



Do Christians pray, fast, and give alms?

In its most basic form, Islam is built upon five pillars: 1. Shahada (declaration of faith), 2. Salat (daily prayers), 3. Sawm (fasting), 4. Zakat (charitable giving), and 5. Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Christianity, on the other hand, was never considered a new religion. Christianity is a relationship with God through Christ. It is not founded on religious pillars, but on the Holy Bible. For this reason, some Muslims assume that Christians do not participate in these rituals. It seems that Christians also perform similar activities as Muslims, such as prayer, fasting, and alms, but in a significantly different way.

How do Muslims pray? Muslims are commanded to pray five times a day, and everything related to prayer is commanded, including the words they speak. Christians, by contrast, are allowed to pray at any time, in any place, and on any subject. For Christians, prayer is a conversation with God. Sometimes Christians ask for forgiveness for their sins, sometimes they seek God's wisdom and guidance regarding a decision they need to make. Sometimes they ask God to meet their urgent needs or to touch and heal a sick friend. Most often, Christians thank God for what He has done and praise Him for who He is. Believing that God loves all of humanity, Christians speak to Him in a conversational tone, as someone who is personally interested in their lives.

How do Muslims fast? Muslims fast in congregation from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan. Christians usually fast individually. They do not eat anything during the day and abstain from eating at night during the fast. Fasting is primarily practiced when a Christian is carrying a particularly heavy burden or is in need of something extraordinary from God.

How do Muslims give to charity? Once a year, a devout Muslim gives a portion of his income to help meet the needs of the poor. Followers of Christ typically give at least ten percent of their income through the church as often as they earn income. In addition to this "tithe," Christians often participate in charitable or philanthropic giving.

There are two distinctions that are more important than those already listed, and that cannot be ignored. How do Muslims pray, fast, and give alms? In a word, publicly. Christ instructed Christians to do these acts in secret. Christ taught that if Christians pray, fast, and give alms in public, they already have the reward they seek. They wanted to be seen as pious, and they were. Christ, on the other hand, taught that if Christians wanted to be rewarded by God for these acts, they should do them in secret, when no one but God was watching. Then God would reward this humble faith. Therefore, Muslims do not see Christians doing these acts and assume that they are not being done.

A final distinction, and perhaps the most important of all, considers the reason why people pursue these activities. Why do Muslims pray, fast, and give alms? Many Muslims believe that performing these duties will one day help them reach heaven. Bible-believing Christians understand that they will go to heaven not by their own merits, but by God's mercy and grace received through faith. These Christians pray, fast, and give alms not because they fear going to hell if they do not do so. They pray, fast, and give alms out of love for God, whose grace saved them from hell.