

Basic Facts Concerning Islam

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*Declare God's glory among the nations,
His marvelous deeds among all peoples.
(I Chronicles 16:24)*

As believers we are under mandate to express our faith to all peoples. We can do this best when we have an enlightened understanding of the peoples around us with whom we work and live. This three-part lecture series is meant to be a brief introduction to the religion of Islam including history and understanding of Islamic society.

I. Terms and Definitions

- A. Word association (student participation): When I say the word "*Muslim*", what do you think of?
- B. See "*Terms and Definitions*" prepared by Professor Woody Wilkinson for a list of fifty words and names associated with Islam. At this point we will consider only seven of them.

Islam is an Arabic word meaning *submission*, or the *peace* which comes as the result of submitting to God.

Muslim means one who submits. *Islam* is the religion, and *Muslim* is the one practicing that religion.

Allah is an Arabic word meaning "*The God*". There is no other word for God in that language. Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is monotheistic.

Muhammad is the Prophet of Islam (A.D. 570-632) who was born in Mecca and died in Medina (Yathrib) in what is now known as Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that God has spoken through many prophets, but the last and final one is Muhammad.

Quran is the holy book of Islam. The Arabic word *Quran* means "*recite*". It is believed that the word of God was revealed over a twenty-three year period to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel in Arabic. Muslims universally recite its words in Arabic, no matter what their native tongue may be.

Hadith refers to a body of literature second only to the Quran in its authority to Muslims. These include the sayings (*hadith*) and the practices and traditions (*sunnah*) of the Prophet.

Mosque is a house of worship. The word *Masjid* means "a place for bowing down".

II. Islam Today

- A. Although this religion began in the Middle East it has spread across the globe. It comprises approximately 20% of the world's population, over one billion people.
- B. It is one of the fastest growing religions in the 21st Century.
 - 1. The largest number of Muslims are in Indonesia.
 - 2. It is the second largest religion in both Europe and North America.
 - 3. Muslims are a majority in forty-five African and Asian countries.
 - 4. According to the United Nations, Muslims will represent at least half of the global birthrate after the year 2055.
 - 5. Saudi Arabia considers itself to be the caretaker of Mecca and the center of the world-wide Islamic community

III. The Five Pillars of Islam

- A. Shahadah The affirmation of the faith: "There is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is the Messenger of God."
- B. Salat Prayers five times a day facing Mecca.
- C. Zakat Almsgiving or welfare contribution of 2.5 percent of one's total assets.
- D. Sawm Fasting from dawn to sunset for the entire month of Ramadan.
- E. Hajj The pilgrimage to Mecca which is expected of every adult at least once in his lifetime.

IV. The Seven Basic Beliefs of Islam

- A. Allah Faith in God (Allah) is the most important. There is only one God who must be worshipped and served.
- B. Angels Angels serve God constantly and are sometimes sent to protect us.
- C. Books God has revealed the *Taurat* (Torah) to Moses, the *Zabur* (Psalms) to David, the *Injil* (Gospels) to Jesus and many other books found in the Bible. Muslims believe the *Quran* is the final book God has revealed.
- D. Messengers God has sent numerous prophets. Most of the prophets mentioned in the Quran are also found in the Bible.
- E. Judgment We will all stand before God on the final day to give an account of what we have done, both good and bad.
- F. Hereafter Muslims believe in both an eternal heaven and an eternal hell.
- G. Predestination Muslims have a strong sense of fate (Turkish "*kismet*").