

COUNCIL ON ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Lessons for *Frontline: Muslims*

Values and Practices of the Faith

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Overview:

This lesson asks students to analyze direct quotes from the film and learn more about the diverse viewpoints held by Muslims throughout the world.

Aim: *Do all followers of any religion interpret their religion in the same exact way?*

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze primary source quotes from the film and interpret their meaning.
2. Gain an understanding of the diverse viewpoints of Muslims concerning their faith.
3. Examine practices in Islam regarding family and community.
4. Analyze the opinions and positions of select Muslims in America.
5. Understand Muslim responses to extremism on the part of some Muslims.

Procedure:

1. Distribute the **Student Handout** and ask students to read quotes from the film and categorize them under the following headings:
 - a. Individual Expressions of Faith
 - b. Family and Communal Aspects of Muslim Practice
 - c. Unity and Diversity Among Muslims
 - d. Muslims in Mainstream American Society
 - e. Muslim responses to Extremism

A **Teacher Key** is available to check student answers.

2. **Discussion Questions:** After students have completed the activity, ask the following questions to stimulate discussion:
 1. Which quote, if any, challenged your previous assumptions about Muslims or their beliefs and practices? Explain how.
 2. Were there any quotes that you felt belonged in more than one category? Which ones? Explain.
 3. Do you think all the quotes you read describe Islamic teachings or are some interpretations by individuals? Try to identify which sound more like interpretations.
 4. Are there other aspects about Islamic practices or beliefs or Muslims, in general, you'd like to learn more about because the film could not provide more information? If yes, what are they?

Student Handout – Values and Practices of the Faith

Read the quotes carefully. After analyzing their meaning, determine the heading under which they best fit. Write the corresponding quote number next to that heading in the chart below.

Heading	Quote Number(s)
Individual Expressions of Faith	
Family & Communal Aspects of Muslim Practice	
Unity & Diversity Among Muslims	
Muslims in Mainstream American Society	
Muslim Responses to Extremism	

QUOTES

1. "A real marriage is a contractual relationship. One must have the approval of the father, two witnesses, a dowry, and it must be announced to the community." Shaykh Mualith, teacher at al-Azhar University
2. "Islam is against drug addiction. Drug addiction is heavily punished. Islam is also against homosexuality. Homosexuality is a crime under Islam and is punishable by death. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is forbidden and is punished by either 100 strokes of the cane, in the case of unmarried people or by death in the case of married people." Nigerian teacher
3. "The African American Muslim community is the largest indigenous Muslim community in the United States. Professor McCloud found that many people thought that all African American Muslims belonged to the Nation of Islam. She thought this was one of the funniest things she had ever heard because she was a Muslim and she didn't know anyone in the Nation of Islam. In fact, most African American Muslims belong to the Muslim American Society headed by Warith D. Muhammad." Narrator
4. "The struggle for Muslims to define how Islam is integrated into society is as old as the religion itself. Some Muslims see Islam as democratic. Other Muslims use Islam to sanction their authority. Whichever way this goes it has consequences for the whole world." Narrator
5. "Islam is the Arabic word for peace. I like the mosque more than my own house. It's peaceful, there are no disturbances." Far Rahman, Imam
6. "Shari'ah law is the attempt to derive a comprehensive code of living from sacred texts and from accounts of how the Prophet (pbuh) lived his life. It covers everything from how to pray to how to punish criminals. There are different schools of interpretation of Islamic law called madhabs." Narrator
7. "Alena believes a woman shouldn't have an abortion unless the woman's life is threatened. She says: The attitude towards sexuality in the West is too liberal for Muslim standards with respect to the standards of those living in the East." Alena Alizar
8. "Yasmin is part of a group of Muslim professionals and after September 11th they started a group called 'Muslims Against Terrorism'. As a part of this group she volunteers 10-12 hours a week and visits schools and churches. She says: We need to stop letting extremists dictate the public face of Islam." Narrator
9. "We teach other religions to our children and that Abraham is the father of all three religions. We teach them the Islam that most Muslims practice but we also teach them about the values that both Islam and America share to show them that, in essence, there is no contradiction." Safa Sarzour, principal
10. "Mehdi Hatabi believes women should put their families first but not necessarily stay at home. His wife is now teaching. His daughter hopes to go to the university." Narrator
11. "You see, Islam gives priority to cleanliness. That's why I say Islam is a safe religion. Because when we adhere to Islamic rules and regulations we will be safe." Far Rahman, Imam
12. "It is not Islam that discriminates against women. Rather, it is men in patriarchal societies that use Islam to control and oppress women." Saima Anwar, founder of *Sisters in Islam*

