

UNDERSTANDING & RESPONDING TO ISLAM

Readings: Genesis 12:1-3, Deuteronomy 6:4-14

"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do. I will not forsake them." Isaiah 42:6

Holy Book: The Quran

Founded by: Muhammad (570 – 632AD) – began to receive ‘messages’ around 610AD – from the Angel Gabriel

Location: Initially in Medina – 622AD – set up an Islamic state

Main Groups: Sunni (80%) & Shia

Need to distinguish between “Islam” (submission) and Muslims (one who surrenders)

Heightened interest: 9/11, war on terrorism, Iraq/Afghanistan,

The Quran/Hadith/Muhammad:

- Muhammad must be protected from slight/critique/ridicule
- Muhammad supersedes Christ
- Quran – 114 chapters/Suras – the original is said to be scribed on heavenly tablets – though this is debated – much ‘borrowed’ from Judaism & Christianity
- Hadith is used to interpret/fill in the gaps where the Quran is vague or ‘silent’

Beliefs/practices:

- Faith is worked out in society – no sacred/secular divide – it is both a ‘government and a faith’
- One God
- Inspired Word – Quran (believe replaced OT & NT) – ‘mechanically’
- Abrogation – later verses cancel out earlier ones if contradict
- Taqiyya – permitted deceit – if in cause of Islam
- The Divine law (Sharia) is considered superior to all man made laws – Islam pushes for “other” legislation to conform to it – based upon the Quran + hadith
- To negate Christian mission
- Very evangelistic - use words like ‘freedom’, ‘equality’
- Only “God” should be revered – but they venerate Muhammad
- Muhammad considered infallible, free from sin – the perfect example
- Arabic word for God (“Allah”) – three major qualities – oneness, his transcendent otherness, his power

- Eschatology – believe we are heading for a final judgement – that Jesus the prophet will return (as a Muslim) – to defeat the anti-Christ – and all non-Muslims, plus the wicked will be assigned to Hell – the ‘just’ to paradise – at “Allah’s” discretion
- Angels & Jinn (good and bad angels) – the greatest angel is Jibrail (Gabriel) – sometimes called the Holy Spirit!
- Five pillars – Shahada (There is no God but God and Muhammad is His prophet), ritual prayers (salat), fasting (sawm), giving of alms (zakat), Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)
- Jihad (the struggle for Islam) –an obligatory duty for every Muslim – war against the enemies of Islam (see quotes)
- Two ‘houses’ – the ‘House of Islam’ & the ‘House of war’ (non-Muslim areas – a religious duty for all to transform the ‘house of war’ into the ‘house of Islam’ –must never yield any Islamic territory to the ‘house of war’ (Palestine/Israel) – once a place has been used for Islamic worship/practice – it is considered to belong to Islam for ever – Islam is the ultimate ‘replacement theology’
- Islamic mission (Dawa) – to propagate and spread the message and profile of Islam – keep it on the agenda (Dawa agencies) -

Social Issues:

- No sacred/state divide – so constantly pushing for Islamic ‘mini states’, political rallies/messages in mosques etc
- The bigger community (Umma) takes precedent over individual needs – the ‘cause’ is the all important
- Loyalty – again to Islam – the bigger picture
- The Racial & Religious Hatred Act – Oct 2007
- Islamization of knowledge – aimed at influencing school curricula
- Women’s rights in law, compensation payments, working, child marriages, polygamy, honour killings, divorce procedures (see website procedures for men & women!

<http://www.islamic-sharia.org/worship-prayer-ablution/how-to-make-complete-wudu-2.html>

- Giving of Aid – often for Muslims only – Tsunami 2004 – needed to convert to Islam to receive aid (is very one way!)

QUOTES FROM ISLAMIC SITES:

But, as regards the reward and blessing, there is one deed which is very great in comparison to all the acts of worship and all the good deeds-and that is Jihad !” <http://islamworld.net/docs/jihad.html>

“Islam has allowed jihad as a means to prevent oppression, yet the Muslims have forgotten this for too long. Though jihad may be a part of the answer to the problems of the ummah, it is an extremely important part. Jihad is to offer ourselves to Allah for His Cause. Indeed, every person should according to Islam prepare himself/herself for jihad and every person should eagerly and patiently wait for the day when Allah will call them to show their willingness to sacrifice their lives. We should all ask ourselves if there is a quicker way to heaven? It is with this in mind that this booklet is being published”.

http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/jihad/

The Qur'an on Jihad

'Jihad is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike something which is good for you and that you like something which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.'

(Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 216)

'O you who believe! Be not like those who disbelieve (hypocrites) and who say to their brethren when they travel through the earth or go out to fight: 'If they had stayed with us, they would not have died or been killed,' so that Allah may make it a cause of regret in their hearts. It is Allah that gives life and causes death. And Allah is All-Seer of what you do. And if you are killed or die in the Way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all that they amass (of worldly wealth etc.). And whether you die, or are killed, verily, unto Allah you shall be gathered.'

