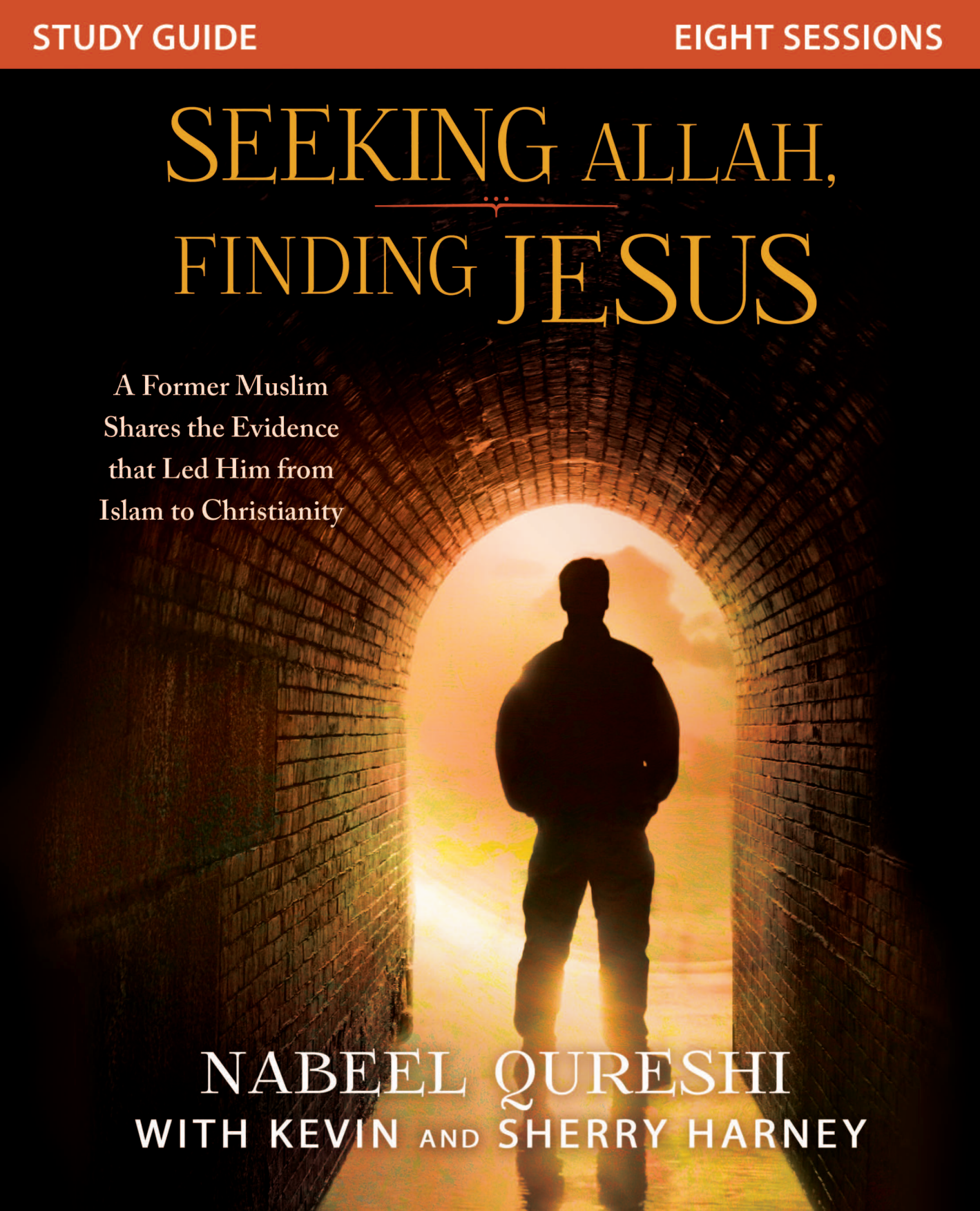


STUDY GUIDE

EIGHT SESSIONS

SEEKING ALLAH, FINDING JESUS

A Former Muslim
Shares the Evidence
that Led Him from
Islam to Christianity



NABEEL QURESHI
WITH KEVIN AND SHERRY HARNEY

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ZONDERVAN

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus Study Guide

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A WORD FROM NABEEL QURESHI

I AM TRULY HONORED and excited that you will be engaging in this study guide and its companion video. They are intended to complement my book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, which I hope you have read or are reading as you go through this study. In my book, I try to take you past the stereotypes and misconceptions of Muslims by bringing you into my home and childhood, where I had loving parents who did their best to raise me according to their Islamic faith. My goal is to introduce you to the hearts of Muslims, not just their minds. Of course, the hearts and minds of devout Muslims are connected, and it is their faith that leads them to see the world the way they do. That is why I also explore the beliefs of Muslims and how those beliefs shape the practice of their lives.

There was a turning point in my life: I became best friends with David Wood, a Christian who loved Jesus and was willing to have conversations with me about Christianity and Islam. We didn't just talk about religion, though. We went to classes together; joined clubs and organizations together; spent time in each other's homes. We were real friends, and in the context of that friendship, I was able to trust what he had to say about Christianity and understand how it could be the true religion, a potential I had thought impossible before. At the same time, we investigated Islam together, and he helped me see many faults in its foundations that caused my faith in it to crumble. After years of friendship and hours of him praying for me, I finally encountered Jesus, as three dreams and a vision led me to open up the pages of the Bible, and I gave my life to Christ.

This study guide is designed to help you do what my friend David did for me. It starts by introducing you broadly to Muslims, then by helping you understand and defend Christianity, especially where Muslims tend to challenge the Christian faith. It will also equip you to understand Islam and, when the time comes, to explore the

significant fault lines in Muslim beliefs with your Muslim friends. The last session is designed to give you specific tips and suggestions on how to meet new Muslim friends and show them hospitality and love.

