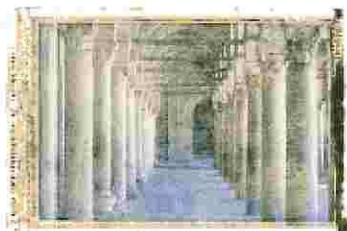


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# What is Islam?

## An overview for Christians



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**ISLAM** is the world's second largest religion with a following of over one billion people called Muslims--one-fifth of humanity.

The word "Islam" actually means "submission to God." Therefore, Muslim is one who strives to submit to God."

### Where is Islam found?

Islam has spread across the entire globe. Muslims can be found in North and South America as well as in Western Europe, but they are predominately found in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Their predominant homelands lie in the area commonly referred to as the "10/40 Window" (between 10 degrees latitudinal north and 40 degrees latitudinal north ranging from the eastern side of North Africa to the western side of Asia). About 60% of Muslims are Asian. The regional breakdown of Muslims in the rest of the world is Arab world, 22%; sub-Sahara African, 12%; Eastern Europe, 5%. The rest are scattered through the world.



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### Recommended Resources

**All that the Prophets Have Spoken**  
(book for Muslims)

**The Cross or the Crescent**  
(video curriculum)  
From [NAMB](#)

Available from [YWAM](#)

**The World of Islam**  
(CD-ROM)

### When did Islam begin, and who founded it?

Islam was founded in 610 A.D. by a man named Mohammed. During Mohammed's time, polytheism reigned. His people were worshipping multiple gods. During one of Mohammed's trips as a trader, he had a vision from a being he perceived to be an angel who said, "There is only one God, and His name is Allah. Worship Him."

### What is their holy book?



Just as Christians have the Bible, Muslims have the Quran. They believe the Quran was dictated to Mohammed by God through the angel Gabriel. Muslims are also told in the Quran to read three other holy books: the Torah (which are the first five books of the Old Testament), the Zabur (which are the Psalms of David), and the Injeel (the gospel of Christ).

**Answering Islam**

by Norman Geisler & Abdul Saleeb (book)

**Building Bridges**

by Fouad Elias Accad (book)

**Daughters of Islam**

by Miriam Adeney (book)

**I Dared to Call Him Father**

by Bilquis Sheikh (book)

**ISLAM:****Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power**

by George Braswell (book)

and more...

**[Answering-Islam.org](http://Answering-Islam.org)**

(Web site)

**[AboutIsla.com](http://AboutIsla.com)**

(Web site)



*Disclaimer:* By necessity, not all of the answers provided are complete and exhaustive. Although all Christian Answers Network Team Member organizations are in close general agreement in their interpretation of the Bible, the individual views expressed are, of course, those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the

**Where do they meet?**

Muslims around the world gather on Fridays in mosques. Mosques are building where men (and sometimes women, depending upon the country) pray to God. a mosque during prayer time, all Muslims face toward Mecca, the birthplace of Islam, where Mohammed had his vision. Where men and women pray together usually the men are in the front and women in the back.

**What do Muslims believe in?**

"Islam has seven fundamental beliefs that every Muslim must accept as a part his/her religion (the Emanul Mufassil, or Faith Listed in Detail). Every Muslim le this formula as a part of his/her religious training." \*

- "Belief in God" (who, in Arabic, is named "Allah")
- "Belief in the angels" (both good and bad)
- "Belief in the revealed Books of God
- Belief in God's many prophets" (including Adam, Abraham, Moses, Davi and other Christians and Jews are familiar with)
- "Accepting that there will be a Last Day
- Belief in the divine measurement of human affairs
- Belief in life after death"

\* Yahiya Emerick, *Understanding Islam* (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2002, p. 18.)

Muslims also believe in [Satan](#) and in a [Day of Judgment](#) on which God will sen people to either heaven or [hell](#). They also believe that [Ishmael](#) (the father of the Arab world), not [Isaac](#), received the promise from God through [Abraham](#); this h to explain why Arab Muslims feel that their claim to the Holy Land is a God-give right.

