

Emir Abd el-Kader: *A Muslim Hero & Teacher for Our Time*



LESSON FOUR: Faith in Action

Presentation Content, Post-Presentation Questions and Activities

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Introduction

This lesson begins with Abd el-Kader's life in exile in Damascus where he settled in 1855 following a brief stay in Turkey after leaving France with his family. Already seeing himself as a bridge builder, a role he writes about shortly before his departure from France, he is called into that role when, in obedience to his faith, he risks his own life to save the lives of thousands of Christians during riots in Damascus in 1860. He is honored in France and beyond for his actions. Accolades pour in from all over the world, including from Pope Pius IX, Queen Victoria, President Lincoln, the Ottoman Sultan Murad V, Imam Shamil, Muslim freedom fighter from the Caucasus, and many others. Abd el-Kader's stature as a humanitarian leads to his recruitment to build support among the Arabs for the Suez Canal project. In Damascus he pursues his vision of a world in which people of all faiths and cultures coexist, servants of one God.

Content Themes

History of the Middle East, Ottoman History, Colonialism, Sectarian Conflict, Religious Pluralism

Guiding Questions

- What did Abd el-Kader devote his life to while living in exile in the Middle East?
- What factors led to the attacks on Christians in Damascus in 1860?
- What beliefs and convictions led Abd el-Kader to his courageous stand in Damascus in 1860?
- What specific actions did Abd el-Kader take to save the lives of thousands of Christians in Damascus in 1860?
- How is Abd el-Kader's understanding of religious pluralism and interreligious harmony still relevant today?

Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the background which led to the attacks on Christians in Damascus in 1860.
- Describe Abd el-Kader's convictions which inspired his actions in Damascus in 1860.
- Describe Abd el-Kader's actions in Damascus in 1860.
- Describe Abd el-Kader's role in the Suez Canal project, including the hopes he envisioned for it.
- Explain Abd el-Kader's view of religion and why he believes it is inherently tolerant.

Arabic and Islamic terms used in this lesson:

Druze: a monotheistic religious group that incorporates several aspects of Abrahamic religions as well as other philosophies

Jizya: poll tax that Muslims traditionally collected from Jews and Christians in lieu of military service

Maronite Christians: Arab Christian members of the Eastern Catholic Church

Mufti: senior Muslim cleric

People of the Book: a Qur'anic term used to refer to Jews and Christians

Zakat: one of the Five Pillars, it is a required donation to those in need

Common Core State Standards

This lesson helps students meet the following Common Core Standards in the sections specified.

Analysis Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history / social science.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Response questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Lesson Four Presentation Content: Faith in Action

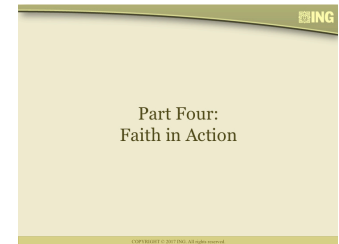
The following presentation notes are designed to explain the subject matter on each respective slide when delivering the digital presentation that accompanies this curriculum. When relevant to the topic discussed with each slide, we provide references to corresponding pages in *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader* by John W. Kiser.

“That which we did for the Christians, we did to be faithful to Islamic law and out of respect for human rights. All creatures are part of God’s family and those most loved by God are those who do the most good for his family.”

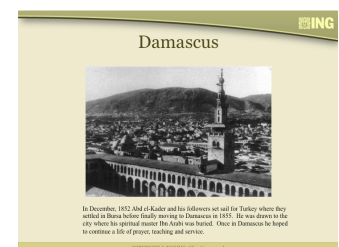
~ Abd el-Kader’s explanation for his actions in Damascus.

Slide #38: Part Four: Faith in Action

- Abd el-Kader was now finally free to leave France for the Middle East as promised by Louis Napoleon, with whom the Emir had formed a strong bond of mutual respect.
- As he moves on to the next stage of his life, yet another challenge awaits him, one that tests his mettle and his willingness to put his faith into practice in a new way.

