

Discover Islam
DVD Series Study Guide

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. / And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. / And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31)

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him). (Qur’an 3:64)

“Thus in obedience to the Holy Qur’an, we as Muslims invite Christians to come together with us on the basis of what is common to us, which is also what is most essential to our faith and practice: the Two Commandments of love.”

A Common Word Between Us and You

Endorsed by Muslim scholars, intellectuals and clerics worldwide
(Muhammad referred to Christians and Jews as “People of the Scripture.”)

www.acommonword.com

Today more than ever we are in need of the healing work urged by this 2007 statement. Misunderstanding and misinformation are a primary cause of the conflict and tension we see today today. The *Discover Islam* DVD series is intended to shed light on the true nature of Islam as it is practiced by a 1.5 billion Muslims across the globe.

Most viewers are surprised by the striking similarities among our religions, especially the deep reverence Muslims have for Jesus. Discovering our common ground opens rich opportunities for new beginnings in respect and relationship. In these sessions we seek to learn and understand, not to convert. Our intention is to create a common ground where wise and compassionate decisions guided by our loving God prevail.

This DVD series was created by Muslims to expand understanding of their religion. Naturally, some of the ideas presented differ from Christian teaching. One goal of this study guide is to help clarify the similarities and differences, and an occasional historical point.

Scholars from several Christian denominations speak throughout the series. We recommend John Esposito’s book *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* for those interested in further study and as a handy resource to help with discussion.

Suggestions for Group Leaders

* If only one segment will be shown, we recommend #1 *Islam: Faith and History* or #6: *Christians and Islam*. (There is a fair amount of repetition among segments 1, 2 and 6.)

We suggest an ideal 4-session sequence would be:

- 1) *Islam's Faith and History* or *Christians and Islam*
- 2) *Women in Islam*
- 3) *Islam: A Faith Hijacked*
- 4) A discussion of our handout, *Safe Harbor: Strategies for Standing Up to Bias and Harassment*, available for download on our website, www.ctfpmn.org

* Make copies of the pertinent study guides and distribute to participants. Invite them to jot down questions as they watch the videos. Much of the information is likely to be new and perhaps confusing. The true story of Islam is so different from the popular impression that people may have trouble believing the information presented at first. Review the main points of the videos to help ensure participants understand. John Esposito's book *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* is laid out in question-and-answer format and is a great resource to have on hand to help with group questions and discussion.

* A challenge both for the makers of the series and for members of the audience is to acknowledge the dark periods of our own past and forgive injuries committed by one another. Leaders can help by creating balance, inviting

participants to move beyond a simple black-and-white approach to interfaith questions. This may take time and trust-building to accomplish.

* We encourage group leaders to set guidelines for discussion at the beginning of the series and review them at each following session. Remind participants the goal is to understand Islam and our Muslim neighbors rather than to debate which religion is superior.

- “What you share within the context of the conversation is confidential, honored and respected.
- Use “I” statements. No one speaks for another or an entire group of people.
- Focus on your own experiences.
- Be honest and willing to share.
- Listen with curiosity and the willingness to learn and change. Resist the desire to interrupt.
- Be brief and share the time equitably.
- Be open to the kernel of wisdom in each person's story.”

Taken from *Conversation Guidelines, YWCA It's Time to Talk Forums on Race*

Feel free to contact us at ctfpmn@gmail.com with any questions.

#1: Islam: Faith and History

Before showing the video, review the Bible story of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-21:20) with the group. These chapters tell a complicated story with many twists and turns.

To summarize:

Abraham and Sara were childless. Sara offered her servant Hagar to Abraham, and Hagar bore a son Ishmael. After Ishmael was born, Hagar felt superior to Sara, who then drove her and her son away; to Abraham's distress. Later, as God promised, Sara bore a son Isaac. God promises to bless both of Abraham's sons. Jews and Christians trace our spiritual ancestry back to Isaac; Muslims trace theirs to Ishmael.

