

August 2016

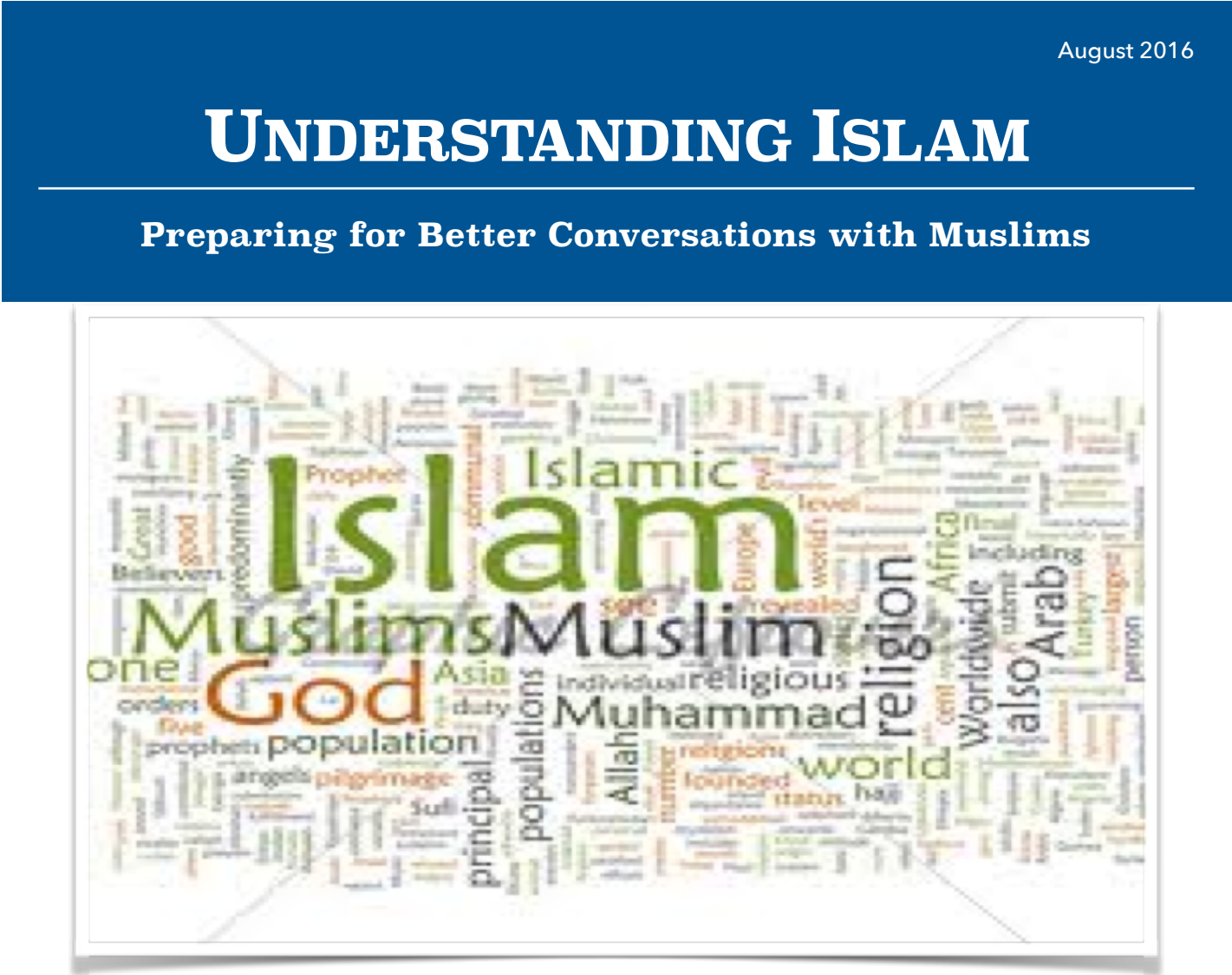
UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Preparing for Better Conversations with Muslims

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Of the pantheon of gods worshiped in the day, Muhammad was "led" to choose the one known as "Allah" (Arabic for "the god") as the only true God. In the year 622, Muhammad and his small band of followers migrated to a city called Yathrib, now renamed "Medina" ("city of the prophet"). There they established the first Islamic state. The Muslim calendar begins from the day of this migration (the hijira or "flight").

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The Asia-Pacific region has almost 1 billion of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world and over 600 million in the Asia-Pacific region.