But, as you will see in Session 1, every Muslim is a distinct, individual image bearer of God! My journey is not reproducible, and your Muslim friends may need a very different path. Consider the information in this guide as tools in your toolbox to be used as you follow the Lord's leading. In addition to those tools, this study guide will also help get you in the right frame of mind by directing you to scriptural principles, personal reflection, and the example of Jesus.

For that, I am greatly indebted to Kevin and Sherry Harney, whose names you will find on the cover of this book. They are not just random people who collated this information; they are dear friends who follow Jesus so closely that I would trust my life to them. More than once, when confronted with a dilemma, I have picked up the phone and asked Kevin for his help, and my wife has done the same with Sherry. Every time, they each pointed us to Jesus and filled us with the hope of Scripture. They are incredible people of God who understand my heart and my thoughts—and they happen to be among the best in the world at writing study guides! For these reasons, I have no doubt you will find this study guide a robust resource filled with direction for prayer, stories to contemplate, Scripture to consider, and also methods to help you remember and apply the information I teach in my videos. All to the greater glory of Jesus and for the love of our Muslim neighbors.

Once again, I am honored that you would engage this video study and excited by the potential the Lord has to work through it and through you. Jesus is amazing; there is no one like our God! People need to know about Him, and not just so they can be in heaven, but so they can have a relationship with their unconditionally loving Father here and now. So they can be filled with the Spirit and transform this world. I pray now, to the triune God of heaven and earth, that He will equip us to reach the world for their sake and for His glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

NABEEL QURESHI

OF NOTE

THE QUOTATIONS interspersed throughout this study guide are excerpted from the book *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* and the video study of the same name by Nabeel Qureshi. All other resources, including the reflection questions, session introductions, and between-session materials, have been written by Kevin and Sherry Harney in collaboration with Nabeel Qureshi.

Session One

UNDERSTANDING MUSLIMS

When you hear the word *Muslim*, what comes to your mind? Do you picture a very specific kind of person? To understand Muslims we must reflect on one simple and profound truth: they are people. And every person is unique. There is no one-size-fits-all description for any group of human beings, including Muslims.