(Surat-aal-Imran (3), ayah 156-158)

Notice how "forgiveness" and "mercy" are associated with slaying and death in Allah's way in the first verse, and how the second verse is does not refer to this because it is devoid of the idea of jihad. In this verse, there is an indication of the fact that cowardice is one of the characteristics of unbelievers, but not of believers. And notice how today the unbelievers seem to be brave *and* the believers seem to be the cowards.

'Think not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision. They rejoice in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His Bounty, rejoicing for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve.'

(Surat-aal-Imran (3), ayah 169-170). Refer up to verse 175 for further information.

'Let those (believers) who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter fight in the cause of Allah., and whosoever fights in the Cause of Allah, and is killed or is victorious, We shall bestow on him a great reward.'

(Surat-an-Nisaa' (4), ayah 74)

Some tips on witnessing to Muslims:

- Be courteous and loving.
- Reflect interest in their beliefs. Allow them time to articulate their views.
- Be acquainted with their basic beliefs.
- Be willing to examine passages of the Qur'an concerning their beliefs.
- Stick to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith but also take time to respond to all sincere questions.
- Point out the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ for salvation.
- Stress that because of Jesus, His cross, and resurrection, one may have the full assurance of salvation, both now and for eternity (see 1 John 5:13).
- Share the plan of salvation with the Muslim. Point out that salvation is a gift and not to be earned.
- Pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Trust Him to provide wisdom and grace.
- Be willing to become a friend and a personal evangelist to Muslims.
- Be willing to be 'family' and 'community' to the Muslim who turns to Christ – they will be cast out by their Muslim family, friends and community

Bibliography:

<http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/islam.html>

Religion & Religions – 901 – London School of Theology notes

<http://islamworld.net/docs/jihad.html>

http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/jihad/

The Challenge of Islam to the Church and its Mission – P Sookhdeo

The Bible & Other Faiths – I Glaser

A Christian's Response to Islam – W Miller

BIBLE EXERCISES:

Islam teaches the transcendent “otherness” of God – a distant, way-beyond-us deity – if conducting a Bible study with a Muslim – what scriptures could you use to demonstrate otherwise?

The notion that “God is love” is alien within Islam – with any references within the Quran being few and only ‘conditional’ statements (“God loves those who love Him” Sura 3:29) – if conducting a Bible study with a Muslim – what scriptures could you use to demonstrate otherwise?

It would be an offence to a Muslim to refer to God as “Father” – if conducting a Bible study with a Muslim – what scriptures could you use to demonstrate our ability to do so?

Islam & Christianity both teach that Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden – but Islam does not teach that this changed (forever) the nature of Adam and his descendants (they basically do not believe in inherent sin) – if conducting a Bible study with a Muslim – what scriptures could you use to demonstrate man’s inherent sinfulness?

The Bible & Other Faiths: EXERCISES:

Read Isaiah 46:1-13: Answer the following:

Note: Bel (marduk) & Nebo were Babylonian gods – meaning ‘lord’ and ‘god of learning & writing’

- 1) Some say Christians, Muslims, Jews etc – all worship the same God – can one conclude from this passage that all ‘gods’ are the same? (see vs5, vs9)**
- 2) Islam teaches about a God who is ‘transcendently other’ (distant) – which verses in this passage show Bel & Nabo to have this characteristic too?**
- 3) Many religions promote a god of oppression who burdens his people – how are the Babylonian gods similar?**
- 4) ‘Salvation’ and ‘intimacy’ are alien to Islamic teaching (and Babylonian!) – which verses show the God of the Bible to be different?**

Read Acts 17:16-34: Answer the following:

- 1) Some people say, ‘as long as you have faith in something, that’s fine’ – what was Paul’s reaction to the religion of the city of Athens?**
- 2) Verse 17 says that Paul ‘reasoned’ (didn’t preach) – ‘reasoning’ was the cultural order of the day – how might his approach to the Jews and ‘God-fearing’ Greeks have been different?**
- 3) Paul’s ‘reasoning’ gained their attention – which particular aspects of what he was saying caused them to question?**
- 4) In vs 32-33, How does Paul show respect about their existing beliefs, whilst at the same time recognising the ‘gap’ in their knowledge? (see also vs28)**
- 5) Paul’s message in verses 24-31 reveals some of the characteristics of the one true God – which verses reveal the Lord as: the Creator, giver of life, One who is ‘near’ (not distant!), as a just Judge, the Resurrection**

PAUL WOULD WISELY:

- **Assess the current situation and beliefs**
- **Endeavour to understand the beliefs**
- **Identify the flaws and ‘gaps’**
- **Speak about the true character of God and His ultimate salvation purposes through Christ**
- **Appeal for people to respond**

HOW MIGHT WE TAKE THIS APPROACH TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS?