

UNDERSTANDING

ISLAM



INTRODUCTION

It's important to understand that "Islam" is simply an Arabic word which means "submission to God." One who submits to God is a "Muslim," an Arabic word which means "submitter." Anyone can be a "Muslim" if he or she worships God Alone. From the Quran, chapter 2, verse 62: *Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the Christians, and the converts; anyone who (1) believes in God, and (2) believes in the Last Day, and (3) leads a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.*

This shows that all believers are united in the worship of ONE GOD. "Allah" is simply the Arabic word for God, just as "Dios" is the Spanish word for God. It's one and the same God. And everyone is equal in the sight of God—men and women, black and white, rich and poor. The only thing that distinguishes us is our righteousness.

O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most righteous. God is Omniscient, Cognizant. [49:13]

Your congregation is but one congregation, and I alone am your Lord; you shall worship Me alone. [21:92]

The verses quoted in this pamphlet are from the Quran, but it's important to understand that the Quran tells us to respect and study previous scripture, the Old and New Testaments, as well.

He sent down to you this scripture, truthfully, confirming all previous scriptures, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel before that, to guide the people, and He sent down the statute book. Those who disbelieve in God's revelations incur severe retribution. God is Almighty, Avenger. [3:3-4]

As you read the articles in this brochure, you will see that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, harmony and justice. If you find it interesting, you can get more information at our website <http://www.masjiduntucson.org> or contact us at (520) 323-7636.

The essence of the Contact Prayers (Salat) is chapter one of the Quran:

The Key (Al-Fātehah)

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Praise be to God, Lord of the universe.

Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Master of the Day of Judgment.

You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help.

Guide us in the right path;

the path of those whom You blessed; not of those who have deserved wrath, nor of the strayers.

CONCLUSION

We hope you found this pamphlet informative and now you have a little more understanding of what Islam is really all about. As with all religions, Islam has been distorted and corrupted through the centuries. It really just means submitting to God, and however one does that is Islam.

There are many more topics of interest, too many to cover in this one pamphlet. If you'd like more information, please contact Masjid Tucson. Topics such as the mathematical miracle of the Quran, prophets and messengers, scientific miracles, Satan, our most ardent enemy, and the all-important question: why are we here, are covered in another pamphlet we will soon have available. But more to the point, all these subjects and so many more are addressed in the Quran, God's final scripture to the world. We encourage everyone to take the opportunity to read and study it and then judge for themselves about the truth. The very first revealed verses of the Quran state: *Read, in the name of your Lord, who created. He created man from an embryo. Read, and your Lord, Most Exalted. Teaches by means of the pen. He teaches man what he never knew. [96:1-5]*

God encourages us not to follow anyone blindly, but to study, learn and decide for ourselves.

You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brain, and you are responsible for using them. [17:36]

They are the ones who examine all words, then follow the best. These are the ones whom God has guided; these are the ones who possess intelligence. [39:18]

All praise be to God.

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LIFE AS A MUSLIM

Islam is a way of life; it permeates all aspects of your day. By recognizing that God is in full control of everything—*To God belongs everything in the heavens and everything on earth, and all matters are controlled by God. [3:109]*—Muslims are able to submit their will to the will of God and know that everything that happens happens for a reason.

Nothing happens to you except in accordance with God's will. Anyone who believes in God, He will guide his heart. God is fully aware of all things. [64:11]

Islam was not founded by Muhammad—he was the Prophet through whom the Quran was revealed. But Islam, submission to God, has been around since Adam and Eve. There are certain practices which are part of Islam. These practices were given by God to Abraham and passed from generation to generation, and they help us focus on God, so that we can grow in our submission. They are sometimes referred to as the “five pillars of Islam.”

The Declaration of Faith (Sha'hada)

The declaration of faith or *Sha'hada*, is simply asserting that there is only One God. We say: “I bear witness that there is no god but God. He is the only God and He has no partners.” This has been distorted by Muslims adding the phrase: “and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” God tells us clearly not to mention any names with His, and He tells us not to make distinctions among the messengers. So when we declare our faith, we must be careful to devote it absolutely to God alone.

He is the Living; there is no god except He. You shall worship Him alone, devoting your religion absolutely to Him alone. Praise be to God, Lord of the universe. [40:65].

The Contact Prayers (Salat)

We do five daily prayers called the Contact Prayers (*Salat*). These are specific prayers assigned to specific time periods throughout the day. They cause us to pull away from the distractions of this world and put our focus back on God. This is why God spaced them all through the day.