13. "Islam doesn't teach violence or acts of discrimination or the oppression of women, Islam teaches justice and peace... Yet there are some Muslims that use Islam to commit these acts. This doesn't help those Muslims that are trying to put forward an Islam that is democratic, pluralistic, that believes in justice, peace, equality and freedom." Saima Anwar
14. "It is easy to use Islam as a means of fomenting popular support. They think that if they bring back the times of the Prophet (pbuh) they will have prosperity. – However, the Turkish Islamic party recently won 20% of the vote. Secular officials decided to clamp down on one of Islam's most visible symbols, the hijab. The hijab, a Muslim woman's head covering, was banned at all public institutions." Aysal Eksi, author
15. "On Friday the men of the community must gather to hear a short sermon and pray."
Narrator
16. "Muslims have left Islam, they don't know what God has ordered them to do or what the Prophet (pbuh) taught. That's why there are problems and things have happened that faith would prevent." Shaykh Mualith, teacher at al-Azhar University
17. "Not all Muslims share the same interpretation of Islamic law, however. The shaykh is troubled when people like Osamah bin Laden issue rulings of their own. These kinds of fatwahs have no basis in religion." Narrator
18. "The struggle for Muslims to define how Islam is integrated into society is as old as the religion itself. Some Muslims see Islam as democratic. Other Muslims use Islam to sanction their authority. Whichever way this goes it has consequences for the whole world." Narrator
19. "I don't think the average Muslim is against the average Westerner. I think a lot of Muslims are against Western politics and Western governments. They perceive what the Western governments do and the influence they have in their countries." Dr. Akbar
20. "American Muslims are comprised of immigrant Muslim and indigenous Muslim communities." Narrator
21. "The verse on polygamy is a good example. It says that four wives are allowed. However, if you fear that you cannot be equal to all of them then you should only choose one (men not really being able to be completely fair)." Abu Bakr Daud, Shari'ah Court Administrator
22. "The immigrant children sometimes have a difficult time because their parents don't know what goes on in the society at large. The kids want to please their parents but they are also living in a society with sometimes different values." Safa Sarzour, principal
23. "The shaykh is troubled when people like Osamah bin Laden issue ruling of their own. These kinds of fatwahs have no basis in religion." Narrator

Teacher Key

Individual Expressions of Faith

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Family and Communal aspects of Muslim practice

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"Mehdi Hatabi believes women should put their families first but not necessarily stay at home. His wife is now teaching. His daughter hopes to go to the university." Narrator

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"Alena believes a woman shouldn't have an abortion unless the woman's life is threatened. She says: The attitude towards sexuality in the West is too liberal for Muslim standards with respect to the standards of those living in the East." Alena Alizar

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Unity and diversity among Muslims

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Muslims in Mainstream American Society

"American Muslims are comprised of immigrant Muslim and indigenous Muslim communities," Narrator

"The African American Muslim community is the largest indigenous Muslim community in the United States. Professor McCloud found that many people thought that all African American Muslims belonged to the Nation of Islam. She thought this was one of the funniest things she had ever heard because she was a Muslim and she didn't know anyone in the Nation of Islam. In fact, most African American Muslims belong to the Muslim American Society headed by Warith D. Muhammad." Narrator

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