

HOW MANY?

There are 70 million Muslims in America today, and that is an increase of nearly 50% over the last decade. There are more than 2000 mosques in America today. One of the five largest religions in the world.

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam is the name of the religion Muslims follow.

HOLY WRITINGS

The **Quran** is the record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. It deals with practices of wisdom, doctrine, worship and law, but the basic theme is the relationship between God and His creatures. It provides guidelines for a just society, proper human conduct and an equitable economic system.

The **Sunna**, is the second authority for Muslims. This includes the practices and examples of the Prophet Muhammad.

A **Hadith** is a reliably transmitted report of what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, or approved.

THE FIVE PILLARS...THE FRAMEWORK OF ISLAM

1. The testimony of Faith - this is the most important pillar – this specific statement is called the **Shahada**, and follows a simple formula that must be said with conviction to convert to Islam.
2. Prayer: - Muslims pray five times a day. Prayer is the direct link between the person and God. There are no intermediaries. Prayer can occur anywhere.
3. Giving **Zakat** - (Supporting the needy) means giving a specified percentage on certain properties to certain classes of needy people. There is also the **Infaq**, part of this is monetary, but without formula and the other part is measured in terms of time and talent (volunteerism).
4. Fasting the Month of **Ramadan** - from dawn to sunset, abstaining from food, drink and sexual relations, as a means of spiritual self-purification.
5. The Pilgrimage to Makkah – the annual pilgrimage (**Hajj**) is an obligation once in a lifetime for those that are physically and financially able to perform it. It occurs during the twelfth month of the Islam calendar. Male pilgrims wear simple clothes which strip away class distinctions and culture so all stand equal before God.

BASIC ISLAMIC BELIEFS

- Belief in one, unique, incomparable God.
- Belief in the existence of the angels and that they are honored creatures. The angels worship God alone, obey Him, and act only by His command. Among the angels is Gabriel, who brought down the **Quran** to Muhammad.
- Belief that God revealed books to His messengers as proof for mankind and as a guidance for them. Among these books is the Quran.
- Belief in the prophets and messengers of God, starting with Adam, including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus. But the final message to man, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that all prophets and messengers were created human beings who had none of the divine qualities of God.
- Belief in the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection) when all people will be resurrected for God's judgment according to their beliefs and deeds.
- Belief in Al-Qadar, which is Divine Predestination, which does not mean humans don't have freewill. They can choose right or wrong and they are responsible for their choices.

WHO IS....?

Muhammad – the founder of the Muslim faith. He was born in 570 A.D. at Mecca (Makkah), in Saudi Arabia. Muhammad received his first revelation at the age of forty and they continued for twenty three years. These revelations are known as the Quran.

Allah – the Greek word for God.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

- The style of dress is part of the Islamic faith. The Quran requires men and women to dress modestly in public. The **Hijab** (headscarf women wear, that covers the head, neck and throat) is worn when women is in a position to be seen by a man other than her husband. The covering is to ensure that a woman's body is her own, not for others.
- **Mosque** is an Islam house of worship. A mosque is symbolically very important to Muslims, and is a humble way for man to recreate pure divine presence on earth. Women, in most areas, are not invited to the mosque.