

Engaging with Islam

ISLAM AND POLITICS - SESSION 6

PART 1: Preparation and Discussion

Islam and politics can be a confusing and heated topic and so it is important that we approach it with a godly attitude. We need to learn how to listen well and hear the grievances and concerns of others, how to speak calmly and sensibly, know what to say, and how to give others resources so that they can make their own decision. This is not easy to do!

As Christians we are to love everyone and work for peace; this will be discussed more in the video, but in the political arena we often find ourselves in confusing and difficult discussions about Islam. This preparation section will focus on understanding these difficult issues.

Important Islamic Political Words: Dawah, Jihad, and Shariah

Dawah is the promoting of Islam. This can be done through sharing the Islamic message on TV, radio, print, and internet; university Islamic Awareness weeks, mosque open days, building mosques, Islamic banking, marriage, political representation, Islamic departments at universities, Islamic schools, and gifts. Dawah may be done by individuals, groups, and all Islamic governments have a dawah department.

Q1. Have you seen dawah in practice? If so where? How should a Christian respond to dawah?

Jihad - The word jihad means “struggle” and the Islamic struggle is to make Islam dominate world affairs. There are three levels of jihad.

- The first jihad is the personal struggle to accept what Muhammad is telling you to do.
- The second jihad is the struggle against nominal or hypocritical Muslims who do not follow all of Allah and Muhammad’s commands. (Qur’an 9:73)
- The third jihad is the struggle to conquer the non-Muslim world and subjugate it under Islamic rule and make dawah the only voice. (Qur’an 9:29ff)

Apologists for Islam often say that the *greater jihad* is the personal struggle and that fighting for Islam is the *lesser jihad*. However, this idea is rejected by the Qur’an and Hadith.¹ Muhammad trained, organised, and sent out jihadist armies, not missionaries, and he taught that the military jihad is the greatest jihad.

The second jihad, against hypocritical Muslims, is important to understand because we often see Muslims killing Muslims, and blowing up mosques, and think this type of behaviour means they are not following Islam. But this not the case. They are following Islam. Muhammad commanded warfare on Muslims he considered hypocrites and had their mosque destroyed.²

¹ Qur’an 4:95-96; *Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 4, bk. 52, no. 44.

² Qur’an 9:107; Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 609.

Q2. How should Christians respond to jihad against themselves and against others?

Shariah - The goal of jihad is the introduction of Islamic law which is called shariah. The shariah is based on the Qur'an, the example of Muhammad, Islamic scholars, and the consensus of the community. It covers *every* aspect of life: prayer, food, and how to wash, as well as punishments and who to conquer. It is a theocracy, an Islamic state, a political system. Islam is a political ideology. There are several competing versions of shariah used throughout the world.

The problem when talking about shariah is that most people do not know what it teaches, and others are in denial about it. Therefore, it is important to know some of the basic references for the commonly discussed issues.

Commonly Discussed Topics Involving Shariah

Women

1. Wife Beating

And those (wives) you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them. (Qur'an 4:34, Arberry)

... He (Muhammad) struck me (Aisha, his wife) on the chest which caused me pain ... (*Sahih Muslim*: bk. 4, no. 2127)

'Umar reported the Prophet as saying, "A man will not be asked about why he beat his wife." Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah transmitted it. (*Mishkat Al-Masabih*: vol. 2, p. 693)

2. Polygamy. Islam is a polygamous religion (Q. 70:29-30, et al.) and there are Muslim leaders in Western countries asking for its introduction. Some Muslims argue that it was only allowed for the time of Muhammad, however, Muslim men have practised it throughout history, and Islamic paradise is polygamous. The destiny of every Muslim women is everlasting polygamy in her husband's harem.

Polygamy fundamentally changes how men think of women. In a monogamous marriage both the man and woman are equally bound to each other, but in a polygamous marriage only the woman is bound and the man is still free to pursue other women. Polygamy creates an entirely different attitude to women.

Another aspect of polygamy in Islam is the temporary marriage (nikah al-mut'ah)³. This is where a man can marry another woman for a very short period of time. Many Muslims believe this practice has been abrogated and leads to prostitution but other still accept it.

3. Child Brides. Muhammad married a six year old girl and consummated the marriage when she was nine.

Narrated Hisham's father: Khadija died three years before the Prophet departed to Medina. He stayed there for two years or so and then he married 'Aisha when she was a girl of six years of age, and he consumed that marriage when she was nine years old. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 5, bk. 58, no. 236) Also Qur'an 65:4.

