

# Cultural event report

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Kalman (2009) defines religion as a cultural practice that has distinct beliefs which strive to link humans to spiritual beings. He asserts that all religions are different in terms of beliefs practiced, symbols used and adapted traditions. Haught (1990) argues that religion defines one's lifestyle as most religions strive to explain the origin of life and life after death. Some common religions include: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism among others (Kalman, 2009).

This paper is going to dwell on the Islam religion, my perception of the religion, the verdict of a follower, why people have misconceptions about religion and recommendations on curbing religion misconceptions. Islam is a religion whose fundamental basis revolves around serving God through total submission. Followers of this religion are normally referred to as Muslims. The Islam religion relies on teachings from the Quran which is the equivalent of the Christian bible. According to the Muslim religion, the Quran is considered to be God's own words and as such, its teachings should be adhered to.

The Islam religion also proclaims that Islam is the only religion that has been certified by God through his teachings. Muslims also believe in prophets as servants of God ordained to spread his word to his followers. Islam religious leaders are referred to as Imams which is the equivalent of a Christian priest, while Islam places of worship are referred as Mosques which is the equivalent of a Christian church (Akhtar, 2011). Before I interviewed an Imam at the local Mosque, I had a number of misconceptions about the Islam religion. Firstly, since the September 11 attacks and the media coverage on the same, I have always considered the Islam religion as a terrorism cult. I

have always had this notion that the Islam religion and its teachings are for extremists who are out to push for their religious and political ideas.

This is attributed to the fact that, Al-Qaida is closely associated with the Islam religion and their acts of Jihad are linked to the Islam religion. I also viewed Islam as an ethnic based religion. Over the years, I have associated followers of the Islam religion with turbans as their main distinct traditional clothing. And as such, I have always assumed that the Islam religion is composed of individuals from Arab ethnic groups because most Arabs wear turbans. Further, I have always thought that all Arabs are Muslims since the Islam religion is rampant in Arab countries.

Another, misconception about the Islam religion revolves around the notion that Muslims do not believe in the existence of Jesus who is the Christian messiah. I have always understood that the main distinction between Islam religion and Christianity religion is the lack of a consensus in believing that Jesus is the savior of all human kind. I was certain that Jesus is never mentioned in Islam teachings. I was also convinced that Islam religion is intolerance to other religions. This is based on attacks on non believers and the assumption that the Quran justifies the execution of non believers.

Critics of the Islam religion argue that Muslims derive pride in dying for a cause, such as the spiritual war also known as Jihad. I have always believed that most Muslim martyrs are adored and glorified by their families and followers due to their contribution in eliminating the non-followers or enemies. I have always been skeptical about Muslim marriages. This is attributed to the fact that most Muslim girls get marriage at puberty thus

questioning if they ever consent to such marriages on their own. Another misconception that is linked to Muslim marriages revolves around women rights. Most Arab countries abhor women who expose their bodies and thus the reasoning behind their long veils.

Further, since most Muslims exercise polygamy, I have always assumed that Muslim women have no say with regards to their husband's conduct and thus, they are not allowed to file for divorce. After talking to the Imam about my assumptions about the Islam religion and its practices, my prior understanding of the Islam religion was completely altered. For instance, to delude my assumption that the Islam religion as a terrorism cult, the Imam informed me that Islam is not a terrorism cult but a religion that has true meaning to its followers. For instance, he explained to me that the Quran does not preach terrorism; instead it condemns fighting against each other. The Imam explained that most extremists hide behind the Islam religion and its teachings while in real sense, the Quran calls for Islam followers to be kind to each other.