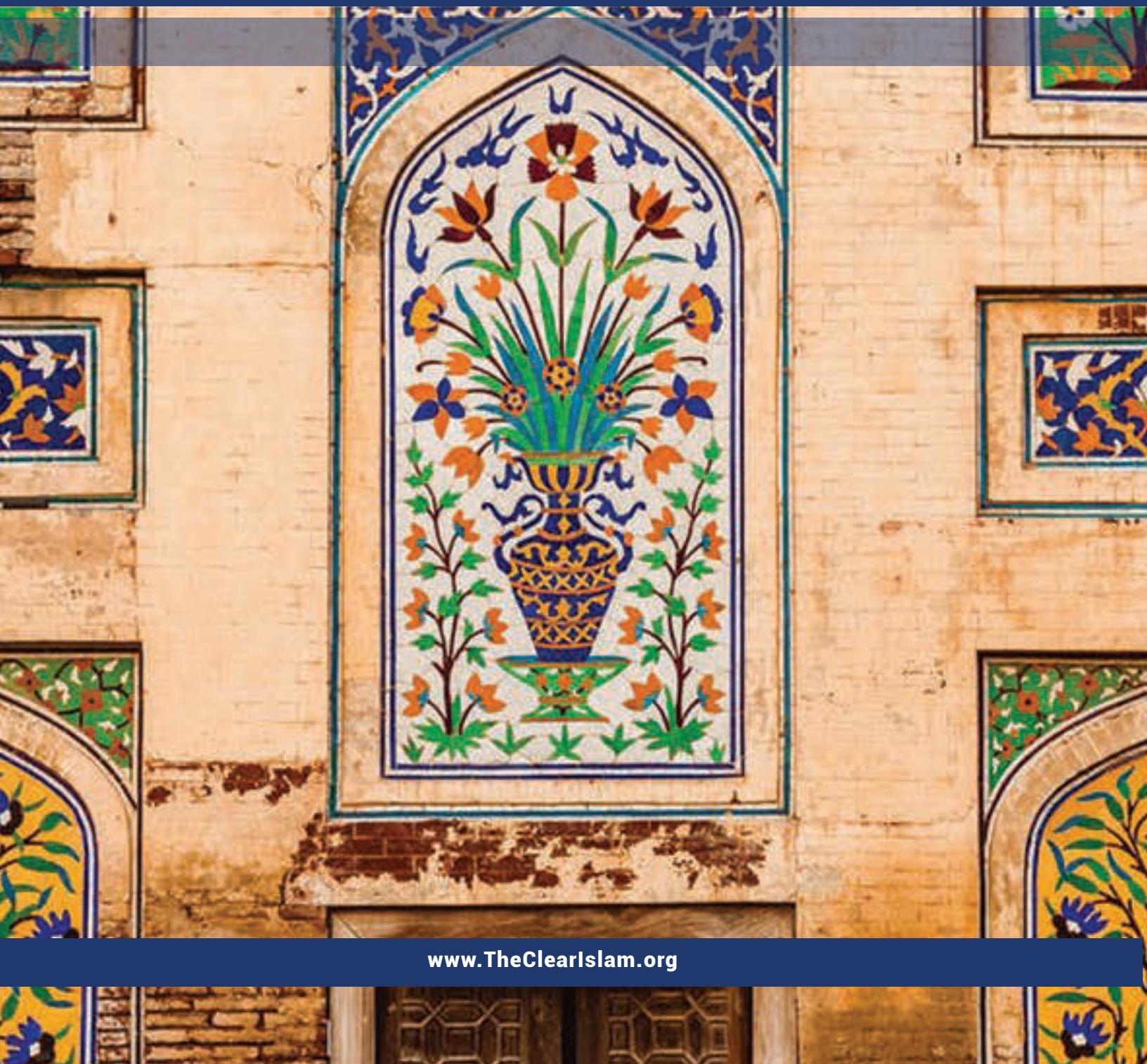
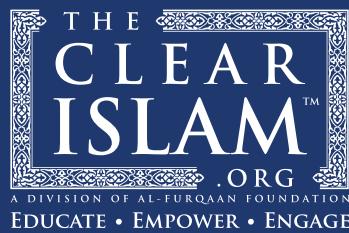


MY NEIGHBORS ARE MUSLIM



What is Islam?

Islam is an Abrahamic religion that is very similar to Judaism and Christianity. People who follow Islam are called “Muslims.” Muslims believe in the same One True God of Abraham and many of the same stories about prophets of the Bible. Like Judaism, Islam pays careful attention to living out the commandments of God as found in scripture. This involves things like daily prayers, periods of fasting, manners of hygiene, diet, and holiday customs. Like Christianity, Islam is a universal religion for all humankind regardless of ethnicity, and Muslims believe, like Christians, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who will return in the End Times to defeat the Anti-Christ. However, Muslims do not worship Jesus or Muhammad, but rather love them as human messengers of God. After mentioning any Prophet, Muslims customarily follow it with a blessing such as “peace be upon them.”

I'm Nervous...

Don't be! Your Muslim neighbors might have different ways of eating, dressing, and worshipping, but Muslims are people just like you. In fact, the more religious your Muslim neighbors are, the more likely they are to be good neighbors. The Prophet Muhammad, (God's peace and blessings be upon him), said, **“Gabriel kept emphasizing to me the importance of care for neighbors until I thought he might make me put them in my will!”**

Clothing



Muslims of both genders are commanded to dress modestly and control their own wandering eyes. Some Muslims fulfill this by wearing modest American-style clothing, but some like to wear clothes from Muslim cultures. The Prophet Muhammad taught women to cover their hair in public, but some only do this during prayer. Some choose to go above and beyond by covering their faces in public as well, leaving only a slit for their eyes.

