

Who is

Muhammad

Prophets

According to Islamic understanding, God not only creates humans but also provides them with a message to live by, which is conveyed and explicated by messengers chosen from among them. The lineage of messengers (or prophets) dates back to Adam, and includes Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Jesus and many more, and ends with Muhammad (peace be upon them all).





What differentiates Muhammad from other prophets? If Muslims believe in them all, why does one always hear about Muhammad?

The Qur'an talks at great length about many prophets, and they are all acknowledged, respected and taken as examples by Muslims. For example, Jesus (pbuh), Moses (pbuh), and Abraham (pbuh) are mentioned scores of times in the Qur'an, and some chapters are entirely devoted to their stories, which almost match the narratives in the Old and the New Testament. Muslims are required to believe in the earlier Scriptures, but in cases where these texts directly contradict what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught – like the notion of the Trinity in the New Testament – it is believed these are historical distortions introduced after those messengers. Since Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived in a more recent past (570-632 CE), the details of his life and practices are well recorded and better known than others.

He is also believed to be the final prophet sent to all humankind, so his teachings are valid until the end of time.

“Wisdom and knowledge are things that the believer lacks. He should take them wherever he finds them.”

Muhammad (pbuh)



How do you know that Muhammad is the last prophet? Can't there be another prophet after him?

The Qur'an is the Holy Book, the divine message, the word of God that is revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as timeless guidance for humanity. In the

Qur'an (33/40) God states explicitly that Muhammad (pbuh) is the final prophet. Because the Qur'an and the *sunnah* (practices and sayings of the Prophet) are and will be valid and sufficient to guide humanity, and because the legacy of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) will prevail, there will be no need for another prophet to be sent.



What is wrong with depicting Muhammad?

Islam draws a clear distinction between God and His creation. God (the One and Only deity, "Allah") is the Creator, and everything else is part of His creation and therefore cannot be worshipped. As history and human experience show, statues, images, and icons tend to become objects of worship in time. Muslims, therefore, do not allow visual depictions of any prophet to prevent the possibility of idolatry.



Did Muhammad write the Qur'an?

Many claims have been made regarding the origins of the Qur'an, ranging from declaring Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an to accusing him of copying earlier Scriptures. These claims can be refuted both linguistically and logically: Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was illiterate and hence could not read or write. He started to receive revelation at the age of 40, and no poetry or other forms of elevated speech were attributed to him until this stage of his life. Also, the tone of the Qur'an is distinctly different than that of the Prophet, whose recorded words and speeches (hadith) have an altogether different wording, tone, and style. At times

**“Account to yourself
before you are called
to account.”**

Muhammad (pbuh)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself is warned in the Quran for certain behavior to set an example for his community/followers (see Quran 80/1-2). The Quran also mentions events and concepts that could not possibly be known at the time, either by the Prophet or by anyone else, such as narrations about earlier peoples, cosmological phenomena, and future events. Last but not least, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), like other prophets, was given the Qur’an with a mission and a strict order to obey its message, follow its instructions, and convey it to the others without expecting any worldly gains whatsoever. This mission brought along serious challenges and hardships to bear, and no man would take on such a responsibility unless he was appointed to this mission by God.



What are the Prophet’s moral teachings?

Before mentioning the moral teachings of the Prophet (pbuh), it is important to understand the source of moral values in Islam. Just as Islamic faith is based on divine revelation transmitted by prophets, the law and ethics in Islam are also based on divine commandments. Although the human mind can arrive at the same conclusions as revelation on questions of ethics and morality, what is essential and authoritative in Islam is revelation and not the reasoning of some philosophers, jurists or moralists. This principle is highly significant, especially when we consider the fact that different ways of reasoning

“Allah will examine neither your physical appearance nor your possessions. He will only examine your hearts and your actions.”

Muhammad (pbuh)

done by different people may lead to completely contradictory results.

One distinct quality of Islam is that it not only sets certain pillars of faith, but also provides social codes of conduct. Without compromising one or the other, Islam recognizes the body in relation to the soul and this world in relation to the next world (see Qur'an 2/201). Therefore, it not only enjoins the good and forbids the evil, but also prescribes material and spiritual rewards and punishments for them.

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives the alms (zakah); [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.” (Quran 2/177)

Some of the moral principles set by God in the Qur'an and practiced by the Prophet (pbuh) are as follows: Respecting and caring for parents, being neither extravagant nor stingy, not killing, not even approaching adultery, spending for the poor and the needy, caring for orphans and not touching their property unless for the purpose of guarding it, etc.

See Quran: 3/133-134, 39/53, 42/40, 49/10-13, 17/23-39, 4/36-38, 4/116...

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *"A man is not a believer who fills his stomach while his neighbour is hungry."*
"Feed the hungry, visit the sick, and set free the captives."
"Modesty/Bashfulness (Haya) is a part of faith."



How do you explain the battles of the Prophet? What is Jihad anyway?

It is a mistranslation to use "holy war" for the term *Jihad*, since jihad (a word in Arabic) literally means "struggle" or "striving". Thus, it has a wider meaning than armed combat, which is only possible when initiated and led by the state. The term is applied to any personal or social effort to obey God's will and to practice Islam in daily life. Therefore, we can talk about spiritual jihad, social jihad, economic jihad, political jihad, etc.

