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*Basic Beliefs of Islam*  
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In the days since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the media have been full of discussion of the terrorists' presumed religion, Islam. Does Islam promote this sort of violence? And within the United States, there are reports that some Muslims have been mistreated and mosques attacked by those who express their anger over the attacks.

What is Islam? Who are Muslims? Islam means submission to God; a Muslim is one who submits to God. The foundation of Islamic belief is expressed in the declaration, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet." In this statement, Muslims make known their belief that there is only one God. Allah, or The God, is the same as the deity Jews and Christians believe in: Creator of all that is.

The second part of the declaration attests that God chose Muhammad to restore the revelation of his word to the world, a revelation given through many previous prophets. Muslims see Noah, Jesus and others as those who brought God's word to the world before the final, and perfect, revelation through Muhammad. Muslims understand that this revelation is The Glorious Qur'an, the scripture that provides the basis for Islamic belief and practice. Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day, so that God is constantly called to mind, from the time one rises, until one goes to sleep. When Muslims worship God, whether in the Mosque or elsewhere, reciting parts of the Qur'an is central to prayer.

Muslims believe that God judges humans according to their deeds. Humans are individually responsible to God for all of their actions. Muslims are told to be the best community on earth, creating the conditions in

which good can flourish, and forbidding what is evil. The Qur'an, and the words and example of the Prophet, provide a guide for moral life. This includes charity; every believer is to give of his or her income to provide for the poor.

For one month of the year, Ramadan, Muslims fast during the day, eating only before dawn or after dusk. During this month, they make extra contributions to charity, and provide meals for the poor. If possible, once in life, a Muslim should try to make a pilgrimage, the Hajj, to Mecca, the place of the first revelation to Muhammad. At Mecca, Muslims encounter the vast diversity of worldwide Islam, as several million believers from all over the world converge in one place to join in prayer.

The vast majority of Muslims express shock that someone could commit mass terror against civilians in the name of Islam. They no more see suicide bombings as Islamic than most Christians would recognize the mass suicide in Jonestown in 1979, led by Jim Jones, as Christian. Rather, Muslims believe that Islam shows the way to peace:

"Whose word is better than his who calls to God and does the right, and says: 'I am of the obedient?' Good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with what is good. Then you will find your erstwhile enemy like a close, affectionate friend." The Qur'an, Surah 42: 33-34.

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