

Modern Problems 2: ISIS, ISL, Islamic State

Scriptures: Matthew 5-7

January 18, 2015

Please note: This week's study guide is brief and designed to be used alongside the additional printed materials handed out on Sunday and posted on the church's website: www.rumcweb.org.

Midweek Provocative Questions

- How might my anger and fear be affecting my perception of Islamic people – people of the Muslim faith?
- How does anger and fear shape public perceptions and prejudice?

SERMON POINTS/OUTLINE

- Historical Info (as described by Peter Surran in November 2, 2014 *FaithLink*): "ISIS began as an Al-Qaida off-shoot in Iraq following the US invasion in 2003. It is made up of Sunni Muslims, a minority group in Iraq. In 2006, the group's second leader, Abu Ayyub al-Masri changed the name of the group from Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) to ISIL in order to highlight the group's territorial ambitions."
- Media, world leaders and the organization itself use 3 different names for ISIS, depending on translation of Arabic word *al-Sham*: ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria); ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant); Islamic State (current ISIL language to indicate goal to establish an official Islamic State)
- Take care when characterizing another religion based on one or two verses of scripture – theirs or ours.
- Three Simple Rules: Do no harm. Do all the good you can. Stay in love with God.

A Guide for Daily Reading and Meditation

A Prayer for Every Day: God of peace, in this world so full of conflict, help us to learn from you how to strive for what is important, without turning to violence. Teach all nations to turn to the ways of justice and peace, that the many peoples of this world may live as one family on earth. Amen.¹

SUNDAY – Review and reflect on the midweek questions (above) in light of today's worship

✠

MONDAY

Read pages 1 and 2 in *FaithLink*, volume 20, number 27, found in the printed resources for this week and at www.rumcweb.org. Read through the section entitled "The World Responds."

- Consider the different names for the organization. What is the significance of the desire to be known as the Islamic State? Compare that to our conversation last week on the desire on the part of both Israel and Palestine to become an independent state – and recognized by the world as such.
- What are some of the horrible acts that you have heard of the group committing?
- How has the world responded to these actions?
- In the media, what has been the most widely covered response?
- What thoughts or feelings do you have about the statements made by Muslim clerics? What surprises you, inspires you, or challenges you about the statements.

End your devotional time today by writing a prayer for our Muslim neighbors.

✠

¹ Prayer of Confession written by Ruth C. Duck, is reprinted by permission of the publisher from *Touch Holiness*, ed. Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi. Copyright © 1990, The Pilgrim Press.

TUESDAY

Read *The Sermon on the Mount*, Matthew 5 – 7 (3 chapters)

As you read, note the portions of this important sermon by Jesus that you think are particularly instructive for you on this topic. When you finish reading, reflect on this passage, using the following questions and the notes that you took, and jot your thoughts in your journal:

- What does this passage say to you about God?
- What does this passage say to you about God's intentions for the world?
- How might the passage relate ISIL (and to similar world issues)?
- How does the passage challenge your thinking on the issue?



WEDNESDAY

Read from the *FaithLink*, page 3, "Diversity Within Islam."

- How do you respond to the information about this diversity?
- What similarities do you see between this diversity and diversity in Christianity?
- Why do you think peacemakers would consider engaging with Muslims from the Sufi, or mystical, branch of Islam as a means to promote peace?



THURSDAY

We have been hearing on the news more and more reports that young people are being radicalized and recruited for ISIL. It is hard for us to understand the appeal. On Sunday, I mentioned how world religious leaders are seeking to "dissuade youth from joining the Islamic State ranks by developing an alternative world view that counters the group's religious claims."² Young people and others who are marginalized or desperate whether U.S. citizens or in other countries, are vulnerable to being controlled by others who offer a compelling vision or way out of their situation.

Read the story *ISIS, Youth and Psychological Warfare* found in the printed packet for this week, at www.rumcweb.org, or at <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/5458/isis-youth-and-markpsychologicalmark-warfare>. Take the few minutes to view the linked video interview of a young Kurdish boy who was kidnapped and "converted" to see ISIL as "right."

- Why might this boy have been so easily swayed by his captors?
- What might make our own young people susceptible to this kind of coercion?



FRIDAY

Today, use your devotional time to read more of the material provided in the packet and explore some of the other scriptures listed in the *FaithLink* sidebar called "Core Bible Passages."

~ Rev. Vivian McCarthy, Pastor
Reisterstown UMC
January 18, 2015

² Religious Leaders Try to Cope with Islamic State Attacks, by Kathryn Marchocki. Published at <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/5440/religious-leaders-try-to-cope-with-islamic-state-attacks>