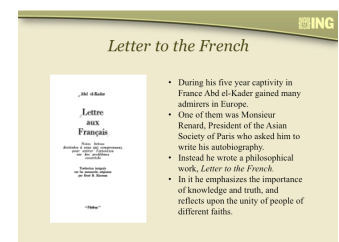
**Slide #39: Damascus**

- On December 21, 1852 Abd el-Kader set sail for Turkey where he took up residence in the town of Bursa. After an earthquake destroyed much of the city in 1855, he returned to France to seek permission to settle in Damascus, Syria.
- Damascus attracted him in large part because of its lively intellectual life. His new interpreter, George Bullad (who also kept the French government informed of the Emir's activities) came from that city and offered to introduce Abd el-Kader to its notables. Perhaps the greatest draw of Damascus was that it was the city of the great medieval spiritual master Ibn Arabi, Abd el-Kader's spiritual mentor.
- Ibn Arabi was a Muslim mystic whose voluminous works guided Abdel-Kader's own spiritual life. For Ibn Arabi, love and mercy are at the center of all creation. As Ibn Arabi wrote, "I profess the religion of love, wherever the destination of its caravans may be." His writings became the subject of Abd el-Kader's famous commentaries known as *The Book of Stops* (John W. Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader*, 286).
- Abd el-Kader arrived in Beirut from Turkey on a boat supplied by his new friend, Emperor Louis Napoleon. From there, he traversed the White Mountains of Lebanon, visiting along the way the estate of English Colonel Charles Henry Churchill before going on to his final destination, Damascus. Churchill, the first to write a biography of the Emir, wrote about his arrival in Damascus, "Not since Saladin had anyone received such a triumphal welcome" (Kiser, 285).¹
- Appropriately he moved into a former residence of Ibn Arabi, a thirty-room, two-story house in the Armara district of Damascus, close to both the Christian quarter and the famed Ummayyad mosque.
- He was able to support his extended family and followers who had accompanied him to Damascus from the generous pension France provided him with as compensation for the expropriation of his family's lands around Masacara in Algeria.
- His goal in his new life was not fame, but rather to continue a life of true *jihad* through teaching, learning, prayer, service to others and obedience to divine law.

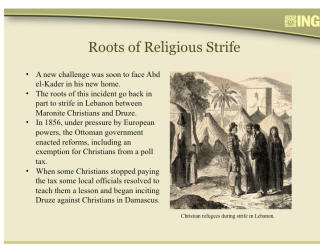
**Slide #40: Letter to the French**

- During his five-year captivity in France Abd el-Kader had already started to think of himself as a bridge between different cultures and religions.

¹ Saladin was a famous Muslim leader who fought the Crusaders and peacefully conquered Damascus in the 12th century.

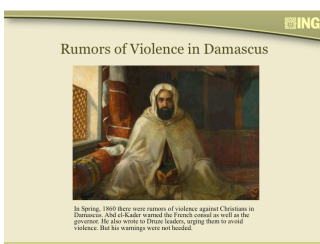


- His piety and character had won the admiration of many Europeans. Among them was Monsieur Renard, president of the Asian Society of Paris, an international organization of scholars, who asked Abd el-Kader to write his autobiography (Kiser, 264).
- Shortly after departing from France, the Emir responded to this request, not with an autobiography, but with a philosophical work that has come to be known as *Letter to the French*, but which Abd el-Kader originally titled *Brief Notes for those with Understanding in Order to Draw Attention to Essential Questions*.
- He addresses it not only the French, but to humanity in general; he begins by describing the distinguishing quality which makes humans unique among God's creation, namely their love of knowledge and pursuit of truths that transcend the senses: mathematical, philosophical and moral truths.
- He also puts forth a unifying perspective stating: "If Muslims and Christians lent me their ear, I would make their differences cease and they would become brothers and sisters within and without."²



Slide #41: Roots of Religious Strife

- A new challenge was soon to face Abd el-Kader that tests these convictions.
- The roots of this incident go back in part to neighboring Lebanon where conflict between the Druze and Maronite Christians³ had been going on for some time before spilling over to Damascus.⁴
- The division of Lebanon into Druze and Maronite regions in 1845 fueled the animosity between the two groups. Additionally, rival colonial powers, England and France each supported one group, with England the traditional ally of the Druze and France supporting Christian communities in the region.
- Adding to this, in 1856 the Turkish (Ottoman) government under pressure by European powers who had called for reforms following the Crimean War, revoked the *jizya* or poll tax which Christians had traditionally paid in lieu of military service and the Muslim alms or *zakat*. Local Turkish officials resented the change in the Christians' status, and particularly their new exemption from this tax (Kiser, 291).
- When some Christians began demanding the concessions granted them by the new decree and stopped paying the tax, a few local Turkish authorities resolved to teach them a lesson. They began secretly inciting the Druze against the Christians, who were numerous in Damascus and environs. The ongoing conflict in Lebanon between the two groups was used to incite violence in Damascus.



Slide #42: Rumors of Violence in Damascus

- In the spring of 1860 the situation turned ugly when rumors were spread of planned violence against the Christians in Damascus. (Kiser, 293).

