

Nine Bible Studies for Muslim Seekers
Preparing the Ground and Proclaiming the Gospel

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had the following experience: You sit with a Muslim friend or acquaintance. As the conversation turns to spiritual matters, you try your very best to share the Good News in Jesus Christ in a way that it would touch your friend's heart. But what is meant to be good news, provokes nothing but arguments. It seems that the message doesn't have any effect on your friend – like water runs down a duck's back without even touching its body. The word of God's grace in Jesus Christ – for you the most precious, comforting and joy-bringing word in this world – doesn't have any meaning for him.

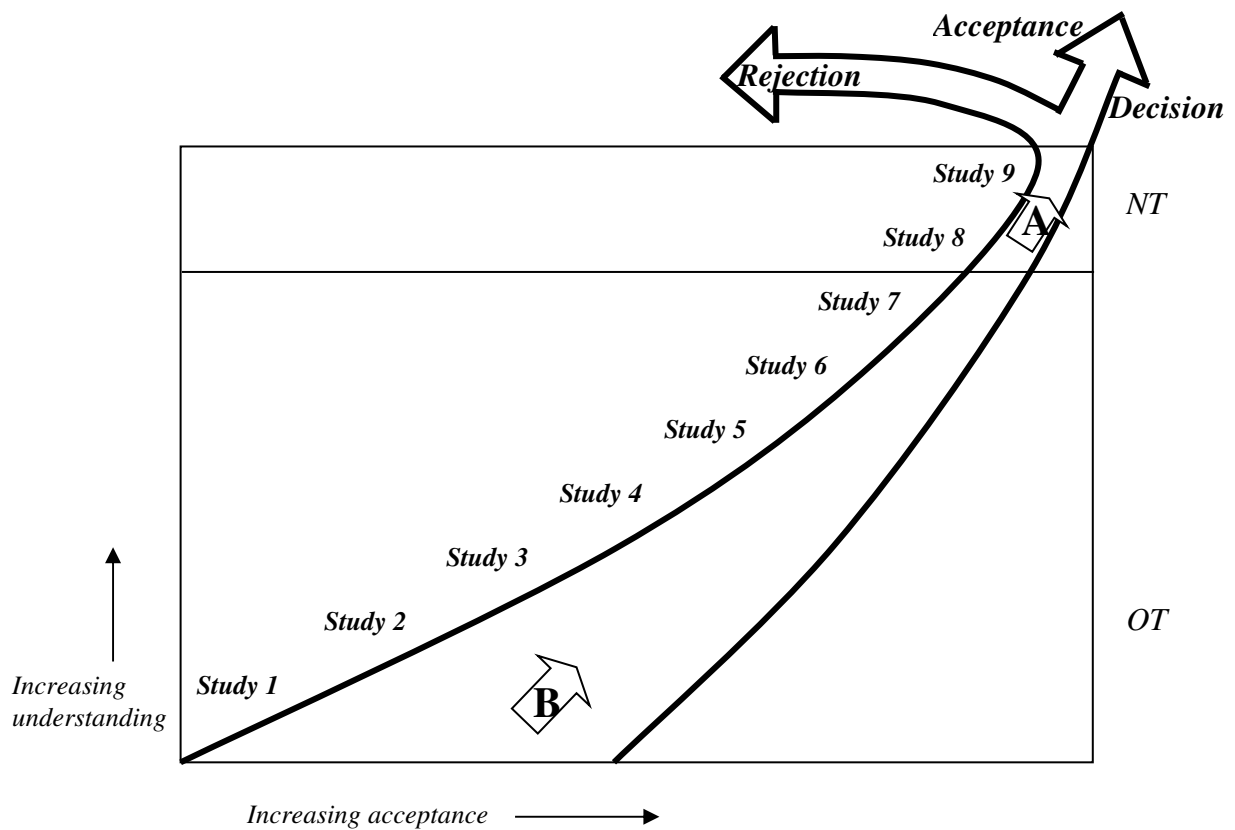
The scene has been repeated over and over again in the Muslim World, and ministers of the Gospel have interpreted this apparent breakdown in communication in different ways. More often than not, the blame is put on the hardened heart of the listener.

To be sure, the reasons are manifold for the Gospel not truly being understood as good news. We do well to first examine our own part in the communication process, before judging that our Muslim friend is unwilling to listen. The responsibility is upon us to speak in a way so that our words are understood! The following pages address one major hurdle which keeps our evangelistic message from touching Muslims' hearts. One might call it “the missing foundation.”

The words “Jesus Christ died for you on the cross, so that you might have forgiveness of sins” are tremendous good news for you. But for your Muslim friend, they are meaningless. To grasp the significance of these words, he needs to believe in the concept of atoning sacrifice as God's way for forgiveness of sin; he needs to know that God's just sentence over sinners is death; that since the fall, each human is under sin; that God created man for a perfect life in perfect harmony with his creator; etc.

All of these basic truths are thoroughly strange to the average Muslim. Therefore, a brief mention of some fundamental Scriptural principles won't do. In order for Muslims to clearly grasp Christ's claims and to come to a point where they can make a sensible decision for or against Him, much foundational teaching must happen.

The following graphic illustrates what we want to communicate: The main arrow represents the way to salvation, as it is revealed step-by-step in Scripture. Traditionally, most Christians would present the message of the Gospel beginning somewhere in the NT, in our graphic represented by [A], and soon expect a decision on the part of the hearer. In the following, we want to argue that it is much more Biblical to begin at the point represented here by [B] and to invite a decision only after some careful foundational teaching, in our graphic represented by “Study 1 – 9”:



The above described frustration has led me and those I work with to considerably change our way of presenting the Gospel to Muslims. We take much more time “preparing the ground” before proclaiming Christ and challenging our friends to follow Jesus. Our main discovery has been that we don’t need to invent anything new! We simply need to follow the pattern and outline which our Lord and Master has given to us in the Scripture we hold in our hands. There is absolutely nothing new about this – Trevor McIlwain’s fine book “Firm Foundations – Creation to Christ” is well known, and more and more ministers of the Gospel in the Arab World are applying these and similar principles in their work.¹ There is nothing “original” in the following. We have just tried to learn from other’s insights, and then come up with a specific study outline which applies the principles learned to the specific situations and needs of our Muslim friends.

Now, we often ask Muslims who show interest in Christ to go with us through the following series of Bible studies. You might say, “This requires too much patience from our friends.” But doesn’t Christ deserve some hours of careful listening and thinking? The experiences we have had until now have been very encouraging. A number of Muslims have told us “finally, I understand what the Gospel is all about.” Also, we rarely ever get into the typical Muslim –

¹ Here is a list of references, to name but a few:

- Trevor McIlwain, *Firm Foundations – Creation to Christ*, published by New Tribes Mission. Especially helpful is the introduction – whereas the 50 specific Biblical lessons don’t seem to always follow the principles laid down in the introduction.
- J.O. Terry, *God and Woman – A Chronological Bible Storying Model For Storying the Good News To a Primarily Oral Culture Muslim Women’s Worldview*, Singapore 1998. This gives an outline of 90 short Bible story lessons.
- In Tunisia, both Vera Lowe and Jim Ishler have developed chronological Bible study material in Arabic, focusing especially on Genesis
- In Jordan, Abdallah Hawatmeh is working with a five-study outline called the “Discovery Course”.
- Mazhar Mallouhi is working at present on a translation / adaptation of the “Firm Foundations” material for Arab Muslims.
- Paul Bramsen, *The Way of Righteousness – Good News for Muslims*, Spring Lake / USA 1998. This material is based on 100 radio lessons developed for black African Muslims.

Christian arguments. For example, a Muslim, in line with popular Islamic teaching, would emphatically deny that Jesus died on the cross. Yet after taking the time to take a close look at the Old Testament teaching on sacrifice, and the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, the question whether or not Christ died on the cross is not even an issue any more.

In the following, we will take a closer look at the principles which guide our thinking as we study Scripture with our Muslim friends. Then we will consider some related practical issues. Finally, we will offer a Bible study series of nine parts which we believe serves well in leading your Muslim friend to a point where he can decide for or against Christ, based on a clear understanding of God's plan of salvation.

1. SCRIPTURE AS A WHOLE: THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

The first main decision we take is to teach through the whole Bible chronologically, beginning with Genesis, followed by some main Old Testament characters and leading on to the stories of the New Testament. This is the way God Himself chose to reveal His Word to us. He is the Master Teacher, He knows man best and knows how to reach man's heart best. Here are some thoughts out of the introduction of Trevor McIlwain's book:

God is the true builder of all things, and He builds everything according to His eternal plans. His work always has adequate foundations, and He builds carefully, patiently and precisely. Nothing is left to chance with God. In the same way, the Bible, as it is revealed to us by God, is not a compilation of disparate pieces of literature to be used as sources for topical studies and lists of doctrines. Rather, it is one book, built carefully according to His plan, with a definite beginning and a definite ending, and forms one complete, cohesive, intelligible story.

The Old Testament is the logical introduction, foundation and authority for the story of Christ. It is the only sound basis for understanding the New Testament: God's fundamental form of teaching is progressive. He gradually unfolded the Bible message over the ages... God's teaching in history as well as to individuals is a slow, careful building process. If we skip the Old Testament foundations in teaching the Bible, those disciplined run danger of building their faith on a very weak understanding of the Gospel itself.

The Old Testament lays an indispensable foundation in its teaching who God is. For example, from the first pages of Genesis on we get to know Him as Sovereign and Holy God. Knowing God as the Holy and Righteous One is the first prerequisite to understanding man's desperate need for the grace of God in Christ. Only an understanding of who God is will produce true self-knowledge, genuine repentance, and saving faith. Equally, for believers to be prepared to walk humbly with the Lord in a life transformed, they need deeper insights in God's nature and character – not many new “Christian” rules to follow. They need to come to know who God is before they are taught the things they must or must not do, lest they slip into legalism and counterfeit experience.

The Law is yet another means which God uses to prepare the sinner for the Gospel. Whoever judges himself according to the perfection and holiness of God as revealed in the Law, will abandon any trust in his own righteousness. Therefore, in evangelism and discipleship we should not turn too quickly to the Gospel, but take time to correctly use the Law. There is a place and a need for preparing and “breaking up the unplowed ground” as to not sow among thorns (Jer. 4:3).

Furthermore, the whole Bible in its core is God's message about His Son, the Savior. The Scriptures reveal Christ from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus said to the Jews of His time: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39). The story of Christ is present throughout the entire Old Testament in numerous types, redemptive analogies and prophecies.

So far some of McIlwain's thoughts – some are given here in quote, some in paraphrase. This is all to say that in teaching the Bible to Muslims, we will follow the basic chronological outline as God has given it to us in His Word, taking much time to carefully lay out the Old Testament foundations before proclaiming the Gospel as revealed in the New Testament.

From a completely different point of view, one could add: To start with the very beginning of Scripture is also very appropriate to the Muslim mindset. For Muslims, especially in the area of religion, the *old* and proven ways are the good and desirable ways. To proclaim the Good News of God's grace in Jesus as a *new* teaching might have been appealing to the people of Athens in the apostle Paul's time (Acts 17:19-21). It might make sense to people in the West today, where the word "new" printed on the packaging of a product is synonymous with "good". Muslims generally have a very different outlook:

In everyday life, the *sunna* (i.e. habitual practice, usage sanctioned by tradition; the proven path, the way of the Prophet and his companions) is the most influential guideline for action, because it is the trustworthy way. To offer a "new" teaching of any kind and about Jesus in particular would from the outset be suspicious to Muslims. Actually, the original meaning of the Arabic word for heresy, **بدعة**, is new teaching, innovation, novelty, etc.²

Incidentally, nowhere in the Gospel is the Good News introduced as a new teaching (except for Mark 1:27). Interestingly, Matthew and Luke both record in the beginning of their Gospels lengthy genealogies, linking Jesus' birth as far back as Abraham and Adam, respectively.

