



SHARING LIVES

HANDBOOK FOR COURSE LEADERS

A course to help Christians share their lives with Muslims

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Dear brother or sister,

Thanks for being willing to lead the course *Sharing Lives*. In this guide you will find some background information to help you with this task.

Someone has defined the work of a leader as follows:

“A leader is a person with God-given capacity and with God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people towards God’s purposes for that group.”

It is my prayer that the course *Sharing Lives* be used by God to help Christians to bring their attitude towards Islam and Muslims in line with God grace and as result will share their lives with Muslims and as part of this will be His witnesses for the truth of the Gospel, in order that their Muslim neighbors will learn to know the God of Abraham as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and in Him, also their Father.

May God help you to carry out your part in this for His glory.

Bert de Ruiter



Background

The course *Sharing Lives* has been developed because of the growing “Islamophobia” (fear of Islam and Muslims) among Christians in Europe. Such fear, based upon statements or activities of Muslim extremists, the way Islam is portrayed in the media, what Christians believe about the Qur’an, the persecution of Christians in Islamic countries etc. makes Christians blind for the diversity of Islam and for the attempts of Muslims in Europe to bring their faith and interpretation of the Qur’an in line with life in the secularized western society.

Many Christians are afraid that in the near future Europe will become *Eurabia*, in which Islamic norms and laws will predominate with many negative consequences for Christians.

Fear of Islam and Muslims is one of the main obstacles for Christians to share their lives, and the Gospel, with Muslims.

Although one could give many legitimate justifications for such negative attitude, it nevertheless is not in agreement with the attitude of self-sacrificing love and grace that characterized the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore the goal of this course is to help students deal with their attitude of fear, suspicion, prejudice towards Islam and Muslims in God’s presence and learn from Him to develop an attitude of grace, without becoming naïve.

Name

The course is given the name *Sharing Lives* because the projected main outcome is that people share not just the Gospel with Muslims, but their lives as well. This thought has been taken from 1 Thessalonians 2:8:

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

Goal

The main objective of the course *Sharing Lives* is to help people change their attitude towards Islam and Muslims from one of fear to one of grace and to encourage them to develop meaningful relationships with Muslims in their neighborhood in order to share their lives and the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them.

Although the course does provide the participants with some information about Islam, particularly in lesson 3, this is not the main purpose of the course. There are plenty of good materials (books, courses) that people can turn to in order to learn more about Islam, its practice and theology etc. Although the course gives some suggestions as to how to talk with Muslims about our Christian faith, participants will need other materials to help them once they are involved in evangelizing Muslims, or discipling those that have come to faith in Christ. The emphasis is very much on helping Christians dealing with their negative attitude and emotions with regard to Muslims and Islam.



Outcome

The course *Sharing Lives* intends to encourage Christians to share their lives with Muslims in five steps. Each step is addressed in one lesson. The first step is to look at one of the main *obstacles* of sharing one's life with a Muslim, namely resentment, prejudice and fear. The second step is to draw attention to one of the main *ingredients* needed in sharing one's life with a Muslim, namely an attitude of grace. The third step is to understand Muslims and their faith and culture. The fourth step is to actually interact with Muslims and hear how they express their faith in daily life as well as their dreams and fears. The fifth and final step is achieved by explaining what it means to be an incarnational witness to one's Muslim friend.

Duration and group size

The course consists of five sessions of 2 hours each and has been designed to be given during five **consecutive** weeks. It is possible to have the lessons every two weeks. It is **not** recommended to have more time in between the lesson. Nor is it advisable to have less than one week between the lessons, because participants need the time to process the information through prayer and Bible reading.

The ideal size of the group is between **five and ten people**. Such size makes interaction with each other and Muslims easier and makes it possible for the course to be given in someone's home, which might be more attractive to potential participants.

Materials

You have been given the login code of the website www.sharinglives.eu in order to download the materials. You order the course book from Amazon, or directly from me.

On the website you'll find PowerPoint presentations you can use during each lesson. You'll also find videoclips that can be incorporated in the lessons. I regularly place other materials on the website that might be helpful for you in teaching the course.

Equipment

The course includes PowerPoint's and videoclip. Therefore, you will need a computer, a beamer, sound linked to the beamer/computer, and possibly a screen to project the slides and films (sometimes a wall can be sufficient). Please make sure that everything works and those things are prepared before your first lesson.

Lessons

- ✚ Lesson 1: Our View of Islam;
- ✚ Lesson 2: Developing an Attitude of Grace;
- ✚ Lesson 3: Understanding Muslims;
- ✚ Lesson 4: Meeting with Muslims;
- ✚ Lesson 5: Building Relationships that Last

Teach alone or co-teach?

You might be comfortable and experienced to lead the course alone. If not, please get in touch with me and I can put you in touch with someone who has already been trained to teach the course and who might be willing to come and assist you.

Lesson 3 provides a lot of information on Islam. If you are not too comfortable to teach this, you might want to bring in a more knowledgeable Christian to assist you during this lesson, or even a Muslim. Get in touch with me if you want to know more about this.

A questionnaire prior to the course

Sharing Lives is developed to change the attitude towards Islam and Muslims. I might be helpful prior to starting the course, to find out more about the attitude of the participants. For that purpose I have developed a questionnaire with statements. You can download this document from the website www.sharinglives.eu. You might want to distribute it several weeks before the course starts and ask the participants to return it to you within a week. This way you know a little about where the participants stand prior to the course.

The content of the lessons

In this handbook you'll find an outline and background information of each lesson.

Please read this handbook very carefully, because it contains a lot of extra information that will help you teach the course.

It is important that you start preparing the visit to the mosque (lesson 4) pretty soon after lesson 1. It might take some time to contact the right person in the mosque and set a date. It is recommended that you meet with the contact person prior to the visit. You find more information about this preparation later in this document under lesson 4.

View of Islam behind the material

There is a variety of opinions among Christians regarding Islam. You find my position on the view of Islam in the appendix of this handbook.

