

What is Islam?

Islam is submission to the will of Allah (God). Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Islam is the same truth that Allah has revealed through all His Prophets to all people.

Properly understood, Islam promotes peace, justice, forgiveness, and mercy.

Who is Allah?

Allah is the proper name of God. There is only one real Supreme Being. He is the All-Powerful and All-Knowing Creator, Sustainer, Ordainer, and Judge of the universe. Allah was not born. Allah is one. Nothing is like Him.

Allah has 99 perfect names (attributes). Two frequently used names are “The Compassionate” and “The Merciful.”

Allah has neither a spouse nor children.

What is the Qur’an?

The Qur’an is the sacred book of Islam. It contains the exact words of Allah, revealed in Arabic through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

(It is Muslim tradition to say “peace be upon him” [pbuh] after referring to Muhammad or any of the other Prophets.)

The Qur’an was memorized by Muhammad (pbuh) as he received it from Gabriel. As Muhammad received revelation, he relayed it to his companions and it was written down by scribes. Over the years of the Qur’an’s revelation, the accuracy of its transcription was checked, first by the Angel Gabriel with the Prophet Muhammad and then by Muhammad with the Prophet’s companions.

The Qur’an deals with every thing that concerns mankind and all creation. It contains clear guidance for Muslims and all humanity to follow. Its core message is the same as that in previous divine scriptures: there is one God to be worshipped, and no other.

Some good English translations of the Qur’an have been made by ‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali, Muhammad Asad, Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, and Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali & Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan.

Who is Muhammad (pbuh)?

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born in Makka (Mecca, Arabia) and received the divine revelation nearly six centuries after Jesus (peace be upon him), the son of the Virgin Mary, ascended to heaven. Muhammad came from the noblest Arab tribe, the Quraysh, but he was born an orphan and raised by his uncle. His community regarded him as the most trustworthy man in Makka.

At the age of 40, Muhammad received a first revelation through the Angel Gabriel in the Cave of Heera, northeast of Makka. Like most people at that time, Muhammad was illiterate. The first revelation that came to him was “Read.”

Read! in the name of your Lord, who has created, and created man out of a mere clot of blood. Proclaim! for your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught man the use of the pen, and teaches man what he did not know.

– Qur’an 96, 1–5

The revelation in Makka lasted 13 years. The main message was “La ‘ilaha ‘il Allah”: the only one to be worshipped is Allah. (The Makkans worshipped numerous idols, as well as Allah.)

Revelation continued for 10 years in Madeena, after Muhammad fled Makka to escape assassination attempts. In Madeena, the continuing revelation established laws of the ideal Muslim state. Citizens of Madeena had equal rights. The Jews of Madeena were citizens, like Muslims, and the state guaranteed their right to practice their faith.

Muhammad (peace be upon him) died in 632 CE, after receiving the final revelation of the Qur’an, the beloved leader of a growing community.

Who is a Muslim?

A Muslim is a person who practices Islam: by submitting to Allah’s will, abiding by His laws, and following the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Each Muslim has a direct relationship with Allah. Muslims are not better or worse with regard to gender, ethnicity, nationality, or social position. Allah honors the most righteous Muslims, and only Allah knows who those people are.

What does a Muslim believe and do?

A person establishes his or her Islam by making the statement of faith: “I testify that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” In addition to la ‘ilaha ‘il Allah, a Muslim believes in:

- *Angels*,
- *Divine Scriptures*, revealed to the Prophets: the Scrolls to Abraham, the Torah to Moses, the Psalms to David, the Gospel to Jesus, and the Qur’an to Muhammad (peace be upon them all),
- *Messengers of Allah*, beginning with Adam, continuing with Jesus, and ending with Muhammad (peace be upon them all), and
- the *Judgment Day*.

A Muslim prays to Allah five times a day, fasts during the month of Ramadan, gives money to the poor (in at least the amount due), and performs the pilgrimage to Makka (at least once in one's lifetime, if able).

The Judgment Day

On the Judgment Day, Allah the Almighty will judge all people. Those who submitted to Him alone and followed His commands will be admitted to Paradise. Those who refused to submit to Him or associated partners with Him will be condemned to Hell.

On the Judgment Day, Allah's ultimate justice will prevail. Those who wronged others in this life and did not repent or pay for their evil actions will find Hell waiting for them. Those who were patient and grateful will find a good reward.

Free Will

Humans have the ability to make choices in this life. Allah created humans to worship Him alone. Worship includes following Allah's commands, detailed in every Divine Scripture sent down to His Messengers. It is up to each of us as an individual, either to believe in the One God and obey his commands, or not.

What is Salah?

Salah is prayer, the direct connection between a Muslim and Allah. Muslims are obliged to offer salah five times a day.

During salah, Muslims worldwide face toward the Ka'bah. (The Ka'bah is a plain stone building in Makka, the first house ever built to worship Allah.) The Ka'bah symbolizes the unity of all Muslims, as well as Islam's unity with earlier revelation.

The purpose of salah is to express our reverence, humility, and gratitude to Allah, most glorious and high.

Salah brings peace, tranquility, security, and healing of the body and soul.

What is the relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book?

According to the Qur'an, the People of the Book are those who believe Allah sent down the Torah to Moses (pbuh) and those who believe that Allah sent down the Gospel to Jesus (pbuh). The Qur'an tells Muslims to invite the People of the Book to accept Muhammad (pbuh) as the last Prophet and the Qur'an as the last divine Book.

Say to the People of the Book—
Let us agree together, that we shall worship none but the One God, and that we shall associate no partners with Him, nor shall we take others for lords besides Allah. If they turn away, then say—Bear witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Allah.

— Qur'an 3, 64

Fourteen hundred years ago, a very small number of people accepted Islam. Today, Muslims are more than 20% of the world's population and live in every country.

This brochure was produced in 2010 by the Committed Pupils study group. We study the Qur'an with Dr. Anwar Hajjaj on Sunday mornings at Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls Church, Virginia (USA). We gratefully acknowledge the support and assistance of Dr. Hajjaj and of Imam Shaker Elsayed, the imam of Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center.

public domain, available from
<http://www.marifatalislam.com/docs/whatis/>

For more information:

1. Please visit our Qur'an class on Sunday morning (starting at 9 a.m. or 10 a.m, depending on time of year) at Dar al Hijrah, 3159 Row Street, Falls Church, Virginia (near Seven Corners). You might call first, as we meet most weeks but not every week. We read through the Qur'an, listen to explanations of its meanings, and ask questions. We would welcome you!
2. Call Dar al Hijrah at (703) 536-1030.
3. or contact...

May Allah bless you.

What is Islam?