

Islam and Faith

Islam is built upon five pillars based on the hadith (saying) of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him (pbuh): *“Islam was built on five (pillars). To bear witness that there is no God (deity) but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. To perform the (five daily) prayers. To pay the Zakat (almsgiving). To fast Ramadan. And to perform the pilgrimage to Makkah if one is physically and financially able.”* Again, these are the pillars Islam was built upon, not Islam!

Islam, linguistically, is “to surrender” or “to submit” (in Arabic). A Muslim submits his will totally and completely to Allah, SWT (Subhanahu Wa Ta’ala, Glorified and Exalted He is). This submission or surrender of one’s will to Allah is the ultimate form of freedom! One would only have one deity who looks at all people equally. Hence all people are equal and his commandments won’t be biased toward a certain group or ethnicity. It is no wonder that the first believers (followers) of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), were the slaves and the poor because they could sense their freedom in the religion of Islam. The hardest enemies of the Prophet (pbuh) were the rich and the high ranks of the pagans of Makka. They did not like the fact that Islam treats

all people equally.

In Islam, one surrenders all his life to the will of Allah (Allah is the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic), not the will of his “Self” or anyone (or anything) else. Islam, as explained before, is a purely monotheistic religion. Only One God (Allah, pronounced Al’ Lah) is worthy of worship. No partners are to be worshipped with Him. He is the most Merciful and most Gracious (Compassionate). This is Islam.

Islam was founded on the revelations received by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the words of God conveyed that make the Quran, Islam’s holy book. The Quran is the last revealed holy book sent to people (the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve).

Muslims believe in a direct and personal relationship with God without intermediaries. Islam teaches a complete way of life, covering spiritual, ethical, social, and legal aspects, with principles and values that guide individuals in their relationship with God, themselves, and society. It emphasizes mercy, justice, compassion, honesty, and community support.

Faith is different. Faith is what settles in the heart and is confirmed by one’s actions. Faith has six articles, which include belief in God, angels, divine



Guest Column

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books (scriptures God sent to other messengers), prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree.

Among the verses of the Quran that make one think deeply is this one: **“(30) Verily, those who say: ‘Our Lord is Allah (Alone),’ and then they straightly follow this statement, on them the angels will descend (saying, at the time of their death): ‘Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised (31) We have been your (close) helpers in the life of this world and are (so) in the Hereafter. Therein you shall have (all) that your inner-selves desire, and therein you shall have (all) for which you ask for.’ [Quran 41: 30-31].**

This verse is strong and very bold. To understand it, one would pause this question: “All these rewards, which are the ultimate that one may think of, are for what? What’s the price one has to pay to be rewarded with them all?” The answer is at the beginning of the verse: **“Verily, those**

who say: ‘Our Lord is Allah (Alone),’ and then they straightly follow this statement.” Is this the price, one just says: “My Lord is Allah”?

The statement says that one needs to affirm his Lord is God (Allah) but when we deeply think about the meaning of the word “Lord” we will see that many have different lords. Some have chosen their lords to be their “Selves”, that is their ambitions and their dreams. Others have money as their lords. They dedicate their lives to amassing as much money, though they are not sure if they will ever live to spend it (and almost all of them have their wills ready with their layers!). Others may have their lords as fleshly desires. Another type has chosen their lords a profession or a high position. So, although we may think that it is easy to say that we truly believe that the Lord is God, the One and we believe in Him, our true endeavor in life may indicate that our true faith is not attached to God, the Almighty, but something else. Those worldly desires, for many, are the lords they believe in, knowingly or unknowingly. They prevent them from true faith.

Then comes the fact that we are humans and make mistakes. These mistakes occur when one forgets or ignores that one has

decided their compass should always be directed toward the Lord, God the Almighty. This is why the second part: **“Then they straightly follow this statement”** is important. It is not enough to declare that the Lord to be obeyed is the Almighty, but one must stay on the right path, the path described by God.

Then comes the rewards. The angels are creatures that only obey God and never disobey His commands. If the angels descend, it means they have an order from God to descend. What do they say? They bring comfort and ask those who have chosen the Lord and put their faith in Him not to fear or be sad. Not to fear death, or the journey one is about to have to the hereafter, that is not to fear their future. They also ask not to be sad for any smaller sins they may have acquired during their lifetime on earth, that is their past. It’s a true comfort. The Angels also give them the good tidings they will be in paradise. Quran, the words of God, is full of promises that the heaven of Eden (paradise) is the ultimate reward for those who believe in God, the Almighty, and worship Him as He orders.

The Quran also gave a good description of true believers, those with good faith. True believers were described in the Quran as:

“Only those are the believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and afterward doubt not but strive with their wealth and their lives for the Cause of Allah. Those! They are the truthful.” [Quran 49: 15]. The verse tells that A true believer remains steadfast in their faith, holding firmly to their conviction, no matter how strongly the winds of temptation blow or how many traps of desires and doubts are set for them. If a believer is sincere in their faith, that faith drives them toward every virtue, distances them from every vice, and compels them to give and sacrifice in the way of God Almighty. Give whatever they can and sacrifice their worldly desires.

True believers are also: **“(2) The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts and when His Verses (this Quran) are recited unto them, they (i.e. the Verses) increase their Faith; and they put their trust in their Lord (Alone) (3) Who perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat) and spend out of that We have provided them.” [Quran 8: 2-3]**

May the Lord, the Almighty, guide us all to the right path.

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For more information: <https://icstillwater.org/islam>

Notre Dame’s restoration surplus of nearly \$150M will be used for future preservation

PARIS – More than five years after the devastating fire ravaged Notre Dame, igniting nearly \$1 billion in pledged donations within days, restoration chief Philippe Jost says €140 million (around \$148 million) still remains from the funds as the cathedral prepares to reopen next month.

The surplus, sourced from both billionaire benefactors and countless small donors, will be used to support vital future preservation work on

the 861-year-old Gothic monument.

Jost praised the generosity after the fire and the management of the restoration funds that were “entrusted to someone very attentive and professional,” he told a news conference in Paris.

He noted that these funds will be used “in agreement with the patrons and donors to carry out needed work campaigns,” as Notre Dame faces continued demands for

preservation and structural integrity.

Jost also confirmed, in response to a question from The Associated Press, that the billionaire tycoons who pledged vast sums in the aftermath of the blaze have “fully fulfilled their financial commitments” and “honored their pledges made on the night of the fire or in the hours that followed.”

This was not always certain. In the hours and days following the fire on April 15, 2019,

nearly \$1 billion was pledged by some of France’s wealthiest figures. Bernard Arnault, CEO of luxury conglomerate LVMH, committed €200 million, matched by the Bettencourt Schueller Foundation of the L’Oréal family, while François Pinault, founder of Kering, and Total’s CEO Patrick Pouy- anne each promised €100 million.

For months, however, AP revealed that the billionaire donors held back on transferring

funds, waiting on specific restoration plans and negotiations outlining how their contributions would be used.

Early on, frustration mounted, as much of the initial clean-up and consolidation work – including toxic lead dust removal and structural fortifications – had to be covered by smaller donations, mainly collected by Notre Dame charitable foundations in the United States and France.

–AP

Worship at the church of your choice this week

Rather, worship the LORD your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.



2 Kings 17:39

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JB Bond, Senior Pastor

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Friday Mass
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Saturday Mass
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