You shall recite what is revealed to you of the scripture, and observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), for the Contact Prayers prohibit evil and vice. But the remembrance of God (through Salat) is the most important objective. God knows everything you do. [29:45]

The Obligatory Charity (Zakat)

God commanded us to be as charitable as we can without being excessive. To help overcome our natural stinginess, He decreed *zakat*, or obligatory charity, 2 ½ percent of net income. This is to be given as soon as we receive income, and it's to be given to those in need, starting with our own family. If the world followed this system, with everyone helping out his or her relatives, there would be no poverty. In addition to *zakat*, we are encouraged to help others as much as we can.

.... Any charity you give is for your own good. Any charity you give shall be for the sake of God. Any charity you give will be repaid to you, without the least injustice. [2:272]

Fasting (Ramadan)

We fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan. From dawn until sunset, Muslims don't eat or drink anything. Once the sun sets and night begins, we break the fast with grateful appreciation of God's gifts to us. This truly helps us to think about God at all times of the day, and also to think about how fortunate we are to have the variety and abundance of food and other blessings.

O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation. Specific days (are designated for fasting); if one is ill or traveling, an equal number of other days may be substituted. Those who can fast, but with great difficulty, may substitute feeding one poor person for each day of breaking the fast. If one volunteers (more righteous works), it is better. But fasting is the best for you, if you only knew. [2:183-4]

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

We are commanded to go on *Hajj*, or Pilgrimage, once during our lifetime, if we can afford it. This involves traveling to Mecca in Saudi Arabia to visit the Sacred Mosque built by Abraham and Ishmail. There are specific rituals to be performed there, but the most important thing is the commemoration of God.

Those who do this are not Muslims; they are not following God's words; they are not representing Islam, anymore than Hitler represented Christianity. Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, harmony and justice, and the Quran is a shining beacon to light the way.

There shall be no compulsion in religion: the right way is now distinct from the wrong way. Anyone who denounces the devil and believes in God has grasped the strongest bond; one that never breaks. God is Hearer, Omniscient. [2:256]

TERRORISM

The true religion of Islam (Submission) forbids the killing of innocent people, regardless of the cause. There is no justification for terrorism, mass murder, aggression or oppression.

.... You shall not kill—God has made life sacred—except in the course of justice. These are His commandments to you, that you may understand.” [6:151]

... we decreed...that anyone who murders any person who had not committed murder or horrendous crimes, it shall be as if he murdered all the people. And anyone who spares a life, it shall be as if he spared the lives of all the people. [5:32]

The religion of Islam should not be confused with what terrorists have done. Those who kill innocent people are actually, by the definition of the Quran, not Muslims; they are simply murderers. All religious scripture, indeed every righteous person, condemns terrorism.

The Quran expressly forbids those who follow it from aggressing against any group of people. Muslims are certainly encouraged to defend themselves when attacked and to stand up for their rights, but they are also told not to aggress.

You may fight in the cause of God against those who attack you, but do not aggress. God does not love the aggressors. [2:190]

Terrorism, by its very nature, is a form of oppression. One group is intimidating another, using violence and fear. And God makes it very clear in the Quran how He feels about oppression. *Oppression is worse than murder. [2:191 & 217]* So God gives believers the right to fight to free themselves or others from an oppressive situation. But even then, as soon as the oppression is relieved, the fighting must stop. You cannot continue aggressing.

You may also fight them to eliminate oppression, and to worship God freely. If they refrain, you shall not aggress; aggression is permitted only against the aggressors. [2:193]

The Quran encourages freedom of thought and action. Everyone is free to choose to worship God or not. No one has the right to try and force another to accept Islam as their religion.

Hajj shall be observed in the specified months. Whoever sets out to observe Hajj shall refrain from sexual intercourse, misconduct, and arguments throughout Hajj. Whatever good you do, God is fully aware thereof. As you prepare your provisions for the journey, the best provision is righteousness. You shall observe Me, O you who possess intelligence. [2:197]

Being a Muslim is so much more than these “five pillars.” It is constant awareness of God in our life, a constant striving to be more righteous, a constant struggle to kill our ego and submit totally to God, and constant remembrance to seek forgiveness for all the little and big sins we keep committing. It is truly a way of life.

DEATH AS PART OF LIFE

In the Quran God states that death is inevitable, none can escape it. Chapter 62 verse 8 is the perfect example: *Say, “The death that you are trying to evade will catch up with you sooner or later. Then you will be returned to the Knower of all secrets and declarations, then He will inform you of everything you had done.”*

God never delays the appointed time of death for any soul. God is fully Cognizant of everything you do.[63:11]

Many people tend to fear death, but we shouldn't fear death, and we should be appreciative of our Lord. *Have you noted those who fled their homes—though they were in the thousands—fearing death? God said to them, “Die,” then revived them. God showers His grace upon the people, but most people are unappreciative.[2:243]*

When a family member or a close friend dies, many people tend to question God, and ask the question why? We should never question God's authority. God is the Knower of everything in the Heavens and the Earth; we couldn't possibly fathom God's intentions. Everything that happens is in accordance with God's will.

