

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON

ISLAM



KERBY ANDERSON

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The second largest religion in the world and one of the fastest growing religions is the religion of Islam. Although we hear so much about it in the news, many Christians don't know much about Islam and don't know how to share the gospel with a Muslim. Whole books have been written on these subjects, but here is a short summary with recommended books so you can learn more.

Islam is a monotheistic religion based upon the holy book, the Qur'an, which its followers believe was sent by God through the angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad. Additional teachings are also recorded in the Hadith.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Although the beliefs of Muslims vary, all believe in what are called the "Five Pillars of Islam." These provide a summary of the practices of this religion.

1. *Shahadah*: The first pillar is recitation of the creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah." This statement is the foundation for all other beliefs in Islam. It is what makes someone a Muslim. Those who convert to Islam are to recite the creed. It is generally believed that you must recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses in order to formally convert to Islam.

2. *Salat*: The second pillar is the daily practice of prayer. Muslim prayer may be done individually or in community, but they are required five times each day

(dawn and sunrise, noon and mid-afternoon, mid-afternoon to sunset, sunset to twilight, and from twilight to dawn).

In Muslim and Western countries where there is a mosque, a prayer leader climbs to the top of the minaret in the mosque and calls the believers to prayer. He chants in Arabic, "God is great. There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to success in this life and the hereafter."

3. *Zakat*: The third pillar is almsgiving, which is mandated giving to the poor and needy within society. The Qur'an requires that each Muslim give 2.5 percent of one's income to the poor or to the spread of Islam. The collected funds are used for building and supporting mosques, for printing the Qur'an, and for the advancement of Islam.

4. *Sawm*: The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast during the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar. This is significant in the Muslim calendar for two reasons.

First, this is the time when Muhammad is said to have received the first of his revelations from God. Second, it is also the time when he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina.

During this month, Muslims in good health are required to abstain from all food, drink, smoking, and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. This month-long fast promotes the Muslim's self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.

5. *Hajj*: The fifth pillar is a pilgrimage to Mecca that occurs during the last month of the Muslim year. Every able-bodied Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life. Pilgrims travel to Mecca, which is the holiest city in Islam and the birthplace of Muhammad. Only Muslims may enter Mecca.

The focal point of Mecca is the Ka'bah which is an ancient stone building (thirty feet wide and forty feet long). A black stone (believed to be a meteorite) is set in the corner. The Ka'bah existed before the time of Muhammad. He taught that

their worship had been corrupted and removed the idols from the Ka'bah and instituted Muslim worship of Allah in its place.

Major Divisions of Islam

Islam is not a monolithic system. Though all Muslims draw their inspiration from Muhammad and the teachings in the Qur'an, there are many identifiable groups and movements within Islam.

The most significant division is between Sunni and Shi'a Islam. The Sunnis comprise about eighty to ninety percent of all Muslims. They draw their name from the fact that they look both to the Qur'an and to the "Sunna" in establishing proper Muslim conduct. The Sunna is the recorded behavior or example of Muhammad and of the early Muslim community. There are many sub-divisions among the Sunnis, but they all identify themselves as Sunni.

Sunnis currently control the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. They adhere to the five pillars of Islam and take a strong

stand on the successor to Muhammad. This leader will be the caliph who will govern Islam and provide theological direction to all Muslims, including the interpretation of sharia law. These caliphs have ruled continuously until the Ottoman Empire fell.

The other major group of Muslims is the Shi'ites. They compose about ten percent of all Muslims. They reside mainly in southern Iraq and in Iran. The word Shi'ite means "partisan," and refers to the fact that Shi'ites are "partisans of Ali." Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad and one of the early caliphs. The Shi'ites believe that the leader of Islam should be a descendant of Ali, whom they believe possess a special divine anointing for this task.

A third group of Muslims are the Sufis. They seek a mystical experience of God, rather than a merely intellectual knowledge of Him. Sufi Muslims are the mystics in Islam. They believe that the soul can rise to Allah during prayer and

other spiritual exercises. Although they also read the Qur'an, they read it in a different way than other Muslims. They believe that it is an allegory of our soul's union with Allah.

Muslim Beliefs

When you are witnessing to a Muslim, it is important to remember that their beliefs about God, Jesus, and the Bible are very different from a Christian's view. They may have many misconceptions, and you may have certain misconceptions about what they believe. It is therefore important to ask questions about what they believe and help them understand what the Bible actually teaches. Here are a few basic theological beliefs.

It has often been fashionable to hear people say that, "Christians and Muslims worship the same God." It is understandable that people might say that. Both Islam and Christianity are monotheistic, even though a foundational difference is the Christian belief in the Trinity.

The most foundational doctrine in

Islam is monotheism. This doctrine is encapsulated in the creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah." Because of this strong emphasis on monotheism, Muslims reject the idea that God could be more than one person or that God could have a partner. The Qur'an teaches that Allah is one God and the same God for all people. Anyone who does not believe this is guilty of the sin of *shirk*. According to Islam, God cannot have a partner and cannot be joined together in the Godhead with other persons. Muslims therefore reject the Christian idea of the Trinity.

Muslims and Christians also differ in their understanding of the nature and character of God. Islam teaches that Allah is distant, transcendent, and unknowable. He is separate from His creation. He is exalted and far removed from mankind. While we may know His will, we cannot know Him personally. By contrast, Christianity teaches the fatherhood of God. Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer that we may address God as "our Father

in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Christians can have a personal relationship with God through Christ.

Muslims also have a different view of Jesus. The Qur’an refers to Jesus as “the Messiah” or “the Christ.” But Muslims reject the idea that God could have a Son. By contrast, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God is heard from heaven declaring, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 17:5). Also, believers are called children of God: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

Witnessing to Muslims

Muslims usually believe that the Bible has errors in it. You should be prepared to answer such objections. But you can even begin with what is taught about Jesus in the Qur’an. They accept that He is the Messiah and the Christ. And they honor him as one of the greatest prophets. In Sura 3:42-55, the Qur’an also teaches that: (1) Mary was chosen by God, (2) Jesus was

born of a virgin, (3) Jesus is the Messiah, (4) Jesus has power over death, and (5) Jesus knows the way to heaven.

The Qur'an also teaches that a proper Muslim must read the Old and New Testaments, known as the Before Books (Sura 4:136). And it teaches that those who observe the teaching of the Torah and the Gospels may go to heaven (Sura 5:65-66). Many Muslims feel this gives them permission to read the Bible. You can give them a Bible and suggest they read the gospel of John.

When you witness to Muslims, be sure you talk about the love of God. Most Muslims believe that Allah is distant and unknowable. Christianity offers to them the possibility of knowing God personally. This is attractive to Muslims.

A seminary conducted a survey of six hundred former Muslims who had become Christians. One of the most significant factors involved in the conversions of these former Muslims was the emphasis on the love of God and the

intimacy that believers can have with God as their heavenly Father. This was an important factor in drawing these former Muslims to Christ, so make sure you talk about the love of God.

Another factor was eternal security. A Muslim never really knows whether he or she will be saved due to their good works on earth. The Bible teaches that we can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). We are saved by grace through faith not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). The bad news is that the works Muslims do will not enable them to enter into heaven. The good news is that God gave his Son so that they would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson. *Understanding Islam and Terrorism: A Biblical Point of View*. Christian Publishing House, 2017.

Ergun Caner and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam*. Kregel, 2002.

Norman Geisler. *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*. Baker, 2002.

Nabeel Qureshi,. *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. Zondervan, 2016.

Joel Rosenberg. *Inside the Revolution*. Tyndale House, 2009.



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