Evaluating the course

In order to help the participants to reflect on what they learned, you can have them fill out the evaluation form, which is found on the website. You can download it, photocopy it and distribute it. You need to take ten minutes after the last lesson in order for people to fill out the form and hand them to you before they leave.

Certificate of completion

To give participants a token of appreciation and a reminder that they are willing to be a friend of Muslims, you can prepare “a Certificate of Completion” for each of them. You find a template of this certificate on the website.

A reunion

It might be useful to bring the group together again after 4-6 months after you’ve finished the course to learn progress they made in developing relationships with Muslims and whether further assistance is needed.

Thank you

Thank you for investing time and energy in helping Christians to share their lives, and in this context also the Gospel with Muslims. I trust that as a result of your work, many Muslims will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

If you need any further help, don’t hesitate to get in touch with me.

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LESSON ONE: OUR VIEW OF ISLAM

One of the main obstacles for sharing our lives with Muslims is fear of Islam and Muslims, together with prejudice, anxiety and suspicion. Therefore, it is good to look at this in some detail during this first lesson.

Objectives

- ✚ To look at Jonah's unwillingness to be God's servant among his enemies in Nineveh.
- ✚ To articulate and discuss our fear (and related attitudes of anxiety, prejudice, suspicion) and our questions and concerns of Islam or Muslims and understand the justification of these.
- ✚ To look at our fear of Islam in light of God's Word in Isaiah 40-54.

Outcome

- ✚ By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to bring their fear of Islam and Muslims to the right proportion and looking at it in the shadow of our Sovereign Heavenly Father.

Outline

- ✚ Opening prayer (1 min)
- ✚ Introduction of the course (5 mins)
- ✚ Answer the following questions (write the answers on a piece of paper, or the worksheet you can download from the website) (10 mins):
 - When you think of Islam, what are some of the words, images, pictures, thoughts that come to mind?
 - Finish the following sentences:
 - When it comes to Islam, I think that in 20 years time.....
 - When it comes to Islam, I would like that.....
- ✚ Discuss what is written down. (15 mins)
- ✚ Discuss Jonah's call to go to Nineveh in relationship to our call to Muslims (15 mins)
 - Try to put yourself in Jonah's shoes. How would you have responded to God's calling?
 - Are we still suffering of the "Jonah syndrome" today? If so, in what way?
- ✚ Look at *Inside Islam, (part 6)* (15 mins)
- ✚ Break (10 mins)
- ✚ Study Isaiah 40-54 in light of our attitude towards Islam and Muslims (30 mins)
 - God is the sovereign Lord of the history. What does this teach us about the establishment of Islam in the 6th century AD?
 - In light of God's sovereignty how show we look at people such as Osama bin Laden, and groups like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda? Could these people and groups be used by God to carry out His purposes? If so, what purposes could these be?
 - What is the relationship between the sovereignty of God and the arrival of millions of Muslims to Europe? In discussing this, look at what the Apostle Paul said: "God determined the exact places where humankind should live...so they may reach out for him and find him (Acts 17: 26-27).
 - How can we help Muslims who seek God, to find Him?
- ✚ Discuss homework (5 mins)
- ✚ Concluding prayer (1 min)



Description and background information

Lesson One: Our view of Islam

Because the main attitudes to overcome are fear, prejudice, and suspicion, the first lesson addresses the fear of Islam and Muslims and seeks to bring the attitude of the students towards Islam and Muslims into the open. (**slide 1**)

After giving a brief introduction of the course, hand out the worksheet (which you can download from the website) and ask the participants to fill it in. (**slides 2 and 3**)

After about ten minutes give everyone a chance to express what they have written down. Most likely you'll hear both positive and negative comments. It is not advisable to spend too much time arguing this at this point in time, because the main objective is to make the students more aware of their attitudes toward Islam. At the end of this lesson, the students will receive a homework assignment based on the thoughts they have written down (see later).

You can then show **slides 4 and 5** to explain that what we want to do in this course is not to deny the reasons that people have for looking at Islam/Muslims in a negative light, but to learn to put on another set of glasses that help us see people through God's eyes. The quote from Chrysostom is quite significant. We will refer to it again in the second lesson. John Chrysostom (c. 349–407, was Archbishop of Constantinople and an important Early Church Father.

Next, you can use the text of the course book to discuss Jonah's disobedience to God's call to go and share his life with his enemies in Nineveh. **Slides 6, 7 and 8** are on Jonah and Nineveh and go with the text of the course book. Because this disobedience might be partially caused by Jonah's fear, it would be good to draw out some parallels to one's attitude to Muslims. The course book includes several questions to do so. These are also on **slide 9**.

Then, have the group look at a part of the film *Inside Islam (part 6)*.¹ You can download this from the website. We will use other parts of the film in the lessons 2 and 3.

This part of the film looks at fundamentalist and extreme Muslims who commit atrocities in different parts of the world and how other Muslims respond to these atrocities. The reason to show this video is to point out that, while there are extremists that use Islam to commit violence, there is another side to Islam. One of the features of *Islamophobia* is a closed view of Islam (which considers Islam to be static and monolithic). By having participants look at this film, we can help them develop a more open view of Islam, one that acknowledges the diversity within Islam.

¹ *Inside Islam*, DVD, dir. Mark Hufnail, 100. (A&E Home Video, 2003). A documentary that provides an introduction to Islam. Topics include Islam's connections with Judaism and Christianity, the life of Muhammad, the Five Pillars of Islam, and the history of Islam, women in Islam, European colonialism, Islamism, the Nation of Islam, and jihad.



After viewing the film, it's time for a brief coffee or tea break.

After the break, it is time to have the students look at the issue for fear in general, and fear of Islam and Muslims in particular, in the light of Scripture. On **slide 11**, you'll find an acronym of Fear.

