

Why do we need to know about Islam?

- Understanding that we are all children of God, good creations, it is important for us to understand and to value the perspectives of our Muslim neighbors. Dialogue helps us gain knowledge about Islam and build relationships with our brothers and sisters in the Abrahamic faith tradition.

What is Islam?

- The word Islam means "to submit" or "to obey," derived from a word for peace. Muslims believe that they must submit to divinely revealed law.
- Islam teaches that God is merciful and compassionate and that God promises the faithful peace and equality and entrance to a wonderful eternity.

Who is Allah?

- Allah is the Arabic word for "the one God."
- Muslims believe that there is no other god but God and that there are no divisions in the Godhead.

Who is Muhammad?

- Muhammad was born in the year 570 C.E.
- Islam teaches that when he was 40, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a cave where he was meditating, and over the next 23 years, revealed to

him messages from God. These revelations were compiled into the Qur'an.

- Muslims do not regard Muhammad as divine with God but as the last in a line of prophets.
- Muslims believe that the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus were true prophets, but in Muhammad the prophetic tradition was perfected.

Who is a Muslim?

- A Muslim is a person who is a member/ follower of the religion Islam. The word "Muslim" means one who submits to the will of God.
- There are Muslims all around the world, with larger populations in Africa, S.E. Europe, and Central/Southern Asia.
- In the United States, about half of Muslims are African American.
- By some counts, there are about 7 million Muslims in the United States.
- Not all Muslims are Arabs, and not all Arabs are Muslim.

How did Islam begin?

- Muslims believe that Islam was founded by the prophet Muhammad based on revelation from God through the angel Gabriel in the 7th century A.D.
- These revelations took place over a 23-year period in the cities of Mecca and Medina in today's Saudi Arabia, making these places holy locations for Muslims.

What are some basic beliefs of Islam?

There are Five Pillars of Islam that outline some basic beliefs:

- *Witness/Shahadah*: Declaration that "there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."
- *Prayer/Salah*: Five daily ritual prayers.
- *Giving/Zakah*: Almsgiving, annual tax to assist the poor.
- *Fasting/Sawm*: Fasting during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset, which includes abstaining from food, drink, and sexual activity.
- *Pilgrimage/Hajj*: A pilgrimage to Mecca (site of God's revelation to Muhammad) for those who are physically and financially able.

What is the Qur'an?

- The Qur'an is the sacred scripture of the Islamic faith. It has been preserved in its original language for over 1400 years.
- The Qur'an is understood as a record of the words revealed by God through the angel Gabriel to Muhammad.
- Although there are many interpretations of the Qur'an, only the original Arabic words and form are considered authentic.
- The Qur'an addresses worship, doctrine, wisdom, law, and other guidelines for faithful living.

How does Islam relate to other religions?

- Islam is a part of a single religious thread that includes Judaism and Christianity.
- Muslims recognize Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other figures as part of that single tradition.

What are the branches of Islam?

- There are two primary branches: the Shi'ite and the Sunni.
- The majority are Sunni.
- Those who believe that Ali (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law), was the rightful successor to Muhammad are called Shi'ite.
- Sufism is a form of Islamic mysticism. Sufis place emphasis on the inward experience of God and on individual acts of spiritual discipline.

What is jihad?

- Jihad means struggle or exertion in the way of God. The 'greater jihad' is the struggle against evil within oneself. The 'lesser jihad' is working against injustice or oppression in society. Sometimes this includes using armed forces, within a prescribed ethical code. The use of armed forces, (sometimes seen as "Holy War") is one aspect of jihad and not its totality.

Did you know?

- Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.
- Currently, there are about 1.2 billion Muslims in the world. By 2025, Islam is expected to grow by 50%.
- Christianity is next fastest growing, expected to grow by 31%. There are currently about 2 billion Christians in the world.
- Indonesia has the greatest number of Muslims in a country, with over 170,000,000 adherents. Pakistan has the next highest number: 136, 000, 000.

For Further Reading:

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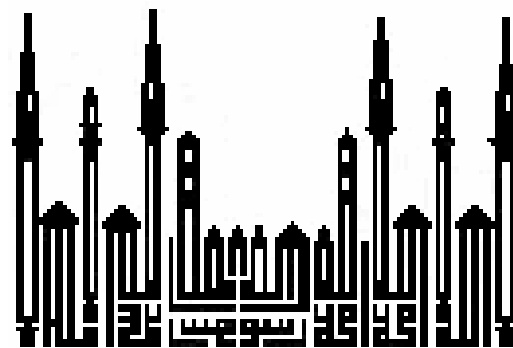
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Basic Facts about Islam



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