Study Guide – *Just Women, Winter 2016*

By Reverend Dr. Beth Rupe

**Introduction**

Welcome to *Just Women*! We hope this leader’s guide will help you plan meaningful study sessions using the Winter 2016 issue of this magazine.

Cathy A. Malchiodi in *The Soul’s Palette: Drawing on Art’s Transformative Powers for Health and Well-Being* states, “Art’s true function is to inspire us, mirror our thoughts and embody our emotions. When words are not enough, we turn to image and symbols to speak to us. They are a conduit to all we contain within and a way of reflecting and recounting where we have been, where we are, and where we are going.”¹ Sharing this understanding of art and creativity, the 2016 Winter edition of *Just Women* invites us to celebrate our creative nature. It asks us to consider how the creative spirit communicates the truth of God’s word as we engage the Spirit of God in unique and diverse ways. It invites us to think outside the box and imagine what is possible as we connect to God and others.

In preparing for the study sessions outlined here, have an individual subscription for each woman in your group. If you need more magazines, go to [http://www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org), and follow the link to *Just Women*.

The four sessions in this study guide will ask your group to play, to explore, and to express your creative natures, it will seek to inspire you to imagine what God can do. Read through the Winter 2016 edition and familiarize yourself with how the theme of creativity is developed in the articles. Ask your group members to read the article that you will be focusing on *before* your meetings so everyone will be prepared to participate in the study.
Session 1

Supplies

Bibles, Copies of Just Women, paper plates, crayons and colored pencils, magazines glue, sheet of newsprint or large piece of paper and a marker

Prior to your group meeting have members read the article “To Whom Much is Given” Artist Follow Call to Create a Better World” by Julie Young pages 4 – 8. Ask specific members to be ready to report back on the gifts of Carol Bass, LaVerne Thorpe, Jesse Decker Smith, Patty Fitzpatrick, Julia Rodrigues Jones, Gail Theissen, and Yeahwa Choi Lee. Ask them to be ready to identify how these women use their gifts for the edification, building up, of the church.

Ice Breaker

Background

Ignatius of Loyola was born in the fifteenth century into a family of Spanish nobility. Serving as a knight in the Italian war, Ignatius was wounded in the Battle of Pamplona in 1521. During his recovery, he underwent spiritual conversion and abandoned his previous military life to devote himself to serving God. Ignatius went on to be a hermit, priest, and founder of the Jesuit order.

Ignatius taught that you do not have to withdraw into quiet and solitude to find God. He believed that God's fingerprints are all around us. He encouraged his disciples see God by looking to their work, relationships, joys and sorrow. Ignatius believed that nature itself is covered in the fingerprints of God; for him God is everywhere. He wrote, “God’s love is poured forth like a fountain spilling forth its waters in an unending stream.”

Ignatian spirituality helps us to recognize God in all things as we live out our faith in acts of justice. It helps us to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as we draw closer to others. Ignatian spirituality encourages us to use our five senses to tap into the deep understanding of God and our hidden realities.

Exercise

As a part of today's session, you will have an opportunity to explore praying with art using resources from http://www.prayerwindows.com/art-prayer/.
As your group members arrive have a paper plate for each woman and a variety of art supplies including crayons, colored pencils, magazines and glue. Instruct the women that they are to make a make by decorating both sides of the paper plate. On one side they are to create an image that answers the following question, “How am I seen on the outside by the world?” On the other side they are to create an image that answers the following question, “What do I keep on the inside and do not let others see?”

Allow the group sufficient time to create their masks. After they are completed, invite group members to share their feelings about the experience. Ask them to share their masks with the group.

Opening Prayer

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.

Ignatius of Loyola

Scripture Focus

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NRSV)

Background

Approximately 17 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul brought the gospel to Corinth, a city that is located about forty miles southwest of Athens. Strategically defensible, Corinth was a commercial and religious hub of activity. It was well known for its artisan goods including pottery, bronzes, and earthenware. The transitory nature of the people contributed to the city becoming a center for prostitution and sexual activity that was known for being a city of wealth without culture where the poor were abused by the rich.
Travelers and sailors who brought their religions to Corinth shaped the religious environment of Corinth. Modern archaeologists have found evidence of two dozen temples, altars and shrines including the Roman imperial cult and Greek and Egyptian religious shrines. There was even a temple “for the all the gods.” The religious landscape also included Jews who had been expelled from Rome by the emperors Tiberius and Claudius.

