

I Against My Brother BIBLE STUDY/ DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Somalia Facts:

Population: 9.5 million

Capital: Mogadishu

Area: 246,201 sq miles

Major languages: Somali, Arabic, Italian, English

Major religion: Islam

Life expectancy: 52 years

The Somali People

Today, over 15 million Somali people live scattered across six countries in the northeastern portion of Africa, commonly called the "Horn of Africa." Millions more live beyond the continent of Africa, in the Middle East, Europe, and even North America.

The Somali share a common language, adhere to a single faith, and share a cultural heritage that is an integral part of their traditional nomadic lifestyle.

The country of Somalia has been without a functioning central government since the president was overthrown in 1991. Years of fighting between rival clans and an inability to deal with famine and disease have led to the deaths of up to a million people. Today, Somalia is considered to be the world's "most failed state."



Introduction

This Bible study/discussion guide is a companion piece designed to be used after watching the film.

I Against My Brother is a short film based on the real story of an ethnic Somali woman, the narrator of the film. To protect her identity and life, an actress played her part, and her name is not revealed. In this study guide she is referred to as Amara, a Muslim name meaning "eternal beauty, urgent news."

GETTING STARTED

[Q] What comes to mind when you hear the word "Somalia?"

[Q] What preconceptions do you have about the Somali people?

[Q] What would you risk for your faith?

[Q] Would you risk your most important relationships?

PART 1: SOMALI FAMILY

Growing up, Amara's greatest comfort and connection came from her family.

TIES OF BLOOD

"Somali people are very close; we share everything. We don't belong to our parents only, but to all our relatives, the whole community. Even those who are far, we are still part of each other. We depend on each other."

[Q] What do you imagine would be the benefits and struggles of such a close-knit family and community?

RELIANCE AND EXPECTATION

"When I was in secondary school, my father died. My uncle brought me to the city to live with his family, those who remained in Africa. He chose me out of all my brothers and cousins because he believed in me, that in the future I will be something, that I would change the family, the community."

[Q] Amara's family depended completely on her uncle. Why was his opinion of her so important and culturally unexpected? Would you feel honored or burdened with such expectations? Why?

PART 2: CHRISTIAN FRIENDS

When Amara moved to the city, she became friends with Christian neighbors and formed relationships that would change her life.

MISCONCEPTIONS

"I'd always been taught that everyone who is not Somali is Christian, that the evil we see on TV and



the movies is because they are Christian. But when I met my new neighbors, they were different.”

[Q] What are some misconceptions Somalis might have about Christians and why might they hold these beliefs? How did Amara’s Christian friends overcome her misconceptions?

CHRISTIAN PRAYER

“My Christian friends prayed about everything in their life, like they were talking to someone they knew, like a father. I didn’t have that. In the Bible, they talk about God as somebody who really loves and cares about them and is with them. But for us Allah cannot be like that. He is far from that.”

[Q] How would your prayer life be different if you believed God was distant and impersonal? **Read Philippians 4:6-7.** What are the characteristics of authentic Christian prayer?

CONVERSATIONS

“This led to many discussions about religion, about who God is, about who we are. They would ask me questions about Islam; I would ask them about Christianity.”

[Q] What is the difference between a discussion and a debate? How do safe relationships provide the right context for such discussions with Somalis?

GOD’S WORD

“Then my Christian friends would refer me to the Bible. We would read it together. But soon I wanted to know more, I wanted to read it for myself. I asked for a Bible of my own. I read and read and read. But I knew the Bible and Quran couldn’t both be from God, they couldn’t both be true. But as I read the Bible, I was drawn to it, convinced of it.”

[Q] The Bible and the Quran refute one another. Can a person follow both books and find truth and consistency? Why was it crucial for Amara to ask for and receive her own Bible?

PART 3: BREAKING FREE

Amara’s spiritual curiosity caused serious conflict within her family and community.

FEAR AND RISK

“But I thought, even if the Bible is true, there is no way I can accept this. I am a Somali. There’s no other world I can go live in. In this world, I cannot survive. If I accept it, I will be killed. I won’t have a life, I won’t be married, I will be without a family.”

[Q] For many Christians around the world, faith seems more a matter of lifestyle and preference than a matter of life and death. If you were in Amara’s situation, would such dire consequences discourage your interest in Jesus or galvanize your resolve?

“My brother made me watch videos of Islamic preaching. ‘You are shaming us!’ he said. ‘Are you doubting the teachings of the sheiks? Are you an infidel, a kafir?’”

[Q] Amara was beaten by her brother. On another occasion, her Muslim friends lured her into an alleyway and attacked her with broken bottles. Why do Somalis and other Muslims see Christians as the enemy? Do you consider Somalis the enemy? Do you harbor bitterness and racial prejudice toward them? **Read and discuss Matthew 5:43-44.**

CHANGE OF HEART

“My brother, my community, they turned against me. I was sent away from the city against my will. When I got to the village, the sheiks were waiting. For five days they paced around me, chanting the Quran, trying to remove the devil from me. But your heart has to accept. My heart was completely against it. I didn’t want this life they had planned for me.”