Therefore, we need to teach the Gospel as the teaching that started from the very beginning, as the ever old counsel of God. God's character has always been the same, His thoughts about man have always been the same, and His plan to bring forth a Savior who would reconcile man with God and break the power of Satan has existed from the very beginning. Jesus is the One all the Holy Scriptures point to.

2. HOW GOD REACHES MAN'S HEART IN SCRIPTURE

God has revealed Himself mainly through stories. About 70% of the Scriptures are stories. Jesus as a teacher powerfully used what we would call Middle Eastern patterns of teaching and learning by telling stories and parables, and by summarizing teaching in a way that can be memorized.

We find that the Middle Eastern patterns of learning and being disciplined today, by and large, are very similar to those we find in Scripture. If we stick close to what we see and learn in the Scriptures, we can rest assured that we will teach in a way appropriate for reaching Muslims in the Middle East. We have to learn how to tell stories. The following studies will focus very much on the story line of the Bible. Also, we need to learn ways of using memorization techniques (alliterations, question-answer patterns, etc.). We will give a verse for memorization with each lesson.

² Here is a *hadeeth* (from *Saheeh Muslim*) which expresses the same sentiment towards new teachings:
"شر الأمور محدثاتها وكل محدثة بدعة وكل بدعة ضلالة وكل ضلالة في النار"

We must remember one other connected issue: Since Middle Easterners are mainly oral communicators, we will reach their hearts most powerfully when teaching face-to-face, through the spoken word. Printed material has value, but we do believe that Middle Eastern people's hearts are touched primarily through relationships. This is *not* a question of education, but rather one of culture.

Therefore, these Bible studies are designed for *you*, as a help to teach and proclaim the Gospel through your spoken communication. They are not meant to be given into the hands of your Muslim friend. There is no shortcut to going through the at times painful process of establishing trusting relationships and teaching the word on such a basis, from heart to heart.

3. SCRIPTURE AND CHRISTIANITY

God's Word is one and will never be changed – yet, how it is taught and preached can take many different forms. There are numerous culturally-Christian traditions in teaching the Bible. On a basic level, there is for example the very important issue of Bible translations, and which theological vocabulary and terms to use. As Christians in the Arab World, we got used to one traditional Bible translation. But does it really communicate the Scriptural truth to our Muslim friends?

Many Christians are oblivious to the fact that many key terms as rendered in traditional translations are either plainly not understood by the average Muslim friend or, worse, communicate to him something not intended by Scripture. As we reach out to them, we are to focus not on what we understand and feel comfortable with, but what serves them first.³

Yet another question is which method and style of teaching to choose. On all of these areas, we believe that ethnocentrism has to die. There is no partiality in our Lord: He speaks to each people and culture, among them to Arab Muslims, in their own language. The Bible itself is transcultural, it is not “ours” or “theirs”. Therefore, in teaching Scripture and proclaiming the Good News, we seek to minister to our Muslim friends in a way that serves them first, not us. We want to think from their perspective, about their needs, and identify with them.

This principle does have a lot of consequences for the way we teach Scripture. In general, translations of available (Western-style) material into Arabic often has only limited value for our work. This is why we put together something new.

To avoid misunderstandings: The goal is not to change Scripture around to make it more palatable for Muslims. We trust that the Bible as it is does speak into the individual lives of our friends and does communicate meaningfully. But we do need to “un-learn” Western teaching patterns to some degree, and learn to speak the language of our Muslim friends in every way.

Also, we want to start laying healthy and sound foundations from the very beginning. We desire that Muslim-background believers be firmly established in the person of Jesus Christ, as God's Word can take root in their lives, their culture, and their community. There is a big difference between being firmly established in a culturally-Christian community and its traditions, and being firmly established in the Lord Jesus Christ. The latter is our goal.

³ It is only very recently that we have had a translation of the whole Bible which seeks to speak the Arabic language of Muslims: “الكتاب الشريف، ترجمة معنوية لكتاب الله”، Lebanon 2000, through International Center, B.P. 14, 13080 Luynes, France

4. SOME PRACTICAL ISSUES:

- Teach with authority, but not as an authoritarian. The “you all shut up, I talk alone” style is probably not very helpful. You need to allow and even ask for feedback and seek interaction through questions. At least, you can use these little open-ended sentences that prompt listeners to say a key word (very common in Egypt). It keeps people involved. Even Muslim teachers who teach out of a very strong authority structure do this. Teach the memorization verses as you go.
- It is important that you hold the whole Bible as one book in your hands. You need to teach that all Scripture is one and to teach the same about God and His plan for man – so communicate it through holding the one book (Old Testament *and* New Testament) in your hands. Don’t read Scripture from pieces of paper.
- The references given in between are for you and your understanding. The principle should be: Teach what you can clearly show from the one passage which is the basis for the given study. If you would need to bring in other Scripture references to make your point – than forget that point for the time being. You should not flip around in the Bible during the study, which can be very confusing. Stick to the text. If you really want to use verses outside the given passage, learn them by heart beforehand so that you can quote easily, without turning to them in Scripture. But let it always be clear that you quote from God’s Word. For example, you can introduce the quote by saying “God gave the prophet Isaiah the following words”, or: “Our master Jesus said in the honorable *Ingeel*”. Keep things simple, uncomplicated.
- We believe you should resist the temptation to start talking early on about Christ by name. Don’t mention his name until Scripture in its divine wisdom introduces him (in our outline that is in study 7, mentioning Daniel’s prophecy of the coming Messiah).
- This paper is meant for your preparation before teaching, and is not to be used while actually teaching. Please don’t hold it in your hand as you speak. If you hold only the Bible in your hand, you give Scripture all authority. If you hold a piece of paper in your hand, then the paper is the authority. Take the time to prepare well, so that you know what you want to say.
- Before you start, you have to explain what you are about to do. The very concept of Scripture giving God’s history with man in a chronological order is thoroughly foreign to the Qur’an and Muslims, therefore you need to clarify.
- Instead of defending the authority of the Bible – if that issue comes up – rather calmly proclaim its authority and assume it as you talk.
- Between the studies, whenever you jump over major parts of Scripture: Give a very short summary of what is left out, so that your friend still can get the main “story-line” of the Bible.
- If you are teaching illiterate or very simple people, you may want to tell the stories which are the basis of these studies orally, instead of reading big chunks of at times difficult Arabic text. That doesn’t really work with studies six and seven though, since they are based on a poetic and a prophetic text, not on a story. But those texts are short.

NINE BIBLE STUDIES FOR MUSLIM SEEKERS

These are nine Bible studies which should enable you to communicate the Good News in Jesus in a progressive, understandable, yet thorough way.

- On the following pages, you will find for each study the content that should be taught, the truth we want to instill and the issues you need to watch out for, background information, ideas, material, etc. There is always an outline given as to how you can break down each study into readable “chunks” of about 5-6 verses, after which you can interrupt reading for explanations and teaching. There are no written-out detailed lessons given here.
- Each study deals with one (not more) Bible passage, almost always stories, following Biblical chronology. Teach and disciple in a way that you leave a reproducible model. Don’t jump around in the Bible, rather stick to one passage. Otherwise nobody will be able to follow or do later what you originally did. Keep it short and simple.
- The studies take especially those Biblical stories and characters which are mentioned in the Qur’an and are therefore known among Muslims. For your own background information, we have included in each study a summary of the Qur’anic account of the story, and we sometimes give ideas on how to avoid useless discussions.
- Each study ends with a summary verse to be memorized.
- These studies are meant to provide a source of ideas and material to you, and are *not* to be used together with your Muslim friend. Add personal notes, as your experience grows! This is not a program you need to push through, but a source of material and ideas, a set of guidelines you may or may not want to follow. Always keep in touch with the specific needs of the person(s) you are teaching!

You might say, “Nine studies is clearly too much, it is very difficult to have anyone interested enough to commit himself to nine Bible studies.” This is a serious issue. We tried to keep the number of studies low, but this kind of progressive, truth-upon-truth teaching takes time. And the vast majority of our Muslim friends will not grasp the all-important basic truths about God and His plan for man unless we take time to carefully build. We might feel a strong urge to “proclaim the Gospel” – but does it help our friends if they clearly cannot yet see its significance?

If you really sense you have to move faster than this outline, you could for example combine some studies to the following outline of six lessons:

1. Studies 1 and 2 (creation and fall)
2. Study 3 (the concept of sacrifice)
3. Studies 4 and 5 (the law)
4. Studies 6 and 7 (repentance; prophecies about Jesus)
5. Study 8 (who is Jesus)
6. Study 9 (what did Jesus do for us; invitation)

In this case though, you have to leave out much of the material and you can’t read all the Scripture passages.

By the way, we found it helpful to have this outline in the back of our minds even for one-time encounters: One can summarize the main truths of these studies in an hour or so, and if you have only one chance, this can be an excellent way to explain who Jesus Christ is and why God sent him into the world.

STUDY 1

ADAM AND EVE

GOD IS GOOD AND HOLY; MAN WAS CREATED PERFECT

Scripture:

GENESIS 1:1 - 2:17

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

There needs to be some basic introduction to the Bible as a holy book. As you use the whole Bible, show the different parts of it without getting into details. First, you need to explain the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament”, as they are completely unknown. The New Testament is easily explained as being the *Ingeel*. Concerning the Old Testament: You can divide it into the Torah (writings of Moses), Zabur (Psalms), and Prophets. This follows the Biblical example (cf. Luke 24:44), the structure of the Hebrew Old Testament, and is also closest to the understanding of your Muslim friends: Moses’ Torah and David’s Psalms are well known. Only “Prophets” as a holy book would be a new concept for them. Maybe it helps if you explain that the term Torah can also have a wider meaning and then include the whole of what we call the Old Testament, with both Psalms & Prophets (cf. 1.Cor. 14:21, where a Isaiah quote is referred to as “in the Law”). For now, people just need to understand that you start with Torah.

Starting out with creation, in many ways we stand on common ground with our Muslim friends – and that is a good thing. Yet, in this study (as in every other one) we will introduce at least one brand new, maybe challenging thought.

The main truth we want to communicate in Genesis 1-2 is that God, being thoroughly good, loving and caring towards man, created man in an amazing and beautiful way. He created man for a perfect relationship with Him, for a perfect life, with a perfect body, in perfect surroundings, no sin, no pain, no disease (key word: Complete). The main new concept to introduce here is: Man is created in the image of God.

This is important, because only he who understands the greatness of man’s creation, will understand the depth of his fall. In Islamic teaching, it is often stressed that man is weak. The Qur’an says “Allah created men weak” (4:28), a concept you will never find in the Bible. In this way, the weakness that came as a result of the Fall is made to be the Creators intention from the beginning. The beauty, greatness, the closeness to God for which man was created, is not understood.

We will see the consequences of this Islamic teaching later in study 4, as we focus on God’s holy commandments.

Concerning terminology: “Khaliqa” (creation) is a Christian-Arabic term which doesn’t occur in the Biblical text and normally doesn’t communicate well with Muslims. It is best avoided. Try to speak in sentences which use the *verb* Khalaqa (create) rather than the noun Khaliqa (creation). Also, here are some other terms you might want to use instead or in addition, bearing in mind that they don’t necessarily mean the same.

