

Book Review: The Quran

David Diestelkamp

davdiestel@yahoo.com

I know that a book review of the Quran is rather unconventional here and maybe even outside the intended scope of this platform. However, I read the Quran over the past year and would like to give my first impressions and advice.

Why read it and review it? Personally, my preaching in West Africa has exposed me to many Muslims. I want to increase my exposure to the Quran and Islam to be more effective in finding ways to present the gospel. Only about 1 percent of Americans are Muslim, therefore you may not feel much of a need to learn about it. However, there are large communities in some cities (Ex: New York, Detroit, Minneapolis / St Paul, etc) and they are growing. If you look for brothers and sisters who are knowledgeable about Islam you will find that there is a real shortage.

I read the Quran much like I read the Book of Mormon – so that I could honestly say that I had read it. This surprises many Muslims (and Mormons) and seems to open doors to discussion.

Warnings

1. As a Christian, it was not what I expected – the Quran is mostly a collection of sayings (like the Biblical book of Proverbs) and very little history and few narratives
2. Because Muslims believe that the Bible has been corrupted, it is usually not helpful to point out the many contradictions between the Quran and the Bible (the Quran is always right, the Bible is always corrupted)
3. Islam teaches that the Quran is the very words of God as given to Muhammad in Arabic. English (or other translations) can be helpful, but are technically not the Quran. Many of the questions you may ask about the meaning of the Quran (or contradiction, injustices, etc) are met with the statement: “You would understand it in Arabic.”
4. Muslims will criticize reading of the Quran with a skeptical or unbelieving heart (much like the Book of Mormon) – and, although I would say the same about the Bible, they generally don’t accept any questioning of the Quran or the prophet Muhammed.
5. Many Muslims do not recommend that you read the Quran because they believe without help you won’t understand it. Even those who argue against the Quran and Islam will tell you that reading the Quran will likely not help you in talking to Muslims (instead preach the true Jesus)
6. Muslims may surprise you by saying that they believe in the Old Testament prophets and Jesus (He is mentioned 97 times in the Quran). However, Jesus of the Quran is NOT the Jesus of the New Testament. I feel these claims are a ploy because most Muslim teachers know there is a radical difference

Advice

1. I found reading the Quran very difficult. Not because the subjects were theologically or morally challenging, but because it was tedious and very repetitive (some of this due to the original oral form and memorization that is expected).

2. If you decide to read it, I highly recommend listening to it on audio. There are some good YouTube English readings. I'll warn you that they are long – taking around 20 hours to complete (I often listened in the car while on trips)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQq-ID-YoUQ&t=28s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PXGYAP3EWo&t=13s>

3. You may be surprised to learn that, although the claim is made that the unchanged Quran (which is subject to question, by the way) avoids the disunity that translation (“changes”) of the Bible has caused in the “Christian world”, Islam is still terribly divided. In fact, not only are there major divisions of Islam, but individual imams (teachers) frequently create their own groups based on interpretations of the Quran that are wildly different from others (and Muslims often shop for an imam or mosque that suits their faith or lifestyle).
4. I'm glad I read the Quran and would likely read it again sometime while taking notes. Although I am nowhere near an expert on the Quran or Islam, I feel it has broadened my background, understanding, and experience in some helpful ways.