Particular attention is drawn to Isaiah 40-54 (**slide 12**) In this passage the people of God are in a difficult situation. They fear losing their identity as the people of God because it seems that the powers and gods around them are stronger than the God of Israel and that although their past was great, their future is dark. During this time when the people of God were fearful, doubtful, and uncertain about their survival and future, God sent the prophet Isaiah to the people with a message of comfort and promise and a reminder to who God is, saying: "Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you" (Is. 35:4). God does so with the frequent admonition to "fear not" and gives his people a rationale for doing so. In Isaiah 40-54 the prophet has a lot to say about fear. These chapters are therefore appropriate for believers in our times to meditate on when addressing their fears of militant Islam and in a context in which the church in Europe fears its future and its identity and points to the Islamization of the continent.

Slide 13 - God promises us to be with us –no matter what

Slide 14- God's plan prevails –no matter what

Slide 15 - Because –He is the sovereign Creator

Slide 16 - Because –He is the Judge of all the earth

Slide 17 -Because –He is the Ruler of all rulers

Slide 18 - Because –He is the First and the Last

After these slides and text, discuss the questions that are in the course book (**slide 19**), to help participants reflect on the truth of Isaiah, particularly the sovereignty of God in light of the presence of Islam.

Next we continue the lessons from Isaiah:

Slide 20 - God is committed to His people –no matter what

Slide 21- God's purposes for his servants involves the cross-no matter what.

The study of Isaiah 40-55 closes with reference to the relationship between 'fear of the Lord' and other fears. (**slide 22**)

Important:

It is very likely that you won't be able to go through the whole study in great detail within the time assigned for this part of the lesson. In that case: focus on the texts on the slides and have the participants read through the extra text in the course book as part of their homework. It is very important to concentrate on the main lessons from Isaiah.

Homework

It is important that you encourage the participants to do the homework, prior to the next lesson. (**slide 23**)

The homework after this first lesson is prayer. The reason is that rational arguments (e.g. that Islam is not just extremists, or that there are some changes taking place in Islam, or that Islam is not as black as some say it is) by themselves do not change people's attitudes. What is needed is a work of God in the hearts of the participants. Therefore, the participants are asked to take the worksheet on which they have written their views of Islam home and bring these into the presence of the Lord during the next seven days. It is expected that when people bring their fears honestly, sincerely and seriously into the presence of the Lord and are willing to listen to him (through his Word), the Holy Spirit can deal with their hearts.

As a help and guideline for their prayers, they will be asked to meditate on seven Psalms. The book of Psalms gives a good insight in the inner lives of David and other believers. When one reads the Psalms it becomes clear that believers of the past were people like modern believers, with their fears and anxieties. The Psalmists did not allow their lives be dominated by fear, but brought their fears before the Lord in prayer, where it disappeared in the light of God's presence. The students are asked to read through one Psalm during each of the following seven days: Day 1: Psalm 137; Day 2: Psalm 109; Day 3: Psalm 55; Day 4: Psalm 69; Day 5: Psalm 56; Day 6: Psalm 27; Day 7: Psalm 91.

These Psalms are chosen because each of them deals with an aspect of fear or threat and gives insight as to how the Psalmist brings his fear, anger, and anxiety into the presence of God. Included are Psalms that call for the Divine wrath upon one's enemies (e.g. 109, 137), which sometimes puzzle Christians. It might be necessary to discuss this briefly at the end of this first lesson and also at the start of the second lesson.

Many Christians use the Psalms as part of their prayer and worship. They find that the Psalms give words to their emotions and their relationship with God. Our emotions reveal something about how we are dealing with God. Encounter with God changes our emotions. The Psalms help us articulate and understand what we feel; they give us the words to vocalize our desperate struggles with the Lord. In our emotional wrestling with God, our understanding of Him grows. In the Psalms we find almost every emotion that exists, such as love, fear, trust, joy, grief, sorrow, despair, but also rage, anger and revenge. And this latter is troublesome for some believers. They find it hard to reconcile some of the words of the Psalmist (e.g. Psalm 137:9: "Happy is he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks" or Psalm 55:15: "Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the grave.") with the love of God they have come to know in Jesus Christ and with Jesus' command to love their enemies.

Some Christians therefore believe we cannot use such Psalms, and they quickly move on to more comfortable Psalms.

There is a place for praying such Psalms, as long as we keep in mind that

1. The primary addressee of these prayers is God.
2. Although the prayers were real prayers of David set in a particular historical context, they find their ultimate fulfillment, like the rest of the Psalms, in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, and as such can also be considered the voice of Christ, praying to God on behalf of His body, the Church.
3. Righteous retribution is one of the glories of the divine character. If it is right that God should desire to exercise it, then it cannot be wrong for his people to desire Him to exercise it. There is never a place for personal vengeance for God's people. (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19-21). David abided by this principle when dealing with Saul (e.g. 1 Sam. 24:12). To pray such Psalms is to surrender all rights for vengeance to God. Having assurance that God exercises justice enables us to forgive and develop an attitude of grace.



...By placing unattended rage before God we place both our unjust enemy and our own vengeful self face to face with a God who loves and does justice. Hidden in the dark chambers of our hearts and nourished by the system of darkness, hate grows and seeks to infest everything with its hellish will to exclude. In the light of the justice and love of God, however, hate recedes and the seed is planted for the miracle of forgiveness.....In the presence of God our rage over injustice may give way to forgiveness, which in turn will make the search for justice for all possible.”(Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*,124)

The Psalms enable us to own our feelings. They teach us to express our anger, rage, hatred, prejudices and all kinds of negative emotions we might have over injustices in the presence of the God of justice. These Psalms help us to see that worship is the right place for such emotions, because we know that God can hear our pain and negativity without rejecting us.

The Psalms enable us to cry and be heard, and to move towards repentance and forgo retribution.





LESSON TWO: DEVELOPING AN ATTITUDE OF GRACE

When we continue to bring our fear (including our fear of Islam) into the presence of God, there comes room to develop another attitude towards Islam and Muslims, namely that of grace.