OUTLINE:

1:1-2

Before creation, the earth was in absolute disorder and chaos. God created order - God is not a God of disorder (cf. 1.Corinthians 14:33). Before creation, the earth was in darkness, there was no light. God created light - He is light (cf. 1.John 1:5).

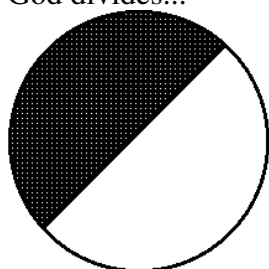
1:3-5

God creates through His *Word*. All His power is in His Word. It is a good idea to point this out very clearly at this point, preferably using the term *Kalimat-Allah* (word of God). This can help you later greatly when you talk about the person of Jesus Christ: He is called Word of God both in the Qur'an (e.g. 4:171) and in John 1. Not that you should draw the parallel at this point, but some preparation for later is always helpful.

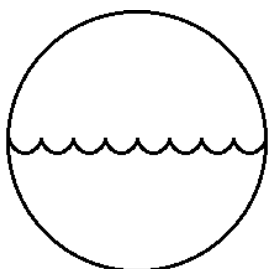
If you want, you can develop the following simple drawings on a piece of paper as you go through the days of creation. This can help to give some structure to the different days of creation. The point would be to show how God lovingly prepared a home (first three days - dividing, making room), then filling it with light and life (day four to six):

1:6-25

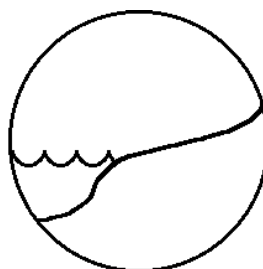
God divides...



Day 1:
...day and night

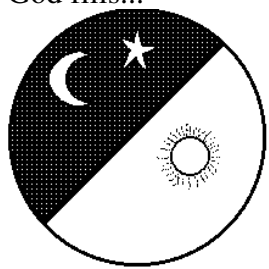


Day 2:
...water and heaven



Day 3:
...land and sea

God fills...



Day 4:
...day and night with lights



Day 5:
...water and air with life



Day 6:
...land and sea with life

Creation shows God's character: He is caring, perfect, loves beauty and order. After each day stress: God creates through His Word, and whatever He creates is good.

1:26-31

The creation of man. Focus on this part (you can move faster on the other verses).

Observation: The basic fact that God created man in His image is repeated four times in verses 26/27! It is obvious that God is communicating here something very important. Stress and repeat verse 27 a couple of times and have people learn it by heart as you go along.

The concept of man being created in God's image is strange to Muslims and needs to be explained well. There are a couple of Qur'anic references which seem to be similar (40:64 and 64:3), but actually they don't say more than that God gave man beauty.⁴

Before explaining the meaning of the sentence, you should stress and explain that Scripture is talking metaphorically here. Since Islamic teachers strongly reject any talk about God using created things as metaphors, people are often not used to such expressions. Certainly, you don't want to communicate that God is visible and looks like a human!

⁴ There is, though, a *hadeeth* which says "خلق الله آم على صورته، طوله ستون ذراعا" (Saheeh Bukhari, 5872)

You could point out that God uses metaphors to communicate difficult truths to us in a way and language we understand. If you want, you can point out as well that, at times, the Qur'an itself uses metaphors to describe God, e.g. when it says "Allah is the light of heaven and earth" (Sura 24:35), or "the hand of Allah is higher than their hand" (48:10), or "He created the heaven and earth in six days and then rested on his throne" (7:54).

You should watch out for metaphorical language in the studies to come, and repeatedly point out to your friends how God teaches spiritual truth through these expressions, and that they can't be understood literally. This will also help later as you have to explain why Jesus is called the "Son of God".

The main issue to teach is: God gave man a tremendous value when He created him. What does "created in God's image" mean? We are not saying that there is no difference between the Creator and his creation! What we are saying is:

- ◆ As God is the ruler over everything, man was created to rule over creation (verse 28). Man has authority and responsibility.
- ◆ There is a resemblance of God. We are created to have God's character. Quote 1.Peter 1:16: "Be holy, because I am holy"
- ◆ God created man for an intimate relationship with Himself (refer to chapter 3, God talking directly to man in the Garden). This will probably be a thoroughly new thought for your friend. Therefore, you need to carefully introduce this precious truth. According to the Qur'an and Islamic teaching, man was created only to worship and serve God.⁵
- ◆ Man *and* woman are created in God's image (there is no difference in their value).

Stress the greatness and beauty of original man.

Also, we learn about God's character and His love towards man: God's very first act after creating man is, to bless them! "God blessed them..." (28), He gave them food in abundance. Point out that this time, it doesn't only say at the end of the day that God found what He created to be "good", but "very good". Man is the crown of creation. God created man to be perfect.

Upon second thoughts: Perfect is a powerful word to express the greatness man was created for, but we are not saying that man is perfect as God is perfect. You need to make that clear.

2:1-3

Introducing the Sabbath Rest: Another blessing from God. Be prepared that some Muslims might have a hard time with these verses. They seem to imply that God got tired from work and needed to rest, which would make God look very human.

The clear intention is *not* to say that God is in need of rest, but that he *ceased* his work of creation. The meanings of the Hebrew word '*shabbath*' used here are: to cease, to desist, to rest.

2:4-14

Why does the Bible start from the beginning again? Explain: The first account of creation is like an overview. Now, Scripture zooms in on the part which we already clearly saw was the most important: The creation of man. We see again that the very first thing God does after creating man is to bless him: preparing a garden of utmost beauty for man, with trees pleasing to the eye and good for food.

2:15-17

Man is given responsibility over the garden. Responsibility is part of him being created in God's image - animals don't have responsibility.

⁵ Sura 51:56 "وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ"

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil: You could teach here, that out of love God gives man the opportunity to disobey and rebel. Adam and Eve were not forced to love and obey God, but had a free will to turn away from Him, they had moral choice. But be careful: This easily gets you into philosophical theories which are not clearly covered by Scripture. Especially, you or those listening to you could easily go on to conclude that man today has a completely free will to decide for or against God as well. And this is not true: Fallen man today is not totally free.

It seems that another focus would be much more helpful in reading these verses: The basic truth God clearly communicates here, is simply: God never intended for man to know evil. He created man to *only* know goodness. All the evil, pain, sin etc. we know today was not God's original plan for us.

Note that God's commandment was in no way harsh, narrow or restrictive. There were thousands of trees in the garden, but God forbade them only to eat from two of them. God's law often seems like a straight-jacket to man, designed to take fun out of our lives. In reality God's law has only one intention: to protect us and do us good!

As to the warning "when you eat of it, you shall surely die", this will be explained in study 2. You may just want to make people curious by pointing out that there seems to be a secret (a mystery) here – which will be addressed next time.

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

Genesis 1:27

Material:

THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT:

God created for man everything that is on earth. Then He turned to heaven and made it as seven heavens.

Then God said to the angels: "I will place a viceroy on the earth." The angels answered: "Will you place there one who will do harm and will shed blood, while we sing you hymns?" So God taught Adam all names, then asked the angels to inform Him of these names. They couldn't, but Adam could. (2:29-32; 7:10-17) – By the way: The Qur'an actually doesn't say clearly, which names are meant – animals? Angels? Places? – and there is much discussion among Muslim scholars on the issue

Therefore God told the angels to prostrate before Adam, which they did, all except Iblis. He said, "I am better than him. You created me out of fire, but him you created out of mud." (Because God made the *jinn* out of fire and man out of mud and breathed from his Spirit into him). Therefore, Iblis became a disbeliever and was degraded by God.

He was reprieved until the judgement day and said that he will lead most of the people away from God's path until that day. Whosoever follows him will be thrown into hell. (15:26 -40; 17:63; 18:48; 20:115)

STUDY 2

ADAM AND EVE

MAN IS SEPARATED FROM GOD THROUGH SIN

Scripture:

GENESIS 2:15 - 3:24

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

This study comes against the background of study 1 and in stark contrast to it. Let people feel the immense shame and depth of the Fall. Communicate a tremendous sense of loss: Loss of purity, loss of intimacy with God, loss of paradise, loss of life. From the moment of the Fall onwards until this very day, man is not anymore as he was planned originally. The consequences of sin are much more destructive and deadly than people normally believe. This is the main truth we want to communicate in this study.

The seriousness of Genesis 3 is most probably not understood by your Muslim friends. The Qur'an does record the story of the Fall in some detail, but the differences with the Biblical account are telling. At the end of this chapter under "The Qur'anic Account", you will find some interesting observations.

Stress also God's Holiness: There can be no impurity in God's presence, He demands absolute obedience, there is no bargaining with God. For Him, sin is sin. There are no "lower levels" of sin, since all sin is in its core directed against God Himself. The whole concept of the smaller and larger sins is false.

You might be under the impression that God's absolute Holiness is the one Biblical truth that Muslims agree most strongly with. That is far from reality! God's Holiness is one of the least understood truths among our friends.

OUTLINE:

2:15-17

Re-read these few verses from the previous study and use them to restate the basic issues from last time: God is good and has prepared a beautiful place for man. Man is made perfect.

This time, focus a while on the last sentence: You need to teach here that sin always leads to death. "You will surely die" is a strong sentence! At this point, you introduce a concept which is probably thoroughly new to your Muslim friends, and actually contradicts some widespread teaching: In Islam, there are many easy ways to get God's forgiveness, since God is "most forgiving, most merciful". Also, you need to carefully explain what death means here. Isn't it true that everyone will live eternally – some in heaven, some in hell? So what is death here?

- ◆ Death here means death to the life that man was originally meant for (We "were all dead in our transgressions and sins", Eph 2:1). Death is separation from God, separation of our spirit from God. This death occurs immediately as we sin.
- ◆ And death means also physical death here: Man was created to live eternally. Therefore, physical death is a consequence of sin as well, but it happens slowly.

At this point, you can have people learn our memory verse as a summary: Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death".

2:18-25

This part is not directly connected with the thought line of our studies and, therefore, can be skipped. But if you have time enough, you might want to bring it up:

Man alone is not complete, woman and man together are complete. Explain the meaning of the word “helper”: Woman is not created to be a household help, but to fill the needs of man on the deepest level. The Arabic language is actually much more helpful than the English at this point: The word used for helper is *Muain* معين, which is an epithet of God, one of the 99 names of God in Islam, and has a much deeper meaning than, let's say, *Musaaad* مساعد.

This goes together with the use of the Hebrew word used here: In the majority of its occurrences in the Old Testament it is used for the help that God is to us and provides for us. Very often it is used for help against an enemy in war. Nowhere is it used for help in the sense of working for someone, doing someone's practical work.

Here is another issue: It is God's will and original plan that a man leaves home to be united with his wife. Man's unity with his wife is more important than his unity with father and mother! - As you teach this, be aware that you go straight against some principles of this culture. There are sayings and proverbs that teach the exact opposite of what the Bible says here.

In God's original plan, marriage was perfect love and companionship, there was nothing impure or shameful about sex. Sex life in marriage is inherently good and part of God's loving creation. God's arrangement from the beginning was: One man and one woman are for each other, for life. Again, man was in perfect condition, with no sin.

