

Belief in the One God

We live in a secular nominally Christian society. Only 28% of the population believe in God; 38% are atheist, and only 5% go to church (You Gov poll 2016). There are many reasons why people hold back from believing in God:

- They might see no need for God in their lives as they have grown up in a materialistic society.
- The idea of submitting to a higher authority may be alien to them.
- They may have had negative personal experiences with ‘religious’ people.
- They cannot reconcile the existence of evil with God being loving.
- They make science their god believing that the belief in God is unscientific.
- They believe that moral behaviour can be decided upon through the use of reason alone

In this presentation we will explain why it is important to believe in God and what Islam states about God.

Why should we believe in God?

Dwell for a moment on this scenario. Imagine you wake up finding yourself on a fast-moving train. You have no idea how you got there. Panicking, you try to find out from the other passengers the answers to two questions that are troubling you. How did we end up travelling on this train? Where is it headed? To your surprise no one seems to care. Instead, they are busy talking, eating or on their smart phones!

Would you just join the rest of them and be indifferent to your predicament or would you continue to seek answers to your two questions? Whether we like it or not, we are on a train and we are going somewhere. We are on the train of life; the next stop is death...

We did not choose to be born but we are here. Our time in this life is limited; we will eventually die. Death is something no one wants to talk about, yet we all agree it will happen. So, it is natural to reflect on this fact. To question: Why am I here? Is death the end, or another stage on the journey?

Belief in the one God gives us a purpose to life as we realise that this life is a test to prepare us for an everlasting life after death.

‘Did you think that We had created you in vain and that you would not be brought back to Us?’ (Quran, Surah Al-Mu’minun 23:115)

Belief in the one God helps us to constructively deal with the variety of life’s tests: health issues, education, friends, family, social pressures, jobs... *‘God does not burden any soul with more than it can bear...’* (The Qur’an, Surah Al Baqarah 2: 286)

Believing in the one God helps us to attain inner peace as we put our trust in God. Believing in the one God helps us to understand why evil things happen to good people and that justice ultimately prevails (if not in this life, then the next).

What does Islam teach about God?

‘Say, He is the One and only God. The Eternal, the Absolute. None is born of Him nor was He born And none is like Him.’ (The Qur’an, Surah Al-Ikhlās 112)

There is only one God who is unique, eternal and all powerful. The one God has no gender. The name *Allah*, is the Arabic for the God and cannot be made feminine unlike the English term god which can be feminised to goddess. Also, the name *Allah* cannot be made plural unlike god which can be pluralised to gods. Islam also teaches that the God is also the Creator, Ruler and Provider of the universe.

The most common attributes of God mentioned in the *Quran* are *Al Rahman* (The Compassionate) and *Al Raheem* (The Merciful) which are mentioned at the beginning of all the surahs except one. Both these names are linked to the word *rahma* meaning mercy. The root letters of these names are r-h-m which are

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the root letters for *rahim* meaning womb. A mother has a compassionate love for the embryo in her womb. Likewise, God has a compassionate love for His creation, however it is far more than the love that a mother has for her child.

Al Rahman refers to God's compassion which is given to everyone whether they are a believer or not. Expressions of this compassion are the blessings of air, water, food, health and life itself. Also, the sending of prophets was also an expression of this compassion.

Al Raheem refers to the compassion specifically for believers such as the blessings of *Ramadhan*; combining of *salah* for travellers and also for those who are extremely sick. The more we strive to come closer to God the more He loves us granting us the blessing of peace in our hearts.

God's love for us is also shown by Him forgiving us (His mercy). *'but He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Loving.'* (The Qur'an, Surah Al-Buruj, 85:14). He will forgive us. All we need to do is to sincerely repent.

'Say [God says], My servants who have harmed yourselves by your excess, do not despair of God's mercy. God forgives all sins. He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.' (The Qur'an, Surah Az-Zumar, 39 53-54).

When someone becomes a Muslim all their sins are forgiven. In addition, a reward for an accepted *hajj* is that all the sins of the pilgrim are forgiven. God's mercy is also shown by giving us numerous opportunities to repent throughout our lives.

Another important attribute is that God is The Wise. There is wisdom behind the tests that God gives us. They are to purify our hearts so that we can become to come closer to Him. There is wisdom behind what is decreed *halal* and *haram*, the former is good for us and the latter harmful. There is wisdom behind the acts of worship: they purify our hearts; give us inner peace and can even have physical health benefits. For example, *salah* (prayer) makes us flexible and *sawm* (fasting) can reduce high sugar levels. God knows what is best for us as He created us.

Finally, an attribute of God that we sometimes forget is His love of beauty. The prophet (pbuh) mentioned that one cannot enter Paradise if they have even a very small amount of pride in their heart. One of his companions asked for clarification saying "O Prophet of Allah, what if a person likes to dress well?" The Prophet replied: *'God is beautiful and loves beauty. Arrogance is rejecting truth and looking down on people.'* (Muslim). This *hadith* also refers to beauty in the generic sense. Both the *Quran's* message and its recitation are beautiful. Also, we can see the external beauty of creation such as sunsets, mountains, flowers and the harmony in the interconnections in nature such as ecosystems; the water cycle etc. (these expressions of beauty in nature are also signs of God's existence). God also loves the inner beauty of someone who works on purifying their heart.

