

The Faith and the Follower

By Phil Sudo

To many Americans, Islam remains a mystery. Mention the word to the average Westerner and images of militants and terrorists leap to mind, or of heavily draped Muslim women, eyes peering out from behind their veils.

In this issue, we intend to replace the stereotypes with understanding.

Islam is said to be the fastest-growing religion in the world. Its followers stretch from Africa to Afghanistan, from the Middle East to modern America. Nearly one-fifth of the world's people are Muslim, or believers in Islam; in the U.S. the Muslim population numbers some 4 million to 6 million including a rapidly growing following among African-Americans.

To view Islam through only a limited set of images would be a mistaken as visiting a single Christian church and saying you had seen all of Christianity the world of Islam is vast, rich and complex; even devout Muslims find themselves continually learning more about their faith.

In this issue we'll try to show you that complexity from the sacred traditions that have inspired legions of followers throughout the ages, to the modern militants who seek to use Islam for more aggressive, political aims. We'll start by addressing some of the most commonly asked questions young people have about the faith.

What is Islam?

Islam is the last in the line of the three major religions to emerge from the Middle East, following Judaism and Christianity. Like the other two, it is monotheistic, or worshipful of a single God.

The Religion was founded in the early 7th century A.D. by an Arab named Muhammad, a native of Mecca. Muhammad announced that he had received a series of revelations from God (Allah in Arabic). These revelations are collected in the Koran, the holy book of Islam.

Muhammad preached that there is only one all-powerful God, who created the universe and is just and merciful. He called upon people to purify themselves through sincere submission to God's will. God will judge their submission, he said, and reward those who succeed and punish those who fail to submit.

Islam in Arabic means "submission" - submission to God only. It is derived from the root word in Arabic that means "peace".

Islam followed what two religions?

Origin:

Where _____

When _____

Who _____

Holy Book:

Deity _____

Muhammad called on people to _____

Meaning of Arabic is

Who is Muslim?

A Muslim is anyone who believes or affirms, "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet. That statement is what Muslims call the

What is Shahadah?

What does it mean when people make

Shahadah, or declaration of faith. Literally, Muslim means "one who submits".

Many people confuse the terms "Muslim" and "Arab". The two are not interchangeable. Muslims are followers of Islam, while Arabs are members of an ethnic group, defined by the language they speak, Arabic. While it's true that most Arabs are Muslims, many Arabs follow the Christian faith, and some even follow Judaism. In fact, Arabs comprise only 20 percent of the world's 1 billion Muslims. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia, in Southeast Asia.

this statement?

What is the difference between a Muslim and an Arab?

Largest amount of Muslims live where?

What do Muslims believe?

Muslims believe that God first spoke to Adam, then to a long line of prophets that included Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and finally, to Muhammad. Thus, Muslims worship the same God as Christians and Jews, and share many of the same beliefs, such as the wrongness of lying, stealing, and murder, and the virtues of compassion, charity, and forgiveness. They believe the Koran is the direct word of God, confirming the truth in the Christian Bible and the Jewish Torah, but also correcting some "errors".

Muslims do not believe for example,

Muslims believe God spoke to

What are some comparisons between Islam, Judaism and Christianity?

What are some differences between the three faiths?

in the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, as do Christians. They accept that Jesus was a prophet, born to the Virgin Mary and was the Messiah. But they do not believe he was the Son of God, or that his crucifixion was to carry the sins of others. In fact, Muslims do not believe humans can picture God. No images of God appear in their faith. Rendering an image of God is impossible, they say, because God is beyond human comprehension.

Muslims also believe the Koran offers a guide to life in all its aspects. The book contains numerous passages on the proper conduct of affairs, including government, business, and family relations. Strict adherents to the Islamic law believe that true submission to Allah will naturally govern all other relations. Muslims also look to the Hadith, narratives about the life of Muhammad and his sayings, to complement the Koran's guidance.

What information is in the Koran?

How do the Muslims practice their faith?

Devout Muslims follow a core set of rules known as the five pillars of Islam, derived from the Koran and the teachings of Muhammad. These rules

What is the name of rules Muslims follow?

call on Muslims to 1.) Profess faith in one God and the prophet hood of Muhammad; 2.) Pray five times daily, at dawn, noon, afternoon, evening and nightfall; 3.) Give alms, or charity to the needy and the Muslim community; 4.) Fast from dawn to dusk during the ninth month of the Islamic year, ~~known as Ramadan~~, when the Koran was said to be revealed to Muhammad; and 5.) If possible, make at least one pilgrimage or Hajji during their lifetime to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam. The Muslim house of worship is a mosque, which is most heavily attended on Fridays for the noon prayer. Unlike, say Catholicism, with its Pope and clergy. Islam has no central authority. Any Muslim whom others are willing to follow is considered qualified to lead prayer. In practice, though, prayers are usually conducted by an Imam, or teacher, who embodies devotion and scholarship.

List the 5 rules.

Where do Muslims worship?

Who leads prayers?

Are there divisions of Islamic Faithful?

