**Lesson 6: A Christian response to Islam**

John Whittington’s Bridges seminar information…

**Ten commandments for Truth Tellers**

First half with initial efforts to remind us of the end game, what’s at stake, then second half with some potential discussion questions…

1) The Battle is the Lord’s (what song in your mind? *“The battle belongs to the Lord”*)

God is sovereign, Jesus is Lord. I want to teach truth, but the whole thing is not riding on my shoulders/explanations.

Sometimes we need to ask each other this question: “Do you have nail prints in your wrists?” (No), then you are not the Savior of the World!

2) Love is the most important Christian weapon

They will know we are Christians by our love…(another song, but with more meaning now as a result of this study)

I tell you, “love your enemies, pray for them” (Matthew 5:43-44: *You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*)

Muslims are not taught to love enemies..

3) Lose battles to win wars

Morey’s article regarding the “sign” of the mole on Muhammad’s back…

Been so long we can’t be sure what was or was not on him.

This hits the Muslim as “in your face” and too direct/derogatory…

4) Different stokes for different folks

Some Muslims will be won over by debate…

Some by reading the gospels…

Some by the love of Christian friends…

A few by the mole question?

How devoted is this Muslim I just met? (Seem willing to discuss? What is background? handle disagreements? How can I help them?)

5) The Days of the Lone Ranger are over

Take help when and where you can find it…

Even academics and archeology might be helpful here…

6) Belief systems have great power to blind people!

Jim Jones, David Karesh, Marshall Applewhite, etc…

Current political landscape: as one gains power and points, more and more start to give in and “go with the flow”… (How they got to 1.6 billion)

2 Corinthians 4:4, *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Consider how it would feel if you’ve never had the gospels…  
What think if you had been taught since childhood that Christians hate Muhammad?

Muslims believe we hate Muhammad so much we changed the Bible so it no longer gives the same message as the Quran…

7) The Battle is spiritual.

Ephesians 6:12, *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

8) Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit

Pray and ask for right words…

God using healings, even dreams and visions to open the hearts and minds of Muslims.

God is always willing to work within cultural norms around the world…

9) Focus on Jesus

religions of the world have many things in common…the crucial difference is the person of Jesus Christ.

Debate and proving Quran false have their place, but all other efforts must remain in the background. Our focus needs to be on the King of Kings and Lord of Lords…

10) Know when to stop

Some people don’t want to hear…

Jesus talking about when and how to “shake the dust off your feet” and move on. Jesus was more realistic about the human condition than we are…

Luke 9:5-6, *If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” 6 So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.*

**Critical Questions in the Muslim dialogue (Potential areas of debate)**

“How do I defend the Trinity? Muslims will say this contradicts the Christian belief in one God.?”

Admit the trinity is hard to grasp…

Use the water, steam, ice…

One man is at the same time, son, husband and father…

BUT…just because something is difficult to prove or comprehend doesn’t mean it’s untrue…

Peter said Paul wrote some hard things…2 Peter 3:16, *He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

Ever listen to Big Bang Theory and not quite understand some of what they are talking about? (those guys still make Atom Bombs?) Still true!

“How do I defend the New Testament when the Muslims say there are so many different Greek manuscripts?”

Muslim trivial pursuit…

Any differences are minute and have no impact on any teaching…in reality the great harmony proves the credibility of the Word over time.

Last week’s reminder of 25,000 texts without any variants…

Remember that Muslim view of gospel rooted in blind obedience to the Quran.

Say that there is something contradictory about any prophet who would use a portion of a previous Scripture as proof of his message, but shows little awareness of the vast body of material in that same Scripture.

Muslims show little interest in serious historical investigation of the Bible and are far from open to the possibility that Muhammad may have deceived them by his own limited and distorted knowledge of Jesus.

What do I say to a Muslim who argues that the Quran is the greatest miracle performed by Allah?

1) Use the Quran to study Jesus…He is mentioned there. He did exist. Want to study Him more?

