Discipling Muslim background believers from a Folk Islamic background

Many of these brothers and sisters find it hard to let go of their occult practices and this hinders their spiritual growth. Here are some examples:

- short phrases that invoke God's blessings or that have a magical effect
- dreams of being attacked by demons
- worrying about the evil eye being placed on them or being cursed in some way
- having Qur'anic verses and pictures of Mecca and Medina's holy mosques displayed in their home to protect them from evil
- wearing amulets – even a cross – to protect them from evil
- many other Folk Islamic practices

The root problem of many of these practices is:

1. The perception that God is only a spectator and never intervenes in the lives of people. He doesn't care about their needs, their worries and all the common problems of life.
2. It is a very major step for them to abandon folk religion and practices. Often after believing in Jesus and abandoning folk practices, they later return to them secretly during a time of persecution, hardship and difficulty.
3. Often it needs special prayer for deliverance and renouncing of these practices. But this needs to be frequently gone over again and again.

I will share four Bible studies you can use. I hope this will help to lay a Biblical foundation. The passages are chosen to show:

- How Jesus dealt with Satan and evil spirits
- That we can learn to trust in the supreme power of Jesus by looking at the experiences of individuals in the Bible
- That God gives those who fail the chance to turn back again and stop their evil practices

Study one: God's laws regarding folk practices

1. **Passages:** Ex. 20:3-6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Mt. 6:24; Lev. 19:31, 20:6; Deut. 18:10-12; Gal. 5.19-25
2. **Preliminary thoughts for the discipler:**

   Common practices that he/she may have been involved in would include:

   - using the evil eye
   - practicing sorcery
   - wearing amulets as spirit repellents
   - going to a medium/marabout
   - visiting a saint's tomb and praying there
   - visiting shrines to pray
   - trying to divine the future by using rituals
   - using actions/words to provide protection from evil spirits

It is rare to find a believer from this background who hasn't been involved in at least one of these practices. So it is necessary for him/her to see that what they had thought was 'normal' is forbidden by God. Be careful that your own jewellery – i.e. a cross – and objects in your own home are not perceived by others as being worn or used by you for protection.

Part One

Ex. 20:3-6: the first two commandments

- Why does God want His people to worship only Him?
- How does one serve someone/something other than God? What actions would be observed?
- v. 5: How do my actions influence the next generation? How do children learn how to practise religion? Describe some actions that would be considered to be serving Satan.

1 Tim. 2:5

- What would God say about praying before any image or person or the tomb of a saint?
- What would God say about going to someone who claims special powers of intercession?
- Who is the only person who can intercede on our behalf before God?

Mt. 6:24

- How does this fit with the first two commandments?
- Why is it impossible to serve two masters at the same time?
- Why does God want believers to serve only Him?

Lev. 19:31, 20:6; Deut. 18:10-12

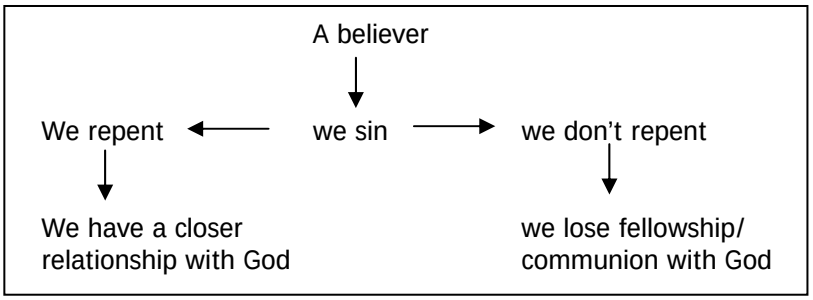
- What are some of the ways in which people seek to know the future?
- What are some of the things that people do when they seek help for problems – sickness, fear, bad luck or fear of the unknown?
- When someone goes to a medium or uses a magic charm, what does this indicate about their belief in God?
- What does God say about these actions?
- Why does He want these things completely removed from their life?
- Look at the story of Eve where she was tempted to mistrust and disobey God. (Gen. 3:1-7) Using this example, what do you think Satan would say to a believer who used to be involved in these practices?
- How does using a medium/marabout defile a person? What does this reveal about their trust in a loving, caring God?
- The penalty in Lev. 20:6 is very severe. What does this show about the severity of this sin?
- What does it mean for God to set His face against someone?
- The Deut. 18 passage lists specific practices to be avoided. What are some practices considered ordinary today that are in the list?