³ *Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 7, bk. 62, no. 13

This example of Muhammad still influences the shariah today. Those Muslims who argue against its application say that this practice was just the culture at the time and does not apply today. However, the orthodox response is that Muhammad was the transformer of his culture who made it what Allah wanted it to be. He was not simply a man of his culture but God's reformer of culture, therefore his example stands.

4. Female Circumcision. This is part of the Hadith⁴ and shariah⁵. It is practised in the Muslim world and has influenced the surrounding cultures.

5. Paradise in the Qur'an is described as having virgin women as a reward for Muslim men. The Hadith gives a lot more detail to this.

Lo! those who kept their duty will be in a place secure amid gardens and water-springs, attired in silk and silk embroidery, facing one another. Even so (it will be). And we shall wed them unto fair ones with wide, lovely eyes. (Qur'an 44:51-54, Pickthall)

Perfectly We formed them, perfect, and We made them spotless virgins, chastely amorous, like of age for the Companions of the Right. (Qur'an 56:34-35, Arberry)

Music

Music is generally viewed as forbidden (haram) in Islam. Islam has a history of destroying musical instruments. This why Islamic schools often forbid music education.

Narrated Abu 'Amir or Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari: that he heard the Prophet saying, "From among my followers there will be some people who will consider illegal sexual intercourse, the wearing of silk, the drinking of alcoholic drinks and the use of musical instruments, as lawful. ... (Allah will judge them)." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 7, bk. 69, no. 494)

Islamic Charity Organisations

One of the Pillars of Islam is the giving of money (the zakat) for Islamic causes. Muslim leaders tell us that this money goes towards charitable causes, but what is the definition of charity? From time to time you will see Islamic charity organisations exposed for funding military jihad activities. This happens because the Qur'an (9:60) says that the zakat money is to be used to support the jihadist.

Non-Muslims and Shariah

The Islamic treatment of non-Muslims is another area that receives political attention. Islam has a class structure based on verses like Q. 9:29-33. Christians are not to rule but live under Islamic control and pay the jizyah (terms of surrender) which stops jihad being made against them and encourages them to convert to Islam.

Christians and Jews living under Islam are called *dhimmah* and the shariah gives many practical examples of how their lower status is to be displayed⁶. It is this teaching that shapes Islamic cultures to discriminate against Christians and other non-Muslims.

⁴ *Sunan Abu-Dawud*: bk. 41, no. 5251

⁵ *Reliance of the Traveller*, p. 59. e4.3

⁶ *Reliance of the Traveller*, pp. 607-609; o11.0

Islam and Multiculturalism

It is inadequate to describe Islam as a culture. It is a civilization with its own legal system, religion, history of the world, and calendar. These are shared by various cultures. Historically it has colonized and replaced other civilizations. Therefore, how Islam fits into a multiculturalism society is not straight forward.

Applying Shariah

When it comes to the shariah all Muslims are different. Therefore do not assume anything, instead ask your Muslim friend or leader how they think the shariah should be applied.

Applying the shariah has lead to a lot of conflict among Muslims: conflict between those Muslims who want to apply all of it and those who do not; those who want to apply it now and those who want to apply it later; those who want to apply the principles and those who want to apply it literally; and between the different schools of shariah. Often Christians, and other non-Muslims, get caught up in this conflict by supporting one Islamic side, which they think will be kinder to them, but it never works out well.

To read the shariah obtain a copy of, Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller – A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*.

Q3. How should Christians respond to the Islamic request to have shariah legally enforced in countries like Australia?

The Law of Necessity

Q4. What do you notice about the following verses? How can this affect political discourse?

He has forbidden for you (Muslims) only carrion, and blood, and pig meat ... But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him (to eat it). (Qur'an 2:173, Pickthall)

Let not the believers (Muslims) take the unbelievers for friends, rather than the believers ... unless you have a fear of them. (Qur'an 3:28, Arberry)

Any one who, after accepting faith in God, utters unbelief (that is, denies Islam), except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith - but such as open their breast to unbelief, on them is wrath from God ... (Qur'an 16:106, Yusuf Ali)

God does not like the public utterance of foul words - except by someone who has been wronged. (Qur'an 4:148, Jones)

History

History is regularly brought up in political discourse, but whereas the West is self-critical of its history, the Muslim world is far less so. Muslims are taught that they are the best nation Allah has ever made.