² A.F.P. Falloux, *Memoires d'un royaliste*, Vol. 1, 363-364 as cited by Ahmed Bouyerdene, translated by Gustavo Polit. *Emir Abd el-Kader: Hero and Saint of Islam*, 186.

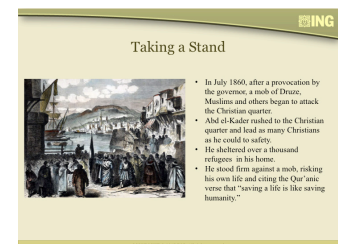
³ Maronite Christians are Arab members of the Eastern Catholic Church. The Druze are a minority monotheistic religious group that incorporates several aspects of Abrahamic religions as well as other philosophies. Both were and continue to be minorities in the Greater Syria-Lebanon region.

⁴ Under Ottoman rule, this region was all part of a province known as Greater Syria made up of the modern day countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel and parts of Iraq.

- He warned the French consul in the city of the imminent threat of violence and organized several meetings of foreign diplomats with Ahmed Pasha, the governor of Damascus; but the smooth-talking governor convinced the diplomats that the rumors were false.
- Abd el-Kader addressed a letter to Druze leaders counseling peace and urging them to refrain from any action against Christians. He also sent letters to the notables and scholars of Damascus, reminding them of their obligation to protect minorities, in particular “People of the Book,” meaning Jews and Christians.
- In June, 1860 he met several times with the governor and warned the Council of Damascus of the risk of pending violence, saying, “If the city is invaded, I will go and put myself with the cavalry in the midst of the Christian quarter, and there I will fight as long as I have breath; I will die, if necessary, for the honor of Islam, whose law forbids crimes of this nature.”⁵

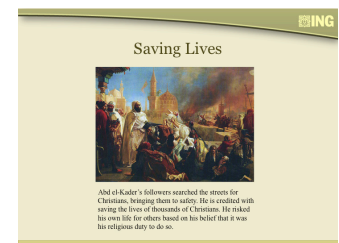
Slide #43: Taking a Stand

- In July, 1860 the storm broke. Ahmed Pasha had a few boys publicly beaten and forced to clean streets as punishment for defiling Christian symbols. This action—probably a deliberate provocation by the governor—incited a mob to begin attacking the Christian quarter.
- After finding himself unable to rouse the *mufti*—the chief Muslim cleric—to speak out against the rioters, Abd el-Kader rushed with his two sons into the chaos of the Christian quarter and led as many Christians as he could gather to safety.
- He made his home a sanctuary for Christians, sheltering in total over a thousand refugees, several hundred at a time, from the violence.
- An angry mob banged on his door, berating him for protecting the Christians. Abd el-Kader confronted the crowd and scolded them for their behavior. He quoted the Qur’anic verse which states that if anyone kills one person without just cause, it is as if he killed all of humanity.⁶
- In anger the crowd responded that he himself had killed Christians, to which he retorted, “You are fools! The Christians I killed were invaders and occupiers who were ravaging our country” (Kiser, 299).



Slide #44: Saving Lives

- His followers, including his own sons, continued to search the streets for Christians, bringing them back to his mansion and offering as incentive a cash bounty of 5 piasters for each rescued person.
- When his house became so crowded that the lack of space, water, and sanitation made the situation untenable, he sought permission to escort the Christians in groups of 100 to the citadel; there they remained under the protection of the Algerians who did not trust the Turks to guard them.
- The French consul Lanusse credited the Emir with saving eleven thousand lives—all those in the Christian quarter who survived.



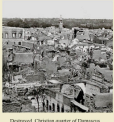
⁵ Francois Lenormant, *Les Derniers Evenements de Syrie*, p. 64 as cited by Bouyerdene, p. 108.

⁶ Qur’an, Ch. 5, verse 32.

- Many asked and still ask the question: what inspired Abd el-Kader to take this courageous stand, potentially risking his own life to save the lives of others of a different faith?
- Abd el-Kader's response to a letter of gratitude from Bishop Pay of Algiers explains his actions: "That which we did for the Christians, we did to be faithful to Islamic law and out of respect for human rights. All creatures are part of God's family and those most loved by God are those who do the most good for his family. All religions rest on two principles—compassion and mercy..." (Kiser, 302).

ING

Destruction of the Christian Quarter



- The attacks were devastating, destroying homes and churches and costing several thousand lives.
- Investigators seeking justice discovered that only a few people took part in the attacks, mainly in the Christian quarter of the city.
- In other mixed neighborhoods, many Muslims protected their Christian neighbors much like Abd el-Kader.