Gal. 5: 19-25

- Why does God want believers to avoid idolatry, sorcery, etc.?
- How does Satan use enmity, jealousy, disputes etc. to tempt the believer to return to the use of magic, sorcery, the evil eye etc.?
- Why do these things hurt the believer?
- How can you avoid being caught by the deeds of the flesh?
- Verse 16: what does it mean to live in the Spirit?
- What is the evidence of living by the Spirit?
- Why can't we live by the flesh and by the Spirit at the same time?
- Why does God want the believer to have the fruit of the Spirit?

Part Two: King Saul returns to the occult – 1 Sam. 28:3-25

- How had Saul obeyed God? (v. 2)
- Imagine the scene and describe it. Why was Saul afraid? How big was the army? What did Saul do? Why didn't God answer Saul? (see the story in 1 Sam. 15:1-35) If a believer prays and doesn't receive an answer, what should he do according to 1 Jn. 1:9?
- **Verse 7:** What did Saul do when he didn't receive an answer from God? What did his friends do in this situation? What does this tell us about the kind of friends we should choose to go to for advice during difficult times?
- **Verse 8:** Why did Saul disguise himself? How can you tell that Saul knew he was doing something wrong? Psalm 139 tells us why we can't hide anything from God.
- **Verses 9 & 12:** What did God do to give Saul opportunities to stop his sin? The woman recognised Saul. How does someone seeing you disobey God, help you to be more obedient?
- **Verses 10, 13-14:** What did Saul do with his God-given opportunities to avoid the sin of disobedience? Why did Saul reject these opportunities?
- **Verses 15-25:** What happened when Saul persisted in his sin? Satan tries to persuade us to sin, but he never tells us of the consequences of sin. Why not? What do you think Saul would have done if he had known the consequences of his visit to the medium? Why are believers tempted to return to folk practices? What sort of temptations does Satan use? How can we defend ourselves when we are tempted? See what Jesus did when Satan tempted Him – Mt. 4:1-11.
- Use diagram something like this:



- 1 Jn. 1:9 does not set any time limits as to when we should confess our sin and be restored to righteousness. But the longer we wait, the more difficult it becomes to repent. How does Satan use that waiting time? Is this why it is more difficult to repent?

Application to the believer.

1. God's first commandment is . . . . . .
2. As evidence that I worship only God, I will . . . . . .
3. Imagine a circumstance in which Satan will tempt you to return to some folk religious practice. Use the stories of Eve and Saul as examples of Satan's temptations. How would your answer be different if you were tempted in a similar way?
4. I will not wear anything or have anything in my home that is believed by others to have magical powers because . . . . . .
5. The fruit of the Spirit that is seen in my life is a demonstration of my trust in God.
6. Write out 1 Jn. 1:9 and memorise it. Once I have resisted temptation, I will not have that temptation again – true or false?
7. How can I be sure that the advice of my friends is not in conflict with God's Word?
8. When I seek God's direction, but don't seem to receive an answer from Him, I will . . . . . .

. . . . . .

Note to disciplers:
You might have to review the life of Saul and describe in a few sentences: the great beginning, his disobedience in 1 Sam. 13 and 15 and its results – separation from God – the lack of steps by Saul to restore that relationship. Satan knew Saul's weakness and tempted him when he knew Saul was tired and hungry. We need to know when we are vulnerable. The concept of shame and bringing shame on one's family is very important. So it is easy to see why Saul disguised himself so he wouldn't be recognised.

The Believers Armour and how it works Eph. 6:10-20

In Genesis 3 we met the serpent who is the evil one. Later in the Bible he is called Satan or the Devil. With him and under him are many evil spirits. The believer faces a continual battle of choice either to follow God or to follow these evil powers – Rom. 7:15-20.