The church at Corinth represents the socioeconomic and religious makeup of the city. In keeping with the steep social pyramid of the culture few believers were rich and most were poor. It seems that socioeconomic and ethnic differences played a role in some of the struggles of the Corinthian believers. Most of the Corinthian believers were gentiles who Paul was re-socializing to think of themselves as part of the ancient people of God. Indeed, incorporated into the people of God, Paul speaks of gentiles in a way that suggests that believers are no longer identified by this term.

Torn by schisms and rent by divisiveness, part of the Corinthians problems come from their inability to properly differentiate between diversity and schisms as individuals in the community came to value some gifts over others. In this passage, Paul again encourages the congregation to see the diversity that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. He instructs them that the differences are necessary for God’s purposes to be accomplished. He encourages them to use their differences for the common good of the community.

Questions

- Read 1 Corinthians 12: 4 -6. Ask the women to identify what comes to mind when they hear someone speak of spiritual gifts. Make a list of spiritual gifts on a sheet of newsprint.
- Summarize how the diversity of gifts are causing problems in Corinth. Ask how spiritual gifts are received in your congregation. Has your community experienced any difficulty in receiving someone’s gifts? What was the source of the problem?
- Ask the women that you have asked in advance to report on the gifts that were identified within Young’s article “To Whom Much is Given.” What motivated these women to pursue their art? What obstacles or challenges did they encounter? How has art helped these women draw closer to God? To others? Were the artistic talents of these women identified when you made your list of spiritual gifts? Why or why not? How is artistic ability utilized in your congregation?
Ask the women to identify their artistic gifts. How might they use them for the common good? Generate ideas of how the women’s gifts might be used for the edification of the community? For example do you have quilters who can make paraments for worship or lap blankets for shut-ins, premature babies? Do you have knitters who could make prayer shawls? Are artists encouraged to help raise funds for outreach program by donating and selling their crafts? Brainstorm how the gifts might be used.

Ask the women to add their artistic gifts to the list of spiritual gifts that was created earlier in your time together.

Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.
Session 2

Supplies

Bibles, copies of *Just Women*, computer with internet access to YouTube [https://youtu.be/YTGqmMG3Eyo](https://youtu.be/YTGqmMG3Eyo) Revelation Song Worship Phillips, Craig, and Dean, and copies of your weekly bulletin for each person present.

Prior to your group meeting ask your group members to read *Enhancing the Worship Experience: Worship and Arts Ministry at Ray of Hope Takes it to New Heights* by Tanya J. Tyler, pages 9 – 11.

Opening Prayer

*Psalm 145*

*I will extol you, my God and King,*

   *and bless your name forever and ever.*

*Every day I will bless you,*

   *and praise your name forever and ever.*

*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;*

   *his greatness is unsearchable.*

*One generation shall laud your works to another,*

   *and shall declare your mighty acts.*

*On the glorious splendor of your majesty,*

   *and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*

   *The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,*

   *and I will declare your greatness.*

   *They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,*

   *and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

   *The Lord is gracious and merciful,*

   *slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

   *The Lord is good to all,*

   *and his compassion is over all that he has made.*
All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,
to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.[c]
The Lord upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.
The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Icebreaker

As your group arrives, take a few moments to view Revelation Song Worship by Phillips, Craig, and Dean. (If you do not have access to YouTube, sing or read the lyrics of a favorite hymn). Ask members to share their reactions to the video. Invite them to share their favorite worship songs. What lyrics do they find meaningful? What were their favorite worship songs as they were growing up? What other aspects of worship are meaningful to you? Why?
Scripture Focus

46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2: 46 – 47

Background

The Acts of the Apostles is the story of the church’s beginnings. Written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, the story is told in a way that parallels many aspects of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The book was written to unify differing faith communities, to challenge the pagan community, to provide a defense of Christianity, and to further the evangelistic mission of the early church. Throughout the book, the anonymous author points to the hope of God’s triumph as the church proclaims God’s faithfulness and continues Christ’s mission.