Key Points in the DVD

- **SaLaam** (Arabic) and **Shalom** (Hebrew) share a common origin; both mean peace. **ISLAM** and **MUSLIM** have the same root word. Islam means to surrender to God, and also signifies the peace that comes with that surrender. A Muslim is one who surrenders to God.
- Islam is a way of life, as is Christianity. Christianity does not mean simply to believe certain things, but also to live them out in our everyday lives and to share them with others. Muslims share these goals.
- The traditional gestures and postures during prayer each have symbolic meaning. For example, the standing position at the outset is a time for gathering one's attention and focus; prostration indicates submission to God. Muslims believe that each person has at least two guardian angels; the turning of the head from side to side is an acknowledgment of the angels at one's sides.
- The core teachings of Islam, Christianity and Judaism are essentially the same:
 - The First Commandment: "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me." Ex. 20:1-3 (Judaism)
 - Jesus' greatest commandment: "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart and soul and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Mark 12:30-31)
- Muslims are scattered all over the world; contrary to popular belief, only 20% of Muslims are Arab.
- Estimates of the number of Muslims in the US varies widely. A 2015 study by the Pew Research Center put it at 3.3 million, about 1% of the American population.
- monotheistic = believing in one God. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are considered the great monotheistic world religions, although there are other monotheistic religions with fewer members. They are also sometimes referred to as the "Abrahamic" faiths, because they all trace their origins to Abraham.
- The divinity of Jesus and the nature of the Trinity are the big stumbling blocks between Christians and Muslims. The Christian formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity was influenced by Greek philosophy and understanding.
- While Muslims have great reverence for Jesus, they do not describe him as begotten by God, and avoid using the term "Father" in referring to God or "children of God" when referring to humans. Muslims say, "May the peace and

blessings of God be upon him/her/them” when referring to prophets and messengers of God, including Jesus and Mary.

- *Allah* is the Arabic translation of the word *God*, just as *Diós* is the word *God* translated into Spanish. Bibles in Arabic refer to God as Allah and call Jesus the son of Allah.
- Chapter 19 in the Qur’an is named for Mary the mother of Jesus (Miriam in Arabic.) If you have a Qur’an available, look up the chapter. Jesus (Isa in Arabic) is mentioned several times in the Qur’an.
- John 16:7-15 In this passage, Jesus promises one who will come after Him. Christianity teaches this refers to the Holy Spirit; Islam understands this to refer to Muhammad.
- Muhammad’s Night of Power bears similarity to Moses’ experience with the burning bush, and encounters of prophets over the centuries.
- Medina under Muhammad’s leadership was unique in its time because it did not depend on tribal or religious membership for belonging. Anyone who pledged loyalty to the community was given protection. The Covenant of Medina (622 CE) gave detailed instructions for the safety of Jews. For example, Article 17 says,

A Jew, who obeys us shall enjoy the same right of lifeprotection (as the believers do), so long as they are not wronged by him and he does not help (others) against them.

The Charter of Privileges (626 CE) says of Christians,

No compulsion is to be upon them...No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything

from it...Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God’s covenant and disobey His Prophet (Muhammad.)

The Muslims are to fight for them.

If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray:

- From the time of Muhammad there has been ebb and flow between Christian and Islamic empires. The Christian Byzantine Empire of Muhammad’s time was beginning to crumble. Islam spread rapidly, partly because the Byzantine Empire was already vulnerable and partly because Islam’s rule was less harsh than that of other empires of the time. Christians, Jews and Muslims lived relatively peacefully together for centuries under Islamic rule. Valuable goods and information were traded from both sides.
- Christians and Muslims each have dark periods in our history when leaders and lay people strayed from the path of God. It is always difficult to acknowledge our failures. But to reach true understanding we must be willing to acknowledge and forgive our own errors and those of other religions.
- The Crusades are a complicated period with tragic decisions made on both sides.
- Colonization of Muslim countries by European Christian countries has had a profound and often negative effect, but it is by no means the only cause of poverty and unrest in the region.

Suggested discussion questions:

1. Review the key points in the DVD to help participants clarify what was said.
2. What most surprised you? Where did your previous ideas about Islam come from?
3. Some people say that Islam is actually closer to Christianity than Judaism is. Would you agree or disagree?
4. The Covenant of Medina and the Charter of Privileges were surprising in their explicit protection of non-Muslims. They also have clearly been violated over the centuries. Can you think of examples of Christian teachings that have been violated - sometimes in the name of Christianity? (ex: tolerance of slavery, conquest of North and South America) If someone critical of Christianity points out some of these failings, how do you respond?
5. Is there something you would like to learn more about?
(A list of recommended resources is available on our website at www.ctfpmn.org)

#2: Islam: An American Faith

This DVD explains that Muslims have been in the United States for many years and share American values and beliefs.