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The Asia-Pacific region has almost 1 billion of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world and over 65 nations in the world are Islamic.

Muhammad's hatred of idols led him to place an immense emphasis on the unity and transcendence of God. At first he believed that Jews and Christians would accept his message, and had his followers kneel toward Jerusalem to pray. When they did not, he taught them to turn their backs on Jerusalem by bowing toward Mecca; this is their practice today.

Muhammad's culture was characterized by tribal warfare, brutality, and promiscuity. He emphasized divine control, and opposed religious liberty and separation of church and state. Since Allah is Lord, he must be Lord of all. Thus Muhammad created a civilization, not merely a religion—a way of life for all people, governing personal autonomy and all morality. Islam attempts to provide the answers to every conceivable detail of belief and daily life.

Muhammad left no designated heirs. The "caliphs" (Arabic for "successors") continued his movement, led first by his uncle Abu Bekr. Soon, however, divisions began to emerge. Most Muslims followed the caliphs and their successors; these are known as Sunnis today. But some believed that only the fourth caliph (Muhammad's son-in-law) was the true successor to Muhammad, and have supported his successors; they are the Shiites ("party of Ali"). Eight-five percent of Muslims are Sunnis; 15 percent are Shiites, living primarily in Iran.

Definitions in Islam

Allah – “the god”

Qur'an – the “recitation” or central book of Allah given to Muhammad

Islam – “submission” or “surrender”

Hadith – a collection of the “sayings” of Muhammad

Sunna – the record of the personal customs of Muhammad and his community

Imam – spiritual leader in local mosque

Shahdah – “witness”

Salah – “prayer”

Injil - the original Gospel of Jesus

Hajj – pilgrimage

Jihad – “holy war”



The “Doctrines of Islam”

There is only one true God and his name is Allah. Children are born in a state of natural purity and then only fall into sin.

Each person has two angels who record their good and bad deeds; evil spirits known as "jinn" also exist.

Salvation is determined by Allah's will and by compiling good deeds and "points" from the Five Pillars.

Allah has sent prophets through human history including Jesus. The final and most important prophet was Muhammad.

Islam claims four inspired books: The Torah of Moses; the Psalms of David; the Injil (the Gospel of Jesus); and the Qur'an.

Islam's View of God

Unlike many world religions, Islam's view of God can be stated very succinctly: "Your God is One God: there is no God but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful" (2:163). Allah in the Qur'an is described as eternal: "Allah, the Eternal" (Surah 112:1); Transcendent and not a part of his creation: "The Creator of the heavens and the earth.... There is nothing like unto Him" (Surah 42:11).

The Qur'an also explicitly rejects the divinity of Jesus: "They do blaspheme who say: 'God is Christ the son of Mary'" (5:72); "They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God" (5:73); "Christ the son of Mary, was no more than an apostle" (5:75). Allah does not have a Son: "It is not worthy of Allah that he should take to himself a son" (Surah 19:88-92). Allah's creatures must deal directly with him with no one to intercede: "Who is it that can screen you from Allah if it be His wish to give you punishment or to give you mercy? Nor will they find for themselves, besides Allah, any protector or helper" (33:17).

The Qur'an makes clear its rejection of the Trinity: "Say not 'Trinity': desist: it will be better for you: for God is one God: glory be to Him" (4:171). Allah calls the Christian doctrine of the Trinity blasphemous: "They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity" (5:73).

Muslims believe that God has sent 313 prophets to humanity, and are required to memorize the 25 most important. Of these, the most significant were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Muslims believe that Jesus was born of a virgin (3:47; 19:20), and that he lived a sinless life and ascended to heaven without passing through death. They reject the atonement and the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ.

Islam's View of Jesus

Muslims like to claim that they have a high view of Jesus pointing out that Jesus' name occurs twenty-five times in the Qur'an. The Qur'an says Jesus was born of a virgin: "She [Mary] said: 'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me....Allah ... says to it only: 'Be!' and it is'" (3:47). It also says He is the Messiah: "The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary" (5:75); He was in the ranks of the righteous: "he will be one of the righteous" (3:46); sinless: "a most-holy boy" (19:19); and He performed miracles: "I [Jesus] heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I bring the dead to life" (Surah 3:49).

