

Handout for Lesson 24 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

DEFINITIONS

Islam — the name of the religion which came out of the revelations and teachings of Muhammed. Islam is the Arabic term for “submission.”

Muslim — the name given to one who adheres to the religion of Islam. Muslim is an Arabic cognate of Islam, meaning “one who submits.” The Muslim submits to the will of Allah as revealed by Muhammed.

Allah — the Islamic name for God. It cannot be easily translated into English. One Muslim writer defined it: “The word means the unique God who possesses all the attributes of perfection and beauty in their infinitude. Muslims feel strongly that the English word ‘God’ does not convey the real meaning of the word ‘Allah.’”

Muhammed — the common name of an Arabic man born in the city of Mecca in A.D. 570 (d. 632). He claimed that he was the prophet to restore true religion and the praise of Allah throughout the world, just as Jesus Christ was a prophet in his time for his people. Muhammed means “the one who is praised.”

Quran (also spelled Koran) — Arabic for “the recitation,” and refers to the collection of revelations supposedly given by Allah through his archangel to Muhammed and preserved as the Islamic scripture.

Surah — the divisions within the Quran, roughly corresponding to our “chapter.” The Quran contains 114 revelations, each composing one surah.

Hadith — Arabic for “collected traditions.” These customs provide source material for the intricate political and social structure of Islam.

Caliph — Arabic for leader and refers to the main leaders of Islam, especially the immediate successors of Muhammed.

Âyatollah — refers to a spiritual master or leader in Islam.

SECTS OF ISLAM

Sunnite — those that accept the four caliphs in direct succession from Muhammed and no others. The Sunnis practice a moderate form of Islamic interpretation. Ninety percent of the Muslims in the middle east are Sunnis.

Shia’ite — the second largest Muslim sect, it is more literal in its interpretation and application of the Quran and is much more militant and fanatical than the Sunnis.

Ahmdiyyan — another sect of note, founded in the 1800s. This small sect has produced the bulk of Islamic apologetics against Christianity and Judaism over the last half of the last century. They are strong proselytizers and are active on American campuses.

Sufi — this sect is the mystical sect of Islam. Sufis are rejected by many conservative Muslims. Some Sufi writings seem to reject unitarian monotheism of traditional Islam for a form of “immanent pantheism.”

ISLAMIC BELIEFS

For the Muslim, Allah is the only true God. There is no such blasphemous thing as the “Trinity.”

Jesus Christ is a prophet of Allah; he is not the Son of God or God himself (Surah 4:171).

The Muslim god is unapproachable by sinful man. Allah is so perfect and holy He can only communicate with mankind through a progression of angels and prophets.

Sin and salvation in Islam is associated with two concepts: works and fate.

Every Muslim who hopes to escape the judgment of Allah must fulfill the works of the Five Pillars of the Faith (Surah 10:109).

THE FIVE PILLARS

1. Recitation of the Shahadah (“There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the prophet of Allah”).
2. Five daily prescribed prayers (Salat or Namaz) in Arabic. These prayers include genuflection and prostration in the direction of the holy city, Mecca.
3. Almsgiving (Zakat), which is unlike tithing since Muslims are only required to give one-fortieth of their income as charitable contributions.
4. Fasting (Saum or Ruzeh) during the entire month of Ramadan, when Muslims are supposed to fast from all food and drink from sunrise to sunset in atonement for their own sins over the

previous year.

5. A pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca, the holy city, at least once in a lifetime.

SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH A MUSLIM

The three key areas to discuss with a Muslim are the nature of God, the identity and deity of Jesus Christ, and salvation by grace.

Emphasis should be placed upon the fact that the Christian God transcends man’s finitude and sinfulness because He cares about people individually, and He loves individuals.

Next, the Muslim needs to hear that salvation does not depend upon his worthiness, but upon the grace of God displayed through the atonement of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Finally, the Christian should love the Muslim. Muslims have a definite zeal for God. Muslims desire to follow God and express their worship of God through their lives.

IS ISLAM A RELIGION OF PEACE?

Active jihadists, while a minority among Muslims, base their actions in Islamic theology and are in the ascendancy throughout the Islamic world.

“The truth is that Islam is not the name of a ‘Religion,’ nor is ‘Muslim’ the title of a ‘Nation.’ In reality Islam is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals ‘Muslim’ is the title of that International Revolutionary Party organized by Islam to carry into effect its revolutionary programme. And ‘Jihad’ refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Party brings into play to achieve this objective.”

“Allah revealed Islam, in order that humanity could be governed according to it. Unbelief is darkness and disorder. So the unbelievers, if they are not suppressed, create disorder. That is why the Muslims are responsible for the implementation of Allah’s Law on the planet, that humanity may be governed by it.”