Key Points in the DVD

- Estimates of the number of Muslims in the US vary widely; reliable numbers are hard to find. A 2015 study by the Pew Research Center puts the number closer to 3.3 million.
- Many people expect all Muslims to be Arab, but only 20% of Muslims are of Arab descent. Muslims come from a wide range of ethnicities.
- Some people question whether Muslims are “truly American” because of the tragic events of 9.11; American Muslims were as horrified and saddened by this event as non-Muslims.
- Many people ask why Muslims don’t speak out more against terrorism. Muslims do in fact speak out repeatedly but their efforts are largely ignored by the media. See www.acommonword.com or google “muslim terrorism condemn list” to find a substantial list of statements.
- John Esposito, a highly-regarded scholar on Islam from Georgetown University, notes that we need to develop everyday interactions and friendships with Muslims in order to break down walls of misunderstanding and fear. For recommendations on how to reach out and begin relationships, see our website.
- Muslims honor the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, and consider Jesus to be a great prophet. Their difficulty, shared

by Jews, is in the Christian belief that Jesus is God. Islam is careful to reject language such as “begotten” or “Son of God” which Christians use to refer to Jesus.

- Some question whether Muslims can accept the American ideal of separation of church and state. This is often a point of tension among Christians as well, last seen most vividly in the debate about marriage. In general, today’s legal standard is that people of faith can be politically active and vote in support of their beliefs, but that anything approaching a state religion is unconstitutional. This understanding is compatible with Islam. Muslims, like Christians, vary in their views on this complicated issue.
- It is critical to distinguish between culture and religion. For example, the Qur’an is prophetic in its teaching about the rights of women, but the majority of women have experienced oppression in both Christian and Muslim lands. Much of the criticism of Muslim customs is actually directed at traditions that have nothing to do with Islam.
- For many years historians have debated whether Viking explorers or Muslim explorers visited the Americas before the time of Christopher Columbus.
- Many Africans brought to America against their will came from regions with a substantial Muslim population. As part of the African-American struggle for civil rights, many people began to search for the heritage which had been taken from them.
- It is important to note that the Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammed was NOT mainstream Islam. It was highly racist in its teaching and incomplete in its understanding and

practice of Islam. Malcolm X had a dramatic conversion experience during his pilgrimage to Mecca, and returned to America determined to practice true Islam and to work with people of all races toward equality. His break with the Nation of Islam cost him his life. The movie *Malcolm X* starring Denzel Washington is a powerful portrayal of a good man's struggle to find God.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the key points of the segment to make sure everyone understands what was said.
2. The separation of church and state is generally understood as saying that Christians, for example, should vote according to their consciences, which are informed by their faith. But churches should not endorse particular candidates, parties or specific laws. What do you think would be the ideal relationship between church and state in the U.S. How would this play out for Christians? Muslims?
3. If you know of any, tell one story of one of your immigrant ancestors who struggled upon first arriving in the U.S. How recently did your ancestors come to this country (or are you first generation?) What were some of their customs that were considered odd or unusual at that time? Do you know of any stereotypes of people from your own ethnic background? Are there lessons we can learn from past struggles with immigration?
4. What concerns do you have about Muslims in America? (If you are concerned about the potential for violence, we encourage you to watch and discuss DVD #5, *Islam: A Faith Hijacked*.) Do you know of, or can you find, groups that are working to help with the issues that concern you?

#3: Women in Islam

The essential message in this segment is that, while oppression of women has occurred in countries with substantial Muslim populations, these customs derive from cultural and economic factors and not from authentic Islamic teaching. We would also like to note that in the United States we often forget how recently women have attained their rights.

The message of this segment is so counter to the public understanding of Islam that some participants may have trouble believing it. At the end of section you will find quotes from the Qur'an and dates and facts about the history of women in Europe and the United States. If a Qur'an is available, participants can double-check the quotes.