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Slide #45: Destruction of the Christian Quarter

- When investigators began to seek justice from the perpetrators, they found that the violence was mainly confined to the one area of Damascus where Christians made up the majority of residents.
- Only a small number of people participated in these attacks; the mob was mainly composed of recruits organized by the governor and included Kurds, Druze and some Arabs who were seeking to foment trouble.
- Abd el-Kader was not alone in his humanitarian efforts to protect the innocent; many Muslims also tried to protect their Christian neighbors in others parts of the city, such as the Midan district.
- The attacks were nonetheless devastating, laying waste to Christian homes and churches and costing several thousand lives.

ING

Legion of Honor



- When reports of his heroism reached Europe, Abd el-Kader was lionized.
- He received honor after honor, including the medal of the Legion of Honor from France.
- Some French officials suggested making him governor of Syria. He rejected all such ideas.
- He responded: "I have no ambition for worldly glory. From now on, I want only the sweet pleasures of family, prayer, and peace."


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Slide #46: Legion of Honor

- Abd el-Kader's actions in Damascus were met with accolades and honors from across the world. World leaders from Pope Pius IX, Queen Victoria, and the Russian Tsar, to fellow Muslim Chechnyan freedom fighter Imam Shamil all heaped praise on the Emir.
- He was celebrated in the press and received honor after honor, including the medal of Legion of Honor from France, which now celebrated as a hero the man who had once been its fiercest enemy.
- Some French officials began openly advocating making Abd el-Kader governor of Syria, which at that time meant not only the territory of what is now the country of that name, but the entire surrounding area. For a time, Napoleon III even entertained the idea of making him king of an Arab kingdom (pliant to French wishes, of course) stretching across the Arab world.
- The Emir wasn't tempted by such ideas and quickly responded, "I have no ambition for worldly glory. From now on, I want only the sweet pleasures of family, prayer, and peace." In other words, he wanted to continue the greater *jihad*, the struggle to make himself a better servant of God (Kiser, 311).

ING

The Suez Canal



- Abd el-Kader's fame as a humanitarian and protector of Christians led to a steady stream of visitors to his Damascus residence.
- He proceeded to play an important role promoting the Suez Canal project in Egypt linking East and West.
- He saw the Suez Canal as not only a link for commerce but for cultural and spiritual exchange between the East and the West.

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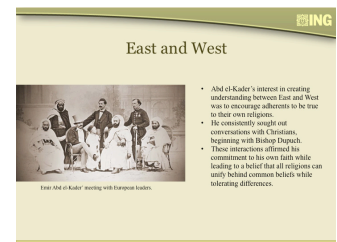
Slide #47: The Suez Canal

- Abd el-Kader's new fame as a great humanitarian and protector of Christians produced a steady stream of European visitors to his Damascus residence.
- His new stature made him an important political ally for the French promoter of the Suez Canal project, Ferdinand Lesseps. Abd el-Kader thought it would improve life for Arabs and Europeans by lowering transportation costs and risks of overland shipping.

- On November 17, 1869, he sat in the grand pavilion with Napoleon's wife the Empress Eugenia, the king of Hungary, and a host of other dignitaries at the opening of the canal. One of his fondest dreams was coming true: the unifying of West and East.
- Joining him on the podium was another Muslim freedom fighter, the Chechnyan hero Imam Shamil. Like Abd el-Kader, Shamil had been exiled to Moscow after years of resisting Russian imperialist expansion in the Caucasus. Of all the accolades received by Abd el-Kader for his actions in 1860, Shamil's was the one he most valued, for he supported his actions on religious grounds saying: "You have put into practice the words of the Prophet and set yourself apart from those who reject his example" (Kiser, 303).
- Abd el-Kader saw the Suez Canal as not merely providing a link for commerce but also opening the way culturally and spiritually between East and West and helping to build bridges and reconcile differences.
- He admired the West's technology and much of its culture, but he had long been dismayed by what he saw as the West's materialism and failure to acknowledge God as the source of all things. He believed that each side had something to teach the other.

