

The Beauties of Islam

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[English - إنجليزي]

www.islamreligion.com website

موقع دين الإسلام

2013 - 1434

IslamHouse.com



At this time in Islam's history, when the entire religion is being judged by the actions of a few, it is appropriate to step back from the glare of the media spotlight and examine the beauties that infuse the way of life known as Islam. There is greatness and splendour in Islam that is often overshadowed by actions that have no place in Islam or by people who speak about topics they only vaguely understand. Islam is a religion, a way of life that inspires Muslims to try harder, reach farther and act in a manner that is pleasing to those around them and most importantly pleasing to their Creator.

The beauties of Islam are those things that are part of the religion and make Islam stand out. Islam answers all of humankind's eternal questions. Where did I come from? Why am I here? Is this really all there is? It answers these questions with clarity and in a beautiful way. So then, let us begin our journey and discover and ponder over the beauties of Islam.

1. The answers to all your questions about life are in the Quran

The Quran is a book detailing the glory of God and the wonder of His creation; it is also a testament to His Mercy and Justice. It is

not a history book, a storybook, or a scientific textbook, although it does contain all of those genres and more. The Quran is God's greatest gift to humanity – it is a book like no other, for it contains the answers to the mysteries of life. It answers the questions and asks us to look beyond materialism and see that this life is little more than a transient stop on the way to everlasting life. Islam gives a clear aim and purpose to life.

“And I (God) created not the jinn and humankind, except to worship Me (Alone).” (Quran 51:56)

Thus it is the most important book and Muslims have no doubt that it is exactly the same today as it was when it was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him. When we ask those most important questions, we want to be sure that the answers we receive are the truth. Knowing that the answers are coming from a book which is the unchanged Word of God, gives comfort and solace. When God revealed the Quran, He promised to preserve it. The words we read today are the same as those memorised and written down by the companions of Prophet Muhammad.

“It is We Who have sent down the remembrance (i.e. the Quran) and surely, We will guard it from corruption.” (Quran 15:9)

2. True Happiness can be found in Islam

Rejoice and be happy, remain positive and be at peace.¹ This is what Islam teaches us, for all God's commandments aim to bring happiness to the individual. The key to happiness is in understanding and worshipping God. This worship serves as a reminder of Him and keeps us always conscious of Him and hence we stay away from evil, committing injustices and oppression. It elevates us to being righteous and of good character. By following His commands, we lead a life that guides us to the best in all our

1 Al Qarni, Aaidh Ibn Abdullah, (2003), Don't be sad. International Islamic Publishing House, Saudi Arabia.

affairs. When we lead such a meaningful life, then and only then are we able to see happiness all around us, at any given moment and even on the darkest of times. It is even there in the touch of a hand, in the smell of rain or newly mown grass, it is in a warm fire on a cold night or a cool breeze on a hot day. Simple pleasures can make our hearts truly happy because they are manifestations of God's Mercy and Love.

The nature of the human condition means that amongst great sorrow can be moments of joy and sometimes in moments of despair we can find an anchor in the things that bring us happiness. Prophet Muhammad said, **“Indeed amazing are the affairs of a believer! They are all for his benefit. If he is granted ease then he is thankful, and this is good for him. And if he is afflicted with a hardship, he perseveres, and this is good for him.”**²

3. In Islam we can easily communicate with God at any time of day or night

Every member of the human race is born innately knowing that God is One. However those who do not know how to communicate with God or establish a relationship with Him tend to find their existence puzzling and sometimes even distressing. Learning to communicate with God and worshiping Him gives life a whole new meaning.

According to Islam, God is accessible at any time and in any place. We need only call on Him and He will answer the call. Prophet Muhammad advised us to call on God often. He told us that God said,

“I am just as My slave thinks I am, (i.e. I am able to do for him what he thinks I can do for him) and I am with him if He remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I too, remember him in Myself; and if he remembers Me in a group of people, I remember him in a group that is better than they; and if he comes

2 Saheeh Muslim

*one span nearer to Me, I go one cubit nearer to him; and if he comes one cubit nearer to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to me walking, I go to him running.”*³

In the Quran God says, “Remember Me and I will remember you...” (Quran2:152)

Believers call on God in any language, at any time and in any place. They supplicate to Him, and give thanks. Muslims also pray in a more ritualised way five times every day and interestingly the Arabic word for prayer is ‘*salah*’, which means a connection. Muslims are connected to God and can communicate with Him easily. We are never alone or far from God’s Mercy, Forgiveness and Love.