Objectives

- ✚ To pay attention to the grace of God in Jonah's life (Jonah, chapter 2) and his unwillingness to be a channel of this grace (Jonah, chapter 4).
- ✚ To understand the importance of grace of God in the Bible and in our own lives.
- ✚ To develop an attitude of grace towards Islam and Muslims.

Outcome

- ✚ By the end of this lesson the students will have learned what it means to respond towards Islam and Muslims with grace.

Outline

- ✚ Opening prayer (1 min)
- ✚ Feedback from last lesson's home work (10 mins)
- ✚ To do: Take a piece of paper (or download worksheet from the website) and write down your description of 'grace' (5 mins).
- ✚ Discuss: C.S. Lewis once said: *Christianity's unique feature among world religions is grace. Do you agree with this? Explain your answer.* (5 mins)
- ✚ Think about lessons in grace from the life of Jonah (5 mins)
 - It was very hard for Jonah to be a 'grace-giver'. Do you recognize this in yourself? In what situations do you find it hard to approach others with grace?
 - Do we recognize something of Jonah's attitude towards the people of Nineveh in our own attitude towards Islam and Muslims? Explain.
- ✚ Discuss "A description of grace"(30 mins)
 - In the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15: 11-32) Jesus gives us a beautiful illustration of the grace of God ('the father' in the parable) to his children, and also shows how difficult it is to live by grace and to share grace with others. Read this parable and discuss the following questions:
 - How is the grace of the father seen towards a) his youngest son; b) his oldest son?
 - What evidence do you find in this parable for the fact that both sons found it hard to receive grace?
 - The oldest son wasn't prepared to be gracious to his brother. Do you understand this and do you recognize this attitude in your own life?
- ✚ Break (10 mins)
- ✚ Look at film *Inside Islam* (10 mins)
- ✚ Developing a grace response towards Muslims: six aspects of an attitude of grace. (30 mins)
- ✚ Discuss home work (1 min)
- ✚ Closing prayer (1 min)



Description and background information

Lesson Two: Developing an attitude of grace

As a follow-up of the previous lesson, students read some Psalms and have had an opportunity to reflect on their attitude towards Islam and Muslims. Start this lesson by asking some feedback on that. **(slide 1)**

It is expected that when students continue to bring their fear of Islam into the presence of God, there will come opportunity to develop another attitude toward Islam and Muslims, namely one of grace. This attitude will be the main subject of this second lesson.

In this lesson we would like to take the second step in the process of an attitude change from fear to grace. Although many Christians use the concept of 'grace' often, it is not always evident what one means by it. Therefore it is good, at the beginning of this second lesson, to ask the participants to write down their thoughts on grace and to discuss this with one another. **(slide 2)** On the website you'll find a worksheet for this.

Take some time to discuss the quote from C.S. Lewis. **(slide 3)**

We will again look at the prophet Jonah. This time the spotlight is on *the grace of God in Jonah's life*, which is seen from the fact that after his disobedience, the Lord miraculously rescues Jonah and gives him a second chance (Jonah chapter 2). **(slide 4)**

In chapter 4:2 Jonah expresses the reason why he didn't want to go to Nineveh, namely he knew God to be a gracious and compassionate God. Although Jonah as a disobedient servant of God experienced God's saving grace, he was reluctant to be a channel of that same grace to the people of Nineveh, whom he disliked. **(slide 5)**

In the course book and on **slide 6** there are 2 questions that you can discuss in the group about being a grace giver. This will help the participants to apply the truth of Jonah to their own lives.

In order to help students understand and appreciate the depth and richness of the biblical concept of grace, this lesson includes a Bible study on grace. Hopefully you'll be able to discuss most of it. If not, please focus on the key points and have the participants read the rest at home. **Slide 7** has a brief description of grace.

The course book explains that grace is part of who God is throughout the Bible **(slide 8)** and that grace is related to all main doctrines in the Bible **(slide 9)**, such as justification and sanctification. The course book also helps participants to look at how the Bible encourages us to be dispensers of God's grace and how this encouragement is worked out in our lives, attitudes and words. **(slide 10)**

In order to have some group interaction about the importance of grace, you might want to read the parable of the lost son (Luke 15: 11-32) and discuss the questions in the group. **(slide 11)**

After a brief break, watch another section of the film *Inside Islam (part 4)*. This episode explains how Muslims glorify their history and point to the golden age of Islam, including the times when Islam ruled in Spain. The reason for showing this part of the film is to help students understand Islam through the eyes of Muslims, which is part of an attitude of grace.



After watching this film (**slide 12**), it is time to think through what it means to develop an attitude of grace. First a definition of a grace-response is given. (**slide 13**)

Next, you can look at **slide 14** (the text of which is not in the course book), that explains what this course is all about, namely to have people get another set of glasses, through which to look at Islam. Also the quote of Chrysostom is mentioned again (on the slide only).

In the course book six aspects of an attitude of grace are mentioned. (**slides 15-18**)

You may want to read the following, to illustrate applying the golden rule or 'being aware of Christianity's mistakes in the past'.

In the light of recent events, it's really quite frightening to realize the mindset of some of the people who think they have a right to live in a country like Britain. People who follow a religion that has repeatedly been taken as the basis for hatred and violence towards any that oppose their worldviews. People who count as holy, a book that seems to applaud mass murder. The destruction not merely of their military opponents, but innocent civilian women and children. People who persist in following their religion despite its shameful history. A history that includes innumerable acts of terrorism and racial hatred. A history of oppressing women, keeping them subservient and dictating how they may dress. A religion that has a track record of nations that have been brutally governed by rulers who took it upon themselves to be the voice of their God and to impose ridiculously detailed legislation as to what was permissible in everyday life. A religion that seems to have so often fostered paranoia.

Should we really put up any longer with allowing these people to live amongst us? To share the benefits of our liberal society even though their ultimate allegiance is not to our government but to their invisible worldwide nation?