INTRODUCTION

A Story of Three Friends and Three Conversions

NABEEL WAS BORN into a devout and loving Muslim home. Though he was brought up by parents who were born outside the United States, Nabeel was raised in America and breathed the air and culture of his family's new homeland. This young boy grew up in America, but he was raised to be a passionate follower of Allah.

Sherry was born into a devout and loving Christian home. Her family roots go back deep into the soil of the Netherlands. Her parents grew up in the United States in a Dutch enclave, not surprisingly called Holland, Michigan. Sherry was born and raised with all of her extended family living within the bounds of that same small city. At only five years of age, she cried out for Jesus to save her and became a faithful follower of the Savior from that day on.

Kevin was born into a loving family that showed no signs of any faith in God. His father was a computer programmer; his mother was a math and science teacher. Their home life in Orange County, California encouraged a passive intellectual agnosticism at best and occasionally antagonistic atheistic skepticism. Kevin grew into his teen years with no interest or thoughts of spiritual things.

You might wonder how these three radically different people end up teaming together to write the study guide you are using right now. The answer is both simple and highly complex. The easy answer is that all three of them became committed followers of Jesus. The complicated answer is *how* they became Christians.

Today, Nabeel, Sherry, and Kevin are dear friends and take joy in serving other Christians through their speaking and writing ministries. They are also passionate about reaching out to people who are still far from Jesus and naturally sharing the good news that has changed each of their lives.

Here is the million-dollar question: Did these three different people come to Jesus in identical ways?

You know the answer. Of course not!

Though all three were born and raised in the same country, each of them grew up in different places, different families, different religious settings, and different cultures. God placed people in each of their lives, at just the right time, to walk with

them and point the way to Jesus—but each journey was unique. Nabeel, Sherry, and Kevin needed the companionship of people who got to know them, listened, loved, talked, cared, and traveled with them on their spiritual journey.

As you begin this study of *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, it is essential to recognize that no two people are alike. Since this is true, then we can conclude that no two Muslims are alike. We must set aside preconceived notions, stereotypes, and the boxes we so quickly put people in. When you interact with a Muslim, at the core, you are encountering a human being made in the image of God and precious to the heart of his or her Maker. If you can come with this attitude and disposition, you will be well on your way to extending God’s love to a person who could one day discover the life-transforming grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

TALK ABOUT IT

Name a family member, friend, or another person who influenced you on your journey toward Jesus, and what did this person do, say, or model that helped you see Jesus and draw closer to Him?

or

What are your impressions of Muslims right now, at the start of this study? When you hear that a person is a Muslim, what thoughts and images come to your mind? Do you think these thoughts and images are accurate, or possibly not fully representative of all Muslims?

Definitions

Salaat: The ritual prayers that Muslims recite five times a day

Wudhu: Ceremonial washing before salaat

Fajr: The first of the five daily prayers offered by Muslims

Du’aa: A prayer offered before meals

Muhammad: The prophet of Islam who received the final revelation of God and passed it on to Muslims

Muslim: One who submits

Islam: Submission

Sharia: Islamic law that guides how a Muslim should live to submit to Allah

Hadith and Sunnah: The Islamic traditions of what Muhammad said and did

Quran: The holy scriptures of Muslims

Imam: A leader of Muslims, usually referring to one who leads prayer at a mosque

Sunni and Shia: The two major branches of Islam

Shahada: The central proclamation of Islam: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger”

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

As you watch the video teaching segment for Session 1, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

A day in the life of a Muslim child

We need to understand our friends and the people we want to share the gospel with if we are going to share it with them in a compelling way.

Islam is not just a religion, but an identity and a way of life

Islam is who you are; it is your very life, your identity.