The second chapter of Acts focuses on the coming of the Holy Spirit who enables the community to move forward as messengers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Here we are given a portrait of community life following conversion. It is characterized by unity, sharing of resources, and worship that serves to nurture growth of the community.

Questions

• Read Acts 2: 46 – 47. How does your congregation reflect the characteristics of the early church community? What areas need strengthening?
• Martin Luther understood worship as a conversation with God that takes place when we present our whole selves before God for sacred encounter. This understanding takes seriously the role of each person who is worshipping. It suggests that no one can be a passive participant. How do you prepare to be an active participant in worship? Take a few moments to look over your worship bulletin. How does your worship encourage you to be in conversation with God? How are you encouraged to talk with God? When are there opportunities to listen for God? When does the conversation involve the whole community? When does it invite you to personally engage God? Is there a balance between speaking and listening?
Consider your last worship experience and answer the following questions: 1) what are we thinking, feeling, hoping for, remembering when we gather to be encountered by God in worship? 2) How best do we listen attentively to God’s Word? 3) How are we drawn to pray, and for what and for whom shall we pray? 4) How do we settle in to rest contemplatively in the presence of Christ known to us in the breaking of bread? And 5) to what ministry and mission do we discern God is sending? iii

Ask group members to share a meaningful worship experience? What made this experience meaningful?

Tyler begins her article by stating “Praising God takes many different forms.” How do you praise God? How is God praised through your weekly worship experience? Which of these elements do you consider most important? Why?

What are the resources that are available in your congregation to incorporate your weekly worship?

Tyler states “Everyone at The Ray is welcome to participate in any facet of Worship and Arts Ministry, whatever their level of ability may be.” What are the criteria that your congregation has for participation in the worship ministries of the community? How are the artistic gifts of the congregation encouraged and nurtured? How important is it to include diverse forms of praise in worship?

Tyler states, “The talents of The Ray’s ministry teams are not confined to the church walls. Ministry arts participants regularly go out into the community to share God’s love through music, movement, and drama.” How does your congregation use the arts to minister to the community? How might your congregation be more active in using the arts to minister to the community?

Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.
Session 3

Supplies

Bibles, copies of Just Women, photos from the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, worship center with white cloth, white candle and keys

Prior to the group meeting have your group members read Woman-to-Woman Worldwide: Middle East pages 12 – 13 and Connections, pages 16 – 17.

Scripture Focus

Matthew 2: 13 – 14

Background

The Gospel of Matthew attests to the continuity of the faith of the children of Israel and of the early church. To do this Matthew roots his narrative in the texts of Hebrew Scriptures. However, one must note that the Matthean community would not have identified itself as Jewish, or Christian for that matter. Rather, the community would have seen itself as a messianic community who followed Jesus the Messiah.

Our passage comes from Matthew’s birth narrative. Here Joseph obediently follows God’s instructions by rising up and taking his family to Egypt in response to a revelation from God. The story parallels events in the life of Moses who was also saved from an evil king seeking to kill the innocents.

Opening Worship

Leader: Like the over 60 million refugees in the world today – Jesus knows what it like to be a stranger. He knows what it is like to have to flee from violence, leaving behind his homeland. Jesus knows what it like to be an outsider, one who is looked on with suspicion and fear. He understands what it is like to know the uncertainty of life far away from family.
The keys on our worship represent the families who are currently displaced from their homes and their homelands. They represent the hope of those individuals to someday find a home – to return home.

Hear the prayer of the exile.

**Scripture**  
Psalm 137 – 1 – 6

By the rivers of Babylon—

there we sat down and there we wept

when we remembered Zion.

On the willows[a] there

we hung up our harps.

For there our captors

asked us for songs,

and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How could we sing the Lord’s song

in a foreign land?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,

let my right hand wither!

Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,

if I do not remember you,

if I do not set Jerusalem

above my highest joy.

**Light the Christ Candle**
Scripture
Matthew 2: 13 – 14

Leader: Christ did not just enter the world only for the cheerful and the secure. Christ came to bring hope and peace to those in pain. Christ came to comfort those who were experiencing loss and grief. Christ came into the world to welcome those who had been pushed to the margins. Christ entered the world to show God’s love. As the light of Christ illuminates our space, the Spirit of God has the power to bring light to the darkest corners of the world. May we move beyond fear and anxiety to stand in the light of Christ continuing his mission to bring hope to those who seem without hope.