This sure is a recipe for disaster. The government must act quickly and decisively to deport all Christians²

Homework

The homework from this lesson (**slide 19**) is to read through the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) several times before the next lesson and answer the questions that are in the course book. Secondly, participants are asked to pray the prayer of Francis of Assisi with Muslims in mind regularly before the next lesson. This prayer is chosen because Francis is a good example of a Christian who extended grace to Muslims in a time (during the Crusades) when many fellow Europeans distrusted and feared Muslims.

² Rev. Richard White, quoted by Richard Sudworth in his book *Distinctly Welcoming: Christian presence in a multifaith society* (NSW, Australia: Scripture Union Australia, 2007), 20.



LESSON THREE: UNDERSTANDING MUSLIMS

After we have faced our attitude and emotions we are in a better position to receive accurate information about Islam and Muslims.

Objectives

- + To provide the student with accurate information about key aspects of Islam.
- + To look at what Islam teaches about the prophet Jonah.

Outcome

- + By the end of this lesson the student will have accurate information about some key aspects of Islam.

Outline

- + Opening prayer (1 min)
- + Watch video clip (5 mins)
- + Feedback from last lesson's home work (5 mins)
- + Watch film *Inside Islam* (16 mins)
- + Discuss what Islam teaches about Jonah (15 mins)
 - o What do you find significant when you compare the Biblical narrative about Jonah with that found in the Qur'an and the Islamic traditions?
 - o How do you explain the similarities and differences?
- + Watch video clip (5 mins)
- + Break (10 mins)
- + Look at several aspects of the faith and practice of Muslims (30 mins)
 - o Are there things Christians can learn from Muslims? If so, what?
 - o Mention several similarities and differences between Muslims and Christians?
- + Discuss some of the main problems Muslims have with Christians and Christianity. (10 mins)
 - o What is your first reaction to how Muslims look upon Christians and Christianity?
 - o How can we respond to these matters?
- + Watch video clip (5 mins)
- + Discuss home work (5 mins)
- + Closing prayer (1 min)

Description and background information

Lesson Three: Understanding Muslims

After having looked at our attitude towards Islam and Muslims in the previous two lessons, it is time to look at the religion of Islam and the religious practice of Muslims. The order: first think through our attitude before looking at the content of Islam is important. It is very likely that after the participants have faced their attitude and emotions towards Islam and Muslims, they are in a better position to receive accurate information about Islam and Muslims. Therefore, this third lesson is called "Understanding Muslims". (**slide 1**)

Before giving the participants an opportunity for providing feedback of last lesson's homework, you could show them a music video clip (**slide 2**). Islamic vocal music is called *Anasheed* (singular *nashid*) meaning: "chants". This can be sung a cappella or accompanied by instruments. Anasheeds are popular throughout the Islamic world. You can download these from the website (www.sharinglives.eu)

The material and lyrics of anasheed usually make reference to Islamic beliefs, history, and religion, as well as current events. Many traditional Muslim scholars have held that music with all its instruments is sinful. On the website you'll find several of such anasheed in which Muslims express their love for God through song. Some participants might be disturbed by seeing this and the following video clips. It might be good to explain that we want to include such clips in the course, to help people realize that, no matter how we think about Islam, for many Muslims, Islam is an attractive religion.

Before showing another part of the film *Inside Islam*, you might briefly want to hear some feedback on last lesson's homework. (**slide 3**)

Show them another part of the film *Inside Islam* (**slide 4**) (Can be downloaded from the website.) This part of the film looks at the beginning of Islam, the life of Muhammad, the Qur'an, and the link with Christianity through Abraham and Ishmael.

Having looked at Jonah from a biblical perspective in the previous two lessons, we will look at him from an Islamic point of view. (**slide 5**) Although in the course book you'll find the verses from the Qur'an about Jonah, it would be good to read these verses from a Qur'an. (**slide 6**)

It is good to then have a brief discussion on the differences of Jonah's story between the Qur'an and the Bible. You'll find the questions in the course book and on **slide 7**.

After a discussion about Jonah in Islam, you can show another music video clip (**slide 8**), which you can download from the website. This clip is meant to show the students some of the diversity within Islam.

After the break, you can go through the information about several aspects of Islam as found in the course book and on the slides. The content of this material has been approved of by an imam, with whom I have gone through this lesson. In fact, he has asked for a copy of it!



Important comment: You'll have about 30 minutes to discuss all this. This usually is not enough time. Some teachers have decided to not include everything; others have decided to add an extra session to deal with this. It is up to you to do as you like. You may also want to give the material of this lesson in advance to the participants (e.g. at the end of lesson 2) in order to give them time to read it through prior to coming to lesson 3.

- The beginning of Islam (slide 9)
- The person Muhammad (slide 10)
- The expansion of Islam (slides 11-19). On the slides you'll find material that is not found in the course book. It is up to you to use it or not. You might also want to include some information on the situation of Muslims in your own country. If you need help to put some information together about this, please get in touch with me.
- What Muslims believe (slide 20)
 - Tawhid (slide 21)
 - Risalah (slides 22-25)
 - Akirah (slide 26)
- Basic religious duties of Islam (slide 27)
 - Shahada (slide 28)
 - Salat (slide 29)
 - Zakat (slide 30)
 - Sawm (slide 31)
 - Hajj (slide 32)
- Sources of authority in Islam
 - The Qur'an (slide 33)
 - The Sunnah (slides 34,35). Slide 35 contains a list of subjects that are addressed in the Hadith. This information is not found in the course book.
 - Schools of law (slide 36)
- Different groups within Islam. (slides 37-44) You'll find several slides that correspond to the text of the course book about different Islamic groups/sects. The reason to have this in the lesson is to help people understand that there is a great variety of Muslims, some of whom do not fit our stereotypes.
- Islamic calendar, culture and customs (slides 45 -47)

After having looked at various aspects of Islam, it's time for some group discussion. Two questions are given in the course book (and also on **slide 48**).

Slide 49 (the text of which is not in the course book) gives some similarities between Islam and Christianity.

