

## Christian Outreach and World Religions

### Islam



#### The Facts About Islam

1. Islam makes up 20% of the world's population. It began in Arabia and spread to North Africa and South-Centra Asia and Indonesia.
2. Non-Arab Muslims outnumber Arab Muslims by nearly three to one. Muslim populations: Indonesia 88%, Pakistan 97%, Bangladesh 97 %, India 11%.
3. One fifth of international students in the United States come from 40 Islamic countries.

#### The Founding of Islam

1. In A.D. 570 Muhammad was born to an Arabian tribe which controlled the city of Mecca. Mecca was an important caravan stop. It contained a cubical structure called *Ka'bah* in which 360 deities of each Arabian tribe.
2. It was the custom to retreat to a solitary place for meditation. In A.D. 610 at age 40 Muhammad received a special revelation from the angel Gabriel. This was the beginning of several revelations that became the *Qur'an*, which means "recitations."
3. Muhammad doubted these revelations, but his wife encouraged him. He began preaching a message of strict monotheism.
4. He and 100 families were driven from Mecca to Medina 200 miles North around 622. After a series of military victories. Mecca yielded to Muhammad and his army in A.D. 630. Muhammad destroyed the idols in the *Ka'bah* and united all the tribes under the religion of Islam. Muhammad died June 8, 632.

#### Sects of Islam

1. Following M.'s death two groups divided over his successor. The Sunnis believed the successor should be elected. The Shi'ites believed he should come from the blood line of M.
2. Sunnis are 80%. They emphasize consensus and the authority of the written tradition. These include not only the *Qur'an* but also the *Sunna* or "customs."
3. The Shi'ites are more authority oriented. They believe that God spoke through an *Imam*. The twelfth *Imam* disappeared, and they await his return. In the mean time they and the Sunnis rely on *ulama* or religious scholars.
4. The Sunnis separate the civil and religious realm. The Shi'ites unite them.

#### Beliefs and Obligations

1. God is one. To associate a partner with God is to commit the sin of *ishrak* for which there is no forgiveness (*Surah 4.48*).
2. Angels fill the gap between God and man. Each person has two angels, one to record good deeds and one to record bad deeds. The lowest level of angels are the *jinn*, which are usually bad and can possess people.
3. God has sent prophets to every nation to preach the message of one God. Biblical characters such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, John the Baptist and Jesus are considered prophets.
4. The *Torah*, *Psalms*, and *Gospels* are all considered holy books. Only the *Qur'an* has been preserved uncorrupted.

5. On the Day of Judgment each person's deeds will be weighed in the balance. If your good deeds outweigh the bad, you will go to heaven. If not, you'll go to hell.
6. Every Muslim recites the *Shahadah* ("to bear witness") *I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger.* To recite this is all it takes to become a Muslim.
7. Every Muslim is required to pray (*Salat*) seventeen cycles each day usually over five times of prayer. When they pray, they must face toward Mecca. The noon service on Friday is the only time when Muslims are expected to gather together at the mosque.
8. Muslims fast during the month of *Ramadhan*. During daylight hours they abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual relations.
9. Muslims give 2.5% of their income to the poor and needy.
10. Sometime during their lifetime Muslims are expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca

### Evangelizing Muslims

1. Consult the Bible often. Muslims are "people of the book." They understand written authority.
2. Meet individually. In groups they are very conscious that they must defend their religion.
3. Focus on Jesus. A former Muslim said, "It is vital for the Muslim to see Christianity not as a religion but as a living, new relationship with God."
4. Use the parables and images of the Bible. Muslims don't respond well to logic.
5. Be patient, persistent and prayerful. Muslims are notoriously slow in turning to Jesus Christ for salvation.
6. Read the *Qur'an* so that you will become familiar with the M. concept of God and the "flavor" of their religion.
7. Handle the Bible with respect. The custom in Islamic countries is to not lower the *Qur'an* below the waist. Muslims keep the *Qur'an* on the highest shelf in the house, for nothing should be placed above the *Qur'an*. Also, they consider it a sign of disrespect to write in the *Qur'an* or the Bible.
8. Don't bring a Muslim to church until they are ready. They will be offended by men and women sitting together. An informal Bible study is better.
9. Don't argue. A Muslim cannot lose an argument, because he or she would lose face. Try to stimulate their thinking.
10. Be prepared to handle objections:

The Bible is corrupt: *The Dead Sea Scrolls (100 B.C.) are in virtual agreement with the next oldest OT manuscripts from A.D. 900. We have 3,157 Greek manuscripts containing all or portions of the NT that date from the second century on. Of the variants 95% have to do with trivialities. No doctrine is affected by textual variants.*

Christians worship three gods: *God is one (Dt. 6.4). But the Bible tells us God is a complex unity (Gen. 2.24). The Bible refers to Father (Matthew 11.25) and Son (John 1.1) and Spirit (Acts 5.3-4) as God. There are three persons but one God. We baptize in the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We should not expect to understand everything about God if we are His creatures.*

God would not dishonor a prophet by allowing him to be crucified: *Explain that God caused Jesus to die for a sacrifice. Compare to Abraham who was commanded to offer up his son as a sacrifice to test his faith. (Muslims think it was actually Ishmael.) Ask: If Abraham passed the test, why did God demand another sacrifice? Explain that God is not glorified if He can only reward us for good deeds. He glorified when He saves us. Jesus humbled Himself (Philippians 2.8-9) and is now exalted. Muslims understand submission!*

Most of the information for these Bible studies has been drawn from *The Compact Guide to World Religions* by Dean C. Halverson, Bethany House Publishers, 1996.