Slide #48: East and West

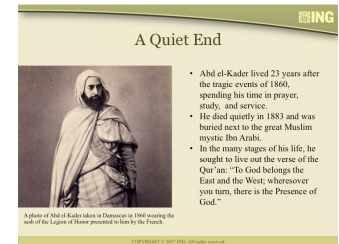
- In hoping that the East would lead the West to a deeper spirituality, however, Abd el-Kader was not thinking of converting westerners to Islam. His long years of contact with French churchmen had taught him that the spiritual roots of the West were still very much alive and could, if cultivated, bear much fruit.
- He wanted Christians to be better Christians, Jews to be better Jews, and Muslims to be better Muslims. His attitude in this contrasts starkly with that of some even of his close friends among Christian clergy who continued to hope for his conversion to their faith.
- For many years Abd el-Kader had deliberately sought out conversations with knowledgeable Christians. His first such encounter was with the priest whom Bishop Dupuch sent to negotiate a prisoner exchange. After this, he carried on a long correspondence with Bishop Dupuch and other Christian clergy, never weakening in his own Muslim faith but seeing much that was true and valuable in the faith and life of others.
- His interactions first in France and then in Damascus led him to believe that men of all faiths could be unified around common beliefs, while respecting and tolerating their differences, "like men who have a common father, but each [of whom] has a different mother" (Kiser, 272).
- He came to believe that all religions contain the same message: love God and be compassionate toward His creatures. As Abd el-Kader expressed in his work, *Spiritual Writings*, "No one knows all of God's facets. Each of His creatures worships and knows Him in a certain way and is ignorant of Him in others" (Kiser, xvii). The finite cannot fully know the infinite and all humans are searching for the truth.



Slide #49: A Quiet End

- Abd el-Kader lived another twenty-three years in Damascus following the tumultuous events of 1860. He spent most of his time in prayer, study, and teaching; but he also took care to serve the needs of those around him—whether by providing for the poor, or supporting major projects like the Suez Canal.
- He died peacefully of kidney failure in 1883 and was buried in Damascus next to the grave of his spiritual master, the great medieval Muslim mystic Ibn Arabi whose works inspired much philosophical reflection on the oneness of God and the diversity of His creation.
- But perhaps the best image with which to end his story is of Abd el-Kader, dressed in his simple white Bedouin robes, among the royalty and bishops and dignitaries of Europe at the opening of the Canal that joined East and West.
- Throughout his life and efforts in the many turns it took, he sought to live out the verse of the Qur'an: "To God belongs the East and the West; and wheresoever you turn, there is the Presence of God."⁷

⁷ Qur'an, 2:115, from the translation by Dr. Thomas Cleary, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*

**Post-Presentation Questions****Comprehension Questions**

Questions about the text associated with each slide specified.

Damascus

1. What type of activities did Abd el-Kader hope to devote himself to in Damascus?
2. What work did he write shortly before his departure from France?

Roots of Religious Strife

3. What two groups were already in conflict in neighboring Lebanon?
4. What other parties may have played a role in fanning the violence in Damascus?

Violence Spreads to Damascus

5. What change in taxes further exacerbated the situation in Damascus?
6. What did Abd el-Kader say he would do to prevent violence against the Christians?

Taking a Stand

7. What did Abd el-Kader do in response to the riots in Damascus in 1860?
8. How did he keep hundreds of Christians safe?

Saving Lives

9. What motivated Abd el-Kader to do what he did?
10. Were there others who behaved as he did?

Legion of Honor

11. How did the French react to his actions?
12. How did the events of 1860 change his status?

The Suez Canal

13. How did Abd el-Kader contribute to the Suez Canal project? What motivated him?
14. How did his views both about technology and intercultural relations impact his participation in the project?

East and West

15. How did Abd el-Kader's view of religion differ from that of even some of his closest friends?

A Quiet End

16. How did Abd el-Kader spend the last years of his life?
17. When did he die and what famous person was he buried next to?

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think the violence that occurred in Damascus in 1860 was solely motivated by religious differences, or were there other factors at play? What were some of the reasons mentioned in the text? What about external causes such as colonialism? Can you cite other examples of religious conflicts that are impacted by such factors? What causes people to act in such senseless ways? How does being part of a mob impact one's individual behavior?
2. What inspired Abd el-Kader to risk his life to save the life of others? What factors in his previous experiences and views may have led him to do so? Do you think you could act the same way in a similar situation?
3. How was Abd el-Kader's attitude towards religion and conversion different from that of others he engaged with? What do you think led him to value the truth in all faiths without the desire to convert people to his faith? Is that quality still important today, and, if so, how can it be encouraged?
4. What do you think of Abd el-Kader's motivation for supporting the Suez Canal? Was he realistic? Did the Canal have the effect he hoped for? Why or why not?
5. What do you think of Abd el-Kader's attitude towards religious pluralism? Was he "ahead of his time" on this issue? What do you know of other influential people of his time or later who advocated similar ideas of pluralism?