3:1-7

Satan's main attack is, to instill mistrust in God and His motives: God doesn't want you to enjoy the blessings of Eden! As we saw in the verses up to this point, this is a thoroughly unjust assessment of God's motives, it is a lie. Satan also instills mistrust in God's Word (his strategy until today): Did God really say? Satan works with *half-truths*: “When you eat, your eyes will be opened” - that is true. They would lean to know evil.

The first result of sin: Shame. With the first sin, immediately shame arrives on the scene. Stress the shameful part of the Fall! If you are from the West, you probably anyway have the tendency to heavily focus on ‘guilt’ and overlook how frequently the Bible describes man's sin as ‘shame’.⁶ Adam became and made his offspring unclean.

3:8-15

Point out that God was present with Adam and Eve in the garden, they heard Him and directly talked to Him - what an awesome life, created to be in God's direct presence, in perfect relationship!

The second result of sin: Fear. Suddenly, Adam and Eve were afraid of the presence of God. What was in the beginning the most beautiful aspect of God's creation - that man was made to live in the presence of God – became the reason for great fear. Why? Because they knew that there was absolutely no way that they, being impure, could be in the presence of God. Stress God's Holiness.

Then God's very first action after the Fall: God calls man “where are you?” Of course, this doesn't mean that God is unaware of Adam's whereabouts. Rather, from the very beginning, God is reaching out to man, following him, desiring relationship, though knowing about sin and shame. Stress this point: It is an important theological teaching. Our Muslim friends generally would not have this concept at all, God is far more uninvolved for them.

⁶ Cf. Bruce Thomas, *The Gospel for Shame Cultures*, July 1994

Man's first reaction after being confronted with his sin: blame shifting. Both are not able to live up to their responsibility and admit sin. Adam indirectly blames God for what happened: "The woman *you* put here with me – she gave me some fruit..." This is a principle, deeply engrained in society today. If you want, you can expand a bit here and give examples. It is going so far as to "blaming God" for mistakes oneself has done: Saying 'God wants that', when a self-made disaster strikes!

Verse 15: This verse is often called the "proto-Gospel". It may be very clear to you how these words speak about Christ, but the question is whether what you want to explain would make sense to a Muslim friend of yours, whether *he* could see it in these words. It is probably better to pass the opportunity at this point and explain about the basics of the Gospel later, when it becomes much clearer in Scripture.

3:16-19

The third result of sin: Pain. Physical pain, frustrating toil and curse enter creation. Also, we clearly see here: God is holy. There is no bargaining with God, no making up for evil with good deeds. Adam and Eve have to leave paradise forever, because impure men and women can not stay in God's presence. They committed one sin, in our thinking maybe a "little" sin (though there are no big and small sins), yet their special relationship and closeness to God is destroyed.

3:20-24

God makes skin coverings for man – though He has to send them away from His presence because of their rebellion, He cares for man and his needs. He is both holy and loving.

You should briefly mention here that obviously, animals had to die so that man in his shame could be covered. This is in preparation for study 3, where we introduce the concept of sacrifice. However, don't focus on sacrifice at this point – it would lead you off the main point, and these verses are not really clearly talking about sacrifice.

The fourth result of sin: Broken relationship. The direct consequence of Adam and Eve's disobedience is distance from God, a broken relationship. There is no way back into Eden for man, angels guard the entrance. The door is closed. Teach about sin: Sin always destroys relationships, both between man and God, and between man and man. Give examples, let people come up with examples. Let them feel that the beautiful brotherhood everyone is always talking about is not a reality in our lives at all. Focus on broken relationships in families – everyone should be able to come up with examples here - the state of not-talking-to-someone: No communication, a perfect picture of a broken relationship.

In closing, give an outlook on the chapters to follow, very briefly telling the following stories: Until chapter 11, the Bible paints a picture of mankind in constant decline, with the grievous consequences of sin getting ever more destructive:

The story of Cain and Abel:

(As to their Arabic names, refer to the notes on the Qur'anic account below.)

- *Briefly, tell the story. In preparation for the next study, mention that Abel was offering a blood sacrifice, and that God was pleased with it.*
- *We learn that sin originates in the heart and its attitudes (Genesis 4:6), and from there leads to evil actions.*
- *Stress that sin has the desire to control us, to rule in our lives. This means that sin is an active power. The problem is not just ignorance. It much more serious than that (Genesis 4:7).*
- *Ultimately, sin destroys life (Genesis 4:8) and makes homeless (Genesis 4:14).*

The story of Noah:

- *Briefly tell the story. Again, Scripture is very clear about the*

character of sin: It comes from the “inside out” and controls man (quote from Genesis 6:5 here).

- *This deeply grieves God (Genesis 6:6): Wrath is not His only reaction to sin*
- *Complete destruction of almost all life...*

The story of the tower of Babel:

- *Sin completely destroys community*

At this point, we have reached the lowest point. Next time we will get a first impression as to how God plans to turn things around and save man...

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

Romans 6:23

You might want to briefly explain about the term sin here: That it is not referring to a single sin, but to describe the state of sinfulness and rebellion. Also, for most Muslims the word “zamb” is stronger than “Khatiya”.

Material:

THE QUR’ANIC ACCOUNT:

And God said to Adam, “dwell you and your wife in the garden, eat freely what you want. But don’t come close to this tree, otherwise you become wrong doers.”

But Satan caused them to deflect and expelled them from their happy life. He whispered to them, he would reveal to them which was hidden from them - their shame. And he said, “your Lord forbade you from this tree only that you shouldn’t become angels or immortals. I am a sincere adviser!”

They tasted from the tree, realized their shame and began to put leaves on themselves. Then God called them and said, “didn’t I forbid you to eat from that tree?” They said, “We have wronged ourselves”.

God said, “fall down” [Imp pl] Pickthall footnote of this word, 2:36, is, “Here the command is in the plural, as addressed to Adam’s race”), you shall be enemies to one another. And on earth there shall be a habitation and provision for a time.”

Adam then received words from the Lord, repented, and was forgiven. (2:35-37; 7:19-26; 20:117-123)

Here are some interesting differences between the Biblical and the Qur’anic account of the Fall:

- ◆ The consequence of eating from the forbidden tree is much more serious in the Bible: God warns “you will surely die”, (2:17), whereas the Qur’an just says “ye become wrong doers” [Pickthall], (7:19).
- ◆ In the Bible, the serpent promises Eve that they will not die – assuming that they were created not to die. In the Qur’an, Iblis promises them immortality – assuming they were created as beings who had to die: “ye should become angels or such beings as live forever” [Pickthall], (7:20).
- ◆ In the Bible, God’s first words after the Fall show Him reaching out to man, in the Qur’an his first words are a rebuke: “Did I not forbid you that tree?”, (7:22).
- ◆ Talking about Adam and Eve being naked but not ashamed, the Bible uses the term “Khagl” for shame, whereas the Qur’an uses “Sawa’a”, which has a very different focus and meaning: “private part, pudendum; shame”.

The names of Cain and Abel are not mentioned in the Qur’an at all, but their story is (5:27-

31). Watch out, in the Bible they are called Cain & Abel, whereas in Islamic tradition (*hadeeth*), their names are Kabil and Habil.

STUDY 3

ABRAHAM

GOD WANTS TO SAVE MAN: SACRIFICE AND SUBSTITUTION

Scripture:

GENESIS 22:1-19

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

At the end of the last study, we reached a very very low point in the history of man. This study takes now the first steps in introducing God's plan of salvation:

Firstly, we simply want to communicate now the fact that God has a plan to restore what was destroyed in the Fall: God chooses a family through which He wants to bring about salvation. In God's progressive revelation, the promise is still very unclear though: "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed". – The very basic truth of God desiring to save man might be absolutely clear to you. But it carries two presuppositions which most Muslims don't share: That there is the need for salvation, and that God is not uninvolved and distant, but actively desiring and pursuing a restored relationship with man.

Secondly, we want to introduce one fundamental concept of salvation as it is revealed in Scripture: In the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac, we see for the first time a picture of how God plans to bring about this salvation – through an atoning sacrifice. At this point, we just have a typological story, no clear teaching about salvation.

You are probably aware of the fact that according to Islamic tradition, Ishmael was offered on the altar, not Isaac. You can go about this in two ways:

1. You can avoid the subject by referring to Isaac as the "son of Abraham", which might be the right thing to do in certain situations. The name is not important for our specific goal here, which is to introduce the concept of sacrifice. Obviously, this works only if you yourself tell the story in your own words – the Biblical text is very clear about Isaac's identity.
2. Or you can address the issue head on. As we try to draw out God's plan of salvation, it *is* important that God decided to chose a certain family line (Abraham – Isaac – Jacob/Israel) to become the people that would later bring forth the Savior. Ishmael was *greatly* blessed by God (Genesis 17:20), but was not the man of the promise.

The Qur'anic reference to the story of the offering of Isaac is Sura 37:102-111. If you read carefully, you will see that it actually does not explicitly say there that it was Ishmael who was offered: In 101, it is reported that God gave Abraham a son (no name mentioned at this point). After the Qur'an's report of the story of Isaac's offering (102 – 111), there is a verse mentioning Isaac being a prophet (112). In Islamic tradition, this verse is understood as introducing Isaac's birth chronologically after the offering of Abraham's other son (102-111). But it doesn't need to be interpreted that way. This view is supported by Al-Qartubi's commentary of the Qur'an. And in Ibn Katheer's famous commentary, we read concerning Sura 37:99-112: "Some from among the learned went on to say that it was Isaac who was offered as sacrifice, and this is said about a group of the forefathers, and even reported about some of the companions of the prophet [!], but it is not said in the book nor the traditions, and I don't think the source of this is anything but the religious leaders of the People of the Book."

Nevertheless, there is at least one *hadeeth qudsi* which very clearly teaches that it was Isaac who was offered as a sacrifice. In Mohammed Al-Madani's *hadeeth* collection, it says: "David asked his Lord and said: 'Make me like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob'. God revealed to him: 'I tested Abraham with fire, and he was patient, and Isaac through sacrifice, and he was patient, and I tested Jacob, and he was patient.'"⁷

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we saw mankind being destroyed in every sense of the word, by the consequences of sin. Today, we will begin to understand that God is not distant and uninvolved, but has the desire and a plan to save man from his shameful life, indeed, even from death. At this point, we will only catch a glimpse, it is still hidden – but later we will understand fully.

Briefly, tell the story of Abraham's call, his faith, his arrival in the land God promised him. Read (or quote) Genesis 12:1-3: The words of God's promise were: "...All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." These are strange words - what do they mean? How can all peoples on earth be blessed through one man and his family? That is only possible if God has an universal plan for his offspring! What is that plan?

As of yet, there was not even one son. – Briefly, tell the story of Isaac's birth after many years of waiting. Mentioning Hagar's and Ishmael's role at this point in detail, could distract and complicate matters. But probably, you have to at least introduce Ishmael's birth.

22:1-2

God knows how much Isaac means to Abraham. Refer back to all the years of waiting. Abraham must have been perplexed, for two reasons: Firstly, God's promise of many descendents was specifically for Isaac (Gn 17:19.21; Hebrews 11:18). Was God, after all, not keeping His word? Secondly, to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering did not fit together with what Abraham knew about God. It rather looked like the pagan practices of sacrificing children to their gods - practices that God hated thoroughly (Isaiah 57:5). Abraham knew that the proper sacrifice to God was not a child, but an animal.

22:3-8

Abraham leaves early the very next morning: He obeys *immediately*, though he surely didn't understand why God commanded him to sacrifice his son.