Key Points in the DVD

- The segment begins with a review of the core meaning of Islam, which is peace and submission to God. See the note on page 3 for a more complete explanation.
- The claim that Islam protected women's rights centuries before Europe they were upheld in Europe is hard to believe, but it is borne out by the facts that follow.
- An explanation of Islam continues, noting that each of us answers only to God for our positive and negative behavior.
- Especially when speaking of war and of the role of women it is essential to distinguish between the Qur'an and its teachings and the behavior of Muslims across the centuries. Similarly, there have been many dark periods in the history

of organized Christianity where religious leaders did not speak from the words or the example of Jesus. These dark times in Muslim, Christian and Jewish history occur because people distort the message of the Scriptures for selfish political and economic interests. Many people, including women, have suffered terribly because of this departure from the call of God.

- Muhammad was born into a society that was wracked by violence, vendetta and constant raids among tribes. Women had no rights, and the majority were treated mercilessly from birth onward. Muhammad was sickened by what he saw.
- Women played an important role in Muhammad's life, much as Jesus counted women among his valued followers. His long marriage to Khadijah was happy, and he relied on her for advice when he received his first revelation from God. Contrary to the custom of the time, Khadijah was Muhammad's only wife until her death. At that time he took several other wives; at least some of the marriages were for political alliances. Solomon, David and other famous men of the Hebrew Scripture also had multiple wives.
- Medina, where Muhammad set up a Muslim city/state, was remarkable for its time or any time. Jews, Christians and Muslims were protected. Women were granted property rights, the freedom to choose their husbands, and could bear witness in court, although female testimony carried only half the weight of male testimony. Muhammad outlawed female infanticide, which was common at the time.

- Muslims have great reverence for Mary, and one chapter of the Qur'an is named for her. The story of the annunciation by the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Birth are confirmed in its pages:

The Angel said, "O Mary; God has chosen you and purified you; He has chosen you above all nations... God gives you good news of a word from Him, whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary; he will be honored in this world and the next, stationed near to God."

Qur'an 3:39-40

- Mary is considered a great model of chastity, piety, and submission to God. Muslims note that art throughout the ages has depicted Mary wearing loose, modest clothing and a head covering.
- Until recently, members of female Catholic religious orders kept their heads covered and also wore loose clothing; some Sisters continue this tradition today. Sisters' habits (distinctive clothing) were an identifier, symbolizing their dedication and devotion to the ideals of their order. Similarly, for Muslim women, a headcovering is a sign of identity and modesty, and intends to divert attention from sexual attractiveness towards the character of the person. Muslim men are also commanded to be modest in their dress and their behavior.
- Islamic teaching on women extends to several quotations calling people to reverence for the parents, including their mothers. This echoes the fourth commandment of Moses to "Honor your father and your mother."

And women shall have rights similar to the rights of men against them,

in kindness, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them.

(Qur'an 2:228)

Divorced women shall be maintained on a reasonable scale. This is a duty on the righteous.

(Qur'an 2:241)

Let the women live in the same style as you live, according to your means: and do not harm them in order to oppress them And if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense: and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable.

[...] Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth, and he whose provision is restricted, let him spend from what God has given him.

(Qur'an 65:6-7)

When you divorce women, and they fulfill the term of their waiting period, either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; do not take them back to injure them or to take undue advantage— If anyone does that, he wrongs his own soul.

Qur'an 2:231)

"And their Lord responded to them (saying): Never will I allow to be lost the work of (any) worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another..."

Qur'an 3:195

"For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much, an obligatory share."

Qur'an 4:7

History of Women in the US

1600-1700's American women in colonies not allowed to own property, enter contracts

1839 English judges allowed to use own judgment in deciding custody of children in divorce rather than husbands automatically receiving custody

1840's-1860's Married women get the right to control their property; achieved state by state.

1880's Most states disallow man's "right" to physically "discipline" his wife ("rule of thumb") (UK overturns "traditional right of a husband to inflict moderate corporal punishment on his wife in order to keep her within the bounds of duty")

1920 Women gain the vote

1970's First domestic violence shelters open; arrests for domestic assault rare until 1990's; women's movement advocates for equal job opportunity and equal pay for equal work; marital rape begins to be criminalized

1974 First sexual harassment case brought to court

2015 Average American woman's pay equals 78% of average American man's pay

2016 First female candidate for U.S. president

New Testament Quotes on Women

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." Eph 5:22-23

"For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head." 1 Cor. 11:16

"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." 1 Cor. 14:34-35

Questions for Discussion

1. Review the key points in the segment.
2. What concerns have you had about the role of women in Islam? Does the video address them? Do you have further questions?
3. What does the Qur'an say about women's rights?
4. How can you support women who wear a hijab in your community?
5. If you are old enough to remember Sisters wearing habits, what was your attitude toward them at the time? Do you see any similarity with Muslim women wearing traditional dress?