Just as physical armour (a flak jacket and helmet) protects a soldier going into a physical war, so the believer needs spiritual armour as he also is engaged in a spiritual war. The new believer needs to understand the purpose of each piece of armour. With our spiritual armour in place we can protect ourselves from the evil spiritual powers. And with our spiritual weapons, we can defend ourselves when the attacks come.

Paul was writing in the first century when many people would have been familiar with the Roman army. Roman armies learned how to fight in multiple units – centuries (i.e. 100) or in legions (5-6 thousand). A soldier very rarely went into battle alone. The strength of the whole legion was dependent on every soldier being fit, trained, in his battle armour, in the right position and ready for battle. So the new believer should realise that he/she is just one of many in this battle against evil. He should know that he has the responsibility to put on the armour God has provided so that he is not wounded or defeated in battle. It is a choice to put on one's battle armour daily.

In discipling, it greatly helps if you have a 'Playmobil' model of a Roman soldier or knight in armour. If not, a drawing would do – even if it is a stick figure. Several soldiers in line is even better! All of them should be in armour and with their swords!

At the end of this lesson the believer should be able to describe each piece of armour and its use in defence and attack. He/she should be strongly encouraged to put on this armour every morning as part of his/her "quiet time". In the case of bad dreams it is good to put on the armour just before sleeping. The image of a prepared soldier, in an army, ready for battle or surprise attack every minute of the day or night is a very powerful one!

Eph. 6:10-20

vs. 10-13

- What form of verbs is used and why?
- Why does Paul want the believer to use the armour of God?
- Why is it necessary to use the full armour?
- What happens when you forget to put on one piece?
- Who are we fighting against as believers?
- Is the fight a temporary battle or a constant war?
- What happens when a soldier disobeys his commanding officer and doesn't prepare himself for battle by putting on his flak jacket and helmet and carrying his weapons?
- Infantry soldiers usually go into battle in the company of many others – platoons, companies, battalions etc. How does this image help the individual believer in his battle against ***"the principalities and powers……."***?

vs. 14-17 **The Belt**

- Why is it essential to hold all your equipment and armour close to the body while going into battle?

- According to John 8:31-32, where does truth come from?
- Why is truth so important in keeping protective armour and offensive weapons close?

v. 14 **The Breastplate**

- What vital organs does the breastplate cover?
- The "heart" is often seen as the centre of our emotions: love, hate, jealousy, envy, pity, happiness etc. Why is it so vital for a believer to protect his heart/his emotional life?
- What is righteousness? (Look up Mt. 5:6)
- How does the believer obtain righteousness? (Gal. 2:16)
- How does a heart (emotions) protected by righteousness, protect the believer from evil?

v. 15 **The Shoes**

- What happens to a soldier in battle if he has no shoes or if he loses his shoes?

  [Think of the importance of a sure footing – shoes speak of the need of security – i.e. no sliding and slipping.]
- What is the definition of the word "Gospel"?
- How will it make a difference in a battle situation if the believer is wearing ***"the shoes of the Gospel of peace"***?
- How will this believer wearing these shoes affect other "soldiers" on either side in the front line?

v. 16 **The Shield:** a shield can be moved around and up-and-down in order to deflect incoming arrows. It is used to protect vulnerable body parts not covered by the fixed armour or to double the protection of those parts that are covered.

- Heb. 11:1, 6 – What is faith?
- Name some of the flaming arrows that Satan might use in attacking a believer.
- Why does Satan attack the believer from more than one direction?
- How can the shield of faith protect from these attacks?
- How does faith help the believer learn to depend on God?

v. 17 **The Helmet:** this protects the head. Our thoughts and beliefs are in the mind. This is a very important part of us spiritually. A wound here can kill you!