At this point, you have to take some time to introduce the concept of sacrifice. The term used here is "Muhariqa" (burnt offering), which is not really understood in Islamic terminology. As you talk about sacrifice, you could use several of the following terms interchangeably, to give a more complete picture of the concept:

- ◆ Muhariqa: Burnt sacrifice, which focuses on the aspect of the sacrifice being offered completely to God, without holding back anything. – You have to explain that there was a special kind of sacrifice to God where the whole animal was burned as an offering to God. Only God benefitted from it!
- ◆ Zabiha: Blood sacrifice, which is frequently used in Scriptures, and in the Qur'anic account of our story as well. It focuses on the fundamental aspect of the shedding of blood in sacrifice.
- ◆ Daheya: Sacrifice, used both in Scripture and Islamic terminology. Is helpful here, as the name of the Muslim feast remembering our story is "Eid el Adha" (the big feast). – Careful: In some dialects Daheya is used for an animal sacrifice, in others not.
- ◆ Qurban : Sacrifice, the root of the word being "Qaraba", to be near. This term is used both in the Biblical and in the Qur'anic account of the story of

⁷ "الإتحافات السننية في الأحاديث القدسية"، by Mohammed Al-Madani, verified by Mahmoud Amin Al-Nawawi, page 139

Cain and Abel. Here, the idea is that the offering (not necessarily sacrifice) has the purpose of getting close to God.

As you introduce the basic meaning of sacrifice, you can refer back to two parts of study 2: Firstly, we read verses 3:20-24. God Himself killed animals to cover Adam and Eve's shame after they had sinned. There was no such thing as sacrifice before they sinned!

Secondly, we heard the story of Cain and Abel. Blood sacrifice was offered to God by man from the very first days of history on. Abel must have learned about it from his father Adam. The main point you need to stress here is: Abel and his offspring had this deep knowledge that blood has to be shed to cover our impurity. As it says in another place: "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22).

Back to Abraham: He had no idea what God's plan was, and how to understand all of this, and he was ready to sacrifice his son. Hebrews explains: Abraham trusted God that He could give him back his son by raising him from the dead (Hebrews 11:19). Abraham had an unwavering trust that God is good and all powerful! You could quote the verse from Hebrews by heart and introduce it as authoritative explanation from the Injeel, from within Scriptures itself.

At the same time, Abraham tells his son: "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (so KJV and most translations, also Arabic ones; NIV mistakenly renders "God Himself will provide..."). Abraham speaks prophetically here! Humanly speaking, he could not know what was to happen soon. And beyond that, his words reveal general truth about sacrifice, as it is meant by God: People might offer all sorts of sacrifices, but ultimately, sacrifice is not provided by man, but *by God, for God Himself*. We will come back to this in the following verses, but stress already here the phrase "God will provide [for] himself...".

22:9-14

In studying these verses with your friends, it is important that you introduce and frequently use basic terminology that we will need later: offering, lamb, redemption. This same terminology is also used in the Qur'anic account: "And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice" (Sura 37:107).

Stress also the simple and basic truth that the ram died *in Isaac's place* ("...instead of his son". 22:13). It is obvious to you and me that this story points to Jesus – but resist the temptation to preach about Jesus at this stage. It will be much more powerful, if your friend discovers the connection for himself sometimes during the studies.

In verse 14, Abraham gives the mountain the name "The Lord will provide". Stress that, in a culture which attributes much importance to names, this is a powerful statement about the significance of the place. And it brings us right back to what we saw in verse 8: It is God Himself who provides the ransom. Again, there is a prophetic dimension in Abraham's words, as Mount Moriah is the same mountain on which later the city of Jerusalem was built – the city where Jesus suffered and died. In preparation for the last study, you should mention that Jerusalem and Mount Moriah are identical places (cf. 2. Chron. 3:1), without making a reference to Christ at this point.

If you are comfortable with using the Qur'an in your teaching, you could point out that the offering of the ram in Isaac's place is called a "momentous sacrifice". How can this sacrifice be called 'momentous' unless it has significance far beyond this specific story?

22:15-19

In closing, we read one more time about all of God's beautiful promises. The phrase "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" gives you an opportunity to restate what you taught in the beginning of the study: God has a universal plan with

Abraham's offspring.

In closing, give a brief outlook on the "line of promise": Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Joseph was sold by his brothers to Egypt as a slave. God, in His providence, saved through him his father and brothers from starvation. In a time of famine, the whole family moved to Egypt.

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

A verse about God providing a Savior. Maybe just Gen 22:8?

Material:

THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT:

Abraham sees in a dream that he must sacrifice his son and asks his son what he thinks. The son tells him to obey. God stops Abraham at the moment of their surrender to His will and ransoms Isaac "with a momentous sacrifice". (37:107). God calls Abraham "one of Our believing slaves". 37:83-112

OTHER MATERIAL:

There are several editions of "Nuur Ul Haq" which focus on the concept of the "Qurban". These articles can give you good ideas how to communicate about the concept of sacrifice.

STUDY 4

MOSES

NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS IN THE EYES OF GOD

Scripture:

EXODUS 20:1-17

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

The main theme here is obviously the law. We want to communicate that God's law is the law of a holy God, there is no playing around with it, it is perfect and thoroughly good – and we all fall short of it. We want to get beyond the stereotype of a good man being someone who externally doesn't steal, doesn't murder, doesn't commit adultery and who performs the prayers regularly. Instead, people need to acknowledge that there is no one who is righteous in God's eyes.

To understand this study, people need the foundation which we laid in the first two studies: an appreciation of the beauty and perfection for which man was created in the beginning, and a sense of God's holiness. Yet, even if your friend has followed the past studies well, be prepared that it will be hard for him to grasp what we want to communicate today.

The whole Islamic law, like other legal systems (e.g. the Jewish one), might at times look quite difficult to follow – but its regulations are always attainable for man. Often, Sura 4:28 is quoted, where it says, "Allah would make the burden light for you (Pickthall)." So with this study, you are introducing something thoroughly strange to the thinking patterns of your

Muslim friend – and any human being outside the Kingdom of God, for that matter.

What you are doing with this study is, to say it in New Testament terms: You preach the law, which is given by God to be a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24 KJV).

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we left off with Abraham’s offspring moving to Egypt. More than 400 years later, their descendants were badly oppressed by a Pharaoh who did not know about Joseph’s story. In a time of great trouble, God called Moses to lead his people out of Egypt into the Land He had promised Abraham.

Briefly summarize Moses’ calling, how the Israelites eventually could leave Egypt, how they were wandering in the Sinai desert, and how they arrived at mount Sinai to receive God’s commandments.

Before you read the Ten Commandments, give a vivid picture of what is described in chapter 19 – how God told the people to wash their clothes in preparation, how he warned them sternly not to come close to the mountain and not to touch it (read 19:1-3). Also, how God’s presence was accompanied by powerful natural signs – thunder, smoke, etc.

All of this is a vivid picture of God’s utmost holiness, and this is what you should stress here.

20:1-4

As we begin to read these verses, Scripture solemnly stresses: This is God’s Word. What comes is absolutely foundational to understand God’s will for our lives.

Before God requires obedience to His commandments, He states who He is for His people and how good He has been to them. God is not talking about a religious system or a set of rules, but about His relationship to His people.

It probably seems to you and your Muslim friend as if this first commandment is the one most thoroughly taught by Islam and kept by all Muslims. But if you explain it well, you will see that Muslims have as many problems in keeping this commandment as anyone else in this world:

What does it mean to have a god? What does it mean to make oneself an idol? The confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. To have a god is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts. Our god is that from which we expect all good and to which we take refuge in all distress. Therefore, idolatry is not just erecting an image and worshipping it. Rather, it is also in the heart, which stands gaping at something else than God, and seeks help and consolation from created things or people.

Believing in one God is not just being intellectually convinced about a doctrine (cf. Jam. 2:19). This is an important point, as in Islamic teaching, often ignorance is seen as the main problem of mankind. You can remind people of what we learned in study 2: From the very beginning, God was foremost interested in man’s heart (cf. Cain and Abel; Noah).

Also, we learned in study 2 that Satan tries to instill in man’s heart mistrust in God’s goodness, which hurts God deeply. Against this wicked lie, God commands: Expect every good thing and all help of me, and whenever you are in need, trust me and cling to me. Let not your heart cleave to or rest in any other.

What are things which people put their entire trust in? Some examples:

- ◆ Money – it gives people a deep sense of security. And it makes those who don’t have it feel despondent. Both feelings have spiritually the same root.

- ◆ Power, connections, honor – many people trust in it for their welfare.
- ◆ Demonic power – to employ occult practices in order to regain health, get help in love affairs, etc. This is to trust in and seek help from demonic powers and not from God.

We should use all the earthly blessings which God gives like a traveler uses a hotel temporarily out of necessity, and then leaves it again: Using them without allowing any of these things to be our God or idol.

20:5-6

This is a very serious warning, and an even more beautiful promise. Watch out for the vocabulary used in these verses: Jealousy, hate and love are all terms which talk about a love relationship. God is jealous for our hearts, because He loves us. Those who keep His commandments are those who love Him.

“Punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation”: You could explain that this is not talking about the final Judgement day, but about the destruction and pain that sin continues to cause throughout generations. For example, if a husband and wife live in constant quarrel and mutual disrespect, their children will probably be unable to build healthy marriages, repeating the sins of their parents.

20:7

Before God gives any command about what to *do* and not to do, he gives a commandment about the tongue. Now, what does it mean to misuse the name of the Lord? Firstly, it means to use God’s name to cover up or support lies and evil deeds (by swearing, cursing, etc.). This is a very widespread practice, as people who did wrong like to conceal their shame and make it look like godliness. But God’s name cannot be misused in any worse fashion than to support falsehood and deceit!

Since in everyday Arabic language, there are a great many formulas and expressions which use the name of God, there is much opportunity to sin. Therefore, give this area careful attention, and let people feel the shamefulness of using God’s name for evil.

20:8-11

The force and power of this commandment lies not so much in the resting, nor in the specific day (the Sabbath), but in the sanctifying. What does it mean to sanctify one day a week? It means that we occupy ourselves that day with God’s Word, and focus on the spiritual realm.

20:12

To honor our parents is to in our hearts esteem them very highly, as a most precious treasure. It means to obey them and to observe modesty in our words towards them. And it includes honoring them with our deeds, by serving them and providing for them when they get old and weak.

This is the first commandment with a promise. To keep it is well pleasing to God.

20:13

This is now the first commandment regarding our neighbors. It protects them as persons. To explain what it means not to murder, quote Mt. 5:21-22, introducing the verses as an explanation from within Scripture itself. Murder begins in the heart (as we saw with Cain). In the eyes of God, who is holy, the anger in our hearts and the cursing of our tongues is as much murder as the deed itself.

You might get strong reactions explaining this and the following commandment: “This is impossible to keep for a human being!”, “God wants to make it easy for us!” Remind people for what perfection man was created originally. These commandments are oriented toward a holy God, not toward sinful, fallen people.

20:14

The second commandment regarding our neighbors protects their spouses, the ones closest to them as a person, with whom they are one flesh. Again, quote from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:27-30) as an explanation of this commandment. Adultery begins in the heart. In the eyes of God, who is holy, the lust in our thoughts and eyes is as much adultery as the deed itself. Let people feel the weight of these words.

20:15

The third commandment regarding our neighbors protects their possessions. To steal is to get possession of another's property wrongfully. This includes false weights, bad merchandise, overcharging someone, taking advantage of someone unrightfully. Also, it includes those who work for someone: to harm his possessions by being lazy at work or doing a bad job is also a form of stealing@.