#4: African-Americans and Islam

Key Points in the DVD

- The segment opens with a Ramadan breaking-the-fast dinner. Ramadan is a sacred monthlong season of fasting when healthy adults refrain from eating or drinking anything between sunrise and sunset. Muslims break their fast at sunset with a festive *iftar* meal.
- Most people know the Jewish greeting of *shalom*, which means peace. The Arabic word for peace is similar: *salaam*. Muslims greet one another with the phrase, “Peace be with you” in Arabic.
- Muslims refer to humans as God’s creatures. While they may refer to one another as sisters and brothers, they would not customarily speak of being children of God or refer to God as Father.
- Muslims see Islam as a reform movement within the faith tradition begun by Abraham and continued by Jesus.
- Muslims consider their religion a way of life, as do Jews and Christians.
- Just as Christianity in Ethiopia would look very different from Christianity in Ireland, Muslim practices can vary depending on where they are found.
- Muhammad was a man of integrity, deeply distressed by the conditions of his time. Muslims believe the Qur’an was dictated word-for-word in Arabic to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel over a period of twenty years. For the first ten years Muhammad won very few people to his cause.
- Muhammad wondered about his sanity after his first experience of revelation, and the second person he confided in was his wife’s cousin, a Christian. This cousin believed that Muhammad’s story had the ring of truth, and told him to trust the revelation. Several years later, Muhammad’s followers sought and received protection under the Christian Abyssinian king in what is now Ethiopia.
- The Qur’an acknowledges the existence of slavery, as does Christian Scripture (St. Paul sent the enslaved Onesimus back to his master. Phil. 1) Muhammad says that freeing one’s own slave, or ransoming a slave from another, is an act that will be richly rewarded by God.
- The first follower to have the honor of calling people to prayer was an African who had been ransomed from slavery because of his faithfulness to God. The call to prayer is translated, “God is the greatest. God is the greatest. There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His messenger.”
- After the first ten years, Islam spread rapidly with Muhammad as its spiritual and political leader. Like Moses, Muhammad led his people into battle, but unlike Moses Muhammad himself experienced victory. Within 100 years the empire had grown as large as the Roman empire before it.
- Some historians have claimed that Vikings came to America long before Columbus; others assert that Muslim explorers mapped the Eastern coast of the Americas.
- Many Africans who came to America against their will were born in countries with a large population of Muslims. Some

of these people were scholars, and a few were recognized as such, freed and returned to their homeland.

- Regrettably, the building of Georgetown University was financed in part by the sale of 272 enslaved persons in the 19th century. The Georgetown archives maintains records of this transaction and other events of the time.
- In the early 1900's, African-Americans began to research and reclaim their African roots. More than other immigrants, they had been deliberately cut off from their heritage. Marcus Garvey famously began a movement intending to return some African-Americans to their homelands in Africa.
- Elijah Muhammad began a movement he named the Nation of Islam. He took Islamic symbols and connected them to black nationalism, but he did not practice authentic Islam. However, the movement initially created pride, discipline and a sense of purpose among many African-Americans. Malcolm X was converted to the Nation of Islam while in prison, and for a time was an enthusiastic representative of its teachings. However, over time he became disenchanted with growing corruption within the movement. His pilgrimage to Mecca transformed him, causing him to leave the Nation and begin his own mosque which welcomed people of all races to work together for justice and peace. He paid for his integrity with his life. For further information we recommend the movie *Malcolm X* starring Denzel Washington.
- African-Americans with European last names generally received those names from the persons who enslaved them.

X symbolizes the fact that Malcolm and others had no way of discovering their true names. To have the word *haji* included in one's name indicates that a person has completed a pilgrimage to Mecca.

- From the beginning Islam has embraced people of all races and ethnicities.
- After Elijah Muhammad's death his son W.D. Muhammad reformed the Nation of Islam and eventually broke away. His movement is both more mainstream in its expression of Islam and more inclusive of people from a variety of backgrounds.

