

Muslim women and Scriptures

Resources made available by Vivienne Stacey

Reaching out to Muslim women means to study your Bible and study the Qur'an. The Qur'an is their Scripture - The Bible can be the Scripture for all people.

How can we encourage Muslims to study the Bible?

How can we study it effectively so that their study leads them to Jesus?

We need to take a careful look at our Muslim friends and their dealing with their Book.

I. Why do Muslims hold the Qur'an in such extremely high honour?

A. Muslims view the Qur'an as the eternal Word of God

Because God is eternal – He is the eternal Speaker

He speaks the eternal Word – which is the Qur'an

B. Muslims should view the Bible as the “previous Scripture”, which is “confirmed” by the Qur'an.

The Qur'an confirms the Thora, Sabuur and Injil. Muslims should be open to read it. We want them to read it. It's my ambition to get them to read the Bible and I can use this confirmation and try to encourage Muslims to read the Bible.

C. Muslims earnestly desire to understand the Qur'an

Listen to a prayer for readers of the Qur'an, that Muslims themselves use in approaching what to them is an eternal book:

Increase our longing for it (the Word of God in the Qur'an); multiply our delight in it, to the number of raindrops and the leaves on the trees. Through it, perfect our confidence in the guidance of the good and the glad tidings of men of spiritual experience. Bring to our minds touches of meaning. Make it for us an imam (a religious guide) and light and guidance and mercy in the abode below and the abode everlasting. And grant us the reading of it in the hours of night and the seasons of the day.”

(from Constance Padwick's famous book *Muslim Devotions*, quoting from a prayer by Ali Muhammad-al-Qari)

II. Conducting Bible studies with Muslims

A. Begin with prayer -Christians and Muslims are seen as people of prayer.

Possible prayers:

Ps. 119,18 *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in you law.*

Try to encourage your Muslim friend to pray this prayer of Prophet David, which does not offend him and at the same time we teach the seeker to pray as well before reading the Word of God.

They are often afraid to make mistakes... give them easy prayers (Ps. 119,18)

Teach young believers to pray. Tell them their prayer is just as valid as yours..

B. Explain how the Bible should be read

Note: Muslims will read the Bible the way they read the Qur'an unless we teach them otherwise.

Understand how Muslim women read the Qur'an together

Example of Qur'an reading:

30 women meet to present or read the Qur'an in one morning

each one reading a section

(the Qur'an can be divided into 30, 60 or 120 sections for public reading)

All Readers are starting off at the same time aloud for about 2 hours

After the reading they feel greatly blessed because the whole scripture has been read aloud.

Understand how a woman might read the Bible unless you instruct her otherwise.

If you give a woman the biblical scripture – she might just read it aloud like the Qur'an, without concentrating on the meaning.

C. Explain how a Christian reads the Bible

- Pray first
- Select only a small portion to read and think about, emphasize application. "What is God saying to you?"

Use your own Bible study as an example

- What is the text actually saying?
- What are people doing or not doing?
- What are the consequences of obedience or disobedience?
- What does this mean to me?

Capitalize on curiosity if possible

- Well educated people attacking the Bible
- Question the person: Did you ever read the Bible?
How can you attack what you do not know?
Do you want to read it – can I lend or send you one?

D. Explain how an illiterate woman can learn from the Bible

- Encourage memorization of Bible verses
- John 17, 3, Rom. 5, 8 and 1.Tim.2,5-6
- **Make use of the "rote learning" pattern** – carrying the Word in their heart
- God's word is a seed – One Mediator

- **Use cards with Scripture verses.**
- Give these cards to patients in hospital, taxi drivers, Shopkeepers – they are much more personal than a tract - and easier to learn by heart.

- **Emphasize the use of the Bible** for seeking "the straight way" mentioned in the first sura.

Examples: Because the Qur'an refers to the earlier scriptures, one woman put the verse card into the Qur'an and was teaching her children – it opened her heart to understand and accept Christ. You can act out Rev. 3,20 Christ stands at the door and knocks...

A Lady is carrying a charm. What is this you are carrying around your neck? – A charm – What is in it? A verse from the Qur'an. Is it better to have the word of God around your neck or in your heart? Would you like to have and keep a word in your heart? Teach her one of the above verses. Jesus is one of the 6 main prophets, so these verses are usually not a problem to Muslim women.

Teach people the word and they come to faith in Christ even illiterate women!!!

Points of consideration:

E. Arabic is the eternal language of the eternal book.

The recitation of the Qur'an has to be in Arabic, or else they won't be blessed. Illiterate people are memorizing the Qur'an in Arabic and young boys and girls memorizing big sections in an early age in Arabic. At least the first sura is memorized by everyone in Arabic.

If it is read in English, we won't get that blessing... !!!

Many parents send at least one of their children to a special school just to learn to read the Qur'an in Arabic. With this kind of Arabic, they usually can't go to the market and use it, but they can help the others by reading.

Even people who have memorized the whole of the Qur'an may not know what it actually says. It is not really a matter of reading for understanding, rather a matter of getting the blessing for reading it aloud.