But the Qur'an also tells us that Jesus was a created being: "Allah created him [Jesus] from dust" (3:59); not God's son: "it is not suitable for Allah that He should beget a son" (19:88-92); no more than a servant: "He [Jesus] was not more than a slave" (43:59).

The Qur'an tells us that Jesus was not crucified on the cross nor resurrected: "They killed him not, nor crucified him. Allah raised him up unto himself" (4:157-158). The Bible says Jesus was crucified on the cross and resurrected: "wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead" (Acts 2:23; cf., Acts 2:32; Mark 8:31; Matthew 16:21; 26:53-54; Luke 9:22; John 10:11; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

In addition, there are numerous other historical accounts that support crucifixion:

- The Jewish Talmud (AD 70-200): "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [Jesus] was hanged."
- Josephus, first century Jewish historian: "Pilate condemned him [Jesus] to be crucified and die," and that the apostles "reported that he [Jesus] had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion" (Antiquities 18:3).

- Tacitus, first century Roman historian added: "Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus" (Annals 15.44).

The Quran's positive and negative affirmations of Jesus only show the book is confused as to who Jesus really is. Claiming to have a high view of Jesus does not in totality mean a correct view.

Islam's View of the Holy Spirit

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John 14:16).

Muslims believe the helper Jesus promised in John 14:16 was Muhammad: "Jesus said... a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Muhammad" (Surah 61:6).

But Jesus said this "Helper" would be with us "forever." Muhammad has been dead for over 1300 years! Jesus said the helper will give us "the Spirit of truth." Muhammad was uneducated and could not even write.

Another belief within Islam is that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel or just some impersonal force of Allah.

Concept of Salvation

Salvation is achieved by submission to Allah: "So believe in God and His Apostle; and if ye believe and do right, ye have a reward without measure" (3:179). Note that strict morality is a hallmark of Muslims.

Muslims believe that there will be a final day of judgment, the consummation of history, and the assigning of heaven and hell to all persons on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of the message of God and their accompanying good works. Allah is depicted as weighing good and bad works on a delicate scale of balance which is accurate even to the weight of a grain of mustard seed (7:5-8; 21:47; 23:103-5).



The Essential Practices of Life and Faith in Islam

1. The "witness" — "There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is Allah's messenger." Every Muslim must declare this aloud at least once in his life very slowly, with deep meaning and full commitment; most Muslims repeat it many times each day.
2. Prayer five times a day facing toward Mecca, the holy city.
3. Almsgiving approximately 2.5% of all one's income and permanent annual worth, to the poor. This is an act of worship.
4. Fasting, especially during the month of Ramadan, which commemorates the giving of the Qur'an. From dawn to sunset every day of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, a Muslim refrains from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once from every believer who is physically and financially able to make the journey.

Islam and Christianity

Major Differences and Comparisons

1. The Qur'an says Jesus is not God and that He is not God's Son. "It is not worthy of Allah that he should take to himself a son" (Surah 19:88-92).

However, Jesus clearly said: "I am God's Son" (John 10:36; cf., 3:16; Matt. 26:62).

2. The Qur'an teaches that the Trinity is blasphemous: "They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity" (5:73). "Do not say Trinity" (4:171).

An essential belief of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is God, the second person of the Trinity (John 1:1,14; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8). The deity of Christ, and His role as the Second Person of the Trinity, is something the historic Christian Church has always confessed.

3. The Qur'an offers no assurance of salvation: "Who is it that can screen you from Allah if it be His wish to give you punishment or to give you mercy?" (Surah 33:17).

The Christian God says in His Word: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13; cf., John 5:24; 3:36; 6:47).

4. The god of the Qur'an demands you win his approval: "Allah loves those who do good" (Surah 2:195); "If you do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you" (3:31); "Allah does not love transgressors" (Surah 2:190); "Allah does not love any ungrateful sinner" (2:276); "Allah does not like the wrongdoers" (3:57); "Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful" (4:36); "Allah does not like the disbelievers" (3:32). Allah must be enticed to love the individual by some demonstration of your faithfulness toward him.

God's standard in the Bible' is that man must be perfect to get into heaven (Matt. 5:48; Lev. 11:44; Heb. 12:14), but we all fall short of that standard: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Entrance into heaven could never be by an attempt at good deeds (Gal. 3:10-11; James 2:10): "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Christianity offers grace, full pardon for sin, and salvation today.