The last part of this lesson deals with some of the main problems Muslims have with Christians and the Christian faith (**slide 50**) and some questions for discussion. (**slide 51**)

After a time of interaction and discussion, you can finish the lesson with another music video clip (**slide 52**) that can be downloaded from the website. The reason for showing such clips is to have the students understand that, for many Muslims, Islam is an attractive religion that receives their full devotion, without leading to aggression or violence and to develop in them a growing open view of Islam.



Homework

The homework given is to prepare next lesson (**slide 53**), which is a meeting with Muslims in a mosque. Ask the participants to write down at least two questions they would like to ask the Muslims they will be meeting. You can download a list of possible questions from the website and hand it out to the participants in order to help them prepare their own questions. It would also be helpful to discuss the homework of lesson 4 at this point too.



LESSON FOUR: MEETING WITH MUSLIMS

"Courage is grace under pressure." - Ernest Hemingway

Objectives

- + To have students meet and interact with Muslims, to learn about their faith, their lives.
- + To encourage students to ask intelligent questions to Muslims.
- + To have students reflect on the responses they have heard.

Outcome

- + By the end of this session the students will have had an opportunity to meet and interact with Muslims about their faith.

Outline

- + Meeting with Muslims (several hours)

Homework

- + What have you learned most about your visit to the mosque?
- + Read Acts 10 and think about the relationship between Cornelius and Peter. Compare Cornelius with the Muslims you have met:
 - Do you think that God hears the prayers of these Muslims? What do you think happens when they pray?
 - Peter learned an important lesson from Cornelius. What have you learned from the Muslims you met?
 - What do you like most of the faith of Muslims?
 - Cornelius needed only one vision to start acting. Peter needed three. Have you seen other examples in which Christians are less receptive for what God has to say than people outside the church?

Description and background information

Lesson Four: Meeting with Muslims

Having prepared the participants' attitudes and taught them some basic information about Islam, it is time that they meet and interact with Muslims. Therefore this lesson is called "Meeting with Muslims". Although such a meeting can take place anywhere, our experience has been that it best can take place in a mosque. There you'll find the religious Muslims and it also gives the participants an opportunity to learn about the role and the layout of a mosque.

Preparation visit to the mosque

It is your task to help the students to prepare for the visit to the mosque. The course book includes several suggestions to keep in mind during the visit to the mosque. You might discuss this briefly with them during the end of lesson 3.

You are responsible to organize the visit to the mosque. Take enough time to do this. It would be best to start this after the first lesson. To prepare this visit, the following things are important:

1. Make a list of the mosques and/or Islamic organizations in or near your city, town or village.
2. Contact one or more of the mosques/organizations, in order to make an appointment for a visit.
3. In making such appointment it is important that you inform the Muslims about the kind of group you are and why you want to visit the mosque. You can say that it is an informal visit, i.e. you want to learn more about the faith and practices of the Muslims in order to have a better understanding of their situation. You can ask whether it is possible to sit in during their prayer times. Afterwards you would like to meet with a group of Muslims for about an hour. Ideally you would like the group of Muslims to consist of men, women, both old and young, so that you can also learn about Islam through the eyes of both men and women of various ages. If at all possible, it would be good when the imam of the mosque could be present too.
4. It might be necessary to meet with the contact person of the mosque in person prior to the group visit in order to clarify the goals of the meeting.
5. When you have made an appointment about date, time and place, it is important to phone up the contact person one day in advance to remind him about the meeting.
6. After the meeting it is important to phone up the contact person of the mosque one more time to thank him/her for their hospitality.

Homework

The homework of this lesson is to reflect on the visit to the mosque and the interaction with the Muslims. Because prayer will most likely be one of the subjects of discussion, the homework is based on Acts 10 and the relationship between Peter and Cornelius, particularly zooms in on 'prayer'. In many ways we can draw several parallels between Cornelius and a religious Muslim.

It would be best to prepare the students for this homework during the last part of lesson 3.



LESSON FIVE: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT LAST

Objectives

- ✚ To help people understand the importance of relational and incarnational witness
- ✚ To encourage the students to proactively build meaningful relationships with Muslims that will enable them to share Jesus Christ with them.
- ✚ To provide the students with suggestions and tools that help him/her to develop a friendship with a least one Muslim.

Outcome

- ✚ At the end of this session, the students should be able to start developing a friendship with at least one Muslim.

Outline

- ✚ Opening prayer (1 min)
- ✚ Feedback of visit to the mosque and the homework (15 mins)
- ✚ The incarnation of Jesus: a model for us (10 mins)
 - What would it be like when every Muslim in our country would have at least one Christian friend?
- ✚ What does it mean to be an incarnational or relational witness? (15 mins)
 - “Arguing simply about beliefs rarely convinces people of the validity of them. Seeing them in action makes the difference.” Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.
 - In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Paul explains that he made himself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. How can we apply this principle in our relationships with Muslims?
- ✚ Practical ways to connect naturally with Muslims (15 mins)
- ✚ Break (5 mins)
- ✚ Some do’s and don’ts in relationship with Muslims (15 mins)
- ✚ A model of meeting (10 mins)
- ✚ Watch Film *Dreams en Visions : the story of Khalil* (30 mins)
- ✚ Discuss homework and follow-up. (5 mins)
- ✚ Closing prayer (1 min).

Homework

- ✚ Ask God to guide you to one Muslim whom He wants him/her to develop a relationship with for His glory.
- ✚ Fill in evaluation form



Description and background information

Lesson Five: Building Relationships that Last

Because one of the main goals of the course is to encourage the participant to become a friend of at least one Muslim, this last lesson focuses on what it means to be an incarnational or relational witness to Muslims.

After having given the participants an opportunity to provide feedback on the visit to the mosque and the subsequent homework (**slide 1**), it is important to look at the concept of relational witness, using the incarnation of Jesus as a model. The Bible verse that is the foundation for this course, namely 1 Thessalonians 2:8, is a good illustration of this (**slide 2**).

Jesus' incarnation is a model for us and we'll draw some implications from this (**slide 3**).