4. Islam gives us *real* peace

The words Islam, Muslim and *salaam* (peace) all come from the Arabic root word “Sa - la - ma”. It denotes peace, security, and safety. When a person submits to the will of God he or she experiences an innate sense of security and peacefulness. *Salaam* is a descriptive word that entails more than tranquillity and calmness; it also encompasses the concepts of safety, security and submission. In fact, Islam in the complete sense means submission to the One God who grants us safety, security, peace and harmony. This is real peace. Muslims greet each other with the words ‘*Assalam Alaikum*’. These Arabic words mean ‘May God grant you protection and security (real and lasting peace)’. These brief Arabic words let Muslims know that they are among friends, not strangers. This greeting encourages believers to be a worldwide community unencumbered by tribal or nationalistic loyalties and bound together by peace and unity. Islam itself is inherently associated with inner peace and tranquillity.

3 Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim

“And those who believed (in the Oneness of God and His Messengers and whatever they brought) and did righteous deeds, will be made to enter Gardens under which rivers flow, - to dwell therein for ever (i.e. in Paradise), with the Permission of their Lord. Their greeting therein will be, *salaam!*” (Quran 14:23)

5. Islam allows us to know God

The first principle and focal point of Islam is belief in one God, and the whole of the Quran is dedicated to this. It speaks directly about God and His Essence, Names, Attributes and Actions. Prayer connects us to God, however truly knowing and understanding the Names and Attributes of God is an important and unique opportunity, one that is only available in Islam. Those who do not make the effort to really know God may find the nature of their existence puzzling or even distressing. A Muslim is encouraged to remember God and be grateful to Him and a person can do this by contemplating and understanding God’s beautiful Names and Attributes. It is through this that we are able to know our Creator.

“God! (None has the right to be worshipped but He)! To Him belong the Best Names.” (Quran 20:8)

“And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to God, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names...” (Quran 7:180)

6. Islam teaches us how to care for the environment

Islam recognises that human beings are the custodians of the earth and all that is on it, including vegetation, animals, oceans, rivers, deserts, and fertile land. God provides us with the things we need to survive successfully and flourish, but we are obligated to care for them and preserve them for future generations.

In 1986 Prince Phillip the then president of the World Wildlife Fund invited the leaders of the world’s five major religions to meet

in the Italian city of Assisi. They met to discuss how faith could help save the natural world, the environment. What follows is from the Muslim statement in the Assisi Declarations on Nature:

Muslims say that Islam is the middle path and we will be answerable for how we have walked this path, how we have maintained balance and harmony in the whole of creation around us.

It is these values which led Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, to say: 'Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded.'

For all these reasons Muslims see themselves as having a responsibility towards the world and the environment, all of which are the creations of Allah.

Unlike many other religions, Muslims do not have any specific festivals in which they give thanks for the harvest or the world. Instead they give thanks to Allah regularly for his creation.⁴

7. Islam is respect

Another beautiful aspect of Islam is respect for humanity and the universe in which we live. Islam states clearly that it is the responsibility of each member of the human race to treat creation with respect, honour and dignity. The most deserving of respect is the Creator Himself and of course respect begins with loving and obeying His commandments. Total respect for God allows all the manners and high standards of morality that are inherent in Islam to flow into our lives and the lives of those around us. Because Islam binds respect to peace, love and compassion this involves respecting the honour, reputation and privacy of others. Respect involves staying completely away from the major sins of

[4http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/environment/isstewardship/rev2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs/environment/isstewardship/rev2.shtml)

backbiting, lying, slander, and gossip. It means avoiding sins that will sow discord among the people or lead to destruction.

Respect also includes loving for our brothers and sisters what we love for ourselves. It involves treating others the way we expect to be treated and the way we hope God will treat us – with compassion, love and mercy. Major sins put a barrier between humanity and God’s Mercy and cause all the torment, misery and evil in this world and the hereafter. God commands us to stay away from sin and to strive against our own destructive character flaws. We live in an age where we often demand respect from others but may not respect those around us. One beauty of Islam is that it allows us to regain lost respect by submitting wholeheartedly to the will of God. However if we do not understand how and why we surrender to God’s will we cannot gain respect we want and need. Islam teaches us and God reminds us in the Quran that our sole purpose in life is to worship Him.