2) debate the Quran’s integrity and greatness, but know what you are talking about…(helps to have read it)

It has limited authorship, borrows heavily from other sources, does not give any real downside or weaknesses of Muhammad…It’s a bully pulpit in my opinion…

3) Have your Muslim friend read the gospel of John and ask him or her what portion of the Quran they would like for you to read…

Notice that a lot of our quotes about love in recent weeks are from John. John is a great starting point for Muslims, shows the love of God from the disciple Jesus loved!

How answer any Muslim who claims that Christians are bigoted towards Arabs because they always support Israel?

Apologize for any Western bigotry towards Arabs in general (guilty)

Admit that any sympathy for Israel has blinded us to the injustice done to Arabs by Israel…(We may sympathize, but don’t have to agree totally with either party)

The Jews misunderstand Jesus as well!

Note the pervasive hatred of Israel in Islam and see if this is consistent with the Quran teaching that Christians and Jews should be allowed freedom to practice their own religions… (Note source!)

What of the Muslim complaint that Christian women are immodest?

Point out that not all Western Cultural practices are synonymous with Christian belief…(Especially now!)

Counter with the question about the lack of freedom for Muslim women in some Arab countries…

If Muslim women like wearing veils, put in context…are they really free to do what they choose??

What if a Muslim asks me for the source of Muhammad’s teaching..say it is Satanic?

He was sincere, but sincerely wrong. I don’t think he was Satanic, but as he did not comprehend the full revelation of God in Jesus, I think he was confused on his calling as a prophet…

Lose battles, win wars…

Beverly says that in the end, he believes that Muhammad’s revelations are a product of his own dysfunctional background, the confusing things he heard about the Bible from others, and his own desire to be a religious leader..

I see that in what I read…He wanted to lead a people and knew what their itching ears wanted to hear…

What if a Muslim asks me something about Islam and I have no idea…

Don’t panic. No one can know everything…

Ask them to clarify or help explain…

**Oral/Written origins of the Quran**

**Narration of the Quran to the Companions**

The revelation of the Quran was not an isolated event in time. It was a constant stream of verses descending to Muhammad ﷺ throughout the 23 years of his prophethood in Makkah and Madinah. (610-632) The Prophet ﷺ appointed numerous Companions of his to serve as scribes, writing down the latest verses as soon as they were revealed. Mu’awiya ibn Abu Sufyan and Zaid bin Thabit were among the scribes who had this duty. For the most part, new verses would be written on scraps of bone, hide, or parchment, since paper had not yet been imported from China. It is important to note that Muhammad ﷺ would have the scribes read back the verses to him after writing them down so he can proofread and make sure there were no errors.1

To further ensure that there were no errors, Muhammad ﷺ ordered that no one records anything else, not even his words, hadith, on the same sheet as Quran. Regarding the sheets that the Quran was being written down on, he stated “and whoever has written anything from me other than the Quran should erase it”2. This was done to ensure that no other words were accidentally thought to be part of the text of the Quran.

It is important to understand, however, that physical writing down of the Quran was not the main way that the Quran was recorded. Arabia in the 600s was an oral society. Very few people could read and write, thus huge emphasis was placed on ability to memorize long poems, letters, and other messages. Before Islam, Makkah was a center of Arabic poetry. Annual festivals were held every year that brought together the best poets from all over the Arabian Peninsula. Exuberant attendees would memorize the exact words that their favorite poets recited and quote them years and decades later.

Thus, in this type of oral society, the vast majority of the Companions learned and recorded the Quran by memorization. In addition to their natural ability to memorize, the rhythmic nature of the Quran made its memorization much easier.

The Quran was not narrated to just a few select Companions. It was heard and memorized by hundreds and thousands of people, many of them travelers to Madinah. Thus, chapters and verses of the Quran quickly spread during the life of the Prophet ﷺ to all corners of the Arabian Peninsula. Those who had heard verses from the Prophet ﷺ would go and spread them to tribes far away, who would also memorize them. In this way, the Quran achieved a literary status known among the Arabs as mutawatir. Mutawatir means that it was so vastly disseminated to so many different groups of people, who all had the same exact wording, that it is inconceivable that that any one person or group could have falsified it. Some sayings of the Prophet ﷺ are known to be authentic through it being mutawatir, but the entire Quran itself is accepted as being mutawatir, because of its wide spread during the life of the Prophet ﷺ through oral means.

