

SESSION 7: Islam

OVERVIEW

We learn in Session 7 that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today. The number of Muslims, which is currently 1.7 billion, is projected to equal the number of Christians by 2050. There are many common misconceptions about Muslims, including the idea that all Muslims are Arabs. A Muslim is someone who submits to God based on the teaching of Muhammad, Islam's founder. Muslims follow the Qur'an, Islam's most revered holy book, and they confess that Allah is the only God and that Muhammad is his prophet. This session also gives an overview of Islam's five pillars, or foundational tenets, as well as its six basic beliefs. Finally, the urgent task of engaging Muslims with the gospel is discussed. Of the 2,317 Muslim people groups, a staggering 2,121 of them are unreached with the gospel. Suggestions are offered for sharing the gospel with Muslims, including questions to ask and bridges (transitions) to the gospel.

KEY TERMS, CONCEPTS, AND SCRIPTURES

Who are Muslims?

- Not all Muslims are Arabs, nor do all Muslims hate Americans.
- Though Muslims don't believe that Jesus was divine or that He was crucified, He is a respected prophet according to the Qur'an.
- A Muslim is someone who submits to God based on the teaching of Muhammad, Islam's founder. Muslims do not worship Muhammad.
- Muhammad was a prophet who had a vision of the archangel Gabriel (610 A.D.) and then began to preach that there is only one God, Allah, and that we are obligated to submit to his will.
- Muslims were divided over who should succeed Muhammad. Sunni Muslims believed successors should be chosen by consensus/election, while Shiite Muslims believed successors should be from Muhammad's descendants.

- Islam has (and continues to) spread through personal conversion and military coercion.
- Muhammad's recitations were recorded in Islam's most holy book, the Qur'an. Supplemental teachings can be found in Hadiths, which inform and prescribe Islamic belief and practice, and in Shariah, which are legal interpretations of Muslim teachings that prescribe duties, laws, and penalties for breaking laws.

What Do Muslims Believe?

- The Five Pillars of Muslim belief are . . .
 - (1) Shahada: The Confession (There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet)
 - (2) Salat: The Prayers (five times daily facing Mecca)
 - (3) Zakat: The Giving of Alms (at least 2.5% of income to the poor)
 - (4) Sawm: The Fast (takes place during month of Ramadan)
 - (5) Hajj: The Pilgrimage (those who are able must go to Mecca)
- The Six Basic Beliefs of Islam are . . .
 - (1) Belief in God: Allah is the only God, and idolatry (*shirk*) is the primary sin.
 - (2) Belief in Angels: angels worship and serve Allah.
 - (3) Belief in the Prophets: out of twenty-five main prophets, Muhammed is the last and most significant.
 - (4) Belief in the Holy Books: the four most holy books were brought about by four prophets—Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad. The Qur'an is the supreme holy book.
 - (5) Belief in Divine Decree: God is all-knowing and whatever he wills happens.
 - (6) Belief in Final Judgment: a day of final reward is coming when all people will go to either Paradise (Jannah) or Hellfire (Jahannam).

How Do We Share the Gospel with Muslims?

- Know (and understand) what they believe . . .
 - "The Bible is not reliable."
 - "It has been changed."
 - "It has been corrupted."

- “Christians are immoral.”
 - “Just look at Western culture.”
 - “Christianity is an easy way out.”
 - “Christians worship three gods.”
 - “God the Father.”
 - “Mary the Mother.”
 - “Jesus the Son.”
 - “Jesus did not die on the cross.”
 - Some Muslims believe Allah took Jesus to heaven before crucifixion because it was unthinkable for an approved prophet to face such a humiliating defeat.
 - Other Muslims believe Jesus was taken down from the cross in a coma and that he later revived.
- In light of what Muslims believe, we need to know what we believe about:
 - God (the Trinity)
 - Jesus (fully man, fully God)
 - The cross (sinless life, substitutionary death)
 - Salvation (by grace, through faith, in Christ)
 - The Bible (historical accuracy, manuscript reliability, fulfilled prophecy, clear unity, internal testimony)
- On areas of disagreement, do less debate and more dialogue
 - Utilize questions.
 - Use illustrations.
- Trust in God's Word.
- Point to God's love (1 John 3:1).
- Pray in Jesus' name (John 14:13-14; 1 John 5:13-15).
- Be holy in your lifestyle (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:16-17).
- Be hospitable and loving (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:13).
- Be patient as you share (1 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Peter 3:9).
- Be cognizant of suffering (Matthew 10:16-22).
- Get to the gospel (Romans 6:23).
- Trust in God (John 5:17-21).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ...

1. What was your impression of Muslims prior to this study? What misconceptions did you have?
2. How is being a Muslim different than being an Arab?
3. What factors make it likely that Islam will continue to grow in the near future?
4. Both Muslims and Christians believe there is one God, so how do their conceptions of God differ?
5. Respond to the following statement and include relevant Scripture passages: Christians worship three gods.
6. What do Muslims believe about Jesus? How is this different from Scripture's view of Christ?
7. Muslims believe that man's great need is instruction. What does Scripture identify as our greatest need?
8. What would you say to a Muslim who claims that the Bible has been corrupted?
9. How might you use the truth of God's grace and of the Christian's assurance of salvation in evangelizing Muslims?
10. Muslims don't believe that God would debase himself in order to take on flesh and be crucified. Come up with a question that might help to start a conversation with a Muslim on this point, with the ultimate goal of sharing the gospel. *See pages 102-125 of the Secret Church 16 Study Guide for help, as there are several examples of a "question to ask" or a "bridge to cross" when sharing the gospel with Muslims.*

FOR MORE ON ISLAM, SEE . . .

Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*

Thabiti Anyabwile, *The Gospel for Muslims*