Study Guide for Healing the Open Wounds of Islam

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Chapter 3

THE ARAB SPRING: Democracy's Dance of Death

The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that spread across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) beginning in December 2010. Citizens protested against authoritarian rule, corruption, economic stagnation, and human rights abuses. Those protests led to major governmental changes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. However, in Syria and Libya, uprisings escalated into brutal civil wars.

- Leadership & Governance: How different rulers responded to protests and whether democracy succeeded.
- Social Media & Mobilization: The role of digital activism in organizing protests.
- Sectarian Conflicts & Power Struggles: How ethnic and religious divisions shaped outcomes.
- Reconciliation & Societal Transformation: Lessons in leadership, justice, and peace

Section I.

Sally Zahran was killed in a 2011 protest against dictatorship and soon became a symbol of Egypt's fight for freedom. Her legacy became entangled in the conflict between democracy and those who sought a stricter Islamic law. The protests, called the "Arab Spring," did not bring freedom. They led to instability, highlighting the challenges of a nation achieving true liberty while holding to Islamic societal beliefs.

- The Arab Spring started as a push for democracy, but was overtaken by ideological conflicts
- Islamic Governance vs. Freedom: Protesters sought individual liberty, but jihadists aimed to impose Sharia law.
- Democratic Disillusionment: Egypt's first democratically elected Islamist leader, Mohamed Morsi, was overthrown in a military coup.
- The Struggle for True Liberty: Removing dictators proved insufficient for establishing lasting freedom.

Section II.

Many Arab nations ended up with artificial borders that were drawn by Europe. This led to conflict over ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs. Iraq, Syria, and Libya were so affected by these divisions that it produced political instability.

- European powers destroyed the Ottoman Empire but left behind people who did not know how to govern themselves. That enabled dictators to consolidate power.

- During the 20th century, British and French rulers established Muslim states without training them in the art of self-governance. They robbed their people of freedom and clung to power by using the military.

Section III:

A belief in the dignity of each person made in God's image plays a fundamental role in governing free people. Colonel Muammar Gaddafi thought that anyone who differed from him was an enemy. It is similar to the post-Christian view—that a human is nothing but an intelligent animal, or a baby is a bunch of cells that could be dismissed until birth. Newly formed Islamic nations that sought power by stifling freedom of opinion and imposing dictatorship led to nations hurting their own people.

1. What were the key factors that led to the Arab Spring?

2. Could anyone have determined early warning signs that indicated that an uprising was imminent?

3. What transition could have come from the Arab Spring if different leaders had emerged? What key values are needed to build free nations?

4. What role did tribal and sectarian allegiances play in sustaining dictatorships?

5. How does servant leadership compare with the authoritarian rule seen during the Arab Spring? Compare the following leadership styles

	Servant Leaders vs	Authoritarian Rulers
Goals/pursuits		
How do they measure human dignity?		
How do they seek to gain and maintain power?		

6. Did social media empower citizens or create unrealistic expectations for rapid change?

7. How did governments attempt to counteract the influence of social media in protests?

8. What lessons can future movements learn from the successes and failures of digital activism?

9. How did the Arab Spring impact women's rights in the region?

10. Were women leaders or activists marginalized?