years ago when the New Testament was written?
- If you are a Christian, you have or will have spiritual gifts. What might yours be?

10. Jesus served us. As Christians we should find a way to **serve others**, not only ourselves.

- In what ways are you currently serving others?
- Who do you know that you consider a true servant?
- Are there any other ways that you are now inspired to serve?

11. Regarding being a “real Christian”:

- Have you ever struggled with or known someone who struggled with understanding what makes a real Christian?
- In your own words, how would you define a real Christian?
- How would you explain “real Christianity” to someone who comes from a very different culture like Islam, or maybe Buddhism, which sees everything in Western culture as “Christian?”

12. Has watching this lesson, reading the study guide and answering these questions, inspired you in new ways of **how you could live**?

- How might that be?
- If so, knowing that our enemy will try to discourage you from any improvement in how you serve God, what measures will you take to be sure that you follow through on your plans?

13. **Peace and Purpose** is a view of the Christian life.

- How is that?
- How could seeing life that way help:
 - simplify life?
 - change what you allow into your life?