Analysis Questions

1. Abd el-Kader's 13th century spiritual master Ibn Arabi wrote the following lines (Kiser, 286):

*"My heart is capable of wearing all forms
It is pasture for gazelles and a monastery for monks,
A temple for idols and the Kaaba for the pilgrim.
It is the tablets of the Torah and it is the book of the Koran
I profess the religion of love, wherever the destination of its caravans may be.
Love is my law and my faith."*

- a. What do you think he meant by these lines?
 - b. How does his view of religion compare with that of some Muslims you hear about today?
 - c. How do you think these lines might have impacted Abd el-Kader's own understanding of Islam and its relationship to other religions?
2. Abd el-Kader told those of religions different from his own, "We are children of different mothers, but of the same Father"
- a. What are the various stages of his life which may have led him to this perspective?
 - b. Do you think many people at the time agreed with him?
 - c. Do you think it is a more common view today?
 - d. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
3. The text related to Slide 42 states that Abd el-Kader "sought to live out the verse of the Qur'an: 'To God belongs the East and the West.'"
- a. How did he try to live this verse in the different stages of his life? List the different stages and if and how he lived this belief.
 - b. How is this verse relevant to the world we live in today?
 - c. How has globalization altered the concept of East and West?
4. The well-known first lines of *The Ballad of East and West* by British poet Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) are often cited to show the divide between East and West, but if one read the 3rd and 4th lines, the meaning shifts.

*"OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!"*

- a. What do you think is the message in these lines?
- b. How is this poem's description of East and West different from that of Abd el-Kader's? How is it similar?

Response Questions

In groups of two or more discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. Abd el-Kader in his *Letter to the French* states, “The Jews objected to Jesus for annulling their laws, but the teachings of Jesus say nothing about the legal code. He offered instead parables and exhortations. *I come not to change the law, but to fulfill it.* The response of the Christ to the Jews is the same as that of the Muslims to the Christians. The Prophet Mohammed said, in effect, ‘I have not come to annul the Gospels or the Law of Moses, but to make them more perfect. The Mosaic Law concerns the external behavior of men generally. The Gospels speak to the hearts of individuals.’” He continued, “The wisdom of Moses is based on action, and is concerned with obligations and proscriptions The wisdom of the Messiah is concerned with the spirit, inviting renunciation in order to attain higher truths. The wisdom of Mohammed unites both. The prophets only differ in the details of certain rules” (Kiser, 271-272).
 - a. How does this view of the three Abrahamic faiths differ from common representations? From your own perspective?
 - b. Do you agree or disagree with his vision of the three faiths?
 - c. How could this view of the commonalities of the three faiths have been beneficial at the time it was written?
 - d. How can this view be beneficial still today?
 - e. Who might oppose such a view?
2. Abd el-Kader warned the Council of Damascus of the risk of pending violence, saying, “If the city is invaded, I will go and put myself with the cavalry in the midst of the Christian quarter, and there I will fight as long as I have breath; I will die, if necessary, for the honor of Islam, whose law forbids crimes of this nature.” (refer to the text for Slide 42 to help answer the questions below).
 - a. What does he mean by dying for the honor of Islam?
 - b. During his earlier life he was willing to also die for his faith fighting non-Muslims; how is it that he is now willing to die to defend non-Muslims?
 - c. Which of the two acts that he believed to be honoring his faith were less likely to be supported or understood by those outside the faith? Within the faith?
 - d. Is it common to find a person who is willing to die for both causes?
3. Many people, both fellow Muslims and Europeans wondered why he behaved as he did in risking his own life to rescue the lives of Christians. Some wondered why the former head of the resistance had not used this opportunity to avenge the suffering inflicted by France on him and his country. Others saw it as pandering to France and criticized him for having become more French than Arab. He responded, “That which we did for the Christians, we did to be faithful to Islamic law and out of response for human rights. All the religions of the book rest on two principles—to praise God and to have compassion for his creatures” (Kiser, 302).
 - a. How did Abd el-Kader uphold and argue his principles in the face of those who challenged him? How did that ability make him a true leader?
 - b. How does the perception that one should stand with one’s “group” rather than one’s principles often lead people to wrongdoing?
 - c. How does a similar attitude of “us vs. them” relate generally to national conflicts, including those in Muslim lands today?