Muslims see their faith as their identity

How Muslims see Jesus and Christians

What do Muslims believe about Christianity? Muslims believe that after Jesus was raised to heaven (and they do believe He was), the followers of Jesus slowly began to abandon His message and turned Him into a god. By doing so, they committed blasphemy. So Muslims' concept of Jesus is that he was a reformer, and that Christians today are fundamentally mistaken about what he actually came to do.

Understanding Islam and Muslims

- Submission

- The Quran and Sharia Law

- Not all Muslims are the same

Around the world, there are various kinds of Muslims. Not all Muslims believe the same thing.

- Where Muslims live

Where are the largest Muslim populations? Most people associate Muslims with the Middle East. It is interesting to note that the nation with the most Muslims in the world is Indonesia. The second largest Muslim population is found in Pakistan; number three is India; and number four is Bangladesh. None of these are Middle Eastern countries. Only about 20 percent of Muslims come from the Middle East and North Africa.

- Varieties of worldviews and devotion to Islam

Honor/shame culture verses right/wrong culture

Passionate conversations and interactions ... don't run from them

Many Muslims are open to the gospel; be open to share it with them

Can I talk openly with a Muslim about my faith? In my home growing up, all we talked about was politics and religion. That is how Muslims generally are if they come from the East and from various other Islamic cultures. In these places, people talk about what they are passionate about, and they expect you to do the same. Christians should feel free to talk about their faith with excitement and passion because Muslims are expecting it. We can feel free to talk about politics also. The key is that we not be upset if our Muslim friends get passionate in their responses. Their zeal is actually a sign of them being engaged in what you are saying.

VIDEO REFLECTIONS AND BIBLE STUDY

1. Nabeel is very clear that his goal and desire is to equip followers of Jesus to effectively share the gospel (good news) of Jesus with Muslims in a way that they can understand, receive it, and enter into a life-saving relationship with Jesus. How do you feel about this goal, and how might God use *us* in this way?

2. If you have a friend, neighbor, or family member who is Muslim, share about your relationship with this person. What about them do you most appreciate and respect? What, if anything, have you done that has opened the door for a deeper friendship and more honest conversation about faith?

Devout Muslims are supposed to try to follow Muhammad to the greatest degree possible, even to such a small detail as how they walk into the bathroom to do their ceremonial washings.

3. What struck you as Nabeel talked about all of the prayers, thoughts of Allah, and spiritual reflections that happened on a daily basis before 7:00 a.m. when he was a little boy? What is your sense of how these practices would impact a small child?

Take a moment to reflect on how your devotion to God is evident throughout your day. Think about one or two ways you connect with God naturally in the flow of your day.

4. Nabeel points out that most Muslims born and raised anywhere except the West see Islam as a part of who they are, not just something they believe. Why is it critical for us to understand this if we are going to reach out to Muslims and hope they will become followers of Jesus? If we can't realize this and respond accordingly, what kind of mistakes could we make as we seek to reach out to Muslims?

Read: Exodus 3:13–14; John 8:58–59; Hebrews 1:1–4, 8–9; Colossians 1:15–20; and Matthew 1:22–23

5. Muslims believe that Jesus is a prophet and a Messiah, but *not* God Himself. What is the problem with this belief?

What do Muslims believe about prophets? According to Muslims, 124,000 messengers, called prophets, have come to this world to lead every people group to Allah. These prophets were sent by Allah, and they include people such as Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, and Jesus.

6. Why is the belief that Jesus was God in human flesh essential to the Christian message and faith? If we removed this belief, what would happen to our faith? Why is it essential that Muslims come to see Jesus as God and not just a prophet?

How do the messages of Christianity and Islam differ? The essential message of Islam is that people ought to submit to Allah and follow him. In Christianity, the essential message is the problem of mankind . . . we have sinned and rebelled against God. In Islam, the essential message is that we are all ignorant and we have all gone our own ways. Muslims believe that if they are guided and told how to follow God (by sharia), then they can and will follow God.