Death is a natural part of life. It is a blessing for any soul to be admitted into Heaven, into Gardens of Flowing Streams. Death is something that the righteous should look forward to. When the righteous die they get to be with their Lord God eternally.

Every person tastes death, then you receive your recompense on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever misses Hell, barely, and makes it to Paradise, has attained a great triumph. The life of this world is no more than an illusion. [3:185]

God puts the souls to death when the end of their life comes, and also at the time of sleep. Thus, He takes some back during their sleep, while others are allowed to continue living until the end of their predetermined interim. This should provide lessons for people who reflect. [39:42]

PREPARING FOR THE HEREAFTER

Heaven and Hell have become confusing, almost cartoonish, ideas in today's world. We tend to get caught up in our day to day lives and not think about what might come after this world. Yet that's the most important thing that we need to think about and plan for. This world is an illusion, though it seems so real to us. The Hereafter is reality, though it seems so vague and far away.

The life of this world is no more than illusion and vanity, while the abode of the Hereafter is far better for the righteous. Do you not understand?! [6:32]

We all know we're going to die someday; it's absolutely inevitable. And yet most people spend very little time thinking about what happens then. Many of us have been duped into believing we'll be saved by some form of intercession through Jesus or Muhammad. Many people believe that only the really, really bad people will go to Hell. Some believe that they might have to spend a day or two in Hell to pay for their sins, and then be saved. But none of these things are true. The only way to achieve salvation is through the worship of God Alone. We must recognize that He is the Only God; we must devote our worship to

women. The following verses are addressed to everyone who believes, not just to the believing men.

O you who believe, when the Congregational Prayer (Salat Al-Jumu'ah) is announced on Friday, you shall hasten to the commemoration of God, and drop all business. This is better for you, if you only knew. [62:9]

Say, "My Contact Prayers (Salat), my worship practices, my life and my death, are all devoted absolutely to God alone, the Lord of the universe. [6:162]

You shall sing the praises of your Lord, and be with the prostrators. And worship your Lord, in order to attain certainty. [15:98-9]

Women cannot hope to attain the certainty mentioned in the verse above if they are prevented from doing the practices that elevate their souls. And God makes it clear that women who are righteous and worship God alone will certainly make it to heaven, along with the believing men.

The believing men and women are allies of one another. They advocate righteousness and forbid evil, they observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), and they obey God and His messenger. These will be showered by God's mercy. God is Almighty, Most Wise.

God promises the believing men and the believing women gardens with flowing streams, wherein they abide forever, and magnificent mansions in the gardens of Eden. And God's blessings and approval are even greater. This is the greatest triumph. [9:71-2]

If you are interested in more information on women in Islam, there's an excellent book entitled Women's Rights, the Quran and Islam by Lisa Spray, available at a discount from Masjid Tucson. It goes into great detail explaining the cultural origins for most of the oppression of women.

When the Quran is recited, you shall listen to it and take heed, that you may attain mercy. [7:204]

God cites the example of a man who deals with disputing partners (Hadith), compared to a man who deals with only one consistent source (Quran). Are they the same? Praise be to God; most of them do not know. [39:29]

WOMEN IN ISLAM

The way that Islam is practiced in most places has very little to do with the Quran; it's because people have abandoned the Quran in favor of the Hadith. This is perhaps most obvious in the treatment of women. The Quran is very clear that men and women are equal in the sight of God.

Their Lord responded to them: "I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female—you are equal to one another. [3:195]

The submitting men, the submitting women, the believing men, the believing women, the obedient men, the obedient women, the truthful men, the truthful women, the steadfast men, the steadfast women, the reverent men, the reverent women, the charitable men, the charitable women, the fasting men, the fasting women, the chaste men, the chaste women, and the men who commemorate God frequently, and the commemorating women; God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great recompense. [33:35]

Women are not required to be covered from head to toe. God tells women to lengthen their garments and cover their chests, in other words, to dress modestly. The *hijab*, or veil, is a cultural addition, not something that God commands.

In many places women are discouraged, or even prevented, from attending the Mosque for prayers and studies. They are forbidden from praying and fasting when they are menstruating. These are all man-made inventions, not at all what God advocates. The practices of Islam, sent down to Abraham and passed from generation to generation, are meant for all believers—men and

Him alone; and we must be aware of accountability on the Day of Resurrection.