- Why do dictators or revolutionaries try to get control of the news media as fast as possible?
- Why do they want control all the information received by the citizens? Why do we sometimes call this "the battle for the mind"?
- What is the salvation that Paul speaks of that will guard and protect our minds?
- [A mind constantly preoccupied with thoughts of our great salvation is kept safe from the onslaught of the enemy.]
- See Is. 26:3 and Phil. 4:7,8
- In Scripture Satan is called ***"The destroyer"*** (1 Cor. 10:10) and he frequently wants to destroy our sanity. See also 2 Cor. 7:5. Fear can be very damaging.
- Another way, Satan attacks is in **wrong thinking** – see 1 Tim. 4:1. Jesus said, ***"Be careful what you hear. Many will come in my name and will deceive many."*** Mt. 24:4, 5.
- How do you think people in your culture and generation are being brainwashed?
- Note John's experience in a slave mine on Patmos and his revelation of Jesus in Rev. 1.

v. 17 **The Sword:** This is both an offensive (attacking) weapon and a defensive weapon.

- See Heb. 4:12. What does the Word of God do for the believer?
- How will Scripture you have memorised help you when Satan attacks you or when you need to attack demonic forces?

- Why do some governments try and prevent believers from reading the Bible?

vs. 18-20

- What does Paul say should be done in addition to wearing the full armour of God?
- Some have likened prayer to artillery or missiles. How does prayer resemble these weapons?
- For whom should we pray? (v. 18)
- How should we pray for others who may have an opportunity to speak about Jesus?

Each soldier has to put on his own armour before going out to meet the enemy. You have to put it on yourself. Others can't do it for you. Putting on our armour daily is a matter of obedience and it is a matter of choice. We must know what will happen to us if we go into battle weaponless and defenceless. The armour should be worn whenever battle/attack is anticipated – which is any time! Satan can attack even at night, so go to bed with your armour on! The enemy has an easy victory when we are unprepared and caught off guard.

Effective soldiers train keeping both offensive and defensive weapons in good working order. They are ready instantly to go to their battle station.

Homework

1. Write out and memorize Heb. 4:13.

2. To protect myself from the evil one I will:

   a) Study the teachings of Jesus

   b)

   c)

   d)

   e)

   f) Pray

3. Explain how each of these protects the believer:

- Truth
- Righteousness
- The Good News of peace
- Faith
- Salvation
- The Word of God
- Offensive/attacking prayer

The power of Jesus over evil and physical illness

Most of the religious life of a Muslim is spent trying to protect himself (and for women in particular, herself) and his family from the influence of evil spirits, jinnun and other supernatural forces of evil. These evil forces are very real in the world around those involved in folk religion. Since a Muslim's worldview of God has been of a disinterested person who is remote. He/she will need much help in understanding that Jesus really cares about him/her and that Jesus is more powerful than any or all evil spirits and evil forces – such as the evil eye. The evil spirits must obey His authority. You, as the discipler, should use this Bible study to show that the Lord Jesus overcame evil in His own life when He was tempted and He overcame the evil in the lives of others. The new believer should learn that being tempted is not a sin.

In studying Mt. 4:1-11, try and get the disciple to recognise that the temptation came when Jesus was in a very difficult environment. He was alone. He was tired and He was hungry. Help him/her to use this in identifying **when** he/she is most likely to be tempted by the devil – often when alone and when physically and spiritually weak.

Satan attacked Jesus in several ways:

The time factor

- Soon after His baptism – our fiercest temptations come after our greatest times of blessing
- When He was alone
- When He was physically weakened – Satan takes advantage of all our weak moments, our tiredness, our sickness etc.

It was a conflict with a real and powerful enemy – Satan

This might be a good time to give an overview of the Bible's teaching about this real, highly intelligent and powerful personality.

God originally created Satan with great power and intelligence (Ez. 28:12-19; Is. 14:12-14). Like all spiritual beings, he had free will and through pride he rebelled and became God's greatest enemy. Look up and compare Lk. 10:18; Jn. 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.

The Tempter chose three lines of attack

According to 1 Jn. 2:16 there are three lines of temptation. Eve was tempted by these three attacks:

- The ***"lust of the flesh"*** (Lk. 4:2-3) – a bodily temptation
- The ***"lust of the eye"*** (Lk. 4:5-7) – an aesthetic temptation
- The ***"pride of life"*** (Lk. 4:9-11) – an intellectual temptation

i.e. attacks on body, mind and spirit

Oswald Chambers said, **"Temptation is the testing by an alien power of the possessions held by a person. Jesus held within Himself His unspotted sanctity and the fact that He was the King of men and the Saviour of the World and Satan was an alien power that came to test Him on these lines."**

A believer who has memorised Scripture will be carrying his 'sword' with him at all times and will be able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to use this Scripture as a 'sword' to defeat Satan.

