

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS STUDY
AND AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

If you are interested in carrying out the great commission of Christ, then this study is something that should interest you. Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He did not say be afraid of certain religious people. He did not say just preach the gospel to a certain sector of the world. He did not say certain people were off limits. Rather, Jesus said that the gospel is to be preached to every creature. Now, do Muslim’s fit this category? Yes and more “creatures” are becoming Muslims, as it is the fastest growing religion in the world consisting of over a billion adherents. Therefore, with this understanding as our foundation, we see the need and motivation that should accompany those participating.

A Muslim is not interested in studying with us based upon our low-informed knowledge of him and his deeply rooted Islamic beliefs. He is uninterested in what we have to say if we are not accurately representing his religion and respecting it- not as truth, but as something that he sincerely believes and lives by. If we cannot approach a Muslim like Paul approached the idolaters in Acts 17:16-33 (READ), then we begin our efforts at reaching them with a headfirst wipeout. We are not responsible for knowing everything there is to know about other religions; however, we are responsible for teaching the lost and doing such out of our love for God and in an effort to imitate the Christ (cf. John 14:15; Luke 19:10; 1 Cor 11:1).

The student editions provided with this study are designed to be a ready reference that can be used when coming in contact with a Muslim. The evidence from Islamic sources of authority will be provided and thought provoking questions will be asked that demand students to gain an actual understanding of the material so that a Muslim can be gained to Christ. An account is known of a sister in Christ who actually scolded a brother in Christ for his efforts in reaching the community about the errors of Islam. The thinking of the sister was that studying Islam meant Muslims would be talked bad about and their beliefs ridiculed and that it would hurt their feelings. What she did not understand was that an appropriate and respectful study of Islam is not to produce hurt feelings for Muslims, but to generate conversions for Christ out of a love for their souls not their feelings! With this being said, a few points about this study are in order.

The goal with this study is NOT to provide parroting answers for common questions about Muslims based upon ignorant knowledge of the religion; it is NOT to stir up hate nor fear of the Muslim community; and it is NOT to misrepresent or belittle the sincere convictions of billions of people. The purpose is to provide a documented resource that can be used by truth loving individuals to reach the world of Islam. The prayer for those taking this study should include requests and yearnings to study with a Muslim so that lost souls can be won to the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds” (Col 4:3).

What is Islam?

Islam is a monotheistic religion which is based upon the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith. The religion points to God's covenant with Abraham which is mentioned in Genesis, but claims the child of promise was Ishmael as opposed to the Biblical teaching that Isaac was the heir through whom Abraham would become a great nation. The Quran was a book which was written by Muhammed, who claims to be inspired by Allah, the god of Islam. The Quran was concluded in A.D. 632, the year of Muhammed's death. Islam's greatest prophets include Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Today, most Muslims belong to one of two denominations, the Shias (or Shi'ite) and the Sunnis.

Today, there are over one billion Muslims in the world, with greater concentrations in the Middle Eastern, North African, and Oriental regions. Over the course of these studies, the true view of Islam will be studied. The intent is to accurately represent the religion based upon its own sources of authority and not based upon personal whim or opinion.

What is the Mission of Islam?

Much has been stated throughout the media about the intent and goals of Islam. The phrase, "Islam is a religion of peace," has been repeated ad-nauseam. Is that oft-repeated phrase accurate, or is it an attempt to politicize and soften true Islamic aims? For one to truly understand the intentions of a religion, one must go to the book which dictates that religion. The Quran teaches very clearly the goal of Islam.

He it is who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists are averse (Surah 9:33).

Very clearly, one can read Islam's desire to be the dominant religion in the world, even if by force. The clarion call of early Islam was "Islam, tribute, or the sword." As can be seen in the political structure of much of the Middle East, Muslim's desire to control as much of each government as possible, so they might be able to enforce their will politically.

Another aspect of the mission of Islam is the teaching of Jihad. Jihad is a word that means to struggle or strive. There are over one hundred verses in the Quran which teach Muslims to strive or fight with non-believers. The following is just one clear example of those verses.

Fight those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid that which Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor follow the Religion of Truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in Acknowledgement of superiority and they are in a state of subjection (Surah 9:29).

How Does One Become a Muslim?

