

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah,
most Kind, most Merciful



Surat an-Nisa, 4:171

إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
وَ كَلِمَتُهُ أُلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَ رُوحٌ مِنْهُ
فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَ رَسُولِهِ وَ لَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً
انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ
سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ

The messiah, Isa son of Maryam, was only a prophet of Allah, and His word that He cast toward Maryam and a spirit from Him. So have faith in Allah and His prophets, and do not say '[God is] a trinity.' Stop [such a belief]! That is better for you. Allah is but the one God. He is far too immaculate to have any son.

Learning Objectives

- To explain that Islam encourages respect for other faiths
- To compare and contrast four core beliefs of Islam and Christianity
- To explain that in Islam there is no compulsion in religion

Key Words

أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ Ahl al-kitab
people of the Book

مَسِيحٌ Masih
messiah

دِينٌ Din
religion

REMEMBER...

“Imam al-Mahdi (a) will reappear as a saviour for all of humanity, not just Muslims. He will rise up against oppression and will work to restore peace and equality across the world, across nations, and across faiths. As those who wish to be with him, we should also be working towards creating this peaceful society, and for this we need to have respect and tolerance for one another.”



DID YOU KNOW?

In *Risalat al-Huquq*, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a) points out the rights of people living under the protection of Islam (known as a *dhimmi*).

Dhimmi refers to non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state and literally means ‘protected person’.

Look up the Glossary at the end of Vol 1 of the latest edition of Ayatullah Sistani's *Islamic Laws* and write the definition of *dhimmi* below:

The Holy Qur'an states that religion should not be forced on any individual against their will (2:256). In Islam, followers of all religions have the right to worship and perform their religious practices. From the life of Rasulullah (s) we learn that he would regularly speak with people of other religions. He invited people of other faiths for discussions to invite them to Islam and explain its teachings, and kept very good relations with them. All this was done to make sure people live together peacefully. To be a Muslim is to be a peacemaker, someone who tries to get rid of conflicts, so that people can live together in peace.

We can show our respect for other faiths such as Christianity in the following ways:

- Establish respectful dialogue with them
- Respecting its places of worship
- Extending good wishes towards people of other faiths
- Inviting them to join us in our religious occasions
- Respecting their joys and sorrows
- Not making fun of or abusing any of their beliefs

Mutual respect is vital to have sincere and lasting relationships.



Imam Ali (a) in his letter of advice to Malik al-Ashtar says:

‘People are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation.’



Once, while marching, Imam Ali (a) and his army came across an old ruined church; Imam commanded his companions to respect the church, as it was a place where God was worshipped.

Note down two other ways you can show respect for other faiths:

In order to truly respect another faith we must take the time to understand its beliefs and teachings. Once we have this knowledge we can work to appreciate the common things between us, and to understand the differences between our faith and other faiths.

Christians in the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an narrates the stories of some pious Christians who believed in the oneness of Allah and followed Nabi Isa as a *Nabi* of Allah, even after he was raised to the heavens. Look up *Surat al-Kahf* and the story of *ashab al-kahf* (verses 9-26).

Note down two qualities of these devout Christians:

Another example is found in the story of the first migration of Islam, which took place in the fifth year after Rasulullah (s) began receiving revelations and preaching Islam. As the number of early Muslims grew they were persecuted and life became very difficult for them in Mecca. Rasulullah (s) advised a small group of his followers to migrate to Abyssinia, which was ruled by a kind and just Christian king, named Najjashi. The Muslims were welcomed with much kindness in Abyssinia and found life there pleasant and comfortable.

The Qur'an refers to this event:

Surat al-Ma'idah, 5:82-83



وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى
ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيَّيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ
وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ
الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ

And surely you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers are those who say 'We are Christians.' That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant. And when they hear what has been revealed to the Prophet, you see their eyes fill with tears because of the truth that they recognise.

Faith in Action

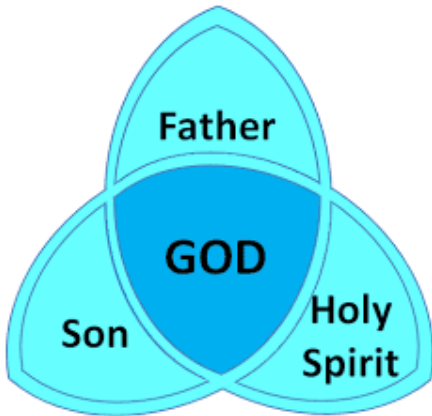
Create a card or craft to gift your Christian neighbour or friend. Write down one quote from the Bible and one from the Holy Qur'an on your card or craft. Try and find two *ayat* on the same topic, such as hijab, God's attributes, or caring for one another.

Remember to focus on the similarities and embrace the differences.

Alternatively, create a card for your neighbour or friend of a different faith to wish them on their religious festival or invite them to join in with you and your family in commemorating a religious occasion.

Enjoy sharing and explaining your beliefs but also remember to pause and listen to theirs.

Christianity



Here are some of the core beliefs of Christianity:

- 1 The Trinity: there is only one God who acts in the world as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Like Muslims, Christians also believe that there is one God and He is creator of everything that exists. However, Christians believe in the Holy Trinity, which describes God as one essence divided in three divine persons - the father, the son and the holy spirit. They believe that God took human form as Jesus and that God is present today through the work of the holy spirit, and is seen in the actions of believers.