Questions

- When you hear the word refugee what comes to mind?
- Read the Blog and Journal entries provided by the women who went on the Middle East Woman-to- Woman trip. What stands out in these entries? What surprised you in these entries? What questions do these entries raise in you?
- Photo of Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem. The residents of this camp are individuals and their descendants who were displaced from their homes in 1948. The key over the gate is a symbol of the keys held by families who are waiting to go home.

Photo of mural painted on one of the walls within the camp listing the names of the villages from which the refugees were displaced. In many instances these villages were destroyed to make room for the Israelis.

- Share the photos with your group. What thoughts, emotions do you experience as you look at these photos. What details stand out to you in the photos?
- For many Palestinian families a key is all remains of the home and land that had been handed down for generations. Consider what it would be like to lose your home? What would you miss most? How would your life change? How would your opportunities to interact as a family change?
- Summarize the ministries that are spoken of in the article Connections. Define Hospitality. How is hospitality different than being friendly? Why are people fearful of refugees? What concerns have you heard voiced in your area? How can you provide hospitality to refugees?
- Prior to your meeting research opportunities in your area to learn minister to and with refugees? Report to your group what you have found. Ask others to share additional opportunities of which they are aware.
Go Deeper

The following link will provide information on how you can assemble and provide Bedding Kits, Bath Kits, Kitchen Kits, and/or School Kits for refugees who are resettling in the United States. If you live within 50 miles of a Church World Services office your congregation can sponsor a refugee. Commit to doing something to assist refugees in your area or through Church World Service. If you would like ask group members to bring items that are needed to assemble one type of kit and take some time during your group to put these together. Pray for the individual(s) who will be receiving your kits.


Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.
Session 4

Supplies

Bibles, copies of *Just Women*, computer with access to Internet, copies of the Israel-Palestine Quiz

Prior to the group meeting have your group members read *Global Ministry Launches Middle East Initiative* by Lorna Hernandez page 14

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by singing *Father Abraham* See hand-out on page 20.

Icebreaker

Take a few moments and discuss the implications of this simple child’s song. What does it mean for Abraham to have many sons? What does this suggest about the nature of the relationship between Jews, Christians, and Muslims?

Launch the Global Ministries website ([www.GlobalMinistries.org](http://www.GlobalMinistries.org)) for the Middle East Initiative. Allow your group members opportunities to explore the variety of resources that are provided.

Scripture Focus

*Genesis 25: 1–18*

Background

Our passage today incorporates end of life and new beginnings. As Abraham dies, Isaac receives his blessing and we hear of new beginning for Ishmael. A close reading of this passage reveals parallels between Isaac and Ishmael. In fact, Isaac (verse 19) and Ishmael (verse 12) are described with the same words “sons of Abraham.”
The narrator crafts the narrative in a way that Abraham’s death is told in the midst of ongoing life of his many children. These children include Isaac and his descendants, Ishmael and his descendants and Keturah’s six children. Thus the narrative of Abraham ends not with one son but with the many sons of Father Abraham.

Questions

- When you hear someone say Middle East what comes to mind? When you hear the word Muslim what comes to your mind?
- Read Genesis 25: 1 – 18. What stands out to you in this passage? What surprises you in this passage? What questions do you have because you have heard this passage? What other narratives in the Bible does this bring to mind? Re-read Genesis 25: 1 – 18. What emotions are evoked by this passage.
- Provide each of your group members with a Israel – Palestine Quiz. After each woman has had time to complete the quiz, review the answers providing correct information. Ask what was new and surprising? Encourage the women to continue to visit the Middle East Initiative at Global Ministries website for further information.
- Read the following:
  Miroslav Volf, a Croatian Protestant theologian is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School and the Director of the Yale Center of Faith and Culture writes: Christianity and Islam are today the most numerous and fastest growing religions globally. Together they encompass more than half of humanity. Consequence: both are here to stay. As a result of globalization, ours is an interconnected and interdependent world. Religions are intermingled within single states and across their boundaries. Consequence: Muslims and Christians will increasingly share common spaces. Since both religions are by their very nature “socially engaged” – they are world-transforming religions of a prophetic type- and since their followers mostly embrace democratic ideals, they will continue to push for their vision of good life in the public square. Consequence: tensions, even conflicts between Muslims and Christians, are unavoidable.