Read: John 4:19–26; John 1:35–43; Matthew 1:1, 16–18; Matthew 16:13–20; and Matthew 26:59–68

7. The term *Messiah* means different things to different people. What do Muslims mean when they say Jesus was the Messiah? What do Christians mean when we say Jesus is the Messiah, and how does this differ from what Muslims mean? How is the Jewish vision of a coming Messiah different than what Christians believe?

8. Nabeel says that the heart of Islam is to submit to and obey Allah. But the heart of Christianity is to repent of sin and love God. How can these beliefs lead to different visions of God and different lives?

How do people from the East and the West see the world differently?

In the East, people tend to make decisions based on honor and shame. It doesn't really matter what you personally think is right or wrong. You should do what is socially the "right thing to do." Family, culture, and recognized authorities determine what should be done, and people tend to follow these expectations. When you do, it leads to honor. When you ignore these expectations, it leads to shame.

In the West, we tend to make decisions based on innocence and guilt. What does that mean? In the West, people tend to think in terms of right and wrong. We do what we think is right. This means if someone does something that is wrong, we tend to show compassion if we discover that they thought it was the right thing to do.

9. Tell about the home in which you were raised. Did you avoid talking about religion and politics, or was there open and vigorous conversation? Most people raised in Middle Eastern culture are very vocal, passionate, and articulate about their faith. How can this be an open door and a helpful reality for us when we want to talk about our faith? Why is it important that we not take offense if we are having a conversation with a Muslim about faith and they strongly disagree with us?

The Islamic worldview is important to understand. Basically, the way Muslims see the world, devout Muslims, is that Allah has created this world to worship and serve him.

10. There are many different kinds of Muslims. Why is it impossible to describe all Muslims with the broad stroke of a brush and one narrow depiction? Why is characterizing all Muslims as identical a dangerous practice and a hindrance to our sharing the gospel with them?

How many Muslims are there in the world? And how many Christians are there in the world?

A Pew Forum survey indicated that in 2011, there were 2.6 million Muslims in the United States, or .8 percent of the population. That percentage is projected to grow by the year 2030 to approximately 1.7 percent, or one out of every fifty people. The global statistics are much higher. There are 1.61 billion Muslims around the world today. That is a quarter of the world's population.

(cont.)

The 2012 Pew Forum survey showed that there are 243 million Christians in the United States, or 78 percent of the population. Globally, there are 2.2 billion Christians, which is 32 percent of the world's population.

11. Why is it important that we get to know each person we meet (Muslim or otherwise) and take time to hear his or her story? What kind of questions can we ask that will advance our conversations and friendships specifically with Muslim friends, neighbors, and acquaintances?

Muslims believe that Judaism slowly became corrupted, also that Christianity slowly became corrupted, and that Islam is the only incorruptible faith.

12. How can building a friendship with a Muslim, including having spiritual conversations and learning about their journey of faith, actually deepen your Christian faith?

How might this journey drive you more into prayer, the Bible, apologetics, and your love for Jesus? What are one or two steps you can take to deepen your faith in one of the areas listed above?

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to pray in any of the following directions:

- Ask God to help you, and the Christians you know, learn to see Muslims as people loved by God and in need of a Savior.
- Pray for fear to be removed and for affection to grow between Christians and Muslims.
- If you have people in your life who come from an Islamic background, pray for them by name and ask God to use you to shine His light and share His love with these people.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to give you the boldness to have vigorous and passionate spiritual conversations with the Muslims God brings into your life.
- Cry out to God for Christian parents and grandparents to take the spiritual training of the next generation seriously. Ask God to help them teach children and grandchildren to pray, know the Bible, love God, and walk close with Jesus.
- Pray for peace in the war-torn places of the world that are often filled with Muslim people.

How can some Muslims be so violent and others so peaceful if they all believe the same things and follow the same book?