Remember the power of learning scripture by heart...

In Sura 1 Muslims are praying "lead me the straight way...!" Christ is the WAY!

Our Goal must always be to help people to read, study and memorize the Bible (or verses) in their heart language. This can be quite powerful, especially for people who have never understood their own holy book.

Compiled by Christel Eric, LCA Nairobi.

Muslim women and Scripture “Rote Learning”

I. The Challenge of the programmed mind –

Computers are programmed into a one particular way and can only be used and work that way... Muslims are programmed too.

A. Programmed through the way of education – the rote system of education stresses memorization more than comprehension. Muslim men have an overdose of the programmed mind, not so much women. (Western education system has the problem of being too theoretical, missing out on practice.)

B. Programmed through the Islamic attention to detail with regulations for every aspect of life: Position of Prayer, Direction of prayer even in use of the toilet... Muslims ask: Where are the rules and regulations in the Bible?

C. Programmed through the emphasis on the memorization of the Qur’an Recitation... children, women learn to recite the Qur’an in the proper way. They than automatically know what to say and what to do.

D. Programmed through the debate form

Part of Urdu culture starting in 1850ies Muslims would debate with Hindus and Christians.

Topics: Unity of God, Divinity, Sonship of Jesus Christ
Reliability of the Bible and the mission of Muhammad.

Following the debate, written responses were widely circulated and popularized apologetic and polemical approaches.¹ (Main authors or writers were Maulana Rahmat Ullah and Dr. C.G. Pfander.)

Those materials were translated into Arabic... printed in book form today
Themes art set: Programmed answers to programmed questions!

The initiative is always with Muslims who attack the Bible... If we accept the programmed mind analysis, we must than ask how Christians may regain the initiative.

What are the new agendas through which we can regain the initiative?

If we can introduce new agendas we will not always have to answer the Muslims’ arguments but we might stimulate them to think in new areas. We can seek spiritual responses rather than reactions. We can address the Muslim mind and heart without necessarily mentioning Islam, the Qur’an or the Prophet of Islam.

The fact that the minds of Muslim women are less programmed than those of Muslim men indicates a great opportunity for Christian witness.

Are we ready that Muslim debates could take place among Women?

Women should take initiative to share Christ in a new Debate Forum

What is needed is a new agenda with new initiatives...

¹ Apologetic – defending your own faith or religion
Polemic - attacking the other faith

Remember: Don't win a debate and lose the person...

II. Taking back the Initiative. A list of possible agendas:

Keep in mind that women do not have such a programmed mind!

Pray that God will enable you to engage in deep conversations and meaningful study of the Bible. As God allows, avoid too many lengthy conversations that do not lead to a discussion of God's Word. Instead, seek to focus on topics such as the following:

1. Personal subjects like suffering, abortion, ritual and spiritual purity, impurity and its consequences (not saying the prayers)
2. Include biographies from the Bible: Hagar – unifying problems of refugees, abuse, exploitations, attitudes to sufferings
3. Studies of Genesis with references to the New Testament, e.g. lives of the patriarchs. Muslims identify with many people in Genesis
4. Studies on Exodus, e.g. themes of pilgrimage, (Servant hood) community (Umma), the nations, etc.
Bridges from Exodus into a personal conversation: I'm always on pilgrimage I'm not there yet... I don't get the title of Hajji... I get a crown when I arrive.
5. Studies on the Life of Christ with reference to Old Testament prophecies.
6. Studies of a Gospel, e.g. Luke or Matthew – specially helpful because of the Genealogies, the appearance of Angels (or fulfillment of OT- esp. Matthew)
Or with Sufis (mystics) you study the Gospel of John. (Sufism is a movement not a sect.)

Note: It is generally better to study the OT and the Gospels before the Theology of the Epistles.

Example of an evangelistic Bible study:

Numbers 21: 4-9 Bronze Serpent – this is an account, not just a nice story....

People of Israel were traveling with their Prophet Moses

Troubles came... instead of fasting and praying

They were protesting and grumbling –

their relationship was broken through ingratitude.

God sent his punishment – severe and deadly... the poisoned snakes...

God showed one healing opportunity... looking at the lifted bronze serpent

People could be saved on God's way... Healing through faith

Parallels between Numbers 21 and John 3, 14-17

God can choose how He saves – God is great!!!

Noah and the Ark - He saves one family

Moses and the raised serpent - He saves one nations – the chosen nation

Jesus lifted high unto the cross – God's chosen way to save the world

Points of clarification:

How to address God? God as Creator, the One True God, the eternal God

Muslim recognize the one God, Christians recognize one God, but Muslims have a Unitarian model and we Christians have a Trinitarian model...

Refer to the Bible as “the Holy Bible” and to the Qur'an as “the glorious Qur'an”.

What to do when the Muslim talks about Jesus and says: "Peace be upon him!" You can explain that this expression is used for people who are dead. Gives you an opportunity to show that Jesus is not dead. You can also plainly remark: "I don't say this about Jesus, because He is peace. He is the Prince of Peace."