

# Islam and faith, the true meaning

Islam is a purely monotheistic religion. Islam is built around this concept and is the sole religion that focuses on this concept. Islam and monotheism are identical. God (Allah, with emphatic L, the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic) created the universe and everything in it for mankind, the sons and daughters of Adam, and it makes sense to come to the fact that we were created for a noble purpose. The sole purpose is that we are here in this life to worship God alone. The Qur'an (the sacred book for Muslims) says, **"I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me."** [Qur'an 51: 56]. The Quran also tells us that this life is a test for humans and how obedient humans are to God's commands. The Quran (the true words of God) says, **"Every soul will taste death. We burden you with bad and good—a test. And to Us, you will be returned."** [Qur'an 21: 35]

Islam began with the revelations received by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) at forty by the angel Jibril (Gabriel, pbuh). These divine revelations continued throughout the remainder of Prophet Muhammad's life, spanning approximately twenty-three years and culminating in the complete Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born in 570 AD, received the first revelation in 610 AD, and died in 633 AD. Prophet Muhammad is the last Prophet in a long line

of Prophets and Messengers. I started a series on the Prophets in the Qur'an and will continue it after Ramadan.

The word Islam means "submission" or "surrender" to the will of Allah, emphasizing a life of obedience, devotion, and spiritual awareness. More than just a religion, Islam is a comprehensive way of life that guides its followers in moral, social, spiritual, and legal matters.

The core teachings of Islam revolve around the belief in the Oneness of God (Allah), the acceptance of Prophet Muhammad as a Prophet and his message, and the adherence to the divine guidance as revealed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Sunnah is the practices and sayings of Prophet Muhammad). The fundamental principles of Islam are: 1. Believing in the Oneness of God, for Islam emphasizes the absolute Oneness and sovereignty of God (Allah). Islam rejects any form of polytheism or idolatry. No partners are to be taken or worshipped with God (not even Prophet Muhammad, pbuh). 2. God the Almighty sent prophets and messengers to guide people to the right path He decided for His creatures. A path that contradicts Satan's plot, that will show Satan that the sons of Adam willfully and obediently worship God alone with no selfishness and arrogance. 3. The hereafter is true. It is a reality that there is life after death and that we will be



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judged based on our deeds, not anything else. Good morals, charity works, or achieving the best in this earthly life means nothing to God if one does not believe He is the One who is worthy of worshiping. 4. Islam is justice and morality. Islam does not allow or encourage injustice. Islam forbids injustice not just for Muslims but also for non-Muslims. 5. A Muslim's life should be centered around pleasing God, worshiping Him, adhering to moral conduct, and fulfilling religious obligations.

Islam is built upon the Five Pillars of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, *"Islam was built on five [pillars]: The testimony that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his final messenger (famously known as the 'Shahada'). Perform the prayers [preferably on time]. Paying the 'Zakah' [Alms giving]. Fasting Ramadan. And performing pilgrimage [to Makkah, if one can physically and financially.]"* It is interesting when one reads this Hadith [saying of Prophet Muhammad] that Prophet Muhammad said *"Islam 'was built' upon five."* Yet, many Mus-

lims and so many non-Muslims believe that Islam is those Five Pillars! The Five Pillars of Islam are the foundation of a Muslim's worship and practice, and upon them, the religion of Islam is built.

The first of these pillars, the testimony that there is no God [to be worshipped] but Allah SWT (SWT = Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā, that is, Exalted and Glorified He is) means nothing but freedom. The freedoms of speech and expression, and the freedom from all sorts of control over one's life and decisions. I shall write about the meaning of this wonderful phrase in a future article. The testimony (or the Shahada) is the essence of Islam, affirming absolute monotheism and the finality of prophethood.

Faith in Islam is not merely an abstract belief but a deep conviction that influences one's actions and character. Faith is the unwavering belief in God (Allah) and His divine principles. It encompasses both internal acceptance and external practice. Faith in Islam is structured around six essential beliefs: **Belief in Allah:** Recognizing Allah's oneness, attributes, and supreme authority over all creation. **Belief in Angels:** Angels are spiritual beings created by Allah to carry out divine duties, including recording human deeds and delivering revelations. **Belief in Divine Books:** Muslims believe in the Quran as the final and the only preserved scrip-

ture while acknowledging previous revelations like the Torah, Psalms, and the Gospel revealed to their respective Prophets. **Belief in Prophets:** All prophets, from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon them), were sent to guide humanity, with Muhammad as the final prophet. **Belief in the Day of Judgment:** Islam teaches that every soul will be resurrected and judged based on its deeds, leading to reward in Paradise or punishment in the Hell-fire. And **Belief in Divine Decree:** Everything occurs according to God's divine plan, encompassing destiny, free will, and wisdom. The Qur'an says clearly, **"The Messenger [Muhammad] has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, as did the believers. They all have believed in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers: 'We do not differentiate between any of His messengers.' And they say, 'We hear and we obey. Your forgiveness, our Lord. To you is the destiny.'"** [Qur'an 2: 285]. The Qur'an also says, **"Say, 'We believe in Allah, and in what was revealed to us, and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and in what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not differentiate between any of them. And to Him, we surrender.'"** [Qur'an 2: 136].

So what is the difference between Islam and faith?

Reviewing the pillars upon which Islam is built, we notice they are a set of worship practices. On the other hand, to believe means that one takes a set of principles for granted as facts without proof. This is the main difference between facts and faith.

While Islam and faith are deeply interconnected, they are distinct concepts. Islam refers to outward submission to God (Allah) through acts of worship, following the Five Pillars, while faith represents internal belief in the unseen, including God (Allah), angels, and the afterlife. A person may practice Islam outwardly without deep faith, but complete submission requires external devotion (Islam) and sincere internal belief (faith).

We conclude this article by saying Islam is a comprehensive way of life that integrates faith, worship, and ethical conduct. The Five Pillars provide the structure for religious practice, while the Six Pillars of Faith form the foundation of belief. Together, they define what it means to be a Muslim, ensuring a life of devotion, discipline, and spiritual fulfillment. The distinction between Islam and faith highlights the importance of both outward practice and inner conviction in achieving true submission to Allah.

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