Test Questions

(Answers on page 15)

1. After leaving France, Abd el-Kader first settles in:
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Syria
 - c. Turkey
 - d. Greece
2. Maronite Christians and Druze had been in conflict in the 19th century for some time in:
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Syria
 - c. Turkey
 - d. Lebanon
3. The Turks ruling Damascus were angered by the Christians refusal to pay:
 - a. *Zakat*
 - b. Alms
 - c. *Jizya*
 - d. Tithes
4. When Abd el-Kader hears of the threat of violence against Christians in Damascus he does nothing to prevent it. True or false?
5. He risks his own life to save the lives of Jews. True or false?
6. What inspired him to risk his own life to save the lives of others? _____

7. In recognition of his valor in saving lives, he is presented by the French with the:
 - a. Medal of the Legion of Honor
 - b. Medal of the Order of Liberation
 - c. Title of Emir
 - d. Title of mufti
8. Abd el-Kader viewed the Suez Canal project as a connector between:
 - a. Egypt and Syria
 - b. Egypt and India
 - c. South and North
 - d. East and West
9. Abd el-Kader's interest in other faiths made him question his own faith. True or false?
10. Abd el-Kader's mission in life had changed many times, but throughout his life he remained committed to:
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Study
 - c. Service
 - d. All of the above

Activities

All activities can be completed individually or in small groups.

1. Research other people or groups who have risked their own lives to save that of people of another faith or background. Ask the question: what makes these individuals different from those who fail to take a stand? Present your findings to the class.
2. The world has often been divided into East and West. Yet the Qur'anic verse that Abd el-Kader's life reflects states: "To God belongs the East and the West." In word, art form or any other expression, interpret what those words mean to you or your group. Present it to the class or display it in the classroom.

Answers to test questions:

1) c; 2) d; 3) c; 4) false; 5) false; 6) his religious beliefs; 7) a; 8) d; 9) false; 10) d.

Supplemental Film Content

In this section of the curriculum we provide recommendations or links to films that relate to the topics or themes discussed in this lesson. These films vary from full length documentaries, to short form documentaries or clips taken from full length documentaries. Each of the film names or links is accompanied by a brief description of the film. Select films also include discussion questions.

Topics and Related Films

[Faith Short 2010](#)
[Runner-up: *Let Us Show You How Faith Inspires Us*](#) (2010),
Faith Shorts—the Tony Blair Foundation, directed by Tariq Chowdhury.

Putting Faith into Practice

Faith Shorts is "an annual global short film competition launched by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to provide young people with the opportunity to express their faith through film. This competition gives young voices a global platform on which to showcase their films." This film *Let Us Show You How Faith Inspires Us* by Tariq Chowdhury, a 22 year-old film maker from East London was the 2010 runner-up. The film reflects the huge diversity which exists in London, featuring people from a range of faith backgrounds and iconic religious buildings. The film points to the central thread which runs through all religions—shared compassion for all. This short film takes us on a tour of London to visit faith communities who each reflect on a quote that is at the heart of their faith.

Questions about the film:

1. This film gives religious textual examples that are sayings of the universality of the "Golden Rule." What are some of the most memorable of these statements in the film?
2. How are we able to understand each other better, with our similarities and differences, when we look at the most beautiful aspects of each other's faiths?

Interfaith Relations

Out of Cordoba takes us on a journey in the Mediterranean world to look for the remnants of the once flourishing and tolerant al-Andalus, which Cordoba was a cultural center of. As is stated on the film website, “*Out of Cordoba* is a feature documentary about Jews, Muslims, and Christians struggling for coexistence and against the hijacking of their respective religions by extremists. The film profiles several contemporary people of faith, who, inspired by two ‘wise men’ from the city of Cordoba in medieval Spain—Averroes the Muslim, and Rabbi Moses Maimonides the Jew—are challenging the propositions that there is an inevitable ‘clash of civilizations’ between the West and the Muslim world, an incompatibility between Islam and democracy, and an unsolvable conflict between Muslims and Jews. . . . *Out of Cordoba* is also the story of the film’s director, Jacob Bender, an American Jew and peace activist, as he undertakes a journey around the Mediterranean world after the attacks of 9/11—in Spain, Morocco, France, Egypt, Palestine, and Israel—following in the footsteps of these two ‘wise men’ in search of Muslims, Jews, and Christians committed to utilizing their religious traditions as sources of tolerance, democracy, and human rights.”

[*Out of Cordoba*](#) (2010) trailer, directed by Jacob Bender.

Questions about the film:

1. How does the director of the film hope to create a more tolerant world with this film?
2. Who were the two geniuses the film mentions who were both born in Cordoba? What did they do and what were they both trying to balance?
3. While some people have used the term the “clash of civilizations,” what is the term used in this film by the advisor to the King of Morocco?