Every person tastes death, then you receive your recompense on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever misses Hell, barely, and makes it to Paradise, has attained a great triumph. The life of this world is no more than an illusion. [3:185]

If you asked anyone if they would rather spend eternity in lush gardens with abundant provisions, perfect light, and comfortable temperatures or in a blast furnace of molten lava and scalding acid, no one would willingly choose the latter. Yet, by not doing the things they need to do to grow their souls today, they are condemning themselves to the Hellfire tomorrow.

Though the Quranic descriptions of the Hereafter are allegorical, Heaven and Hell are easily defined. It's not a matter of streets paved with gold versus a fiery pit. Heaven is the presence of God. It's being able to stand His awesome energy and light, to bask in the glory of God. Hell is the absence of God. It's being in darkness and misery, wanting to be close to God but being unable to survive there. God doesn't put a single soul in Hell. The humans who did not do enough to grow their souls during this life will not be able to withstand the overwhelming power of God's presence. Those who worshiped God alone, repented and reformed will join the angels in glorifying God forever.

Those who disbelieved will be led to Hell in throngs. When they get to it, and its gates are opened, its guards will say, "Did you not receive messengers from among you, who recited to you the revelations of your Lord, and warned you about meeting this day?" They will answer, "Yes indeed. But the word 'retribution' was already stamped upon the disbelievers."

It will be said, "Enter the gates of Hell, wherein you abide forever." What a miserable destiny for the arrogant.

Those who revered their Lord will be led to Paradise in throngs. When they get to it, and its gates are opened, its guards will say, "Peace be upon you; you have won. Therefore, you abide herein forever."

They will say, "Praise be to God, who fulfilled His promise to us, and made us inherit the earth, enjoying Paradise as we please." What a beautiful recompense for the workers!

You will see the angels floating around the throne, glorifying and praising their Lord. After the equitable judgment is issued to all, it will be proclaimed: "Praise be to God, Lord of the universe." [39:71-5]

THE QURAN

The Quran is God's final scripture to the world. It supports and upholds previous scripture, but the Quran is the only one that is still intact in its original language. And God tells us that it is complete, fully detailed and infallible.

This Quran could not possibly be authored by other than God. It confirms all previous messages, and provides a fully detailed scripture. It is infallible, for it comes from the Lord of the universe. [10:37]

The Quran contains an intricate, unique mathematical code, based on the number 19, which protects every verse, every word, every letter. The details are too complex for this pamphlet, but to give you an idea, here are some simple parameters.

SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND IMPOSSIBLE TO IMITATE

The first verse (1:1), known as "*Basmalah*," consists of 19 letters.

The Quran consists of 114 suras, which is 19 x 6.

The total number of verses in the Quran is 6346, or 19 x 334.

Note that $6+3+4+6 = 19$.

The famous first revelation (96:1-5) consists of 19 words.

This 19-worded first revelation consists of 76 letters 19 x 4.

Sura 96, first in the chronological sequence, consists of 19 verses.

The last revelation (Sura 110) consists of 19 words.

The first verse of the last revelation (110:1) consists of 19 letters.

The Quran mentions 30 different numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 99, 100, 200, 300, 1000, 2000, 3000, 5000, 50,000, & 100,000. The sum of these numbers is 162146, which equals 19×8534 .

Having this mathematical proof allows us to have confidence that the word of God has not been tampered with, either intentionally or accidentally, over the centuries.

Shall I seek other than God as a source of law, when He has revealed to you this book fully detailed? Those who received the scripture recognize that it has been revealed from your Lord, truthfully. You shall not harbor any doubt. [6:114]

....A beacon has come to you from God, and a profound scripture. With it, God guides those who seek His approval. He guides them to the paths of peace, leads them out of darkness into the light by His leave, and guides them in a straight path. [5:15]

God tells us to study and learn from the Quran; that He has placed in it all the lessons we need to find salvation; that we should not seek any other source except the word of God.

Why do they not study the Quran carefully? If it were from other than God, they would have found in it numerous contradictions. [4:82]

We made the Quran easy to learn. Does any of you wish to learn? [54:17]

We have cited for the people every kind of example in this Quran, that they may take heed. [39:27]

In their history, there is a lesson for those who possess intelligence. This is not fabricated Hadith; this (Quran) confirms all previous scriptures, provides the details of everything, and is a beacon and mercy for those who believe. [12:111]

Yet, despite all those warnings and affirmations, people have turned away from the Quran and follow words and actions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. These are called "Hadith," and there are volumes of sayings and stories that were collected hundreds of years after Muhammad's death. Unfortunately, these are what most Muslims understand as the religion, and they follow them even if they contradict the Quran. But if we just return exclusively to the word of God, the Quran, which contains no ambiguities or nonsense, we would have all we need.