This concept means that there needs to be a close proximity between Christians and Muslims, but as **slide 4** shows (the information of which is not in the course book), this is a problem. According to research only 18, 5% of Muslims in Europe are in contact with Christians (of all kinds).³

It would be good to discuss in the group what the implications might be when every Muslim in your country would have at least one Christian friend (**slide 5**).

Then we'll look at relational evangelism, incarnational witness in comparison to for instance, confrontational evangelism. There is a place for apologetics and a more confrontational approach to Muslims, as long as it is done with respect. Nevertheless, this kind of ministry takes good preparation and is not something that an average Christian will or need to get involved in. Therefore, the emphasis in this course is on relational witnessing (**slide 6**).

The discussion questions in the course book (**slide 7**) might bring out the different approaches to Muslim evangelism.

Following this, the course book provides some practical suggestions for getting into contact with Muslims (**slide 8**). These are just examples of many possibilities. Feel free to add other possibilities from your own life or people you know of.

The course book mentions several things to keep in mind when in contact with Muslims (**slides 9 and 10**). Many more suggestions could be added and feel free to do so. The main idea here is to help participants think about the first steps.

The example of a dialogue, based on Luke 2: 46, 47, gives some good principles for our relationship with Muslims (**slide 11**). Be aware that the word 'dialogue' sometimes has a bad reputation among some Christians.

³ This information comes from World Christian Database, www.worldchristiandatabase.org and was referred to in the article "Personal Contact: The sine qua non of Twenty-first Century Christian Mission" written by Todd M. Johnson and Charles L. Tieszen, in *Evangelicals Missions Quarterly*, October 2007.



Some believe that dialogue always means that we are compromising the truth of the Gospel. But this doesn't need to be so. Dialogue involves listening and genuinely trying to understand and learn from our Muslim friend, but it also involves proclamation and witnessing. We might call this kind of dialogue 'witnessing' dialogue or proclamatory dialogue.

We want to close this lesson and the course with a powerful testimony of a Muslim who came to faith in Christ (**slide 12**). This testimony of Khalil is part of the film *More Than Dreams*, and can be downloaded from the website. This film is a dramatized conversion story of Khalil, a former Muslim fundamentalist. The reason for using this film to close the lesson and the course is to encourage the participants that the Lord is at work in the Muslim world and that he is able to bring those who might cause us fear to himself, during His word and His people, who are willing to share their lives with Muslims.

Encourage the participants to ask the Lord to guide each one of them to at least one Muslim, with whom he/she can build a meaningful relationship in order to be the Lord's witness in their lives. (**Slide 13**)

Also, it is important that each participant fills out the evaluation form, which will help to continue to improve the material. You can download this evaluation form from the website.

In closing

The course Sharing Lives is just an introductory course. It is developed to help Christians build relationships with Muslims, in order to share their lives and in this context also the Gospel with them. The course has been successful when each student will make specific steps towards becoming a friend of Muslims in their own context. When this happens they might have several more questions. For such questions the participants can visit the website www.sharinglives.eu, which includes also additional materials and contact details of local organizations.

It is strongly recommended that you stay in contact with the people you have trained. You might want to have the group meet again within a few months. This would give the participants an opportunity to share what the Lord has done in their lives with regard to Muslims after they finished the course and also gives you an indication of what more help is needed for them to continue to share their lives with Muslims

Thank you for your willingness to invest time and energy in this course and I hope that you, while helping others have learned something as well.

I would appreciate getting your feedback as well. If you send me a mail after the course is finished, I will send you an evaluation form.

I would appreciate it very much when you would be willing to teach the course more often. Perhaps in another church in your town, or another Bible study group in your church. Also, when this course becomes better known, more teachers are needed, so that many more Christians that can benefit from the content of this course.

In Christ,

Bert de Ruiter

bert@sharinglives.eu





APPENDIX: VIEW ON ISLAM BEHIND THE COURSE SHARING LIVES⁴

Among Christians there is a variety of opinions regarding Islam. Through answering three fundamental questions, I would like to explain the view behind the course Sharing Lives.

1. Is the God of Islam the same as the God of Christianity?

During the past 25 year, the above question came up almost every time when I spoken about sharing our lives with Muslims, and it often stirred up a lively discussion.

Interestingly enough this same question is hardly ever asked about Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews etc. I never had a long discussion about the question whether secular Europeans believe in the same God as the Christians or whether people of other denominations believe in the same God as we do.

To the question whether the God of Islam is the same as the God of Christianity I cannot give a clear 'yes' or 'no' answer. In order to answer this question, I would like to break the question down into three smaller questions:

- I. Is the Christian's *idea of God* the same as the Muslim's idea of God?

My answer is: No.

- II. Is there anything in common between the Christian's idea of God and the Muslim's idea of God?

My answer is: Yes.

- III. Is there enough in common between the Christian's idea of God and the Muslim's idea of God for us to be able to use the same word?

This is the crucial question. Some Christians believe that there is not enough in common, while others believe that there is enough in common. For the last group the similarities outweigh the differences, whereas for the first group the differences clearly outweigh the similarities.

My answer to this question is: Yes.

I would like to give the following reasons for my answer:

- I. Millions of Arabic Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere use the same name for God, namely Allah, as their Muslim neighbors. In their prayers they address God as Allah. The Arabic Bible reads in John 3:16 "*For **Allah** so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"
- II. Most Muslims around the world believe that Christians believe in the same God as they do. They find support for this from the Qur'an. Nothing in the Qur'an suggests that Muhammad ever

⁴ The content of this document has been taken largely from Colin Chapman's book "*Cross and Crescent*" and is included here with permission of the author.