How do you feel about Volf’s conclusions? How are Christians, Muslims, and Jews already sharing spaces? What are some of the tensions? How do we benefit from our shared life?
• Read Matthew 7: 12. Read the following: What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. (Judaism, Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31 a) and Not one of your truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself. (Islam- Muhammad, Hadith). What are the similarities in these three passages? If these are core teachings of Christianity, Islam and Judaism why do you believe that there is so much conflict between some of the followers of these faiths?

To Go Deeper

• Research opportunities in your area to engage in interfaith dialogues by consulting local clergy associations. Schedule a time to have someone report on what is available

Consider forming a book club and reading

1) The Lemon Tree: and Arab, a Jew and the Heart of the Middle East
   by Sandy Tolan, 2007

2) The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, a Jew – Three Women Search for Understanding

Closing Prayer

Let us pray. God of the all the children of Abraham, we call out to you today with the children who continue to live in the land of our forefathers and foremothers Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, Issac and Rebekkah, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah, and our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

We have seen the ongoing plight of the sons and daughters of Rachel. We have heard their voices crying out for justice. We ask, O God, how long must they continue to fear for their safety and well-being? How long, O God, must they experience loss of tradition and livelihood as olive trees are uprooted and burned? How long, O Lord, will families long for water to quench thirst in the midst of rationing and inequitable
distribution of the resources of the Promised Land. How long, O Lord, will children face guns with rocks only to face life behind bars.

We cry out with our brothers and sisters, O God. Generations have been ripped from their homes. They continue to hold keys that are bitter with the loss they represent and sweet in the hope that remains as they are held. We understand the longing for home and the desire to return to what is familiar. We know that there is no justice without return.

We turn to you, O God, for we know that politicians cannot bring relief alone. We know that national interests seem supersede the kinship of all the children of Abraham. God of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar draw near your children. Hear the cries of the children. Hear the rage of the adolescents. Hear the frustration of the elderly.

We know, O God, that you are one who blesses your children. We know that you have heard the cries of your children from the slave huts of Egypt. You have given the children of Zion new songs to sing in Babylon. We trust that bloodshed and bombs are not your intention for this land. We know that suspicion and hate for one another is not congruent with your heart’s desire for these people. We trust that your abiding love and steadfast mercy will prevail. We know that you are laying out a new way in this wilderness. We know that you can soften hearts so that peace may prevail and wholeness may flourish in the lives of our brothers and sisters. Act quickly God so that lives may be saved and wounds may be healed. Amen.⁴
Father Abraham

Father Abraham had many sons left foot!
Many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them and so are you Father Abraham had many sons
So let’s all praise the Lord. Many sons had Father Abraham
Right arm! I am one of them and so are you
So let’s all praise the Lord.

Father Abraham had many sons Right arm, left arm, right foot,
Many sons had Father Abraham left foot, chin up!
I am one of them and so are you
So let’s all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm! Father Abraham had many sons
Many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them and so are you
So let’s all praise the Lord.

Father Abraham had many sons So let’s all praise the Lord.
Many sons had Father Abraham Right arm, left arm, right foot,
I am one of them and so are you left foot, chin up, turn around!
So let’s all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm, right foot! Father Abraham had many sons
Many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them and so are you
So let’s all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm, right foot, sit down!

Father Abraham had many sons
Many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them and so are you
So let’s all praise the Lord.
Right arm, left arm, right foot,
Israel-Palestine Quiz

1) T or F All Arabs are Muslim.

2) T or F All Muslims are Arab.

3) T or F Palestinians are Christian and Muslim. While Jews who live in Israel and the West Bank consider themselves Israelis.

4) T or F There have been times in history when the Jews and the Muslims lived without conflict.

5) T or F Palestinians deny the existence of Israel.

6) T or F Israel is rich and Palestine is poor.

7) T or F The United States provides large sums of money to the Israeli economy.

8) T or F Islam is an older faith than Christianity dating back to Ishmael.

9) T or F The core teachings of Islam are contained in the five pillars of Islam.