Many of these things one can do and still be seen as an honorable, pious citizen – yes, one can even become especially respected as a very smart businessman.

20:16

The fourth commandment regarding our neighbors protects their honor. God does not wish for the reputation, good name, and upright character of our neighbor to be taken away or diminished any more than his money or possessions.

This commandment concerns sins of the tongue. There is nothing in man which can do both greater and more extensive good or harm than the tongue. God detests all gossip, slandering a person's name or speaking behind his back. With all this kind of talk, we do grievous injury to our neighbor. Also, by listening to gossip, we ourselves take part in breaking this commandment.

20:17

Strictly speaking, this last commandment is “not needed”: If we understood the previous commandments well, there is no place for coveting. But God wants to make it abundantly clear: I am not just commanding you to follow these commandments externally. I am, and always have been, and always will be interested in the purity of your heart as well. This is the holiness which I require from you.

This last commandment is given not for criminals in the eyes of the world, but for the most pious, who wish to be praised and be called honest and upright people, since they have not offended against the former commandments – as they think.

In closing, try to let your friend reach and express the conclusion: As long as we live here, we will never attain to the purity of heart which our holy God calls us to. No man can get so far as to keep one of the Ten Commandments as it should be kept. “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Ro. 3:10 – this is the verse to be memorized in this study).

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

Romans 3:10

The term “bar” is not a good translation for Muslims. “Saleh” communicates much better.

Material:

THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT:

A covenant is made on the holy mountainside between Allah and the Israelites. Manna and quail are sent down to the people. (20:80.85-97)

Moses appointed 40 nights of solitude. Asks Allah, “Show me Thy self, that I may gaze upon Thee.” He said, “Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stand still in its place, then thou wilt see Me.” And when his Lord revealed His glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless. Moses also throws down the tablets in anger after seeing the disobedience of the people. (7:142-150)

OTHER MATERIAL:

For a thorough exposition of the 10 commandments, read the part about the 10 commandments in Martin Luther's Larger Catechism.

STUDY 5

MOSES

GOD REGULARLY REMINDS MAN OF HIS NEED FOR A SAVIOR

Scripture:

LEVITICUS 16:1-34 (if this is too much: 16:1-22 and verse 34)

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

The main points we want to make with this study are:

1. God gave the ceremonial law to the people of Israel, as a constant reminder of man's need for cleansing and redemption. As we are, we can't approach the holy God
2. The animal sacrifices offered were not meant to take away man's sin, but were a foreshadowing of the salvation God was to bring about. (Cf. Hebrews 10:1-4)

Often, the reaction of people who for the first time in their lives read in the Mosaic ceremonial law, is: So many rules and regulations concerning sacrifices and purification! How complicated - this must have been really difficult to follow! Indeed, the amount of sacrifices and purification rites required in our passage for today is staggering. Use this observation to bring home the main point: See to what extent God went to constantly remind people of their need for atonement!

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we saw that everyone falls short of God's holy law, and we were reminded as to how far man is from pleasing God. Today, we will get a deeper insight into God's plan for salvation. We will pick up the theme of sacrifice, as it was introduced in Abraham's story. But this time around, we will understand in a much deeper sense how God is to use sacrifice to save man:

16:1-10

Explain briefly what happened with the two sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-3). Their story shows us once more: God is holy, there is absolutely no playing games with Him, He demands death as payment for sin.

Also, explain briefly what the Most Holy Place is, and about the curtain (cf. Hebrews 9:1-8). Concerning the Most Holy Place: This is another expression which is not really understood.

Point out that the people of Israel could never approach the Most Holy Place behind the curtain, and even Aaron could only go once a year, with much blood sacrifice and ritual washing: God was teaching them in a very vivid way that they were banned from His presence. The way to paradise is guarded by angels. The relationship is broken. It is important for people to understand about the curtain, as it will re-occur in the part about Christ's death on the cross: The way into God's presence is open again.

Then, there are great number of regulations concerning sacrifices and purification rites. In the following paragraph, we will address this issue and explain the meaning of these sacrifices. For now, just tie in our passage with what you taught in the lessons before: The sacrifice we saw happening in the story of Abraham and his son Isaac is now part of God's

law for the people of Israel.

Introduce the term “lamb of redemption” clearly, as it carries the important concept of substitution.

There is one important point which is not mentioned in this chapter, but needs to be taught: Each animal which was slaughtered as a sacrifice had to be “without defect” (cf. Leviticus 4:3 for example). This is important in study 9, as we will glance at Jesus’ deity: If he would have been a sinful man, his sacrifice would have been no good.

16:11-19

Sin is frequently referred to as ‘uncleanness’. Work on a proper understanding of sin! What is this uncleanness? Point out how much sprinkling of blood is needed, how complicated the ceremonies are, all to prepare the High Priest to go into the Most Holy Place this one time in the year.

At this point, you should introduce the meaning of the ceremonial law: Blood sacrifices and washings are clearly connected with our sin and impurity. But the ceremonial law is not given so that man might get rid of his sin and be purified! You could ask: Can the offering of an animal take away my sin? The answer of course is: No way! Can the washing of my body make me pure in God’s eyes? No way! You could quote (by heart, without turning to the passage at this point) Hebrews 10:3-4, which summarizes what we want to say here.

Now, if the animal sacrifices themselves can’t take away sin, God must be intending something else with them. What is it? – Don’t jump at this point to Christ, but let people just feel that a perfect, much more beautiful sacrifice is still to come.

If possible, have people learn the Hebrew 10:3-4 verses by heart as you are going. In summary, the meaning of these sacrifices are: Firstly, they are there to remind man on a regular basis of his sin and impurity. And secondly: They are like a shadow of the perfect sacrifice which was still to come, which would truly cleanse those in sin (cf. Hebr 10:1).

As to the washings, you could refer to the “wudu” before the Muslim prayer: There is a daily reminder of man’s impurity. And of course the Islamic washing which is more important, since it is a cleansing of the whole body. Of course these washings can never prepare a sinful man to approach a Holy God, they can only give him understanding of his need for cleansing.

16:20-28

Just make sure that it is clear what is happening. Re-tell the story in colloquial Arabic, if appropriate. Confessing the specific sins is important. “The goat will carry on itself all their sins...”. The important point again is: It must be clear to any understanding person that a goat can’t carry a whole people’s sin. Therefore, God must be pointing to another meaning: Waiting for the One who will come and truly be able to carry the sins of the world.

There are *two* goats: One being sacrificed (blood covering sin), one being sent away (sins being carried away).

Again, there are frequent references to ‘washing’ (24.26.28).

16:29-34

This part doesn’t bring much new, but can serve as a summary.

Explain the term “atonement” (comes three times in this paragraph). Be very careful here: The word atonement is used frequently in Leviticus and our chapter, but it always talks about a sacrifice done for us and our sins - not an act of penance we ourselves do for our sins. Be careful to point that out, otherwise people might understand the opposite of what you want to communicate! The Qur’an doesn’t use the word ‘takfir’ for atonement, but ‘kifara’. In each reference, ‘kifara’ means making up for one’s own sins by giving to the poor. In the Hadith, fasting is also mentioned as a means of atonement (Sura 5:45.89.95,

Hadith Sahih Bukhari 3.158).

VERSES TO BE MEMORIZED:

Hebrews 9:22 and 10:4

STUDY 6

DAVID

A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART

Scripture:

PSALM 51

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

In the timeline of God's story of salvation, this study serves sort of as a link between Moses and the Mosaic law on the one side, and the prophets on the other side. It is the only one focusing on one of the Kings, and the only one with a poetic text as its basis.

This study doesn't introduce much new concerning God's plan of salvation. For that reason, you could leave it out if the overall amount of material seems to be too much for the one you are studying with. Nevertheless, you would miss out on several aspects: In "salvation history", you would need to make a huge jump from Moses to Isaiah; you would completely miss out on David, who is well known to Muslims as a prophet; and you lose a great chance to prepare people's hearts to receive Christ.

The following has two main goals: Firstly, to summarize and deepen what was taught before: The seriousness and character of sin - man is sinful from birth on, our nature is sinful, sin defiles us completely and destroys our relationship with God.

Secondly, in looking at David's character, to prepare for a proper response to hearing the Good News: True repentance ("repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near"), which leads to joy, celebration, and proclamation of the Good News. This is very important: For the most part, we focus in our studies on everything God is doing to restore man's relationship with him. But what does that mean for us? What do we do with this information? What is our response?

You might want to give a brief introduction to the Psalms (El-mazamir in Christian Arabic, el-zabur in Muslim Arabic).

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we learned about the true meaning of the "Day of Atonement", as it was commanded by God to the Children of Israel when they were still wandering in the desert. Briefly tell the story-line leading up to David: The people of Israel entering the promised land, chaos in the time of the judges, people asking for a king, Saul – then David.

David is called "A Man after God's Heart" (1.Sa 13:14 and Acts 13:22). Why? If we want to live a life pleasing to God, we need to know, why!

By the way: Here again, we have Scripture speaking metaphorically. God obviously doesn't have a heart in the human sense.

Today, we will read one of David's Psalms. These Psalms are the prayers and songs of

a man who wanted nothing more than a living relationship with the One and Only God.

Psalm Title

(There are Bible editions which count the psalm title already as two verses. In that case, you have to add “2” to the references given in the following.) Obviously, somebody new to Scripture will not understand what incident these words refer to. Depending on your time frame, your friend’s ability to concentrate and willingness to accept information strange and new to him, you can do several things with this introduction:

You can ignore the title altogether, or maybe briefly explain that there was a prophet who once confronted David over a sin. Or you can tell the story of David and Bathseba (2.Sam.11) in some detail. Doing this, you will strongly challenge the widely held belief that all prophets were without sin – especially, since what David did here was really wicked, even in an average Muslim’s understanding of sin. The story might be mind-blowing for your friend. But with this story in the background, one truth we want to teach about in this study will become very clear: what it means to be “a man after God’s heart.”

1-3

In these first verses, we get the picture of a man who is deeply in touch with his sin. Neither here nor in the verses to come, does David refer to anything he has to offer or wants to do to be pleasing to God. He puts his hope only in God’s grace. You could point out the different terms he uses to describe sin in its different aspects: Rebellion, impurity, guilt, etc.

4-5

Two important aspects of sin: Firstly, it is in its core always against God Himself. This is a good place to teach about true repentance: There is ‘regret’, which says: “I wish I wouldn’t have done this!” It is basically someone realizing that he hurt himself by what he did. Many people mistakenly think this is repentance. But true repentance is something else. It says: “I have sinned before God and before men!” David was a man of true repentance.

Secondly, sin is part of our nature, we are born in it. David says it very strongly: I am sinful from the time I was conceived. Therefore, sin is not just what we do. Rather, the bad things we do are a *result* of our sinful nature.

6-9

Verse 6 reminds of what you taught before in several studies: That God is not just interested in man’s outward behavior, but also – and actually foremost – in man’s heart. Scripture uses a strong word here: You *desire*... What God wants and always wanted is purity coming from inside.

Verse 7 shows another aspect of the character of a man pleasing to God: The word pictures David uses – “I shall be whiter than snow” – show that he wants nothing less than total purity. He knows that he is created for that. He is not content with looking good, or being pure most of the time, in most situations. And again, he counts on nothing but God’s grace for his purification.

As to “hyssop”, this is a reference to the Mosaic law. Hyssop was used to sprinkle people or things with water or blood, for their purification (Lev. 4:4, Num. 19:18).