- believed that Jews and Christians worship a different God. Speaking about Christians, the Qur'an says: "Our God and your God is One, and it is to Him we bow down." (Sura 29:465)
- III. Many Muslims that have come to faith in Jesus Christ emphasize that upon their conversion they have come to know the God whom they worshiped from afar, as their heavenly Father in Jesus Christ. One example is in the title of the book "I dared to call Him Father" of Bilquis Sheikh, a Muslim background believer from Pakistan.
- IV. Some biblical examples –
- a. When the Jewish prophet Jonah was asked by Yahweh to go to the Assyrian city of Nineveh to speak to them and warn them about God's judgment, he treated them as if they believed in the same God;
 - b) When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan women, he assumed that the Samaritans worshiped the same God as the Jews, although He said: "You, Samaritans, worship what you do not know, we worship what we know." (John 4: 22);
 - c) When the Apostle Paul spoke to a Greek audience at the Areopagus in Acts 17 he doesn't hesitate to use the word *theos* both for the 'Unknown God' and for the God who raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:23-24, 30-31). He believes that there is enough in common between *their* concept of God and his concept of God for him to use the same word.
- V. Some analogies –
- a. A friend of mine, a Muslim background believer once gave me the following analogy: Suppose, a writer in South Africa decides to start writing a book about Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. He has never met her, but has had contact with Dutch people and has read some articles about her etc. Another person, who lives in the palace of the Queen, the son of the Queen, also decides to write a book about his mother. You now have two books. When you ask the question: 'do they write about the same person?' you probably answer: 'yes, that was their intention' and you'll find similarities as well as differences. You probably will take the book of the prince as the truthful one, but you nevertheless do not deny that the other book's aim is to write about the same person.
 - b. Suppose, that there's a country somewhere in the world where the sun is never clearly visible. People are aware of the sun, because they can see the shape of the sun behind the clouds, and they know that the sun is a source of heat. But they have never seen the sun in a cloudless sky. Contrast this with someone who lives in the Mediterranean. He sees the sun very clearly, and feels the heat of the sun on his skin. Is it the same sun for both these people? Of course it's the same sun, although their mental image of the sun and their experience of the sun are very different. Chapman concludes: "If we accept the analogy, we can assume that Muslims and Christians are talking about the same God, even though their ideas of that God and their experience of him may differ considerably. If we cannot accept the analogy, we have to think in terms of two completely different planets, like the sun and the moon, and assume that Christians and Muslims are talking about two totally different beings.



2. Is Islam inspired by the Devil?

Again, this is a question that I have been asked many times. Many evangelical Christians might answer immediately: 'Of course'. My answer is: 'Yes....but'.

I do believe without hesitation that *'the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...'* (2 Cor. 4:4). I do believe that *'our struggle is... against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'* (Eph 6:12). I also believe that *'Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light'* (2 Cor. 11:14).

Nevertheless, I believe we should be careful in coming too easily and too quickly to the conclusion that Islam is a religion inspired by the Devil.

I would like to give the following rationale for my answer "Yes...but":

- I. Why single out Islam for special mention? What about communism? What about humanism or materialism? What about some of the demonic forces at work in parts of the Christian world, or even within churches?
- II. An overemphasis on the role of Satan in Islam can easily prevent us as Christians from facing up to the terrible record of the Christian church in its relations with Muslims. Attributing everything in Islam to demonic forces fails to recognize the responsibility of the Christian church in all that has happened. The very existence of Islam might be seen as a judgment on the Christian church, and the record of the church over fourteen centuries in its relations with Islam should leave us with a sense of shame.
- III. Even when we believe that Islam is inspired by the Devil, we should be careful to jump to the conclusion that Muslims must therefore by definition be possessed by evil powers. It is obvious that there are occult practices in some forms of Folk Islam, but I don't believe that every Muslim must be treated as a case of demonic possession.
- IV. Interpreting the contemporary revival of Islam only in terms of the work of Satan is an oversimplification of complex issues. This revival might be attributed to centuries of European colonialism, and many other cultural, political and economic factors. Simple explanations expressed in purely spiritual terms can easily have the effect of preventing us from getting to grips with the complexities of history and politics.
- V. We should be careful to use the language of the demonic to explain things that are culturally strange and foreign to us.



3. Is there any revelation in Islam?

I would like to break down this question into a number of smaller questions:

a. Are we speaking about general revelation or special revelation?

When we talk about special (i.e. new) revelation from God which had not been revealed before through the prophets, Jesus or the apostles, I believe it would be accurate to say that Muhammad did not receive special revelation. If, we're speaking about general revelation, I accept any revelation Muhammad received was no different from the general revelation that is available to all men. (Romans 1: 18-20; Psalm 19). If Muhammad was a sincere seeker after God, any revelation he received was no different in principle from that given to a man like Cornelius before his conversion. This would mean that if God had real personal dealings with Muhammad, they were no different in kind from his dealings with all men who are seeking after God (Acts 17:27).

b. How did the religion of Islam compare with the religion of Arabia?

I think it's fair to say that Islam was an improvement on the pre-Islamic polytheism and idolatry of Arabia. We may therefore want to acknowledge that if the pre-Islamic religion of Arabia had much in common with Canaanite religion; Islam had (and still has) much in common with the monotheism of the Old Testament. On the other hand, we could argue that it is irrelevant to ask how close or how far Islam was from the religion of the Old Testament, because what matters is the final product, which is a denial of Christianity.

c. How are we to understand the development in the experience of Muhammad?

I am prepared to acknowledge that earlier in his life Muhammad was a sincere seeker after God. He had come to believe in the One Creator God, but didn't have the opportunity to read the Bible or find out the truth about Jesus. And because of choices that he made at certain stages in his ministry, he wandered away from the truth that he knew, and was further away from the truth at the end of his life than he was at the beginning. Of course one can also argue that what matters is 'the finished product', namely his life and teaching as a whole, and that studying the development of his experience is irrelevant.

d. How are we to understand Muhammad's rejection of Christianity?

What Muhammad rejected was at best a misunderstanding of the gospel, and at worst a distortion of the gospel. We do not know how Muhammad *would* have responded *if* he had had an opportunity to hear the true gospel. On the other hand one can say that since Muhammad denied the deity of Christ and the cross, Islam must be seen as a heresy just like any other heresy, ancient or modern.