8. The Equality of men and women

Quran states that all believers are equal and that only righteous deeds elevate one person above another. Believers therefore have

an immense respect for pious men and women and Islamic history also tells us that both men and women served and showed righteousness in all areas. A woman, like a man, is obligated to worship God and fulfill the duties upon her. It is thus required that every woman testify that there is none deserving worship but God, and that Muhammad, may God praise him, is His Messenger; to pray; to give charity; to fast; and to perform the pilgrimage to God's House if she has the means and ability to do so. It is also required that every woman to believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in God's decree. It is also required that every woman worship God as if she sees Him.

“And whoever does righteous good deeds, male or female, and is a (true) believer in the Oneness of God such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a speck on the back of a date-stone, will be done to them.” (Quran 2:124)

Islam however recognizes that equality does not mean that men and women are the same. It takes into account their differences in physiology, nature and temperament. It is not a question of superiority or inferiority, rather a question of natural abilities and having different roles in life. The laws of Islam are just and fair and take these aspects into consideration. Men have been assigned the duty to work and provide for their family and women have been assigned the role of motherhood and homemaking. Islam states however that that the roles are not exclusive nor are they inflexible. Women can work or serve society and men are able to take responsibility for their children or their household. It is interesting to note that where women choose to work the money they earn is their own however a man must provide financially for the whole family.

9. Humankind is able to regret past actions and reform

Muslims believe that all members of humankind are able to reform; in addition they believe that the possibility of successful

reform is greater than the probability of failure. This belief is derived from the fact that God has given humankind the means to reform, not once but over and over again right up until close to the Day of Judgement. God sent Messengers and Prophets to each and every nation. Some we know from the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, others are known only to God.

“And for every community or nation there is a Messenger; when their Messenger comes, the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged.” (Quran 10:47)

God does not hold any person responsible until he has been clearly shown the right way.

“...And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger. ” (Quran 17:15)

At the same time we are responsible to search for the truth and upon finding it we should accept it and reform our lives accordingly. The past bad actions can be left behind. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven!

“Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.’” (Quran 39:53)

A person should take advantage of God’s mercy by sincerely repenting for the past or if one is not a believer, by converting to the religion of Islam. Every person must work towards his salvation by combining faith, belief and action.

10. God loves beauty in all its forms

Prophet Muhammad said, “No one will enter Paradise who has an ant’s weight of pride in his heart.” A man said, “What if a man likes his clothes to look good and his shoes to look good?” He

said, “God is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride means denying the truth and looking down on people.”⁵

Beauty is the opposite of ugliness. The beauty that exists in creation attests to God’s beauty as well as His power. He who created beauty is the most entitled to beauty. And indeed Paradise is adorned with beauty beyond imagining. God is beautiful and this is why the greatest of all pleasures in Paradise is to look upon God’s Face. God says,

“[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant; looking to their Lord.”
(Quran 75: 22-23)

He refers to His names as being the Most Beautiful:

“And the Most Beautiful Names belong to God, so call on Him by them...” (Quran 7:180)

Noted Islamic scholar Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, had the following to say about beauty in Islam:

“God is to be acknowledged for beauty that bears no resemblance to anything else, and He is to be worshipped by means of the beauty which He loves in words, deeds and attitudes. He loves His slaves to beautify their tongues with the truth, to beautify their hearts with sincere devotion, love, repentance and trust in Him, to beautify their faculties with obedience, and to beautify their bodies by showing His blessings upon them in their clothing and by keeping them pure and free of any filth, dirt or impurity, by removing the hairs which should be removed, by circumcision, and by clipping the nails. Thus they recognize God through these qualities of beauty and seek to draw close to Him through beautiful words, deeds and attitudes. They acknowledge Him for the beauty which is His attribute and they worship Him through the beauty which He has prescribed and His religion.”⁶

5 Saheeh Muslim

6 al-Fawaa'id (1/185)