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## Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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# World Religions

## Do all religions lead to God?

Rick Rood

### V. Islam

#### A. *What is Islam?*

*Islam* ("submission") is the religion of all who believe that Muhammed was God's prophet. There are approximately one billion Muslims (those in submission to God) in the world.

#### 2. *What was the origin and development of Islam?*

##### 1. Life of Muhammed

Muhammed was born about A.D. 570 and raised first by his grandfather, and later by his uncle. At age 25 he married Khadija, his employer in trade. At age 40 (610) he began receiving revelations through Gabriel. These later were recorded and became the Koran ("recitation"). After being rejected for his preaching against greed and idolatry in Mecca, he fled to Medina in 622. This flight became known as the *Hijira* ("migration"). In 632, he led 10,000 men in taking Mecca. He died in 634.

##### 2. Development of Islam

###### a. Early expansion (634--750)

The early expansion of Islam (largely through military means) took place under the leadership of the four "rightly guided" caliphs (successors to Muhammed): Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (Muhammed's son-in-law). The Ummayyad Dynasty,

under the leadership of members of Muhammed's tribe, ruled from 661 to 750. By 750 the Muslim empire extended from Morocco to the Indus River.

2. Solidification (750--1258)

The Abassid Dynasty ruled from Baghdad. The Crusades occurred during this time.

3. Fragmentation (1258--1945)

Islam continued to expand, largely through trade. The Muslim world was divided, however, into regional empires. European powers gradually gained control over Muslim areas.

4. Resurgence (1945--present)

With the attainment of political independence and economic power, there has been a resurgence of Islam as an alternative to both communism and capitalism.

**3. *What are the basic beliefs and practices of Islam?***

1. Six Articles of Faith

- a. There is no God but Allah.
2. Belief in angels and jinn
3. Belief in 104 holy books, the Koran as the final revelation
4. Belief in the prophets, Muhammed as the "seal" of the prophets
5. Belief in predestination
6. Belief in resurrection and judgment, paradise and hell

Salvation from hell is achieved by our submission to the will of God, in hopes that our good works will outweigh the bad.

2. Five (or six) Pillars of Islam

- a. Repetition of the creed: "The is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is His prophet."
2. Prayers
3. Almsgiving

4. Fast of Ramadan
  5. Hajj ("pilgrimage") to Mecca
  6. Jihad ("struggle")
3. The Scriptures of Islam
    - a. Koran--recorded revelation given to Muhammed
    2. Hadith ("report")--traditional sayings of Muhammed
    3. Shariah--term used to designate Muslim law, based on the Koran, the Hadith, and the Sunna (the example of Muhammed's life)

#### 4. *What are the major divisions of Islam?*

##### 1. Sunnis

The vast majority of Muslims are considered Sunnis (though there are various groups among them). They consider themselves to be followers of the *Sunna* (example or practice of Muhammed).

##### 2. Shi'ites

These are "partisans" (*shia*) of Ali, Muhammed's son-in-law. About 10 percent of Muslims are Shi'ite, mostly in Iraq and Iran. Though there are several divisions among the Shia, their common belief is that the successor of Muhammed must be among his descendants through Ali.

##### 3. Sufis

Sufis are mystics who believe that God must be experienced directly, not just through revelation of His will in the Koran. Sufism has been the gateway through which many animistic practices have entered Islam.

#### 5. *What are the major conflicts between Islam and Christianity?*

##### 1. The Bible and the Koran

Muslims believe that the reason the Bible does not agree with the Koran on many points is that it has been corrupted by the Jews and Christians.

##### 2. The Nature and Character of God

Muslims deny the Trinity and consider worship of any other being than Allah to be *shirk* ("idolatry"). Furthermore, the Koranic representation of God is of a totally transcendent and unknowable being. He reveals his will but not himself. He is our Master, but not our Father.

### 3. The Person and Work of Jesus

Though Jesus is described as virgin born, a worker of miracles, a prophet, and the messiah, the Koran denies that He is the Son of God. Neither is it acknowledged that Jesus died and was resurrected (though when He returns in the future, He will die and be raised). When He returns, He will establish Islam universally.

### 4. Muhammed

Most Muslims believe that Muhammed was prophesied in John 14:16, 26. Some Muslims virtually worship him, despite the fact that he claimed to be a mere man and a sinner.

### 5. Nature of Man/Sin/Salvation

Islam denies the fall and that man has a sinful nature. Although it acknowledges that man is weak, it teaches that man can work out his own salvation through submission to God's law.