Questions for Discussion

1. Had you heard of Malcolm X? What was your impression of him?
2. Do you know any non-immigrant African-Americans who are Muslim? If so and it's practical, ask them to share with you the story of their growing up Muslim or converting to Islam.
3. If possible, take a look at a map of Muslim-majority countries in Africa in 1800. Does it seem reasonable that a significant number of Africans who came to the US as enslaved persons were in fact Muslim? What must it have been like to not only be taken into slavery but also to have your religion outlawed?

#5: *Islam: A Faith Hijacked*

The purpose of this segment is to explore the issue of war and violence in Islam and the West. It invites us to reconsider our understanding of terms such as *jihad*, and to grapple with the dark periods in the Christian and Muslim past in order to find a healing space to move forward together in protecting our world.

At the bottom of this guide is a series of quotes from the Qur'an and the Bible. Make copies of the list and hand them to the participants, or if you're watching these DVD's alone take the quiz yourself. Label with a "Q" each quote you think comes from the Qur'an and mark with a "B" each you think comes from the Bible. The answer key follows the list.

Key Points in the DVD

- The segment opens with scenes from the tragic events of September 11, 2001
- John Esposito is a world-renowned scholar on Islam from Georgetown University. He introduces the idea that Islam has been hijacked. He notes that every religion has had extremists who perpetrate terror but act outside of the true teachings of the tradition. The KKK, for example, targeted Catholics and Jews as well as blacks in the name of Christianity. Hitler promoted a "Protestant Reich Church" and claimed to be acting on divine guidance. Mainstream Christians describe these groups as outside of Christianity,

not as Christian terrorists. Likewise, mainstream Muslims consider terrorists to be outside Islam.

- SaLaaM (Arabic) and ShaLoM (Hebrew) share a common origin; both mean peace. ISLaM and MuSLiM also have the same root. Islam means to surrender to God, and also signifies the peace that comes with that surrender. A Muslim is one who surrenders to God. The traditional Muslim greeting, similar to the Jewish greeting *shalom* or the greeting of peace at Mass, is *assalamu alaikum*, or "Peace be to you" in Arabic. Arabic is the unifying language in Islam much as Latin unified the Christian church for many centuries.
- Muhammad was familiar with church bells ringing and the ram's horn sounding to call Christians and Jews to prayer. Searching for a distinctive invitation, he decided on the sound of a human voice calling out, "God is most great.....there is none worthy of worship other than God."
- Like Christians, Muslims have a tradition guiding warfare. The traditions are very similar, calling among other things for war to be defensive, not offensive; directed at combatants and not civilians, particularly women and children.
- Many Muslims today would compare groups like ISIS or ISIL to cults such as the Branch Davidians. This group, which took passages from Revelations as their guiding principle, died terribly in a standoff in Waco, TX in 1993.
- The Kaaba is the holy place of pilgrimage for Muslims. It is believed to have been built on the spot where Abraham was

called to sacrifice Ishmael. Muslims believe Ishmael rather than Isaac was the intended sacrificial victim.

- Many people ask why Muslims don't speak out more against terrorism. Muslims do in fact speak out repeatedly but their efforts are largely ignored by the media. See www.acommonword.com or google "muslim terrorism condemn list" for an extensive list of statements.
- This series is dated 2009. Harassment and hate crimes have spiked in recent months.
- *Jihad* traditionally refers to the struggle we find when we try to live according to God's will. The term when used about a military war can carry the same meaning that the term "crusade" can mean in English, generally intending a good cause. Its use to justify terrorism is offensive to mainstream Muslims.
- The Qur'an is the Scripture Muslims believe was revealed word-for-word in Arabic to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. The Hadith is a collection of stories about Muhammad; it was written down over a period of many years.

Questions for Discussion

1. Review the points summarized above. Is anything unclear, or are you having trouble believing any of it?
2. What is your opinion of Christian just war theory? This includes, for example, that war must be:
 - Defensive
 - A last resort
 - In proportion to the offense or possible gain
 - Not inflicted on non-combatants
3. Try making a list - simultaneously - of examples of unjust wars waged by Muslims and unjust wars waged by Christians. What do they have in common?
4. How can Muslims and Christians both help to de-escalate today's fear and suspicion? Is there something you're willing to commit to today? (We have suggestions on our website at www.ctfpmn.org.)