10-13

Focus on verse 10 a bit – this is a very good preparation for the New Testament’s teaching of our need to be born again: David talks about ‘creating’ and ‘making new’. God needs to create a brand new heart and spirit in us. What we need is nothing short of a new creation.

Verse 11 gives us another insight into David’s heart: As he has an understanding of the life he was meant for by his creator (cf. Study 1), he deeply desires to be in God’s presence, and to have God and his Holy Spirit present in him. We are created to live in God’s presence!

Talking about verse 12, you need to carefully introduce the term “salvation”. It is a powerful

word here – it implies being in danger of one’s life! And it is necessary to later understand the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. As this Christian Arabic term is really not understood by Muslims in such a way, use several times other Arabic words for salvation in its place (‘inqaz’ or ‘nigah’), to paint a picture of the concept we are talking about here.

Verse 13: “Then...” connects this verse with the one on salvation. The joy of salvation leads into proclamation. Mission comes out of thankfulness and joy, not out of duty.

14-15

“The God who saves me” uses again the term salvation which we talked about in verse 12. Later, it talks about *singing* [terminology] of God’s righteousness: God’s salvation leads into joy, singing and music. To most Sunni Muslims, the idea of singing in praise of God is thoroughly strange. All four great legal schools of Islam decided, more or less, against even the mere ‘listening to music’. Though especially among Sufis there is quite a bit of ‘singing’, mainly in praise of Mohammed, Hussein etc., this has never been called “singing” in Islamic language. Here is an opportunity for you to encourage your Muslim friend, who might believe one day, to express his thankfulness to God in songs which are meaningful to him.

16-19

On the background of the last study, how can we understand verse 16? Why doesn’t God take pleasure in the burnt offerings He Himself commanded? This shows what we already said in study 5: The sacrifices are not God’s goal in themselves. They are a constant reminder of man’s need for salvation.

God seeks in man “a broken spirit and contrite heart”. This is talking about true repentance, which is the proper response to knowing the seriousness of one’s sin. This is why David was called by God “a man after my own heart”. Not because he was blameless. He was not. But because he had a deeply humble heart. Whenever he sinned, he quickly turned to God, confessed his sin without trying to excuse himself.

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

Psalm 51:17

Material:

THE QUR’ANIC ACCOUNT:

David is mentioned in the Qur’an a number of times. His victory over Goliath is reported (2:249-251). About him, it says in 38:17: “he was ever turning in repentance (toward Allah)” (Pickthall). The Psalms are mentioned in 3:184, 4:163, 17:55, 21:105, 35:25. In Sura 21:105, we have the only direct Biblical quote in the Qur’an: Psalm 37:29

STUDY 7

ISAIAH

THE PROMISED SAVIOR AND HIS CHARACTER

Scripture:

ISAIAH 52:13 - 53:12

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

With this study, we leave “common ground” in a way: Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David are all well known in Islamic tradition. With Isaiah and other later prophets however, we introduce new names to our Muslim friends.⁸ Be aware of this, and explain a bit about their time and their role in Biblical history.

This study is all important in preparing people for the coming of the Messiah: The clearest yet revelation of His character and person. The main issue is: The promised Messiah and His Kingdom are completely different in character from what humans would expect them to be like. Not worldly strength but weakness, not political victory but sacrifice. Here lies one of the main obstacles for Muslims (and every human being, for that matter) to understanding Christ’s life.

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we heard about David – a king, a “man after God’s heart”. Most of the following kings of Israel did not follow in his footsteps. They lived in grievous sin, many worshipped idols and lead the Children of Israel astray to follow their example.

Introduce the prophets and their role in this time: Warning the sinful people of Israel of the consequences of their sin, and time and again the prophecy of a savior coming out of David’s descendants.

This promise of a coming savior becomes more and more specific. To Abraham, God’s promise was just generally that all peoples on earth would be blessed through his descendants. In Moses’ time, we saw more specific shadows of a true salvation, a perfect sacrifice which was yet to come. Now, we learn with ever-increasing clarity details about a savior, and God’s promises get very specific.

Isaiah 7:14: He will be born from a virgin.

Jeremiah 23:5-6: He will come from David’s descendants

Micah 5:2: He will be born in Bethlehem (David’s town).

Psalms 16:10: He will die, but not stay in the grave.

Daniel 9:25,26: A “Messiah” will come, at a certain time. He will be “cut off and have nothing”.

You need to explain the meaning of the word Messiah: ‘Messiah’ comes from ‘massaha’, which means to anoint a king etc. Since it also means “to wipe”, your friend will probably

⁸ Actually, Isaiah and a number of other prophets are mentioned in Islamic tradition, but no average Muslim would know about them. Perhaps the best book on the stories of the prophets from an Islamic view is “” by Abd el-Wahaab el-Naggaar who compares the Qur’anic stories with those of the Old Testament and completes the former through the latter.

not understand “massaha” unless it is made explicit: with oil on the head, as a visible sign of God’s choosing. It was done to the king, to prophets, and to priests. – This should be the very first time that you use the name of Christ in your studies! If you want, you can even wait with this last quote from Daniel until you finish with the study of Isaiah 53.

Then turn to the passage which we will focus on in this study. Introduce it as talking about the promised Savior, Messiah. The title ‘Messiah’ doesn’t appear in our passage though - if people ask you could refer to Daniel 9:25.26. But keep in mind: You know that Isaiah 53 is talking about Jesus, your friends don’t.

Isaiah 52:13-15 The Lord’s servant - a big surprise

Point out the stark contrast between 13 and 14: He is highly exalted with God - yet on earth he doesn’t look like that at all. He is a big surprise, completely different from what people expect. His strength and power is absolutely not according to the standards we are used to. Let people feel the utter strangeness of God’s plan, how low the Messiah was to be.

Verse 15: In this verse the the Living Bible in Arabic as well as the English TLB follow in their translation a certain understanding of the Hebrew which also the Latin OT ‘Septuagint’ follows: “Many shall be amazed...” (TLB). Most other translations understand the Hebrew say “He will sprinkle many...” (NIV), which is the same Hebrew word used as e.g. in Leviticus 16:14: To sprinkle, Arabic “yarush”.

The understanding of TLB fits nicely into the context, which is saying strongly how amazingly and surprisingly different the Lords Servant is from what people expect. However, if you are using another translation, e.g. Van Dyke which renders, “he will sprinkle”, you have an opportunity to remind people of the meaning of “sprinkling”, referring back to Leviticus 16 and the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. In this way you can make clear that the prophet is not talking about any the slave of God, but about the One who was to take away the sin of the world.

“What they have not heard, they will understand”: Explain the coming of the Messiah as a mystery, not fully revealed to people of old (cf. Romans 16:25, Col 1:26).

Isaiah 53:1-3 His humble appearance

Who has believed our message? It needs divine revelation to understand that God’s arm (picture of power) is revealed in a weak and suffering servant. What was revealed? What grew up? “The Lord’s arm” - this means that the coming Servant, Messiah is called “the Lord’s arm”.

Go through the different attributes: No beauty, no acceptance, man of pain, experiencing suffering.

53:4-9 His atoning sacrifice

In many different words, these verses describe the same thing: atoning sacrifice. It talks not only about our sin, also our sorrows, infirmities, etc. Refer back to Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22) and Leviticus 16: The principle is always the same.

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray”: Stress, that every human being, without any exception, is sinful (if you want, point out that the prophet includes himself in the number of those who have gone astray). The picture of sheep going astray: Sin / being far away from God means not living according to God’s original plan of creation, going other ways. Refer back to Genesis 2-3, reminding people that man was made for perfect fellowship with God in the garden Eden.

“Like a lamb” - “He did not open his mouth”: You will need these pictures later when introducing Jesus as the Lamb of God (study 7) and when describing Jesus trial (study 8). - By the way: Sheep are silent before those who slaughter them, because they don’t understand what is going on. Jesus was quiet, knowing what would happen.

Verse 9: The Messiah himself will be pure, like any lamb that is chosen for sacrifice must be without defect.

53:10-12 It's all God's plan

Explain that this all is God's Plan for Salvation. It all must happen.

The following is like a summary: The sacrificial death, atonement, intercession is all in these verses. "Guilt offering": If you were not able to refer to the ceremonial law in 52:15 because of the different translation, you can clearly do it here. The specific term comes a number of times in Leviticus 4.

11: The resurrection foretold

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

Isaiah 53:5-6

STUDY 8

JESUS

WHO IS HE?

Scripture:

LUKE 1:26-38, 2:1-40

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

At this point, you should explain some basics about the New Testament. One issue very much on the mind of Muslims is: How can there be four Gospels? It is for them one more proof for the New Testament being corrupted. If you encounter such questions, here are some thoughts as to how to introduce this part of Scripture:

We believe it is very important to stress that there is only one Gospel, and always will be only one Gospel. You could explain: "el-ingiel" derives from a Greek word which means "good news", and which refers to the message, the Good News which were given to Jesus. He was sent to bring these Good News to mankind. In this sense, *Al-Ingeel* does not refer to a book, but to the message of Christ. Jesus himself did not leave us a written revelation. Instead, he appointed apostles who would, guided and inspired by God's Spirit, write down these good news. What they wrote down is *Al-Ingeel* in its written form as we hold it in our hands today.

Don't be deceived, therefore, when you hear people talking about different gospels. God in His wisdom has used several men to transmit God's one Good News, which was proclaimed by Jesus to us. Therefore, to give an example, we don't say "the Gospel of Luke", but "the Gospel as it was put down in writing by Luke". There is only one *Ingeel*, one Good News, one message given by God to mankind through Jesus. And there are a number of apostles appointed by God to write down this one message, for us to receive a full and comprehensive picture of God's message through Jesus.

Also, towards the end of this study it would be good to explain the relationship between Old Testament and New Testament: Prophecy, preparation, fore-shadowing - fulfillment, full revelation.

Depending on who you study the Bible with, you could also choose John 1:1-51 for this first

study about who Jesus is. Luke is less “philosophical”, and perhaps you are not forced as much to deal with the question of Jesus’ deity. Also, the destitute poverty Jesus was born in comes out clearly. And Luke brings much more of the story of Jesus’ birth.

On the other hand, with Luke you miss out on some great opportunities to tie in Christ’s coming with the Old Testament studies we just did: Jesus is the Word of God (study 1), the Lamb of God (study 3/6). If you take Luke, you should for sure bring in John 1:29 at the end.

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we learned about the prophets during the time of the kings. With this study, we “jump” roughly 700 years. What happened in between?

The Children of Israel did not listen to the warnings of the prophets. Therefore, God sent a pagan king to destroy Jerusalem and take the people into captivity. After 70 years, they returned and re-built their city. For many years to come, God did not send them a prophet who would proclaim the Word of God. We call these years the “silent years”. But all this time, those among the Children of Israel who feared God were patiently and eagerly waiting for the promised Messiah.

1:26-38

Mary being a virgin: A well known fact among Muslims. If you want, refer to Isaiah 7:14. “The Son of David”: Explain, that the promised Savior was to come from David’s descendents, and would reign forever.

Explain: Though people were expecting an earthly, political king-savior, it is very clear from Scripture that the Messiah’s reign was to be of a completely different nature (“His Kingdom will never end” can only point to a heavenly kingdom).

“Son of the Most High”, “Son of God”: Here, the Bible connects Jesus being called “Son of God” with the virgin birth. You need to do some explanation, otherwise this messianic title could well be misunderstood by your Muslim friend in the way he is used to interpret it: That God had sex with Mary. You want to avoid this understanding by all means!