Some definitions:

Quran

The Quran (Koran) is the Muslim holy book. It is believed to be the inspired words of Allah, revealed to the prophet Mohammed over a 23 year period in the 7th century, and compiled into a book after he died. The Quran is written in Arabic.

Sheik

The head of a Muslim family, tribe, or village; similar to a chief.

Infidel

An unbeliever. In Islam, this term is applied to someone who rejects god, or even doubts or rejects a particular doctrine. The Arabic word “kafir,” is sometimes used synonymously.



[Q] When she returned to her village, Amara wasn't yet a believer, just a Muslim woman with deep doubts. Instead of removing them, the five-day ritual with the sheiks confirmed her doubts. When did you first realize you needed something the world could not offer? How did the Holy Spirit draw you from your old life into a relationship with Him?

CRYING OUT

"I had to run away. But two hours outside the village, the bus broke down. I was thinking, 'They are coming to get me!' I have never felt more helpless. But then I remembered the things I read about Jesus, the miracles he did. I remembered all those talks with my Christian friends, about how he healed the sick, how he brought the dead to life, all this. If it really is true, then he can help me."

[Q] Discuss a time in your life when you felt completely helpless. Were you alone or surrounded by those who love you? Do you think that God ever brings us to a place of helplessness so that we will call upon Him?

"All my hope was in this prayer. 'If you are really the Son of God, a God of miracles, can you save me?' And for the first time, I prayed in the name of Jesus."

[Q] **Read Psalm 4:1 and Philippians 2:9-11.** The Bible is full of stories of men and women who cry out to the Lord to be saved. Why was it so significant that Amara prayed in "Jesus' name?"

DELIVERANCE

"And then I felt it. A hand on my shoulder. A whisper in my ear: 'Yes, it's true!' I turned to see who had spoken. I couldn't see anyone, but I knew he was there. Jesus was there. I wasn't alone. I wasn't afraid."

[Q] It's not uncommon for Muslims who become Christians to have a supernatural element to their conversion. Why might this be more common in areas closed to the gospel?

PART 4: NEW IDENTITY

After her life-changing experience on the bus, Amara put her trust in Jesus and continues to follow Him today.

STILL SOMALI

"I am still Somali. I don't have to dress differently, or eat different foods. But some things are different. In many ways I am a woman without a country, without a family. I'm a Somali Christian, a contradiction."

[Q] What does Amara mean when she says "I am a contradiction"? What is the connection between ethnic culture and spiritual identity?

COUNTING THE COST

"And it hasn't been easy, especially those first years: moving from house to house, the threats, the loneliness. Following Christ cost me everything. But it was worth it."

[Q] Amara's story didn't end on the bus. **Read Matthew 10:21-22.** What did she gain and lose by putting her trust in Jesus?

PROVERB

"I and Somalia against the world.
I and my clan against Somalia.
I and my family against the clan.
I and my brother against the family.
I against my brother."



[Q] This Somali proverb addresses the issue of allegiance and relationship. How was Amara’s understanding of cultural loyalty and hierarchy challenged by her desire to follow Christ? How should a person’s faith impact their relationships with family and community?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

It’s unlikely that Amara would have heard the gospel if her Christian friends hadn’t intentionally sought a relationship with her.

[Q] Whose job is it to reach the Somalis?

[Q] How can someone who lives thousands of miles from Somalia share Christ with Somalis?

At the end of the story, Amara shares some specific concerns that fellow believers should take as a call to love and action:

LEARN

“I pray that other believers around the world would remember Somalis. They are not the enemy. They just need to know the truth.”

It’s impossible to care about people if you know nothing about them. Make an intentional habit of checking world news and reading about Somalia, the failed government, the refugees, etc. Share what you learn with your family, friends, and church.

PRAY

“I pray that other believers around the world would pray for my people...”

Commit as a group to pray weekly for Somalis. A good resource for accountability and direction is the “Year of Prayer for Somalia” guide available from the somalistory.com website.

Also, pray for those who are intentionally working among and reaching out to Somalis.

ENGAGE

“And I pray that believers would intentionally go to Somalis, like my Christian friends did with me.”

Traditional evangelism is nearly impossible in Somalia, but millions of Somalis live in diaspora, scattered around the globe. Many live in the Western world, often as students at colleges and universities. Instead of avoiding Somalis and other Muslims, boldly seek chances to interact and develop authentic relationships.



Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?

And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?

And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?

~ **Romans 10:13-15** ~

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child;

children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

You will be hated by everyone because of me,

but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

~ **Matthew 10:21-22** ~