Disagreements on the body of canonical literature is what causes so many different varieties of Islam. Peaceful Islam focuses on certain parts of the hadith and the Quran that encourage love and compassion. Other Muslims, such as terrorists in the Middle East, interpret the violent parts of the hadith as the ones that take precedence and the violent sections of the Quran as the ones they ought to follow. *(Note: To a certain extent, this is no different than certain Christian groups drawing on specific passages of the Bible to justify their own idiosyncratic beliefs.)*

Session One



BETWEEN SESSIONS

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take time in personal reflection to think about the following questions. Journal your responses if you like.

As he was investigating the Christian faith, Nabeel asked God to reveal Himself. If you are a follower of Jesus, how has God revealed Himself to you, spoken to you, and led you? If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, how might you invite God to reveal Himself in your life? What are ways you imagine God might show Himself to you as He has to other people?

Who walked with you as you came to know Jesus, and how did this person care for you, get to know you, and serve you along the way? How could you be more like this person?

What was unique about your journey to Jesus, and how did God show Himself to you along the way? How can your unique journey grow your compassion for those who may be traveling toward Jesus from a Muslim background?

As Nabeel looks back on his life growing up as a Muslim, he makes statements such as, “Before anything else, you represent Islam and you see yourself as a Muslim,” and “Islam was my identity.” Can you say the same about your Christian faith growing up ... or now? How might your faith grow deeper and more authentic if you saw your primary identity as being a Christian? What gets in the way of your having this kind of devotion and worldview? What could help you shift your thinking toward a more Jesus-centered worldview?

PERSONAL PRAYER JOURNEY

- Begin journaling your prayers for God to use you to share His love, grace, and truth with the people God places in your life, including Muslims.
- Write prayers of confession expressing the ways you have stereotyped people from a Muslim background, feared them, avoided them, and even had harsh feelings toward them (without ever having met them).

What are the different sects of Islam? There are various kinds of Muslims, and not all Muslims believe the same thing. Some Muslims don't even recognize other sects as being Islam. There are two major branches of Islam: Sunni Islam, which is followed by 80–85 percent of Muslims globally, and Shia Islam, which is followed by 10–13 percent of Muslims globally. The remaining 2–5 percent of Muslims follow various other sects that don't easily fit into Sunni or Shia Islam.

PERSONAL ACTIONS

Digging Deeper into the Divinity of Jesus

Take time in the coming week to study the gospel of John and discover more about the divinity of Jesus. You may want to read the whole gospel, paying particular atten-

tion to how Jesus is referred to (and refers to Himself) in language that is reserved for God alone. Look closely at some of the following passages:

Passage: **John 1:1–18**

Insights about Jesus as “God with us”...

Passage: **John 10:22–39**

Insights about Jesus as “God with us”...

Passage: **John 14:1–11**

Insights about Jesus as “God with us”...

Passage: **John 20:19–29**

Insights about Jesus as “God with us”...

Exploring Great Resources

Nabeel tells the story about how his friend David walked with him, talked with him, debated with him, and studied with him. Love and friendship grew the relationship and became the glue that held them together. David was honest about not having all the answers, but he was willing to study, research, and discover truth in partnership with Nabeel.

Over the past years many excellent online resources have emerged that can help you grow in your faith and learn to help others walk toward Jesus. One of the best is the Ravi Zacharias website (rzim.org), where you will find helpful videos, articles, and more. Explore this site and review the resources that are just a click away.

Language Matters

Language is important. We all need to learn not only our own language but how to speak intelligently with others using words they understand. If you want to have robust and meaningful conversations with Muslims, it is helpful to have some basic knowledge of the terms they use, what they mean, and how they use them. Take time to become conversant with the simple definitions listed at the start of this session. If it helps your memory, rewrite the definitions in the space provided below.

As you talk with Muslim friends, don't assume you fully comprehend these terms, and invite them to help you deepen your understanding. Ask if you are pronouncing the words correctly and let your friends help you learn more about the words' significance.

Salaat: _____

Wudhu: _____

Fajr: _____

Du'aa: _____

Muhammad: _____

Muslim: _____

Islam: _____

Sharia: _____

Hadith and Sunnah: _____

Quran: _____