10) T or F Jihad means a holy war that is carried out politically and militarily.
1) T or F  All Arabs are Muslim.
FALSE - An Arab is a person who speaks Arabic and claims the Arab culture. Arab is not a religion but a cultural/language group. There are Arab Christians and there were self-identified Arab Jews- those Jews who lived in Arab countries before Israel was established and whose everyday language was Arabic. A small number of Arabs in the area belong to other religious groups (such as Druze and Baha’i) but the majority are Muslims. In other parts of the world some Arabs belong to other religious groups as well.

2) T or F  All Muslims are Arab.
FALSE – The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia and there is a considerable Muslim population in Africa (both Arab and non-Arab) as well. The large Muslim populations in Pakistan, Turkey, Iran and India are non-Arabs. Muslim populations can also be found in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and China. In addition to the Arab Muslim population in the United States, there are many Muslims among African Americans. Islam came to the United States through African slaves.

3) T or F  Palestinians are Christian and Muslim. While Jews who live in Israel and the West Bank consider themselves Israelis.
TRUE – The Palestinians are the people who inhabited historic Palestine – today’s Israel, West Bank, and Gaza Strip. Some still live in the area and others have either moved out or been made refugees. At one time there were Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Palestinians but at the present those who are Jewish consider themselves Israelis.

4) T or F  There have been times in history when the Jews and the Muslims lived without conflict.
TRUE - Arabs and Jews have not always been in conflict. Before the formation of the State of Israel there were Arab Jews as there were Arab Christians and Arab
Muslims. Many times in history Jews and Muslims were allied and worked together peacefully. In 1492, Christian rulers expelled both Jews and Muslims from Spain, although now Spain cherishes its background of all three religions. Most Jews who fled moved to Arab lands.

Christians, Jews and Muslims have worked together and have lived as neighbors in the Middle East for centuries and some still do. One hears many stories from Palestinians of the friendships they had with their Jewish neighbors and vice versa.

5) T or F Palestinians deny the existence of Israel.

FALSE - The Oslo Accords made it clear that the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people, recognizes the existence of the State of Israel. In the letters exchanged on September 9, 1993 between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin, Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, stated "The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security." In return Mr. Rabin recognized the PLO as the "representative of the Palestinian people." In a subsequent meeting, which was televised, the Palestinian National Council voted to uphold the agreements made in the Oslo Accords.

6) T or F Israel is rich and Palestine is poor.

TRUE - The occupation has prevented the Palestinians from developing economically and so they have become dependent on Israel for employment. When those means of employment become unavailable because of Israeli military closures of Palestinian areas in West Bank and Gaza Strip, unemployment rates jump rapidly and there are few local businesses and jobs to fall back on. Much of the Palestinian agricultural land has been confiscated and fruit and olive trees have been destroyed.

7) T or F The United States provides large sums of money to the Israeli economy.

TRUE - the United States government (and private citizens) have given and still give large sums of money to develop the Israeli economy. Official aid from the U.S. government totals more than $3,000,000,000 (three billion) per year (all military aid).
8) T or F  Islam is an older faith than Christianity dating back to Ishmael.

FALSE - Islam arose in the arid peninsula occupied largely by what we now know as Saudi Arabia. The language of the people was Arabic, a Semitic language, and the culture was organized loosely into tribes or extended family groups with no centralized authority. Most were nomads but there were also farmers and city dwellers.

Mohammad was born in 570 C.E. (Christian Era) in a respectable Meccan family and he became a commercial agent. When he was about 40 he experienced revelations. A group gathered around him but his message of socially responsible behavior clashed with that of the Meccan’s sense of economic priorities and the little group finally moved to Yathrib (later known as Medina). Some Christians and Jews lived in Arabia so Mohammad was familiar with both religions. He believed they both had made errors of interpretation, despite a succession of Prophets sent by God. He went back to the Abrahamic faith and an undisturbed monotheism and saw himself as the last of the God’s Prophets and Islam as the purest of the three religions.

9) T or F  The core teachings of Islam are contained in the five pillars of Islam.

TRUE –

Confession of faith  Muslims believe in the oneness of God and confess their faith in the exclusive place of one God (There is no deity except God) and Mohammad is his Prophet (the messenger of God). The word "Allah" simply means God in the Arabic language and is used by Arab Christians as well as Muslims.