>> [Why do many Arab Christians refer to God as "Alla](#)

**Is it true that Islam is a lot like Christianity?**

Although the two religions share some terminology and even some theology (monotheism, for instance), Islam is fundamentally different from Christianity. It is a works-oriented religion, while Christian faith is based on salvation by grace through faith as a result of the shed blood of Christ. In Islam, if God wants to forgive sin, He simply says, "It is forgiven." Christianity recognizes the necessit the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. ([Hebrews 9:22](#))

**What do Muslims think about Jesus?**

All Muslims believe Jesus was born of a virgin and that he was a great prophet he was only a man. They believe he was sent by God to help people obey God Islam claims Jesus spoke as a baby, healed the sick, and raised the dead. The Quran refers to Jesus as the breath of God, the spirit of God, the life of God an the word of God. Muslims do not think Jesus died on the cross. They believe th right before he was to be killed, God took him up to heaven and someone else (probably Judas) replaced him on the cross. They trust that Jesus will return to earth again to usher in the final judgment from God and confirm that Islam is th

views of all Team organizations.



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true and final religion for all mankind. (Yes, Muslims believe in the second [com of Christ!](#))

*For Musli*

>> [What does the Qur'an say about Isa al Masih \(Jesu](#)

*This article is also available in: [French](#), [Indonesian](#), [Portugu](#)*

*For Christia*

>> [What does Islam teach about the crucifixion of Jesu](#)

*This article is also available in: [Indonesian](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spa](#)*



#### Recommended Web site:

Muslims want the truth, and [IsaalMasih.net](#) provid in a way they best understand it. Various teachers who love Muslims team together to give the answe to the questions Muslims ask. [Learn about Isa al Masih \(Jesus\), the Holy Scriptures, proofs from](#)

[archaeology, creation, and more...](#)

## How do Muslims think they are saved?

As a works-oriented religion, Islam requires that its adherents earn their way to heaven by performing the five pillars of the faith.

1. **Say the confession of faith.** A Muslim must confess, "There is no God Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of God."
2. **Pray.** Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day: shortly before sun mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and after sunset.
3. **Give alms.** Muslims are to give about 2.5 percent of their wealth.
4. **Fast during Ramadan.** For one lunar month, from sunrise to sunset, Muslims are not to allow anything to pass down their throat. (Theoretical good Muslim would even spit out his or her saliva.) Then from sunset to sunrise, they are permitted to eat as little or as much as they want. This their way of developing discipline and relating to the poor. (Travelers, yc children and pregnant or nursing mothers do not need to keep the fast.)
5. **Make a pilgrimage to Mecca.** Every Muslim who is financially able is supposed to travel to the birthplace of Islam once in his or her lifetime.

>> [What is Ramad](#)

### But do Muslims have any guarantee of salvation?

Muslims have no guarantee of being saved. They believe that all their works wi accounted for and that on Judgment Day, if your bad works outweigh your good works, you are going to go to hell. But if your good works outweigh your bad works you'll probably go to heaven. (Since God is all-powerful, they concede that He do with you as He pleases, even if you have been very righteous. They hope H won't be having a "bad day" at Judgment.) A third possibility is that you could g hell and burn your sins off for a while and then be allowed into heaven. The onl way Muslims can be guaranteed to go to heaven is through "jihad." Although it often translated "holy war," "jihad" literally means "exerting force for God." One could be in "jihad" by writing a book about Islam, or by sharing his faith to bring others to Islam, or by physically fighting for the cause of Islam. If a Muslim dies "jihad," he is guaranteed to go to heaven.

## Is Islam growing?

Yes, Islam is growing at an annual rate of about 3 percent. In 1900 Muslims comprised about 12.4 percent of the world's population. As of the year 2001, followers of Islam number about 22% of the world's population [adherents.com]. The growth is largely due to biological expansion; Muslims usually have large families.

## Does Islam vary?

Yes, Islam varies greatly around the world. Although Muslims take pains to describe themselves as members of the brotherhood of "one religion," the Islam practiced in Indonesia is very different than the Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia which is different from that in Kazakhstan, or Iran, or Morocco.

