

## **Myths vs. Reality: A Closer Look at Islam**

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In a time when Islam and the people who follow the religion often face undue scrutiny and stereotypes, it's crucial to unravel the myths and uncover the truths about this complex and diverse faith. Those who fear Islam because of false stereotypes may say that Islam supports terrorism and violence, Islam is sexist, or that all Muslims are Arab/Middle Eastern. Some other misconceptions that they may have are that Muslims don't believe in Jesus or that Islam is intolerant of other faiths. I am here to explain Islam and lay rest to these misconceptions. One

thing that is very clear in the Quran and the teaching of Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) is that Islam condemns acts of violence and spreads a message of peace. Islam is not sexist, it believes that men and women are different mentally, physically, and biologically but not that one is better than the other. Not all Muslims are from a Middle Eastern country, a very large part of the followers of Islam are actually converts/reverts from Western countries. Muslims do actually believe in Jesus, they don't believe in the Trinity, that Jesus is the Son of God, or that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. Islam is very tolerant of other religions and promotes peace between everyone.

One of the most pervasive misconceptions is the belief that Islam promotes terrorism and violence. In reality, Islam explicitly condemns the taking of innocent lives. The Quran states, "Whoever kills a person [unjustly]... it is as though he has killed all of mankind" (Quran 5:32). The vast majority of Muslims are peaceful individuals who abhor violence, and extremist groups represent a small and radical minority. An article from Learning for Justice (2017) talks about how the people who claim to follow Islam do not represent the entire religion. "Just as the great majority of Christians find the beliefs and practices of the Ku Klux Klan abhorrent (the Klan considers itself a Christian organization), the vast majority of Muslims are appalled by terrorist acts carried out or inspired by al-Qaeda and ISIS." The Quran also says "If the enemy is inclined towards peace, make peace with them. And put your trust in Allah. Indeed, He 'alone' is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (Quran 8:61) This shows that Islam does not support violence and the killing of anyone. It also shows that Islam is advocating for peace but does not encourage us to be completely passive and not do anything if someone wants to harm us.

Another misconception is the idea that Islam is sexist or anti-female. While there are cultural practices in some regions that discriminate against women, these practices are not

intrinsic to the religion itself. Islam promotes the rights of women and provides them with certain legal and social protections. In fact, the Quran explicitly states, "And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women" (Quran 2:228). Learning for Justice (2017) talks about how "the Quran and related teachings of Islam propound many views regarding gender that were quite progressive for the time in which the prophet Muhammad lived. Women may own property, for example, and keep their last names after marriage. Muhammad also strongly advocated for the education of girls." In an article from ADL.org (2017), the writers talk about how the hijab is often considered to be an example of the oppression that women face in Islam. This is false and most "women choose to wear a hijab, niqab or burqa on their own and do so for a variety of reasons including a sense of pride in being Muslim, a collective sense of identity or to convey a sense of self-control in public life." (ADL,2017) It is important to truly understand what the hijab is. It is not only the headscarf but also includes loose clothing that does not show the shape of the body and the covering of the whole body except for the face (there is a difference of opinion here but the majority says it does not have to be covered), hands (from the wrist to the fingers), and the feet (from the ankles down). My mother, who has been wearing a hijab (the headscarf and all the other things that I explained were included) since the age of around 11 years old also had something to say about this topic. I will have to translate since she doesn't know much English but pretty much what she said was that "the hijab is a source and testament to my belief in Allah (god)." She also said that although it was a mandate for her to adhere to the rules of the Hijab, she did it willingly and started before it was a requirement for her.

A common misconception is the assumption that all Muslim people are Arab or Middle Eastern. Islam is a global religion with over a billion followers worldwide. Muslims come from

diverse cultural backgrounds, and the majority of Muslims actually reside outside the Middle East. Huda, an Islamic Expert who has a Master's Education (M.Ed.) from Loyola University–Maryland, says that “while Islam is often associated with Arabic people, they make up only 15 percent of the world's Muslim population. Actually, the country with the largest population of Muslims is Indonesia. Muslims make up one-fifth of the world's population, with large numbers found in Asia (69%), Africa (27%), Europe (3%), and other parts of the world.” [This is an important statistic because it shows that Islam is spread throughout the whole world, not just in the Middle East. It shows that Muslims come from very different backgrounds and places in the world.](#)

Some people mistakenly believe that Muslims don't believe in Jesus. In fact, Jesus is highly regarded in Islam. He is considered one of the great prophets and is mentioned numerous times in the Quran. However, the Islamic perspective on Jesus may differ from that of Christianity, Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Muslims also do not believe that Jesus died for the sins of Humanity. This is because Islam preaches absolute justice, and Jesus dying for the sins of humanity does not adhere to the rules of absolute justice. What I mean by this is that it doesn't make sense and it would not be considered justice for an innocent man (in this case, Jesus) to die for the sins of someone else (in this case, humanity). For example, if a person was on trial for murder, it would never be considered justice to arrest a random person off the street and throw them in jail instead of the actual murderer. The Quran does talk about his miraculous birth, his teaching, his story, and the miracles he performed with God's permission. “There is a chapter in the Quran named after his mother, Mary. Muslims believe that Jesus was a fully human prophet and not in any way divine himself” (Learn Religions, 2019). [This shows](#)

that Muslims respect Jesus, love him, and believe in him but we do not believe that he had any divine attributes (like either being God or being the Son of God).

The last misconception that I want to talk about is that some people believe that Islam preaches hate other religions. This is the exact opposite of the truth. Islam preaches peace for everyone. In an essay done by the Islamic Society of Greater Springfield, They say “The Quran highlights the special place of Christians and Jews by constantly referring to them as “People of the Book.” There are many verses in the Quran that highlight the close relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. “And you will certainly find those who say, ‘We are Christians,’ to be the nearest of them in love to the believers. That is because amongst them are savants and monks and because they are not arrogant” (Quran 5:82). Additionally, the Quran even prohibits Muslims from insulting the gods or idols that are worshiped by other religions. “And do not insult those whom they call upon besides Allah (Quran 6:108)” (Islamic Society of Greater Springfield, 2019). [This shows that Islam teaches us not to hate others and not to talk down on anyone, even if their beliefs are different than ours.](#)

Islam fundamentally rejects violence and actively preaches a message of peace. It's not about sexism; rather, it acknowledges that men and women have distinct roles without implying that one is superior to the other. Not all Muslims come from the Middle East; a significant number are converts from Western countries. When it comes to Jesus, Muslims believe in him, but their perspective differs on the Trinity, Jesus as the Son of God, and his crucifixion for our sins. Islam promotes religious tolerance and encourages peaceful coexistence among diverse faiths. The myths about Islam are very damaging, but now you know that most of those are misunderstandings.

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