Abrahamic Traditions: Shared Beliefs and Practices

The Calling is a film that not only educates about different religions, but provides a view into the actual practices of each of the faith groups featured in the film. According to the viewing guide, “*The Calling* follows the life-changing journeys of seven young Americans—Muslim, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish—as they prepare for leadership in their faith communities. Produced by a team of multi-faith filmmakers, this intimate look behind the walls of seminaries and into the hearts of our country’s future religious leaders provides a nuanced, deeply personal portrayal of faith in America. While the United States is one of the most religiously observant and spiritually diverse countries in the world, faith often clashes with contemporary society. *The Calling* reveals a new paradigm: passionate spiritual leaders, who commit to a life of religion and service without compromising their strong identification with modern culture. Their stories are surprising—and inspiring.”

The Calling (2010), PBS, directed by Danny Alpert.

Questions about the film:

1. How does this film address issues of social justice as being central to each of these faith leaders?
2. What similarities and differences did you see between these different faiths featured in the film?

3. Part of the focus of this film is the academic training that each of these people receives in becoming a faith leader. How do the academic training and mentorship that each of them receives differ? How are they similar?

Further Resources: [What's Your Calling website](#). The complete film is available on Netflix, iTunes, and for purchase as a DVD. It is also available at many local libraries.

Additional Teacher Resources

Books

Ali-Karamali, Sumbul. *The Muslim Next Door: The Qur'an, the Media, and That Veil Thing*. Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2008.

Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Bouyerdene, Ahmed, translated by Gustavo Polit. *Emir Abd el-Kader: Hero and Saint of Islam*. Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom Inc., 2012.

Cleary, Thomas. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Starlatch Press, 2004.

Esposito, John. *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*. New York: Oxford Press, 2002.

Kiser, John W. *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader*. New York: Monkfish, 2008.

Articles

Werner, Louis. "[Prince of Brotherhood](#)," *Saudi Aramco World*, July / August, 2010.

Rany. "[Abd el-Kader and the Massacre of Damascus](#)." Tuesday, July 13, 2010.

Websites

[abdelkaderproject.org](#): "Starting in Iowa, the project is growing a worldwide movement to revive the legacy of Emir Abd el-kader. Our goal is to restore the historical memory of a remarkable human being whose importance today is greater than ever. He was also an Arab warrior-scholar-statesman respected and admired from the Missouri Territory to Moscow to Mecca. When he died in 1883, the New York Times wrote, he 'deserved to be counted among the few great men of the century.'" The Abd el-Kader project also features an annual essay contest featuring six scholarships for winning essays from students in high school and college.

[truejihad.com](#): As this website about Abd el-Kader states, "History, according to the truism, is written by the victors. Yet, it was the French victors who paid homage to the moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities that made Abd el- Kader a widely recognized 'great man' of the mid 19th century. Emir Abd el-Kader inspired respect from Missouri to Moscow. His story is about many things, but ultimately it is about struggle: struggle against French invaders, struggle with Arabs who rejected his leadership, struggle with depression and despair in French prisons, struggle to live as a good Muslim. Today, he would be dismissed by many in the West as a 'fundamentalist'— a label signifying to the secularist a retrograde, narrow-minded extremist. He was indeed a fundamentalist in this sense: to be rightly guided meant only one thing for him—to do God's will according to the teaching of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet. He was also a man of great intellectual curiosity, marked by Greek thought, who squared his faith with a deep humanity and a progressive belief in the value of knowledge to improve lives. For

him there was no contradiction between faith and reason, or between a rigid orthodoxy and acknowledging the diversity of God's ways. Nor was there a contradiction between being a puritanical, Law-abiding Muslim and a compassionate humanitarian who respected the accomplishments of European culture."

[Golden Rule Art Exercise and Lesson Plan](#): "The goal of this program is to inspire and support young people to become global citizens rooted in the Golden Rule. This effort to engender character education in young people is achieved using creativity, imagination and the arts. This program also serves to counter the negativity that so many of us, including young people, are exposed to in modern culture."

[Interfaith Youth Core](#): "What if people of all faiths and traditions worked together to promote the common good for all? What if once again, young people led the way? Across the country, Muslims and Hindus, Jews and Christians, Buddhists and non-religious, are coming together in a movement of interfaith cooperation. They are proving that the 21st century can be defined by cooperation between diverse communities instead of conflict. Read more. Get involved. Let's prove we are better together."

[What's Your Calling?](#): This site explores notions of "calling" from both religious and secular perspectives. As described on the website, "Through a growing series of interviews, videos and articles, *What's Your Calling?* explores the notion of "calling" to explore in all of the ways stuff that makes us human: our values, our passions, our doubts and hopes. Profiling individuals from diverse backgrounds – professional snowboarders, jazz musicians, tug boat captains, academics, improvisers, Muay Thai fighters, religious leaders, social workers, environmental activists, toy inventors – *What's Your Calling?* shares what people have been called to do with their lives and how they hope to change the world."