The power of Jesus over evil – Mt. 4:1-11

- What circumstance was Jesus in?
- Why does Satan attack when we are physically or emotionally vulnerable?
- Look at verses 4-5, 8-9. What kind of temptation did Satan use?
- How does Satan tempt the believer in the same way today?
- What are some examples of recent temptations you have had?
- How did Jesus respond to these temptations?
- What did Satan do each time Jesus quoted a verse from the Bible?
- How do you think Jesus was able to quote Scripture with each temptation?
- How can memorised Scripture verses help you when Satan tempts you?

Look at v. 6. Satan misuses a verse of Scripture as part of the temptation. How can you be sure you are using the verses as God intended and not out of context?

Matthew 28:18

- What had Jesus received?
- Who gave this to Him?

Note: Jesus received from God the very things being offered by Satan in Mt. 4. Only God had the power to give them to Jesus. Although Satan claimed this power, he didn't have it! How can this thought help you resist temptation?

Mark 5: 1-20

Describe the scene.

- What was wrong with the man?
- Where did he live?
- Why were people afraid of him?
- Why wasn't Jesus afraid of him? (v. 8)
- Who was living in this man?
- How do you know that they recognised Jesus? (v. 7)
- How did the evil spirits acknowledge that Jesus had authority over them? (v. 7, 10, 12)

Acts 16: 16-18.

Describe the scene. We have already seen that God forbids the use of divination.

- What kind of spirit was living in this woman?
- How do you know that the spirit recognised Paul?
- Who has power over the evil spirit?
- Where was Jesus when this miracle occurred?
- What does this tell you about Jesus' power over all the evil in the world today?

Application

1. Jesus quoted a verse from Deut. 6:13 when he was tempted. Look it up. Memorise it and write it down several times without looking.
2. Satan is most likely to tempt the believer when he/she is ……..
3. When I feel tempted to use charms or magic to defend myself against evil spirits, I will do as Jesus did and …….
4. What would God say to someone who used a verse of Scripture or God's name as a form of magic – as a talisman to ward off evil?

The power of Jesus over physical illness – Mark 5:25-34 and Leviticus 15:25-30

This is a very powerful story – especially for women. Help all disciples to understand what this woman's life must have been like during her 12 years of illness. Islam has much the same laws regarding the menstrual cycle. There is a Hadith that says that women are deficient in religion compared to men and one reason is that menstruation makes a woman unclean. She cannot pray at this time and so, compared to men, women have far less chance of gaining merit.

Help your disciple to imagine the difficulties in this woman's life. Help him/her to understand the great courage needed for this woman to come forward and confess what she had done.

Discuss what practices local women would have used to attempt to 'cure' this illness. Emphasise that in this story it was her **faith** that healed her and not a touch of a magic robe. Also point out that no cause is given for the illness. The woman doesn't appear to think the cause was demonic.

Jesus took time to make sure the woman understood that she was healed by her faith in Him and it was not His garment that healed her. New believers are often tempted to use amulets and charms and potions for protection or cures. Spend plenty of time to make sure your disciples understand that healing comes from God without any aid of magic, evil spirit repellents etc.

God created the whole field of medicine. He placed in various plants and animals (sponges for example) a large variety of chemicals that have healing properties. God guides doctors and

nurses in their care and gives them the motivation to continually improve. Most people who are sick are healed through the use of medicine that was created by God. God does heal people miraculously – i.e. by means that can't be explained medically – as a sign that points to Himself as a God of care, concern and love for each person, but He also expects His people to use what He has provided. In Scripture there is no teaching that we should refuse medical treatment while praying for a miracle. One temptation for new believers is Satan's temptation to refuse medical treatment in the hope of a miracle. The miracle doesn't happen, faith is destroyed and the believer is in bondage again.