As forced conversion to Islam is clearly rejected in the Qur'an (2/256), fighting with this intention is out of the question. Any war that does not have a just cause and is not compatible with the divine law is prohibited. Armed conflict, in other words combative jihad, is possible and equally important as other forms of jihad, but it is permitted only after exhausting all possible peaceful ways of resolving a conflict and with the aim of removing injustice and protecting people's lives and liberties. It is not done for the purpose of exploitation, worldly gains or revenge. The battles of the Prophet (pbuh) took only 53 days in his entire life and were certainly compatible with these fundamental principles. Furthermore, he set clear guidelines to abide by at the time of an armed conflict:

"He who is not merciful to our young (people) and who shows no respect to our elderly is not one of us."

Muhammad (pbuh)

- Not harming non-combatants
- Not harming nature or crops
- Not torturing prisoners
- Not harming religious sanctuaries of any faith
- Not poisoning wells or water supplies
- Not harming the elderly, women, and children



What would you say about the polygamous life of the Prophet?

When evaluating social practices, we need to take the time period and cultural differences into account. We cannot understand practices in other cultures if we look at them one-sidedly and only from our own perspective. Neither can we impose our worldview and practices on them. Islam is a universal religion that guides people and informs every aspect of their lives, no matter where or when they live. The life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is a complete example for Muslims, and his married life is not an exception. In his life, one finds the experience of both monogamy (25 years of happy marriage with Khadijah, until her passing away) and polygamy (last 13 years of his life). Like in many societies today, polygamy was commonly practiced in the society where he lived (Arabian Peninsula in late 6th and early 7th century), and his marriages never elicited a single reaction or opposition even from his adversaries. This is understandable when the socio-cultural structure of the period is considered.

“If a servant covers the shame of another servant, on the Day of Judgement Allah will cover their shame.”

Muhammad (pbuh)

Islam allows a man to have up to four wives with the condition that he treats them equally and fairly (Qur'an 4/3). It is not a requirement nor an encouragement, but a permission with certain legal requirements and conditions. By stating "up to four", the Qur'an limits the number of legitimate marriages, whereas in many societies people have numerous partners without having any legal responsibility whatsoever. In the case of polygamy as regulated in Islam, all wives have equal rights, and they, along with their children, are guaranteed to be taken care of in a family environment.



What is the legacy of the Prophet?

Prophet Mohammad's entire life in prophethood exemplifies the message of God. His "Farewell Sermon", which he addressed to some hundred thousand people, summarizes the essence of this message. Here are some themes from the sermon that include both spiritual and legal aspects of the religion:

Oneness of God

Oneness and uniqueness of God is the most central tenet of faith in Islam. The Qur'an puts it concisely: **"Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born; nor is there to Him any equivalent.'" (Qur'an, 112)**

And in his final sermon, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says:

"There are two characteristics that a believer does not have: Meanness and bad morals."

Muhammad (pbuh)

“The believer possesses cordiality. There is no goodness in the person who is not cordial (who does not socialize with people) and does not permit cordiality (allows others to socialize with them).”

Muhammad (pbuh)

“Praise be to Allah. We glorify Him; we thank Him. We expect help from Him. We ask to be forgiven by Him and, with repentance, we turn to Him in obedience. We take refuge in Allah against the evil suggestions of our ego (nafs) and committing evil. Whomever Allah shows the truth, no one can make him stray from the true path. Whomever He allows the freedom to stray from the true path, no one can show him the straight way. I accept and affirm that there is no god but Allah and that He has no partner in His divinity, authority, domain and power. I accept and affirm that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.”

Rights of women

Allah, as our Creator, does not discriminate between men and women. They have mutual rights and responsibilities, and they will both be judged fairly before Allah on the judgment day regardless of gender differences.

“And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due, and they obey Allah and His messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them.” (Qur’an 9/71)

And the Prophet (pbuh) explains:

“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His

permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste."

"Reporting everything one hears is enough of a lie for every believer."

Muhammad (pbuh)

Equality of people/Brotherhood

Islam declares all people equal in terms of human rights, and they are equally treated before the law. Every human being is entitled to dignity and honor during his/her life and after death.

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." (Qur'an 49/13)

And in the words of Allah's Messenger:

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety (taqwa) and good action."

It must be remembered that these words were declared in the 7th century and were implemented immediately. They are more than just theoretical ideals as they were exemplified in the Prophet's life.

They were taken as an outstanding model for future generations of humankind.

Qur'an and Sunnah (practice of the Prophet) - inclusive guidelines that encompass all aspects of life

Individual and social problems of Muslims are clearly the result of diverting from the teachings that were set and exemplified in these two essential sources of Islam: The Qur'an and the *sunnah*.

"Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things. [...] No prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray."

Accountability

"Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone."

Fairness in economics

"Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all

"As long as the heart is not honest, the faith of a servant cannot be sincere. As long as the tongue is not sincere the heart cannot be sincere."

Muhammad (pbuh)

“There are two blessings, and most people evaluate these blessings incorrectly: Health and free time.”

Muhammad (pbuh)

interest obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity.

Allah has judged that there shall be no interest and that all the interest due to Abbas ibn 'Abd'al Muttalib (Prophet's uncle) shall henceforth be waived..”

Transmitting the Message

“All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people”.

To conclude, Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet, “sent by God as a mercy to the worlds” as declared in the Quran (Quran 21/107).

His life and his teachings serve as a model not only for Muslims but for all people of the world.



Thanks,
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