How can atheists have good character when they do not believe in God?

There are atheists who have a purpose in life wanting to improve the world whether through the fields of politics or education; through campaigning on issues related social justice (e.g. the antiracism movement) or on environmental issues; peace activism or scientific developments etc. Atheists like people who follow religion can also have exemplary character and manners. The difference is that the focus of life for atheists is this life, whereas Islam teaches that we should not only be concerned with this life but should also be striving to achieve success in the hereafter where we will be held accountable for how we lead our lives.

'Our Lord, give us good in this world and in the Hereafter, and protect us from the torment of the fire.' (Quran, Surah Al Baqarah. 2:201)

So how can atheists have good character and be involved in striving to make the world a better place when they do not follow divine revelation? Firstly, many atheists originally come religious backgrounds with

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their parents or grandparents being religious. Others may be humanists which is an intellectual tradition based on reason inspired by the Ancient Greek philosophers which dates back to the Renaissance (outside Italy these humanists were initially Christian).

Reason is important in Islam as long as it does not contradict divine revelation, as humans should not claim to know better than God about what is right and wrong, our knowledge is limited whereas the knowledge of God is not. Moreover, the proper use of reason will help us come closer to God.

‘There truly are signs in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, for those with understanding.’ (Quran, Sura Al Imran, 3:190)

Secondly, people are basically good. Islam teaches that this commitment to helping others and looking after the environment is due to *fitrah* or the pure natural state that all humans are born in (this also includes the inherent belief in the one and only God). *‘Every child is born on this fitrah.’* (Bukhari and Muslim). People though as they grow up due to environmental influences stray away from this *fitrah* to various extents which is why we need divine revelation.

How should the belief in the One God affect our lives?

The belief in God should have an impact on every aspect of our lives and remembering God helps us to remember the purpose of our lives: *‘I created jinn and mankind to worship Me.’* (Quran, Surah Adh-Dharaiyat, 51:56). The Arabic term *ibadah* though means more than worship: it also means obedience. Therefore, we need to strive to make every aspect of our lives a form of worship through submitting to the teachings of Islam and performing them for the sake of God.

By striving to remember God as much as we can, God-willing, we will attain inner peace.

‘Those who have faith and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of God, truly it is in the remembrance of God that hearts find peace.’ (Quran, Surah Ar-Rad, 13:28)

Moreover, remembering God should also result in humility, gratitude, repentance, turning to God for help and should also be reflected in our treatment of others. Our lives should be moulded by gratitude to God for the uncountable blessings that God has given us: our life, our *deen* (way of life), our health, our intellect, our wealth, our families, our friends... True gratitude is not just thanking God but also using these blessings for the sake of God in our lives. Our lives should also reflect the teachings of Islam in our interaction with others.

‘The people God loves the most are those who are of most benefit to others...’ (At-Tabarani)

All of this involves an unlimited commitment; it is up to us to choose whether to go down this path or not.

We would like to thank the Woking Study Circle for allowing us to use this material which is the basis of this document
The additional resources used were:

Abdel Haleem M.A.S. (2015) *The Qur’an: A new translation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Hussain A. M. (2016) *The Muslim Creed: A Contemporary Theological Study*, The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge.

You Gov poll 2016: [Faith Survey | Christianity in the UK](#)

<https://aboutislam.net/reading-islam/understanding-islam/3-signs-of-allahs-mercy-to-his-creation>

www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Europe/The-northern-Renaissance

www.virtualmosque.com/ummah/community/divine-beauty

www.virtualmosque.com/personaldvlp/a-souls-burden

<https://www.whyyislam.org/misconceptions/gods-love/>

For specific signs on God’s existence, please refer to the following article: <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/justin-parrott/the-case-for-allahs-existence-infographic>

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Why believe in God?

We did not choose to be born but we are here. Believing in God gives us a purpose to life as we realise that this life is a test, enabling us to deal with the struggles of health, education, family, social pressures, jobs, and so on. Believing in God also helps us to attain inner peace, helping us to understand that justice ultimately prevails (if not in this life, then in the next).

“Did you think that We had created you in vain and that you would not be brought back to Us?”
(Quran, Surah Al-Mu'minun 23:115)

What does Islam teach about God?

There is only one god who is unique, eternal and all powerful. The name ‘Allah’ has no gender and cannot be made plural. He is loving, forgiving and wise - there is great wisdom behind what we are commanded to do and what we are prohibited from doing, such as fasting. But when we transgress, we only need to ask to be forgiven.

‘Say [God says], My servants who have harmed yourselves by your excess, do not despair of God’s mercy. God forgives all sins. He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’ (The Qur’an, Surah Az-Zumar, 39 53-54)

Belief in the One God Handout

Why do some people not believe in God?

There are many reasons why people hold back from belief in God:

- They might simply see no need for God in their lives.
- The idea of submitting to a higher authority may be alien to them.
- They may have had negative personal experiences with ‘religious’ people.
- They make science their god believing God as unscientific.

How should belief in God affect our lives?

Remembering God should result in humility, gratitude and repentance. We should strive to remember God as much as we can and make every aspect of our lives a form of worship through submitting to the teachings of Islam, to attain inner peace.

‘Those who have faith and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of God, truly it is in the remembrance of God that hearts find peace.’ (Quran, Surah Ar-Rad, 13:28)