A secondary teaching in this lesson for both male and female disciples is the value of women in God's eyes. The New Testament demonstrates that the Lord Jesus cares for women and considers women to be persons of worth. So this lesson should help all disciples to appreciate that women are loved and valued in God's Kingdom. For many new disciples this will be very new and very different to what they understood from their previous worldview.

Mark 5: 22-34

- What is the setting of this story?
- What is the woman's medical problem?
- Look up Leviticus 15:19-27 and describe her life over the 12 year period
- How did her life compare to that of a Muslim woman today with the same problem?
- What did she do to be healed during the 12 years?
- What would a Muslim woman do today to be healed in a similar situation?
- Why didn't this woman just stop Jesus on the street and asked to be healed? [Think of her status, the crowd and the religious laws of Leviticus.]
- Why did she touch Jesus' garment?
- What happened?
- Where did the power that healed her come from?
- Was the power in the robe or in Jesus himself?
- Can a piece of material or any object carry power?
- Why do you think Jesus stopped and talked with the woman?
- Why did Jesus have her come forward and tell her story in public?
- How did Jesus address the woman?
- What does this title signify to you?
- How does Jesus' knowledge of the law in Leviticus make His acceptance even more powerful?
- What would any other man have done if she had touched him?
- How was this woman healed?
- What caused her to be healed?
- Did Jesus need the help of an object, a potion/substance or a person to heal this woman?
- Does Jesus ever need this kind of help?

In today's world we have medicine, doctors, hospitals etc. How is the use of medicine different from using such things as magic, charms and objects?

Look back at the beginning of the story. Jesus was in a hurry. What does His stopping to take care of this woman tell you about Jesus? What did the people around Jesus think of Him stopping? How does knowing that Jesus takes such care of an individual help you?

Application

1. Write out and memorise Mark 10:27.
2. When I am tempted to use magic, an object or a substance to heal me from an illness, I will ……..
3. When my family or my friends give me or my family and amulet to wear, I will ……..
4. Imagine that you are the woman described in Mark 5. Describe how you feel when Jesus calls you 'daughter'.

God helps the believer who faces temptation

We have learned why believers should not use magic charms, amulets etc. We have looked at the primary defence of the believer – the armour of God. We have also looked at how the Lord Jesus experienced temptation, His power over evil spirits and some examples showing that Jesus has the power to heal but magic objects do not have such power.

King Saul's experience demonstrates that although Saul removed all mediums from the country, yet when he was in trouble, instead of repenting and renewing his relationship with God, he went to a medium.

It is important to notice that Saul was physically tired. This made him very vulnerable. We need to be aware of when we are vulnerable.

This last study is designed to help the believer who is in a crisis and is facing a temptation involving the occult:

Matthew 6: 25-34

- How does this passage relate to the stresses of life that cause us to be tempted to use magic, charms etc.?
- What should the believer be doing?
- How can the believer learn to depend on God? (v. 33)
- Why should the believer seek God's Kingdom and righteousness and why is this so very important?

1 Corinthians 10:13

- Who is tempted to disobey God?
- What promises are given in this verse?
- How does this verse relate to the temptation of returning to the occult?
- Can you remember some examples we have looked at when God provided opportunities to escape temptation?
    - ✧ Saul – 1 Samuel 28:3-35
    - ✧ Jesus – Matthew 4:1-11
- Did each person use his God-given way of escape?
- What happened to each person?
- Describe a time when God provided you with a way to escape temptation.

Romans 8:26

- How does the Holy Spirit help the believer?
- Satan knows our weaknesses. Who else knows them?
- How does this verse relate to 1 Cor. 10:13?

1 John 1:9

- When a believer disobeys God what should he/she do?
- Why is this important?
- What happens to a believer who doesn't confess and repent?
- What promise from God is found in this verse?

Galatians 5:22-26

- In a dictionary look up the definition of each 'fruit' – love, joy, peace, patience etc.
- How can you tell when a believer is living by the Spirit?
- What is it like to be with a believer who lives by the Holy Spirit?
- How does this passage relate to the use of folk-religious practices?

Application

1. Memorise 1 Corinthians 10:13
2. Choose a time when Satan tempted you. Now list the opportunities God provided to help you resist the temptation.
3. Learn by heart three promises given to you by God that you have found in this section.