

The Islam FAQ

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Islam

“Whosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.”

— Holy Quran (Al-Ma'dah:32)

Q: What is Islam?

A: Islam means “submission to the will of God.” Islam teaches belief in only one God, the Day of Judgment and individual accountability for actions. Islam greatly values peace; in fact the traditional Muslim greeting is “Salaam” which means “peace.”

Q: What are the basic teachings of Islam?

A: The basic teachings of Islam are similar to those of Christianity and Judaism. Islam teaches the belief in one God, the Angels, the Day of Judgment, Heaven and Hell, Adam and Eve, Prophets, Prayer, and Equality. There are five Pillars of Islam:

1. *Faith*: Believe in one God and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as his last messenger
2. *Prayer*: Pray towards Mecca five times each day to remember God and thank him for his grace
3. *Charity*: Donate a portion of your wealth to the poor
4. *Fasting*: Go without food and drink from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan to empathize with the poor and learn self-discipline
5. *Pilgrimage*: Visit Mecca and perform the Hajj once in a lifetime, if you are able and have the means

Q: When was Islam started?

A: Contrary to popular belief, Islam was not started by Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the 7th century. Muslims, the followers of Islam, believe that Islam was first followed by Adam, then by all of the prophets thereafter. Muslims believe that the same basic message of belief in one God was communicated through many prophets including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them) over time.

Q: What is a Muslim?

A: A “Muslim” is one who follows Islam and submits to the will of God.

Q: How many Muslims are there?

A: There are currently 1.2 Billion Muslims in the world, with 7 million in the United States. Contrary to popular perception, only 20% of Muslims are Arabs and live in the Middle East. The countries with the largest Muslim populations are India and Indonesia with about 175 million Muslims each.

Q: Who is “Allah”?

A: “Allah” is simply the Arabic word for God, the same God worshiped by Christians and Jews. It is the God of Abraham and Moses, not a different God. Christian Arabs also refer to God as “Allah”.

Q: What is the Quran/Koran?

A: The Quran is the holy book of Islam. Muslims believe that the Quran was divinely revealed and is the last testament of God. The Quran is preserved in its original Arabic form and has never been changed.

Q: Who was Muhammad?

A: Muslims believe that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a prophet and the last in a series of messengers of God. Muslims believe in many prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (Peace be upon them).

Q: What does Islam say about Christians and Jews?

A: Islam teaches that Christians, Jews and Muslims are all descended from Abraham and are “people of the book”. By that it means that the three religions share the same basic beliefs articulated through their holy books. Muslims hold Jesus and Moses (peace be upon them) in high regard and believe that they were prophets blessed with the power of miracles to show the glory of God.

Q: What is an Islamic Fundamentalist?

A: This term has no basis in Islam. This term is incorrectly used in the media to refer to some Middle Eastern people and does not represent Muslims.

Q: How does Islam view terrorism?

A: Islam does not support terrorism under any condition or circumstances. Terrorism goes against every principle of Islam. If a Muslim engages in terrorism he is not following the religion. He may be wrongly using the name of Islam for political or financial gain.

Q: How does Islam view killing innocent people?

A: Islam does not condone the killing of innocent people under any condition or circumstances. It is one of the greatest sins in Islam.

Q: How does Islam view suicide?

A: Islam states that life is a gift from God and must be cherished. Suicide is a major sin in Islam and not permitted or justifiable under any circumstances.

Q: What is “Jihad”?

A: Jihad does not mean “holy war”. Jihad in Arabic means to strive, struggle and exert effort. It is a central and broad Islamic concept that includes struggle against evil inclinations within oneself, struggle to improve the quality of life in society, for self-defense or fighting against tyranny or oppression.

Q: What is a “Fatwa”?

A: A “Fatwa” is a religious ruling to a question based on Islamic law and issued by Islamic scholars.

Q: How does Islam view women?

A: Islam views women as equal to but different from men. Islam teaches that women must be respected and protected. Islam does not condone oppression of women but to the contrary provides many rights to women. In some Middle Eastern countries women may be limited in certain rights. This is not due to Islam but due to the culture of that area.

Q: Why do Muslim women cover their hair?

A: Islam teaches modesty for women and men. Women are required to cover their bodies so that their figure is not revealed and that only their face and hands are shown. This requirement is designed to protect women and give them respect. The dress of Muslim women is very similar to that of Christian Nuns who also cover their bodies and hair.

Q: What is a Mosque/Masjid?

A: A Mosque or Masjid is a place of worship for Muslims. Muslims pray in a mosque in the same way that Christians pray in a church.

Q: Where can I learn more about Islam?

A: One way to learn about Islam is to read an authentic translation of the Quran. Most libraries carry an English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. You can also visit the Islam FAQ website for more answers and information

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