### What is the difference between Shi'ite and Sunni Islam?

The difference between these two major sects is that they disagree about the legitimate successors of Mohammed. About 85 percent of all Muslims are Sunni and only 10 percent of the Muslim world is Shi'ite. (The remaining 5 percent are affiliated with other, minor sects.)

### Are all Muslims radicals?

No. Although Shi'ites tend to be more radical, the average Muslim is like the average Christian. They know enough to call themselves Muslims, but basically they are materialistic, want a good job, and hope to live a good comfortable life.

*Read More*

>> [Are most Muslims terrorists?](#)

*This article is also available in: [Bulgarian](#), [Indonesian](#)*



>> [What is the Nation of Islam?](#)

## Do Muslims understand what Christianity is all about?

The average Muslim around the world has a tremendous misunderstanding of Christianity. This is largely due to the fact that their only understanding of Christianity comes from movies, music and television shows such as "Baywatch," "Madonna," Rated-R films, etc. Because they believe America is a Christian nation, they assume everything that comes out of America is Christian.

### How do they view Christianity?

Muslims think Christians believe in three gods: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Mother (Mary). They believe that Christians and Jews have changed the Bible; therefore, although the Quran acknowledges the Gospel of Christ, the Torah of Moses and the Psalms of David, the existing copies can't be trusted. In any case, they are all superseded by the Quran. Because of pornography from

the West and the Western media, they equate Christianity with fre sex, drugs, alcohol, rape, divorce ... all the evils of the West. This misconception confirms their belief that Islam is the true and final religion for all mankind.

### Why is it so hard to help Muslims come to know Christ

The factors that hold a Muslim to his religion are usually only about 10 percent theological and 90 percent cultural. Muslims have to fit into a larger group of people in order to feel secure and "belong." This could be an extended family, a network of friends, etc. In this "community" (the Muslim term for this is, "umma") there is tremendous security and safety. If they ever lose their job, no problem! Their "community" will help them out until a new job is found.



Moslem girls at Damascus Gate market, Israel



Palestinian shoppers, Moslem Quarter, Old Jerusalem

When Muslims are confronted with the claims of Christ, they may know it to be truth, but they are more worried about leaving their "community" than they are about not having the truth. Muslims need to first find a "community" of Christians that they can belong to before they will leave their "community" of Muslims. And in most Muslim areas, there are no acceptable Christian "communities," which makes it very difficult for Muslims to follow Christ.

### Is much being done to bring Muslims to the one true God through Christ?

Although in recent years there has been a tremendous increase in the number of Christians working among Muslims, much has yet to be done. The vast majority of Muslims wake up every morning with no Bible, with no church, with no one to tell them of the way, the truth, and the life. In the last 25 years, more than 100 times as many American Christians have gone to the Middle East to serve their country in a military capacity than have gone to the Middle East to serve the King of kings by proclaiming the gospel of peace! In North Africa, there is still roughly one missionary for every two million Muslims. In northern India, it is roughly one missionary for every five million Muslims. Globally, it averages out to be one missionary for every one million Muslims.

### Are Muslims coming to know Christ (Isa al Masih)?

Absolutely Yes! More Muslims have come to faith in Christ since 1970 than in the entire previous history of outreach to the Muslim world. God is doing a new work among Muslims as He writes a new chapter in the history of His church.

One factor that is fostering the growth of the church within Muslim communities is the fact that some Muslims worship Jesus in ways that they are culturally comfortable with rather than adopting Western styles and forms of worship. For instance, there is nothing wrong (inherently evil) with the setup of a mosque, prayer five times a day, postures used during prayers, clothing, washing before prayers, etc. A follower of Christ in such cultures may be indistinguishable to Western eyes. Yet we must praise God for the unique expressions and praise He gratefully receives from cultures that very greatly. (A good example of this, read Jim Mellis' *Abu Sharif: The Mystery of the Hundredth Name*.)

>> [Read about the dreams & visions of Jesus happening in Muslim world today](#)

## How can Christians reach out to Muslims with the love of Jesus Christ?

Please see the following:

- ▶ [Why should Christians love Muslims?](#)
- ▶ [How can I pray for Muslims?](#)
- ▶ [As a Christian woman, how can I develop friendships with Muslim women?](#)



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