

UNVEILING ISLAM – Basic facts concerning Muslims and their beliefs

By Shirley Davis

1) Understanding the religion and its followers



What do all these people have in common?

Amish people in USA, the Pope, church in India, Virgin of Guadalupe, Newsboys band, Greek Orthodox priest – All say they are Christians. Very different lives and sometimes beliefs but all believe in Jesus, Bible and try to follow God. We must be careful when thinking of religion to remember that Christianity is NOT just what we know personally in our own culture. BUT basically there are two kinds of people in world – lost and saved. What are we supposed to do about that? Jesus and the Bible teach us NOT to hate those who are lost, and that we cannot force them to be saved, just share the Gospel (Jesus) with them and encourage them to trust God. Also remember many Christians are NOMINAL (by name only) and really don't know Jesus as Savior and Lord.



What do all THESE people have in common?

American woman, women in front of a gold store in Dubai, Indonesians, girls studying, Osama Bin Laden, teenage girls – All say they are Muslims. They are also of different cultures and beliefs. Many Muslims are also NOMINAL and really don't follow or understand all the Islamic laws. But most Muslims also think of the world as having two sets of people – Muslims and infidels, and their Qur'an teaches them that the world belongs to Allah and all infidels must be subdued or killed.

2) What do you already know about Islam?

Founder of Islam (Mohammed)

Follower of Islam (Muslim)

Beliefs of Islam (5 Pillars)

Name of God (Allah)

Place of worship (mosque)

Holy book (Qur'an or Koran)

Most holy city (Mecca)

Holy War (Jihad)

3) Founder of Islam - Mohammed

Born in Mecca about 570 A.D.; was persecuted for his beliefs and fled to Medina in 622 A.D., where he began regularly raiding caravans and his teachings became more forceful and violent; died 632 A.D.

Could not read or write

Married 11 women (one aged 8) and had 2 concubines

Prone to convulsions and admitted to hearing from both Allah and Satan but claimed to receive the Qur'an from Allah dictated by an angel

4) Follower of Islam – Muslim

23% of world population follows Islam; largest population is in Indonesia - only 15% of Muslims are Arabs

Sunnis – The majority, about 85% of all Muslims; believe leadership passes to elected caliphs and so follow Islamic laws decided by the state; found especially in Saudi Arabia & Indonesia

Shi'ites – Believe leadership passes to the Imams, who are considered divinely inspired as direct descendants of Mohammed; found especially in Iran & Iraq

Sufis – Mystical movement focusing on meditation; found especially in India & Asian countries



5) Five Pillars (Beliefs) of Islam – essential for faithful Muslims

Recite “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger” – first words spoken and repeated often to babies

Pray 5 times daily (at designated times facing Mecca) with ritual washing & specific prayers

Fasting sunrise to sunset for month of Ramadan

Give money to the poor (2.5%)

Take special pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during lifetime (the Hajj)



6) Name of God – Allah

“Allah akbar” means God is great

Believed to be all powerful but has no personal relationship with Man

Entrance to “paradise” is dependant on good works outweighing bad works, yet still uncertain until Allah decides

Allah only loves good people; does not reach out to sinners, and has no mercy for the disobedient or infidels

No Trinity; considered blasphemy to regard Jesus as Son of God (merely a prophet)



7) Place of worship – mosque

Where followers gather for communal worship and prayers facing Mecca

Also a center for information, education, and to settle disputes

Women usually worship in a separate area from the men



8) Holy book – Qur'an

Believed to have been dictated to Mohammed by an angel from God

Only written down after Mohammed's death, and has 114 "surahs" or chapters; about one third size of Bible



Considered should only be read in Arabic to understand the true meaning

Many consider that burning, dropping or in any way showing disrespect to the Qu'ran is blasphemy and deserves serious punishment, even death

9) Most holy city – Mecca

In Western Saudi Arabia, birthplace of Mohammed

Closed to all but Muslims

Place of yearly pilgrimage (the Hajj) attended by around 2 million Muslims

The Ka'ba is the focal point – a mosque believed to have been built by Abraham around a black stone. It is also believed to be the first place that was created on earth and the place at which heavenly bliss and power touches the earth directly.



10) Holy War - Jihad

Jihad means to struggle or strive

Personal Jihad – struggle to purify one's soul

Verbal Jihad – protesting without violence

Physical Jihad – use of physical force against enemies of Allah (infidels)

Muslim extremists believe being killed fighting a jihad is the only way to be assured entrance into Paradise



11) How should we as Christians view Muslims?

Remember that everyone's beliefs are influenced by culture, politics and education – many have heard nothing different

Must not stereotype – consider each person individually

As Christians, we are taught to see only 2 groups of people: the lost and the saved – and to love and share the Gospel whenever possible with the lost