Surat an-Nisa, 4:171



يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ
وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا
الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِّنْهُ
فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ
انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ
سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى
بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

O People of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not attribute anything to Allah except the truth. The messiah, Isa son of Maryam, was only a prophet of Allah, and His word that He cast toward Maryam and a spirit from Him. So have faith in Allah and His prophets, and do not say '[God is] a trinity.' Stop [such a belief]! That is better for you. Allah is but the one God. He is far too immaculate to have any son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and Allah is sufficient as a trustee.

Allah addresses the Christians in the Qur'an as follows:

- 2 God created the world and humans in His image.
- 3 God loves everyone unconditionally.
- 4 Humans can get to know God through prayer, worship, love, and spiritual experiences.
- 5 Christians worship in churches and their spiritual leaders are called priests or ministers.
- 6 God is powerful, present everywhere, and knows all things.
- 7 Jesus died to save the people from punishment, and to have their sins forgiven. Christians who believe in Jesus as the son of God and their saviour will live eternally in heaven.

While Christians believe that Nabi Isa was crucified and then resurrected, Muslims believe that Nabi Isa was raised to the heavens by the will of Allah and is still alive today. Both followers of Christianity and Islam believe that Nabi Isa will return towards the end of time.

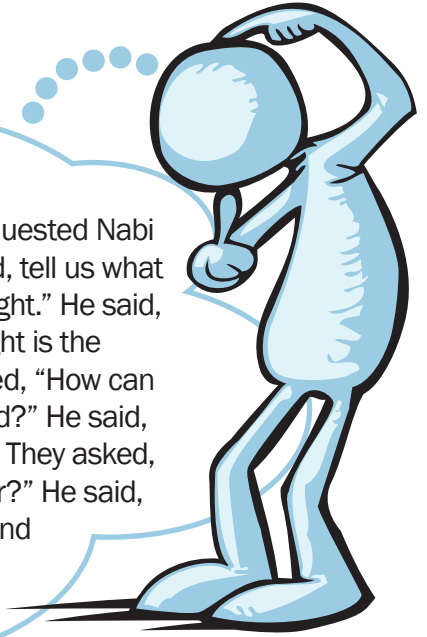
- 8 Christians do not believe that Nabi Isa was given a book. He was the Book himself. However, they believe in the Bible. The Bible is in two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the original Hebrew Bible which is said to contain the writings of Nabi Dawud, Nabi Musa, Nabi Isa, and other Prophets. The New Testament is composed of 27 different books and has three sections: the Gospels, the Acts of the apostles and the Letters.

The Gospels narrate the story of the life of Jesus which are written by four of later Christian authors, Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Acts of the apostles recount the struggles of Jesus's disciples and the way they tried to preach Christianity after him. The Letters are written by various Christian leaders and provide guidance for the early church communities. There is also a final chapter regarding the Book of Revelation by John.

Muslims believe that Nabi Isa was given the holy book of *Injil*, however, the Bible we have today is not the *Injil* that was revealed to Nabi Isa although it contains some of his preaching and revelations. It is evident that the Bible is a collection of many books written by numerous individuals and not the original word of God that was revealed to Nabi Isa.

REFLECTION...

Once the *Hawariyyun* requested Nabi Isa. "O teacher of all good, tell us what is the most enormous blight." He said, "The most enormous blight is the anger of God." They asked, "How can we avoid the anger of God?" He said, "By not becoming angry." They asked, "What is the root of anger?" He said, "Arrogance, unfairness, and contempt for people."

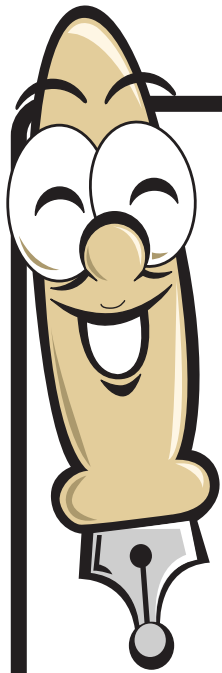


HIGHER LEVEL

Like Muslims, Christians also believe that there is one God and He is creator of everything that exists. He is all powerful, present everywhere and knows all things.

Which positive attributes of Allah (*sifat ath-thubutiyyah*) match the above qualities of Allah?





KEY POINTS

1 Islam encourages respect for other faiths. This can be done by understanding the teachings and values of that religion, appreciating the similarities, and respecting the differences between our faith and other faiths.

2 Rasulullah (s) invited people of other faiths for dialogue. Dialogue leads to understanding and is important to our relationships. Rasulullah (s) built relations with the Christians and the Jews of Arabia, and wanted people to live together peacefully.

3 To be Muslim is to be a person who works to make peace.

4 Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later.

5 The Bible we have today is a collection of many books written by numerous individuals and not the original word of God that was revealed to Nabi Isa.



TEST YOURSELF

1 According to the Qur'an, which group of people are closest to the Muslims? Why?

2 Give three ways you can be respectful towards believers of other faiths.

3 Christians believe in the concept of the Trinity; explain what this means.

4 Briefly describe two similarities and two differences between the beliefs of Islam and Christianity.