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding

dishonour, and believing in God. Had the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) believed, it were better for them; some of them are believers, but the most of them are ungodly. (Qur'an 3:110, 2:143, Arberry)

The result of this is a civilization that cannot view history objectively because history must show that Islamic rule is the best. This romantic view of history leads to denial to acknowledge and take responsibility for the Islamic conquests, colonialism, slave trade, and the accompanying atrocities and injustices. Instead it is often claimed that everything good in the world came from Islam: This is the Islamizing of history. What we are after is a balanced discussion of the facts. The problem is many of us do not know the history of these issues. The following are some of the key historical areas that arise in public dialogue.

Islamic Spain. The Islamic conquest and occupation of Spain is often put forward as a model of tolerance, enlightenment, and liberation, but this is false. The conquest was a violent jihad ordered by the caliph and directed by the original taliban. The Spaniards did not need enlightenment; they were an educated Christian Roman culture. The Islamic rule of Spain was a time of massive enslavement of Europeans who were sold into the Islamic world. It was a time of crucifixions, female circumcision, and polygamy. It was not a particularly harmonious culture as peace was kept by Muslims, Christians, and Jews living in separate suburbs and not through integration. For more information on this read, Dario Fernandez-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews Under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain*.

Maimonides was a famous Spanish Jew who fled Islamic Spain. He writes about the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman conquests of Israel (p. iii) and then says of Islam:

Never did a nation molest, degrade, debase and hate us as much as they. (Moses Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen*, p. xviii; http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Epistle_to_Yemen)

Regarding slavery, Islam is often portrayed by men like Malcolm X as a force that has liberated the African, again this is false.

Slavery in general and black enslavement in particular thus developed into a deeply entrenched institution, accepted in the mainline Muslim heritage by learned Muslim lawyers and pious believers as a matter of course. Right from the conquest of Egypt by Arab armies between 639 and 642 CE, the "land of the Blacks", bilad al-Sudan, became a reservoir of slaves for the Muslim world. The main sources of slavers were war (jihad), raid, tribute, purchase and kidnapping. (John Alembillah Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa*, p. 141)

Muslim enslavement of traditional African believers during the wake of the jihad movements is one single factor that accounts for large-scale conversion to Islam in the eighteenth - and nineteenth - century Western and Central Sudan. (Azumah, p. 102)

With regard to most parts of Muslim Africa, however, long before Europeans ever appeared on the scene slavery was a well-organized and institutionalized system. (Azumah, p. 117)

The holiest city of Islam, Mecca, became "the centre of slave-trade in the world" and remained so well into the twentieth century; from there slaves captured and brought from East Africa and the Sudan were distributed to all parts of Arabia and the Muslim world. (Azumah, p. 146)

Regarding the history of Jihad,

The Jihad, the Islamic so-called Holy War, has been a fact of life in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Near and Middle East for more than 1,300 years, but this is the first history of the Muslim wars in Europe ever to be published. Hundreds of books, however, have appeared on its Christian counterpart, the Crusades, to which the Jihad is often compared, although they lasted less than two hundred years and unlike the Jihad, which is universal, were largely but not completely confined to the Holy Land. Moreover, the Crusades have been over for more than 700 years, while the Jihad is still going on in the world. The Jihad has been the most unrecorded and disregarded major event of history. It has, in fact, been largely ignored. ... The Jihad has been largely bypassed by Western historians, and this book is an attempt to right the situation, for the Jihad has affected the lives - and continues to do so - of far, far more people and regions in the world than the long-extinct Crusades ever did. (Paul Fregosi, *Jihad in the West*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1998, p.19)

Regarding the history of science,

Most of the Islamists repeatedly talk about modern science's debt to Islamic civilization but they seldom say a word about the Arab's scientific debt to the pre-Islamic ancient civilization from the so-called *jahiliha* phase. Can any Islamist tell us what the source of Islamic science was? Was it the Qur'an or Hadis or did it come straight through the divine intervention of angels? Arab civilization did not see the light of science till the middle of the eighth century. There was hardly any science during the Prophet's time or even during the period of the Khulafa-i-Rashedins (The Khalifas of the Right Way). It was during the reign of the liberal Muslim Abbasid and later Ottoman kings that science flowered in Islam. This was possible because the Abbasids welcomed Greek, Indian, Chinese and other sciences and got all these works translated into Arabic. Most of these scientists and translators who gathered in Baghdad were Arab Christians, Jews, Muslims and even Hindus and Buddhist from India. (S. Irfan Habib, *Jihad or Ijtihad*, India: HarperCollins, 2012, p. 55)

Q5. The Islamic empires ruled most of the world for over 1000 years. Do you know the history of what these empires did?