**Collection After the Death of the Prophet ﷺ**

We have thus far seen that the way the Quran was taught to the numerous Companions of the Prophet ﷺ prevented it from being subject to the protection of a few people. As verses became widespread across the Islamic world, it was impossible for those verses to be changed without Muslims in other parts of the world noticing and correcting them. Furthermore, during the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the angel Jibreel would recite the entire Quran with him once a year, during Ramadan. When the Quran was finished being revealed near the end of the Prophet ﷺ’s life, he made sure that numerous companions knew the entire Quran by heart.

During the reigns of the first caliphs, however, a need to compile all the verses into a central book arose. Taking preemptive action, the caliphs who ruled the Muslim world after the death of the Prophet ﷺ feared that if the number of people who had the Quran memorized dipped too low, the community would be in danger of losing the Quran forever. As a result, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, who ruled from 632 to 634, ordered a committee be organized, under the leadership of Zaid bin Thabit, to collect all the written pieces of Quran that were spread throughout the Muslim community. The plan was to collect them all into one central book that could be preserved in case the people who had the Quran memorized died out.

Zaid was very meticulous about who he accepted verses from. Because of the enormous responsibility of not accidentally altering the words of the Quran, he only accepted pieces of parchment with Quran on them had to have been written down in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ and there had to be two witnesses who can attest to that fact.3 These fragments of Quran that he collected were each compared with the memorized Quran itself, ensuring that there was no discrepancy between the written and oral versions.

When the task was completed, a finalized book of all the verses was compiled and presented to Abu Bakr, who secured it in the archives of the young Muslim state in Madinah. It can be assumed with certainty that this copy that Abu Bakr had matched exactly the words that Muhammad ﷺ had spoken because of the numerous memorizers of Quran present in Madinah, coupled with the disseminated pieces of parchment on which it was recorded. Had there been discrepancies, the people of Madinah would have raised the issue. There is, however, no record of any opposition to Abu Bakr’s project or its outcome.

**Clay Bird origin? (The infancy gospel of Thomas)**

The text describes the life of the child Jesus, with fanciful, and sometimes malevolent, supernatural events, comparable to the [trickster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trickster) nature of the god-child in many a [Greek myth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology). One of the episodes involves Jesus making clay birds, which he then proceeds to bring to life, an act also attributed to Jesus in [Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [5:110](http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/005-qmt.php" \l "005.110),[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infancy_Gospel_of_Thomas" \l "cite_note-hartsem-1) although Jesus's age at the time of the event is not specified in the Quran. In another episode, a child disperses water that Jesus has collected. Jesus, aged one, then curses him, which causes the child's body to wither into a corpse. Another child dies when Jesus curses him when he apparently accidentally bumps into Jesus, throws a stone at Jesus, or punches Jesus (depending on the translation).

**10 Commandments for Truth Tellers:**

1) The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the most important Christian \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ battles to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wars.

4) Different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5) The days of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are over.

6) Belief systems have great \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people.

7) The battle is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

8) Ask for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

9) Focus on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

10) Know when to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Potential areas of debate:**

*How do I defend the Trinity?*

*“How do I defend the New Testament when the Muslims say there are so many different Greek manuscripts?”*

*What do I say to a Muslim who argues that the Quran is the greatest miracle performed by Allah?*

*How do I answer any Muslim who claims that Christians are bigoted towards Arabs because they always support Israel?*

*What of the Muslim complaint that Christian women are immodest?*

*What if a Muslim asks me for the source of Muhammad’s teaching..say it is Satanic?*

*What if a Muslim asks me something about Islam and I have no idea…*

**My Notes**