Yes. Soon after the death of Muhammad, the Muslim world split into two main sects, the Sunnis and the Shiites (SHE-ights). Sunnis, meaning majority, believed the successor to Muhammad should be

What are the two divisions of Islam and what do they mean?

democratically elected. Shiites, meaning partisans, believed the successor should be a blood relative of Muhammad. Although Sunnis comprise more than 80 percent of all the world's Muslims, Shiites form the majority in Iraq, and Bahrain.

Both sects believe in the same Koran and follow the Five Pillars of Islam, but Shiites believe in a more centralized leadership system.

Which division has a larger population?

How has Islam spread?

In the early 7th century, Muhammad was scorned in Mecca for his preaching. Faced with death threats, he was forced to flee to the city of Medina in 622. (Muslims date their calendar from this year) There, he amassed a following, and years later, returned to Mecca without opposition. By the time of Muhammad's death in 632, many people on the Arabian Peninsula had accepted him as their leader, and Islam as their religion.

In the decades following Muhammad's death, Islam spread through Arab territorial conquests. By the 8th century Muslim rule stretched from northern Africa and Spain to India. Historians have often characterized these conquests as part of an Islamic holy war of jihad.

But Muslims are careful to note

Where did Muhammad start to gain supporters?

By the 8th century what was the extent of Islam?

What is Jihad?

that, while Islamic states may have used religion to inspire soldiers to territorial conquest just as the 11th through 14th century Crusades used Christianity to inspire conquest the religion of Islam itself condemns aggression. In its pure sense. Muslims say, the concept of jihad refers not to battlefield wars, but to the inner spiritual struggle of Muslim for self-control in order to do well.

In the later middle Ages, Islam spread through merchants and trade to areas such as central Asia and Indonesia. Today, the faith has spread to Europe and the United States primarily through the conversion of nonbelievers to the faith.

What is "Islamic fundamentalism"?

As understood in the West, Islamic fundamentalism refers to a series of complex, grassroots religious and political movements arising in many parts of the world, ranging from northern Africa to the Middle East to central Asia. But misperceptions abound as to what these movements are, and what they have to do with Islam. Many Westerners think of Islamic fundamentalism as a single, unified movement. It is not. Arising on the local level, it differs widely in

Explain the meaning of jihad?

How is Islam spread?

What is Islamic fundamentalism?

character from region to region. In its broadest sense. Islamic fundamentalism represent a religious revival a reaction against the perceived lapse is often attributed to Western influences, which some Muslims believe have corrupted traditional values and led to a rise in greed and government corruption. To counter these influences, many Muslims have returned to the fundamentals of Islam, observing the Koran more closely, donning traditional Islamic clothing, and in some cases, protesting against non-Islamic influences. The majority of Muslims in these movements seeks peaceful, democratic means of change.

Much of what gains attention in the West, however, is a far more militant strain of thus revivalist movement radical groups that, in the name of Islam, resort to acts of violence. In countries such as Egypt and Georgia (the former Soviet republic), small, loosely knit groups have embraced the concept of jihad as a "holy war against Western influences." They seek to upset and established order of government and give rise to an Islamic revolution. Some also target the state of Israel, whose land they believe belongs to Palestinian Arabs. Most Muslims

Why do some Muslim fundamentalists use violence?

Why do some Muslims act out against Westerners and Israel?

condemn these acts as counter to the teachings of the Koran, but some Muslims support the radicals struggle. For example, the governments of Iran and Sudan have been accused by the U.S. of giving support to Islamic extremist groups around the world. Both governments rule by Islamic law, after Islamic revolutionaries won political control.

What two nations does Islamic law rule? _____

What are Islam's rules regarding women?

This question is often the source of confusion in the West, particularly in the areas of dress, marriage, and women's rights. While no one article can address the subject fully, it can be said that many stereotypes about women in Islam are false.

The Most common misperception is that all Muslim women wear cloaks and veils. Muslim women dress as diversely as the different lands they come from. While the Koran does advise women to "draw their veils close round them" so as not to be viewed in an exploitative way, the actual wearing of a veil-called a chador-is not required by Islam. In strict Muslim countries such as Iran, women must wear a veil in public. But elsewhere in the Muslim world, women can be found wearing anything from

Are women required to wear a chador? _____

business suits to blue jeans.

A second misperception concerns the place of polygamy, or multiple marriages, in Islam. The Koran says men are limited to four wives, and all must be treated equally. But in reality, only a small percentage of Muslims actually practice polygamy.

As for women's rights, many Islamic countries do impose special restrictions on women. In Saudi Arabia, for example, women are not allowed to drive, in Kuwait, they are not allowed to vote. These restrictions do not arise from the Koran. Muslims say, rather, like many of the biases faced by women around the world, they raise from cultural tradition. Today, many Muslim women are actively working to reform these traditions and rules, which they say are based on repressive social control, not religion.

These Muslim women feel Islamic revivalist movements are placing more restriction on women's rights. But many other Muslim women have joined revivalist movements. Finding more protection, security, and social status in a strict interpretation of the Koran.

Why are there restrictions on women's rights in some nations?