

Monday: Genesis 21:9-20; 25:7-9. Islam is the youngest of the world's 5 major religions, so it's not mentioned in the Bible. But they trace their ancestry to Ishmael, Abraham's son through Hagar. Isaac is Abraham's son through Sarah. In today's reading, God's mercy and love kept Hagar and her son Ishmael alive. The Hebrew people included these stories in their sacred history despite the messy and sometimes hate-filled relations between Middle Eastern peoples. How might God's attitude toward both Ishmael and Isaac, and their coming together, help to point to a path toward greater peace today?

Tuesday: Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:24-26. A Muslim is "one who is submitted (to Allah)." Christians are to make themselves a "living sacrifice." In the ancient world, most people made sacrifices to some god. If that were your background, how would you need to shift your thinking and acting to respond to Paul's call to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice? In what ways are you willing to put yourself, your life, "on the altar" to live daily for God?

Wednesday: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Matthew 6:5-14. Muslims pray 5 times a day, facing Mecca. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples was not meant to simply be something we repeat once a week in church. It was a model for an unbroken inner link with a God in whose love we trust. Paul's counsel is to "pray continually" - with words or just groans (Romans 8:26). How can you cultivate a deeper prayer life? How can Paul's words guide you to a better, richer life with God?

Thursday: Matthew 25:31-45. Muslims and Christians agree - the poor and the marginalized are to be cared for. Methodism's founder John Wesley used the phrase "comprehensive charity" to define the lifestyle taught by Jesus. What are the main ways you are involved in honoring God by serving others? Consider making your service more "comprehensive" by serving in a way you never have before. Maybe that's at the Clothing Closet. Maybe it's being reader in church, or a greeter, or helping out at Friday Night Arts.

Friday: 2 Timothy 3: 16 - 17. On Sunday, Rick shared some ideas about how Muslims view their sacred writing, the Quran, and how Christians view the Bible. How do you see the Bible? Is everything in there absolutely true and without error? How do you understand some of the challenging parts of the Bible, such as commands in the Old Testament that seem to promote violence? Have you ever used the 4 aspects of the quadrilateral (scripture, tradition, reason and experience) to "hear" God's voice?

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