An interesting aspect of Islam is the ease by which one becomes a Muslim. All one must do to become a Muslim is repeat the phrase, “Ash-Hadu Anla Elaha Illa-Allah Wa Ash-Hadu Anna Mohammadan Rasul-Allah,” which means, “I bear witness that there is no deity worthy to be worshipped but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammed is His servant and messenger.” This phrase is called the Shahadah. After repeating this phrase, subjection to the remainder of the five pillars of Islam is required.

What are the Five Pillars of Islam?

As with any religion, Islam is a religion that has several central practices at its core. These central practices are called the Five Pillars of Islam. These Five Pillars include the Shahadah, the Salat, the Zakat, the Saum, and the Hajj.

The Shahadah is the confession of faith, which was mentioned earlier, which allows one to become a Muslim. The Shahadah is a declaration of the two foundational principles of Islam, working as an abbreviated creed. This creed is to be repeated at least seventeen times a day by faithful Muslims. The constant repetition is a reminder to refocus their minds on the supposed reality of their purpose.

The Salat is the requirement of regular prayer. Muslims are required to recite repeated prayers five times a day. There are various ritualistic positions which should be followed during certain parts of these prayers. Each prayer must be recited while facing Mecca. The five prayer times are Fajr (pre-dawn), Dhuhr (noon), Asr (afternoon), Maghrib (Sunset), and Isha (evening). These times are calculated and either announced publicly with a call to prayer or, in areas where Muslims are in the minority, there are electronic programs which are used. These prayers are preceded by ceremonial washings.

The Zakat is a religious financial gift which is to be given by all who are financially able. This gift purifies the remainder of a Muslims wealth in the sight of Allah. This money is used for religious activities and is given to poor Muslims. It is taught that those who have a desire for wealth will be punished by Allah.

O you who believe, surely many of the doctors of the law and monks eat away the property of men falsely, and hinder (them) from Allah's way. And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah's way - announce to them painful chastisement, on the day when it will be heated in the Fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs will be branded with it: This is what you hoarded up for yourselves, so taste what you used to hoard (Surah 9:34-35).

The Saum is a ritualistic fast that is required of all Muslims over the age of puberty who are of good health. This fast is kept from dawn until dusk during the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a thirty day period of time based upon the lunar calendar. Because it is based upon the lunar calendar, the exact dates changes yearly. The Quran teaches Muslims the importance of fasting.

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil (Surah 2:183).

The Hajj is a pilgrimage to Mecca, which is required of every able-bodied Muslim at least once within their lifetime. It is to take place in the 12th month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Muslims claim that this ritual dates all the way back to Abraham, but there is absolutely no evidence in Biblical nor historical literature claiming Abraham ever stepped foot in the area known today as Mecca. The main drawing feature of Mecca is a cube shaped structure known as the Ka'bah. This is one of Islam's most holy sites, backed by the teaching of the Quran.

And when We made the House a resort for men and a (place of) security. And: Take ye the Place of Abraham for a place of prayer. And We enjoined Abraham and Ishmael, saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide (in it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves...The Safa and Marwah are truly among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit (to it), there is no blame on him if he goes round them. And whosoever does good spontaneously - surely Allah is Bountiful in rewarding, Knowing (Surah 2:125, 158).

Deeper into the study when “The Muslim’s Worship” (lesson 9) is examined, a further and more detailed picture will be provided regarding the five pillars. Likewise, “how to become a Muslim” will be studied and expounded on as “Salvation According to Islam” (lesson 8) is reviewed. This lesson was intended to provoke motivation for teachers and students to actively engage in this full 13-week study of Islam and to introduce the religion.

Review Questions

Question 1) What should be the motivation for learning more about Islam?

Question 2) Discuss how Paul’s knowledge and respect of other religions impacted his ability to convey the gospel of Christ to the lost.

Question 3) What is the goal/purpose of this study?

Question 4) How should our prayer life correspond with our learning of Islam?

Question 5) What is Islam and what is it’s mission?

Question 6) How does one become a Muslim?

Question 7) What are the five Pillars of Islam?

Works Cited

“The Holy Bible”, King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Bible. 2003. Print. (All Scriptures taken from this version unless otherwise noted.)

“The Meanings Of The Holy Qur’an By Abdullah Yusuf Ali. New Dehli: Millat Book Centre, 2011. Print