In popular Christian understanding, the title “Son of God” strongly asserts Jesus’ deity. Contrary to this interpretation, a careful examination of Scripture (2.Sam 7:12-16 and Ps 2:7ff) shows that this title refers to the promised coming king, the Messiah. It expresses a very unique personal relationship with God. “Son of Man” is really the title which ascertains this Messiah’s deity (Dan 7:13f). For a very helpful study on this issue, read Rick Brown’s article “Explaining ‘Son of God’ and other Messianic Titles”.

The Holy Spirit: Here is some more potential for misunderstanding. In Islamic understanding, the angel Gabriel (who is just mentioned in verse 26) is the Holy Spirit, who communicated the Qur’an to Muhammad. If this is an issue, you need to explain the Biblical concept of the Holy Spirit very briefly (God’s Spirit, not an angel).

Elizabeth: Since we didn’t read from the beginning of the chapter, the background is missing: Elizabeth is the wife of Zechariah, and she is pregnant with a child: John the Baptist. In Christian tradition, he is called Yohanna el Muamadan, but in Islamic tradition we would say Yahia ibn Zakareya.

2:1-7

Here, two Old Testament promises are fulfilled: The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem

(cf. Micah 5:3, you probably read that verse with your friend during study 6), and he was to come from the line of David (cf. Jeremiah 23:5-6, also mentioned in study 6). Mention that Bethlehem was David's home town.

Point out Joseph's difficult situation: They had written the contract, were officially married, but hadn't had their consummation of the marriage. How could he understand Mary's pregnancy? You can refer to Matthew 1:18-20 to explain his reaction.

2:8-14

As you read these verses, stress that we are hearing here tremendously *good news*! This is not another prophet coming to warn us of the Judgement Day, but someone coming to proclaim Good News indeed!

As already mentioned in study 6, you need to dwell on the term Saviour. This (together with 'Khalassa' and the verb 'Yukhallas') is a key term in the Arabic New Testament, yet for Muslims, there are other Arabic terms which communicate the Scriptural concept of salvation in a much more powerful way. You can use Munqiz and Munahi to explain the concept of a savior.

"He is the Christ": Remind people that "Messiah" is not just any title, but clearly carries with it the meaning of the One who is Promised, the Savior.

2:15-20

Here you can foster from the very beginning an attitude of sharing the Good News with others: Once the shepherds had seen Jesus, they couldn't keep their mouths shut. They had to spread the Word around, and they were praising God. (They obviously did both spontaneously, because their hearts were overflowing, not because they felt it was a religious duty.)

2:21-32

There was great expectancy among the people of Israel in those days, because they knew the Torah. Again, carefully explain the term salvation. Also, it is very clear from these words that Jesus came for all peoples - not just for the Jews, as some of our friends say.

2:33-40

Simon prophesies already here that there will be opposition. Again, it is clear that people were waiting. Waiting for what? For the redemption to come. The word redemption brings us right back into the Old Testament: Genesis 22 and the Lamb of redemption as the Qur'an says, Leviticus 16 (verses 8 and 10) and Isaiah 53 (though the word doesn't occur there).

In another place in the Gospel, we hear about the ministry of John the Baptist. One day, before Jesus had commenced his public ministry, he came to the place where John was preaching. These are the words John said upon seeing him: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). We chose Luke for this study, but we can't miss out on that great verse about the Lamb of God. Have people memorize this verse.

In Summary: Who is Jesus? The promised Savior, the One who would substitutionally take our sin upon Him, The One the Old Testament continuously talks about.

After the encounter with John the Baptist, Jesus began his public ministry. – If you want, quote Luke 4:18-19 at this point. Tell about Jesus years of ministry: Teaching the Good News of the Kingdom, healing all sicknesses, and driving out demons.

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

John 1:29

Material:

THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT:

Mary is born of the family of Imran. Her mother offers her as a sacrifice to the Lord. Allah gives Zechariah as guardian over her. Allah sends food to her in the sanctuary continuously. (19: 35-37)

Angels come to Mary and speak of her off-spring, Jesus, who would speak to mankind in his cradle and in his manhood. (19:45-47)

She asks how this could take place since she has not touched a man. Allah chose her and made her pure and preferred her over all women of creation. (3:42-47)

“And Mary, daughter of Imran, whose body was chaste, therefore We breathed therein something of Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was of the obedient.” (66:12)

Mary secluded herself from her people and Allah sent His Spirit in the form of a man. He told her that he would bestow on her “a faultless son”. She then questions this as no man has touch her. She conceives. When pain comes upon her she is driven to the trunk of a palm tree. There she has dates and drink provided. She returns to and the people accuse her of harlotry. She points to baby Jesus who speaks, “Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet, and hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive,... Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!” (19:16-33; 3:42-47)

Jesus is a messenger to the Children of Israel. (3:49)

“...O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was revealed before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One.” (61:6)

OTHER MATERIAL:

Rick Brown, Explaining ‘Son of God’ and other Messianic Titles

STUDY 9

JESUS

HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH ON THE CROSS, HIS RESURRECTION

Scripture:

LUKE 22:63 - 24:49

The Study:

INTRODUCTION:

This is really a lot to read, but I don't know what to leave out. Possibly, you could read parts, and just tell others. For example, you could skip reading the part about the trial before Pilate and the part about the disciples on their way to Emmaus, and rather tell these verses in your own words. You might want to practice reading this passage as well as you can, read it with much passion and even emotion, and cut down on your own comments and teaching. The Word in itself is abundantly clear!

OUTLINE:

In the last study, we heard about Jesus' birth and learned who he is: the promised Savior, the Lamb of God. And we got a first impression about the years of his ministry. He very soon ran into problems with the religious leaders in Israel. They were jealous of his popularity and afraid that he would usurp their positions as religious leaders. Furthermore, his teaching exposed their religiosity as impressive from the outside, yet hollow from the inside.

*Early on, these religious leaders planned to kill him. And Jesus himself prepared his disciples a number of times that he would have to suffer, be killed and raised again:
Quote Mt.16:21.*

Briefly, tell about the events leading up to the passage we read in this study.

22:63-71 The Trial Before the Sanhedrin

Point out that all questioning by the Jewish religious leaders revolves around one issue: *Who is this Jesus?* Also, point out that in verses 67 and 70, again, the terms "Messiah" and "Son of God" seem to be used parallel.

In vers 69, Jesus makes an amazing claim: He basically says that he will sit with God on the throne, which means ruling and judging the earth. I think it is good to let people feel the amazing weight of these words. But you should not get into a discussion of the question of trinity at this point. It would lead you away from the main direction of this study.

The Jews wanted to kill him for claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Especially the second claim makes them exceedingly angry – in a sense, their response then is very similar to the reaction of many Muslims today. It is the question who Jesus is, his identity, which brought him to the cross – and which is for us the question of life and death: "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins." (John 8:24 NAS).

23:1-25 The Trial Before Pilate and Herod

Briefly explain the political situation in Israel those days: How the the Romans controled the whole Middle East, and how much the Jews hated their rule. You could compare it with Egypt being a British protectorate before 1952

Before the Roman rulers, the Jewish religious leaders twist their accusations to be of political nature. To say that Jesus opposed paying taxes to Caesar is a plain lie (cf. Luke 20:24-25), and to bring up that Jesus called himself a king is playing on the fear of every ruler for his throne...

Then follows the scene before Herod. Jesus had performed countless miracles during the years of his ministry, he had helped many people in physical need, and this had caused many to praise God and start to believe in Jesus. But in front of Herod, who desired to see a miracle for nothing but curiosity, Jesus refuses to say even a single word.

Remind your friends of Isaiah 53:7, which we read during study 7. What we read here is a direct fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus is not fighting against his accusers and is silent. In study 7, we began to teach about the character and the principles of the Kingdom of God, and how thoroughly strange they are, how they are in many ways opposed to the principles ruling this earth.

The way Jesus is portrayed here goes very much against the thinking patterns of your friends. Therefore, you need to take some time to explain.

23:26-43 The Crucifixion

28-32 is not easy to explain. Don't dwell on it, rather focus on other parts.

35-38: Again, the issue is Jesus' identity: Is he the Messiah? If yes, why his apparent weakness? It is clear that the onlookers had no idea why this had to happen, they had a completely wrong concept of what the Messiah should look like – though they had Scripture and the prophets.

The criminal beside Jesus entered paradise, because he put his faith and trust in Jesus. Here, you can teach the “Gospel in a nutshell”: What will open the door to heaven for us is to acknowledge “I have absolutely nothing to offer to God” (which is repentance), and to put one's trust completely in Christ: “You are the only one who can help me!” This criminal had lived a wicked life, and he had absolutely no time before his death to collect good deeds to make up for the bad ones!

23:44-49 Jesus Death

You should dwell a while on this part, especially on verse 45. What happened to the curtain (حجاب / حجاب) in the temple is a powerful picture of the good news in Christ Jesus! Remind your friend of the meaning of this curtain, as we explained it in study 5 when we read Leviticus 16. The way to the Holy of Holiest, to God Himself is open again!

And this happened exactly when Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice for our sin, died. At this point, you should remind people of the the past studies which focused on the concept of sacrifice: Genesis 22, Leviticus 16, Isaiah 52/53. What we read about in these verses is in fulfillment of all these passages. Proclaim the Good News about Jesus atoning sacrifice on the cross!

23:50 - 24:12 Burial and Resurrection

51: In Joseph, we have the example of a devout Jew who was faithfully waiting for the Kingdom of God to appear.

7: Reading this verse, I think you should dwell a bit on the words “had to”: What happened on the cross was a “must”, compulsive, from God. It had to happen, because it was God's plan from the very beginning, and he had promised it through the mouths of many prophets.

24:13-35 On the Way to Emmaus

Here, Jesus himself powerfully teaches what we just said about verse 7. Again, what happened was according to the ever-old counsel of God. In a way, Jesus probably was giving his disciple something like what we tried to do with these 9 studies...

24:36-49 Jesus Appears to his Disciples

26: Actually, if properly translated from the Hebrew greeting, it should read el-salam alaykum ...

44: Again, we read that all of this had to happen in fulfillment of the many prophecies. Also, you can repeat here some of our explanation about parts of Bible.

47 Repentance, forgiveness: Explain as practical as possible what that means. Have this verse lead you to extend an invitation to believe in Jesus and follow him:

At this point, the meaning and significance of Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection should be abundantly clear. Give a summary, tying in the OT passages we studied before. What is a proper response?

- *The need for repentance (David's example). Recognizing the death sentence on our lives (“you will surely die”). The tremendous price which had to be paid.*
- *The need for personally taking a hold of Christ's sacrifice: This is for me, I believe he died for me! I trust in you alone for my salvation!*
- *The joy of knowing with absolute certainty that we will be in paradise one day (“today, you will be with me in paradise!”).*

Extend an invitation to follow Jesus!

VERSE TO BE MEMORIZED:

Romans 6:23

Or Romans 3:21-25a – this is a lot, but a beautiful summary of the studies we have had: ◌

Material:

THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT

“Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised!” (19:33)

“And We said, ‘Smite him with some of it.’ Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His portents so that ye may understand.” (some commentators refer this to the martyrdom of Jesus Christ, ‘Maulvi Mohammed Ali’ his footnote to v. 72) (2:72-73)

“And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, Allah’s messenger- They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain,....” (4:156-157)

“I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, saying: Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things.” (5:117)