Criticism of Islam

Muhammad assassinated many people who spoke against him. These included old men like Abu 'Afaq, and women like 'Asma bint Marwan. These assassinations still inspire Muslim radicals today and generate a culture that expects Islam to be given protected status from critical examination. Many Islamic countries censor the internet of material that questions Islam, and many Western universities and politicians give Islam this protected status. Islamic intimidation has been successful.

Hence in the study of Islam in the West, the dominant convention is that a critical approach is reserved for the Christian past but forbidden for the Muslim past. ... The net result is a romantic picture of the history of Islam avoiding and sometimes denying such issues as the jihadists' slaughter and massive enslavement of traditional African believers. (Azumah, pp. xiv-xv)

Caution and Wisdom

The problem with learning these facts about Islam is that it can make you angry or scared. You need wisdom to speak about these things sensibly. You need to learn to be calm, careful, and accurate.

You need to be able to listen to others, and rather than tell them what to believe about Islam, give them the tools to make a decision themselves. We need to remember that as Christians we are to love everyone, not be frightened, and work for peace.

PART 2: Video Presentation (22 minutes) <https://youtu.be/YzdPgPjz5Ws>



Working for Peace

Working with Muslims

The war within Islam

Taqiya

Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends ... unless you have a fear of them. (Qur'an 3:28, Arberry)

The Law of Necessity

Speaking with Politicians and the Media

Motivation - Some people are religiously motivated.

Shariah

- Shariah is not just what Muslim do privately but also what they do to non-Muslims. Therefore it is everyone's business to discuss it.
- Muslims are already free to practice most of the shariah.
- The elements of shariah that are banned are banned for a good reason.
- Allowing shariah to be legally enforced strengthens the authority of radical Muslims and compels the nominal Muslims. Many Muslims in Australia have fled Islamic countries to be free from the imposition of shariah. Why should we make them submit to it? We should be giving them freedom.

Islam is a religion of peace.

History

PART 3: Discussion

Q6. Do you have any comments about the video? How do you feel about political Islam?

Q7. What are some positive engagement events you could do with the Muslims in your area?

Q8. A Muslim group wants to run a big public meeting where radical Muslims will be speaking. Should Christians oppose this and have the meeting cancelled?

Q9. What would you say to the following: "The U.S. government with the help of Israel organised the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on 9/11. Muslims had nothing to do with this."

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Answers

Q4. Muslims are allowed to do certain things that are considered wrong if it is necessary.

Q7. Simply meet with Muslim leaders and talk. Learn about their culture, talk about the issues facing youth today. Play soccer together and share food.

Q9. It is time Muslims take responsibility for the actions of their community and stop blaming others.

PART 4: Activities

1 Have you done the following? Circle an answer.

- Smile at a Muslim. Greet the Muslims you know. Yes/No.
- Pray at home and at church for the Islamic world and the Muslims you know, and for Christians who are suffering under Islam. Yes/No.
- Have you done your group activities? Yes/No.

2. Questions for Muslims

- Ask if they know what books are in the Bible. Yes/No.
- Ask if they believe in the Day of Judgement. If they do ask if they have done enough good deeds. Yes/No.

Further Reading - You may like to buy some of these books for your university or city library.

Shelomo Alfassa, *Reference Guide to the Nazis and Arabs During the Holocaust*, Lulu, 2006.

Tamim Ansary, *Destiny Disrupted - A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes*, New York: Public Affairs, 2009.

John Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2001.

Andrew G. Bostom (ed.), *The Legacy of Jihad - Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims*, New York: Prometheus Press, 2005.

David Claydon (ed.), *Islam - Human Rights and Public Policy*, Australia: Acorn Press, 2009.

Dario Fernandez-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews Under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain*, Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2016.

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Muhammad Humai, *Jihad in the Qur'an and Sunnah*, Riyadh: Darussalam, 1995.

Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, U.S.: Da Capo Press, 2007.

Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller – A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, (trans: Nuh Ha Mim Keller) Maryland, U.S.A: Amana Publications, 1994.

Katharine C. Gorka & Patrick Sookhdeo (editors), *Fighting the Ideological War*, U.S.:Isaac Publishing, 2012.

Rodney Stark, *God's Battalions*, New York: Harper One, 2009.