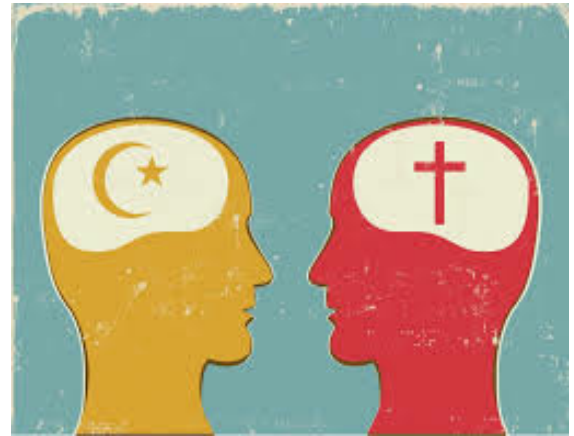


Offering Grace to a Muslim

Explore Muslim convictions as a pathway to sharing the gospel.

Muslims recognize Jesus as one of their six most important prophets, along with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad. They believe that he was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, ascended to heaven and will appear at the end of history.

Affirm these beliefs, and use them to share your faith in Christ.



The Bible - two different approaches to discussing and using the bible with a Muslim.

The first is to impress upon the Muslim that the Qur'an itself claims the Bible to be the word of God: "We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them" (Surah 2:136; 2:75; 5:46, 5:67-71). The Qur'an also states that all of God's words cannot be altered: "No change there can be in the words of Allah" (10:64); "there is none that can alter the Words (and Decrees) of Allah" (6:34); "none can change His Words" (6:115). If the Qur'an speaks the truth in this area and the Old and New Testaments are inspired (2:136) and can't change (10:64), then they must take the Bible and the words of Jesus as God's word. When Muslims argue that the Bible has been corrupted they are arguing against Muhammad and God! The bottom line is that if Muslims discredit the Bible they discredit the Qur'an.

The second is for those Muslims that insist the Bible has been corrupted, while the Qur'an has been preserved in its original state of purity. Actually, the opposite is true. New Testament scholars tell us that the Greek New Testament we possess today is virtually identical to the original documents, and state that the few variants that remain affect no matter of doctrine, faith and practice. By contrast, the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (led Islam 644-656), after numerous variations of the Qur'an had become popular, ordered every version destroyed except one. Muslims have no way to know if the Qur'an they read today contains the original message of Muhammad.

The Trinity - Another Muslim objection to Christianity concerns the Trinity.

Islam teaches that Christians worship three gods, in violation of the monotheism they embrace. Christians know that we do not worship three gods, but one God who has revealed himself in three persons. Jesus clearly affirmed the unity of God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mark 12:29, quoting Deuteronomy 6:4).

As the Father is the source of all life, so the Son called himself "the Life" (John 11:25, 14:6) and is called the Author of Life (Acts 3:15). The Holy Spirit is likewise the one through whom God will give eternal life to our mortal bodies (Romans 8:11). In all these texts we can see a divine tri-unity, not three independent personalities. Our doctrine is only held within a definition of God's unity. Without it the Trinity's fundamental nature falls away. You quite simply cannot establish the doctrine outside of God's essential oneness. As Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30) and this total unity is shared with the Holy Spirit. The co-equal and distinct persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three Gods because they share the same essence in complete unity.

Helpful Hints for Evangelizing a Muslim

- Pray without ceasing before during and after any engagement with a Muslim.
- Understand there is no one methodology that works.
- Be the example Jesus gave us: Have compassion, be personal and watch your attitude.
- Don't look at the person you are speaking with as an opponent but another human searching for God and truth.
- Do not on attack on Muhammad, Islam or the Qur'an. Be patient and remember how hard it is culturally for a Muslim to consider Christianity.
- Your greatest testimony is what Jesus has done in your life.
- Your thoughts should be on sharing Christ. Remember that Jesus is unlike any other prophet with his actions and words showing He was God. Why would God allow a prophet to say and do those things and then take the credit for them?
- If they ask you if you are a Christian- respond with "what is a Christian?" This opens a door, providing insights to their beliefs and potential objections.
- If the divinity of Jesus is at issue, ask if God appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush (they accept this story in the Torah as true). Then ask if God could appear in the form of a burning bush why couldn't He choose to appear in the form of a man? (Is it blasphemy to not believe God is all-powerful?)
- Encourage them to read the gospels especially John. The Qur'an itself told Mohammad to do so. Sura 10:94 - So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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