## 6. *What is the Christian response to Islam?*

There are many issues that could be addressed, but the fundamental issue is that of salvation. The Bible informs us that it is impossible to be accepted by God on the basis of works. It is only by God's grace that we can be saved, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. Only if Jesus is divine can He have provided a sacrifice sufficient for the sins of the world.

## 6. The Christian Attitude Toward Other Religions

Three general attitudes can be found among professing Christians today toward non-Christian religions.

### A. *Pluralism*

Pluralists hold that all religions are valid ways to God. This view is contradicted by the New Testament and also seriously underestimates the differences among the religions.

### 2. *Inclusivism*

Inclusivists believe that, though Christianity is the truth, many people outside of Christ are recipients of the salvation He has provided. They are saved by Christ, but on the basis of their general attitude toward God

(through their own religion) or through their sincere attempt to do what is right. This is an attractive view, but it lacks any clear biblical support.

### 3. *Exclusivism*

This is the traditional view among Christians--that Christianity is the truth, and that only through faith in Christ may people come to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:17). This is not to deny that there are moral and theological truths in other religions, but it is to deny that there are any saving truths outside the gospel. No other religion conceives of the human predicament in the same way as does the Christian faith--alienation from God due to sin which is of our very nature. All other religions conceive of man as capable of delivering himself from his predicament. Christianity offers man the only way of deliverance--through God's gracious provision of His Son and of His Holy Spirit. Luke 8:18 would be seen to indicate that for those who respond to what they *do* know about God, He will see that they eventually receive the Gospel, that they may believe and be saved.

#### **For Further Reading**

Anderson, Sir Norman. *Christianity and World Religions*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1984.

A fine exposition of the contrast between the Christian faith and other religions and explanation of the uniqueness of Christianity. Anderson also presents a lucid (though in this writer's opinion, inadequate) case for the inclusivist position.

Anderson, Sir Norman, ed. *The World's Religions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975.

An excellent overview of the teachings of Animism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism, with each chapter written by an expert in that religion. Christian in approach.

Clarke, Andrew D., and Bruce W. Winter, eds. *One God, One Lord*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992.

For the serious student who wants to explore the flaws in the pluralist approach to non-Christian religions.

Crockett, William V., and James G. Sigountos. *Through No Fault of Their Own?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1991.

Twenty-two evangelical scholars discuss the theological, exegetical, and missiological implications of the existence of non-Christian religions and those who have never heard the gospel.

*Eerdman's Handbook to the World's Religions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982.

A beautifully illustrated volume, providing a wealth of information on the world's religions.



Eckstein, Yechiel. *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism*. Waco: Word, 1984.

A very interesting book written for Christians by a conservative Jewish rabbi.

- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold B. *Jesus Was a Jew*. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1981.  
An excellent book designed to help Jews understand the biblical basis for believing in Jesus as the Messiah.
- Geisler, Norman L. and Abdul Saleeb. *Answering Islam*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1993.  
An outstanding critique of Islam, written by a Christian apologist and a former Muslim.
- Johnson, David L. *A Reasoned Look at Asian Religions*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985.  
An interestingly written account of the historical development of the religions of China, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.
- Miller, William M. *A Christian's Response to Islam*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976.  
A very readable and useful description of the history and teachings of Islam, with excellent material on presenting the gospel to Muslims. Written by a former missionary to Iran.
- Nash, Ronald. *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994.  
An excellent survey of the three major views of non-Christian religions noted above, and a defense of the exclusivist position.
- Netland, Harold A. *Dissonant Voices*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991.  
A serious discussion of the pluralist viewpoint, with a scholarly critique.
- Neusner, Jacob, ed. *World Religions in America*. Louisville: Westminster, 1994.  
An introductory overview of 11 religious groups represented in the U.S., including those discussed in this outline. Not Christian, but useful!
- Noss, John. *Man's Religions*. New York: Macmillan, 1984.  
A standard text on world religions, used by many colleges and seminaries. Not a Christian approach, but very valuable.
- Saal, William J. *Reaching Muslims for Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1991.  
An excellent tool for the student who wants to befriend and witness to his Muslim friend.
- Seamands, John T. *Tell It Well: Communicating the Gospel Across Cultures*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 1981.  
If you can't find this book, special-order it. If you buy one book on how to communicate the gospel to followers of other religions, make this the one!

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