Prayer  Muslims are to pray five times a day at a minimum: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and in the night. The times vary with the seasons of the year and formed an impetus for the Muslims to be leaders in astronomy. First comes the call to prayer and then the faithful person performs ablutions to purify the body. The person then faces Mecca (formerly the person faced Jerusalem) and prays with a series of words and movements. This can be done alone or in a group although the Friday noon prayers are said in a group along with other readings and a sermon.
Fasting during the month of Ramadan  Muslims fast from dawn until sunset during this lunar month in their calendar. The sick, children, the elderly, menstruating women and the insane are exempt from fasting. This is not only fasting from food and drink but fasting from smoking, sex, and forbidden words and deeds. The fast is also not considered valid if the person observing it entertains thoughts of envy or hatred.

Emphasis is placed on self-discipline, surrender to the will of God, purification, physically strengthening the system, and renewal of the personal relationship with God. Muslims also see themselves as living in a way that shares the hardships of the poor and deprived. The fast is broken each evening with prayers and an Iftar, special dinner.

At the end of Ramadan the 'Id al-Fitr (The Feast of the Breaking of the Fast) is celebrated with special prayers, family visits, renewal of friendships, new clothes, the distribution of food to the poor and the giving of gifts to children.

Contribution to charity  Muslims believe that God is the owner of all things and, therefore, wealth involves responsibility. Muslims are required, as an act of worship, to contribute about two and one-half percent of the value of their total wealth each year to care for the unfortunate. This is not of their income but of their property and possessions. They are encouraged to give it directly to the poor or to a Waqf (Islamic endowment that administers social services, mosques, and religious institutions).

Pilgrimage to Mecca  Every Muslim is to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in a lifetime, if economic circumstances permit. If any member of the family needs financial help, the Muslim person is excused from the Hajj at that time. The Hajj (Arabic for pilgrimage) is made by people from all over the world converging on Mecca at the same time and includes a series of ritual actions including the sacrifice of an animal. The people wear simple white garments so that there are no distinctions between rich and poor. During the Hajj, Muslims back home commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son (Ishmael) on the 'Id al-Adha (The Festival of Sacrifice) with communal prayer and animal sacrifice.

10) T or F  Jihad means a holy war that is carried out politically and militarily.

Jihad is an Arabic word meaning to struggle or strive in the path of God carrying the moral weight of a social responsibility.
The Arabic word "Jihad" means exerting an effort and struggling in the path of God. It is basically a struggle for peace and justice, and outwardly carries a moral responsibility, while inwardly conveys a devotional struggle. Jihad calls Muslims to stand for those who are occupied and who are oppressed because of their religion. The highest form of Jihad is the personal struggle to make oneself a better Muslim and to overcome one's lower instincts.

In the Western mind Jihad is equated with a war waged against non-Muslims or a Holy War (a Christian term). Some Muslim extremists make reference to Jihad mainly in its military meaning. Unfortunately the term has been used in the media to mean “holy war” involving Muslims. This means that the common usage in the West has now distorted its original use.

The highest form of Jihad, according to the Prophet Mohammad, is the personal struggle to make oneself a better Muslim.

There are four kinds:

- Jihad of the tongue = the expression of the faith
- Jihad of the hand = good works and striving to express the ethics of the faith
- Jihad of the heart = the throwing over of the self to follow God's will
- Jihad of the sword = a just war where you have to defend Islam or fight for peace and liberation.

Source: [http://www.globalministries.org/living_stones_background_definitions](http://www.globalministries.org/living_stones_background_definitions)


iv In 2010, the congregation that I served in Moline had the opportunity to host an international guest from Ramallah who was participating in the International Disciples Women’s Ministry’s Quadrennial. At her invitation, a witness mission trip was planned to the West Bank Palestine in the summer of 2011. The group visited Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho, Ramallah, and Hebron. While in the West Bank, we visited four refugee camps, spoke with Palestinian olive farmers, and saw the plight of Palestinian Christians living under oppression. The following prayer was used in a prayer service that was held on November 29, 2011 for those who had participated in the witness mission trip. This prayer was published in my doctoral thesis. Beth Rupe "*My God, My God! Why Reclaiming Lament in Disciple’s Worship*” Lexington Theological Seminary, 2013.