

World Religions

Better understanding our neighbors and their beliefs

Week Three: Islam Early History & Beliefs Matthew 5:43-48

Series overview: As we get to know our neighbors, many of us are met with a rich collection of people from cultures worldwide. With so many religions and backgrounds represented in our community, you may find yourself wondering more about the people who surround you. What do they believe? How do I relate to people coming from experiences far different from mine? And most of all, how do I interact with my neighbors in a way that shows love and respect?

This week's message: Many of us may be able to list off the practices of Islam – praying five times a day, fasting during Ramadan, etc. – without understanding what Muslims actually believe. “Islam” means “submission to the will of Allah,” and a “Muslim” is “one who submits.” So who is “Allah” and what is this submission all about? This week, we dive into Islam’s early history and beliefs in order to understand some of our neighbors on a deeper level.

Basic Beliefs and Assumptions

- One transcendent God – Allah does not relate personally with the earth or humanity, and requires total submission. Total submission and surrender to Allah’s will brings peace. The right response of pious Muslims is respect and fear.
- Many prophets & Muhammad is the seal – We share prophets with Muslims, including Abraham, Moses, and even Jesus. However, Muslims believe messages of the earlier prophets have been corrupted by people over time, making Muhammad’s final revelation God’s true will for man.
- Angels – In both good and evil forms. One angel, Gabriel, is credited with bringing the message of Allah, the Qur’an, to Muhammad.
- The Qur’an is God’s full and final revelation – the book is considered a miracle, with it’s original copy believed to be in the presence of God Himself in heaven. Similar to how Jesus Christ is the final word from God in Christianity, the Qur’an is Allah’s will and sacred revelation in Islam.
- A final day of judgment is coming – every person will be judged for what they did and will end up in either heaven or hell. Christianity’s views of heaven & hell differ greatly to those of Islam.

Small Group Discussion:

➤ Connect

- If you could travel to one Muslim country in the world, where would it be and why? (Note: most Muslim countries are in North and East Africa, the Middle East, and Central & South Asia)

➤ Grow

- Have you ever been tempted to consider Muslims your enemies instead of your neighbors? Why?
- Name something about Islam that you admire or appreciate – the reverence for God; the expectation of justice; the mission of “Ummah,” or community, to help keep people on the right path; Muhammad’s intentions to create a monotheistic society; the practices of fasting, giving, praying multiples times a day; etc.
- Have you ever believed or been told that the God of Christianity and the Allah of Islam are the same? Using Scripture as a foundation, what are some major differences in the character of God vs. the character of Allah?
- Muslims believe that Arabic is the language of heaven, and the culture of the Qur’an is the culture of heaven. How does this differ from Christianity? What major issue(s) does this create? (Revelation 5:9-10 and 7:9-10)
- What is the difference in motivation between a Christian striving to be obedient to God and a Muslim striving to submit to Allah? (Romans 8:1-17, John 14:15-21, James 1:25)

➤ Reach

- One City. What are some things you can do to begin to reach out to Muslim friends this week?
- One Nation. Pray for our country – that fear of Muslims be replaced by a heart of compassion for a lost people whom God loves.
- One World. As a small group, get involved in the Adopt-a-Verse project. Austin churches are partnering with the Seed Company to translate the Gospel and the Jesus Film into the language of an unreached Muslim and Hindu population living in a war-torn area of the world. \$35 adopts a verse for translation. Pick your specific verse(s) by stopping by the HCBC offices or support the project: www.hcbc.com/give

Prayer Focus

Pray Psalm 139:23-24 over yourself and your small group. Confess any fear, anxiety, doubt, hate, or apathy regarding your attitude toward Muslims. Ask God to give you His heart for people.

Scripture Memory

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

John 14:6