

# [Islam more than a religion](https://assignbuster.com/islam-more-than-a-religion/)

[Religion](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/religion/), [Islam](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/religion/islam/)

Islam More Than A Religion
Despite its huge following around the world and the growing Muslim
communities in the United States, Islam is foreign to most Americans who are
familiar with Christianity or Judaism. Because most Americans know little or
nothing about Islam, they have many misconceptions about Muslim beliefs and
rituals. The negative image many people in the United States and Europe have
of Islam and the Muslim world has a long history. Many have judged Islam
without making an effort to consider this religious tradition on its own terms,
without bothering to become acquainted with its teaching and the ways in which
Muslims practice their faith.

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is a monotheistic religion, based
on the belief in one God.. This religion was proclaimed by the Prophet Muhammad
in Arabia, in the 7th century A. D. The term Islam virtually means " surrender".

Within Islam the believer (called a Muslim) use the Arabic word for God, Allah,
to refer to the creator of the world and of all life within it. Allah is viewed
as the sole God----creator, sustained, and restorer of the world. The will of
Allah, to which man must submit, is made known through the sacred scriptures,
the Qur'an (Koran). Allah revealed the Qur'an to his messenger, Muhammad.

According to Islamic beliefs, Muhammad is the last of a series of prophets
(including Adam, Noah, Jesus, and others). Muhammad's message concurrently
perfect and do away with the " revelations" attributed to earlier prophets.

From the very beginning of Islam, Muhammad had indoctrinated a sense of
brotherhood and a bond of faith among his followers. The Prophet Muhammad fled
to Medina in AD 622, it was during this time that his preaching was accepted and
the community-state of Islam emerged. During this early period, Islam acquired
its characteristics as a religion uniting in itself both the spiritual and
temporal aspects of life. Islam also seeks to regulate not only the
individual's relationship to God (through his conscience) but human relationship
in a social setting as well. Thus, there is not only an Islamic religious
institution but also an Islamic law, state, and other institutions governing
society.

During the earliest decades after the death of the Prophet, certain
basic features of the religio-social organizations of Islam were singled out.

The features are to serve as anchoring points of the community's life and
fashioning as the " Pillars of Islam." There are five pillars. To these five,
the Khawarij sect added a sixth pillar, the jihad, which, however, was not
accepted by the general community. Jihad means " holy war" or " holy struggle".

The first pillar is the profession of faith which states, " There is no god but
God; Muhammad is the prophet of God." The profession must be recited at least
once in one's lifetime, aloud, correctly, and purposively, with an understanding
of its meaning and with a covenant from the heart. The second pillar consists
of five daily congregational prayers, which may, however be offered individually
if one is unable to go to the mosque. The first prayer is performed in the
morning before sunrise. The second prayer is performed just after noon, the
third in the later afternoon, the fourth immediately after sunset, and the fifth
before retiring to bed. However, only three prayers are mentioned in the
Qur'an: morning, evening, and middle prayer in the afternoon. In strict
doctrine, the five daily prayers cannot be waived even for the sick, who may
pray in bed and, if necessary lying down.

The third pillar is the obligatory tax called zakat which means "
purification." Zakat indicts that such a payment makes the rest of one's wealth
religiously and legally pure. In today's society the payment of zakat has
become a matter of voluntary charity dependent on individual conscience.

The fourth pillar of the faith is fasting during the month of Ramadan
(ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar). Fasting begins at daybreak and ends
at sunset, and during the day eating, drinking, and smoking are forbidden. The
Qu'ran (2: 185) states that it was during the month of Ramadan that the Qu'ran
was revealed.

The fifth pillar is the annual pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca prescribed for
every Muslim once in a lifetime -- " provided one can afford it" and provided a
person has enough provisions to leave for his family in his absence.

By the eighteenth century Black Muslims begin to arrive in North
America; coming by the thousands, working as slaves on plantations. As slaves
these early communities were cut off from their heritage, families, and
inevitable their Islamic identity. During the nineteenth century America
experienced an influx of Arab Muslims arriving from Europe, settling in major
industrial cities. The Arab Muslims were generally able to form their
communities and to practice their religion freely. The early Twentieth Century
witnessed the arrival of several hundred thousand Muslims from Eastern Europe;
whom opened a mosque in Maine in 1915 and other mosque soon followed.

After World War II an Islamic movement emerged among blacks in the US;
members called themselves the Nation of Islam, but they were popularly known as
Black Muslims. Although they adopted some Islamic social practices, the group
was in large a black separatist and social-protest movement. Their leader,
Elijah Muhammad, who claimed to be an inspired prophet, interpreted the doctrine
of Resurrection in an unorthodox sense as the revival of oppressed (" dead")
people. The popular leader and advocate Malcolm X (el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz)
broke with Elijah Muhammad and adopted more orthodox Islamic views. After the
death of Malcolm X in 1965 and the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, many blacks
turned to Sunni Islam. While most Muslim blacks identify with the traditional
Sunni Islam practiced worldwide, the black community's history is entwined with
the Nation of Islam, founded about 1930. Malcom X was among the first black
Muslims to turn to Sunni Islam through the Nation of Islam. Most Muslims are
known as Sunni Muslims; and all other Muslims belong to the Shi'i sect and are
known as the Shi'ah.

Today many blacks point to the Islamic faith of their slave ancestors.

Scholars estimate that as many as 20 percent of slaves brought to America were
Muslims. In the early part of this century black communities started to take
hold to the Islamic faith.

In the Islamic faith the family is the foundation of the Muslim society.

The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and
seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A friendly social
order is created by the existence of external families; the children are
treasured and rarely leave home until the time they marry. Also, Muslim women
are seen as an individual in her own right, with the right too own and dispose
of her property and earnings. Both men and women are expected to dress in a
manner that is modest and dignified; the traditions of female dress found in
some Muslim countries are often the expression of local custom. The code in
which Muslims eat and drink forbids the consumption of pork meat and any kind of
intoxicating drink. The Prophet Muhammad teachings stated that one's body has
rights and the consumption of wholesome food and the leading of a healthy
lifestyle is seen as a religious obligation and a way of life.

In todays society many have come to believe that we live in a secular
age, meaning, in effect, that religion is not an especially important issue for
most people. But there is much evidence to suggest that this is not true. In
many societies, including the United States, religion and religious values shape
the lives of millions of individuals and play a key role in culture.

REFERENCES
Dawood, N. J. The Koran. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1974
Gordon, S. Matthew., Islam World Religions, New York: Brown Publishing, 1991
Hiro, Dilip., Holy Wars: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism, New York:
Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc. 1989
The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago: 15th Edition: 1987
Islam More Than A Religion
I. Introduction
A. Historical Origins
B. Source of Islamic Doctrine
II. Fundamental Practices
A. The Five Pillars
B. Sacred Places and Days
III. American Experience
A. History of Migration
B. Black Muslims
IV. Cultural/Racial Appreciation
A. Traditions
B. General Culture - Family, Food, Music, etc....