Food/Diet



Like Jews, Muslims are forbidden from eating pork, and many Muslims only eat meat and animal products that are kosher or halal/zabiha to ensure that the animal was slaughtered humanely, with God's blessing, and that the animal's blood was drained from the body. Some Muslims eat any type of seafood while others try to stick with fish.

Muslims are also forbidden from consuming alcoholic beverages, though Muslims vary on other things with alcohol content like vanilla extract. Check with your neighbors to see what ingredients they are comfortable with before bringing a dish to the barbecue.

Holidays



While most Christian holidays are based on the solar year, Muslim holidays occur according to a lunar calendar, so the holidays move about 10 days earlier every solar year. Because the start of a month depends on real-time moon sighting, your Muslim neighbors might not know exactly what day their holidays will fall on until shortly before (though they will have an estimate of 2 or 3 possible days).

Ramadan is the ninth of twelve months in the Islamic calendar, and for that month, Muslims who are healthy and able will fast from all food, drink, and sexual relations from dawn until sunset. Ramadan ends with a big holiday called 'Eid al-Fitr (Festival of Fast-Breaking).

The other major holiday, 'Eid al-Adha, happens along with the Hajj pilgrimage in the last month of the Islamic year. This festival remembers how Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son to God, but God stopped him and supplied a ram instead, forbidding human sacrifice forever more. Muslims remember this by slaughtering an animal and sharing the meat with friends, family, and the needy.

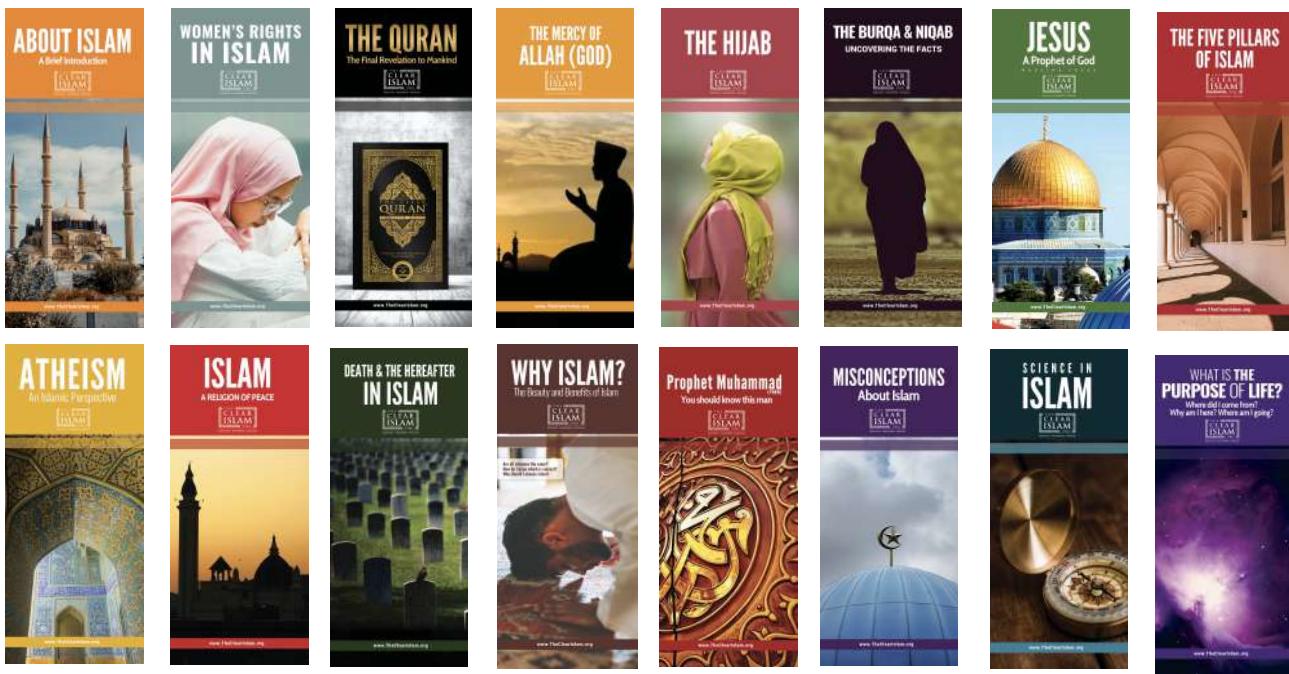
Prayers



Muslims know that God can hear their prayers whenever and however they offer them, but they also perform a special type of ritual prayer five times per day called salah. The day is divided up into five different time slots in which practicing Muslims make time to perform salah. Before doing salah, Muslims purify themselves by washing their faces, hands, and feet with water. Then they face the Ka ba in Mecca (northeast from the perspective of North America) and recite the Quran out loud or quietly to themselves. Talking to another human being in the middle of salah breaks the ritual and needs to be done all over again, so if you see your Muslim neighbor going through cycles of standing, bowing, and prostrating, they might want to finish their prayer before responding to greetings, etc. If there's an emergency just say so and they will certainly cut off their prayer to respond.

Knowing Each Other, Knowing God

God says in the Quran, "O humankind, We have created you male and female and made you peoples and tribes so that you may learn to know one another," (Q 49:13). We hope that you and your Muslim neighbors can get to know each other and learn to see the divine wisdom in your differences and commonalities, and that you can work together to make your neighborhood and world a better place.



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