#6: Christians and Islam

Key points in the DVD

- SaLaam (Arabic) and ShaLoM (Hebrew) share a common origin; both mean peace. ISLaM and MuSLiM have the same root word. Islam means to surrender to God, and also signifies the peace that comes with that surrender. A Muslim is one who surrenders to God.
- *Allah* is the word *God* in Arabic, just as *Dios* is the word *God* translated into Spanish. The term Allah is an ancient term, bearing similarity to the Hebrew word *Elihom*.”The Islamic and the Jewish understanding of God are the same; the Christian view differs in the belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus.
- Muslims have a very strong focus on the sovereignty of God and on surrendering our wills to God. This is echoed in the First Commandment, “I am the Lord your God; You shall have no other gods before me.”
- Islam is not a new faith. Muhammad saw himself as a reformer, calling back people who had strayed from the path of God. Islam recognizes all the major prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and considers Jesus among the greatest prophets. Islam is a way of life, as are Judaism and Christianity
- Contrary to the popular stereotype that all Muslims are Arab, Muslims come from all over the world.
- Much of the difficulty between us is the result of ignorance and misunderstanding. We share a common

mission of calling people back to God and educating them on what that means.

- The DVD summarizes Muhammad’s life and the revelation of the Qur’an, which Muslims believe was transmitted by the angel Gabriel word-for-word in Arabic. We can recognize some familiar names translated into Arabic: Jesus/Isa; Mary/Miriam; Abraham/Ibrahim; Gabriel/Jibril.
- Muslims believe in angels. They believe angels do not have free will, are God’s messengers, and are subordinate to humans.
- Adam is considered a prophet in Islam. In the Qur’an, Adam and Eve bear equal responsibility for the fall. The stories of Noah and Moses are told in detail in the Qur’an.
- The 19th chapter of the Qur’an is named for Mary. Muslims revere Jesus as a great prophet, and believe in the virgin birth, Jesus’ miracles and his coming at the end times. Muslims do not believe that Jesus is divine, or that he was crucified (they believe God would not permit something so horrible to happen to a prophet.) There was understandably much debate about Jesus’ identity in the years following his death. Muslims would be in agreement with groups who believed Jesus was sent by God but not equal with God.
- Muhammad referred to Jews and Christians as “People of the Book” and affirmed the common ground we share. This may have been influenced by the fact that the second person he told of his revelations was his wife’s cousin, who was Christian and supported the divine nature of the

revelation. In addition, when Muhammad's early followers were being persecuted they found refuge and protection with a neighboring Abyssinian king, who was Christian.

- Jesus told his followers he would send a Paraclete, or intercessor, to be with them after he was ascended into heaven. Muslims believe Jesus was referring to Muhammad. "Muhama" is the Aramaic word for intercessor, and Muslims cite this as evidence supporting Muhammad's mission.

- The Kaaba is the large black building circled by Muslims when they make pilgrimage to Mecca. It is believed to have been built by Abraham and his son Ishmael, whose mother was Hagar.

- Muslims believe that Muhammad was unique not in his message, which was the same as preceding prophets, but because he was sent to proclaim God's word to all of humankind

- Most American non-Muslims tend to think of Islam as an Eastern religion like Hinduism or Buddhism. In fact, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are branches of the same tree, originating in the same part of the world, with God as our common root. The DVD closes with a call to remember our similarities while honoring our differences. We are called to work together to bring people to relationship with God and to live their lives in accordance with God's will.

Questions for Discussion

1. Review the main points of the segment for clarification. John Esposito's *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* is a great resource to have on hand for fielding questions.
2. What most surprised you? Where did your previous ideas about Islam come from?
3. Try to summarize Jesus' teaching in a short paragraph. How does his teaching match up with Islam as it is portrayed in this video?
4. Are there parts of this video that are hard for you to believe because they sound so different from what is often said? What resources or experiences might help you be more confident? (We have many resources on our website.)
5. How do you think Muslims and Christians can work together to spread God's message?

Thank you for your openness to exploring the information in these videos. Please see our website, www.stfpnmn.org, for more information about learning about Islam, reaching out to our brothers and sisters, and taking action to stand up for peace.

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