

The Nature of Allah



This is the testimony of a Sunni Muslim.

‘Most people ask; ‘Do you believe in God?’ before they ask ‘What is God?’. It is the wrong way around. How can you have a conversation about believing in something or not unless you agree what it is you are talking about? Both questions are important for Muslims, but for Muslims living in non-Muslim countries it is very important to identify that the nature of Allah is not the same as the nature of God in other religions.

Muslims do not disagree on their belief about what God though they may place a different emphasis on how they respond to God. *Tawheed* is a central feature of belief in Allah. It means that there is **only One God**. Along with that, it means that you cannot compare anything to God; obviously I suppose given that we have already established that there is only One God. You also cannot divide the idea of Allah either. So, whereas you would say water is one thing but actually you can break it down into hydrogen and oxygen, not so with Allah. Allah cannot be broken down into anything. To break something down assumes a weakness, because to be bonded together there must be ‘cracks’. It assumes an imperfection OR a comparison; water is great- sure, but hydrogen is also great and can bond into other amazing things and have other amazing effects. Not so with Allah. The effects of Allah can only be due to Him. *Tawheed* is a central point of understanding Allah BUT you will find that *Salafi* Muslims are more likely to put a greater emphasis on it in their general understanding of Islam, whereas a *Sufi* Muslim may be more likely to put more emphasis on the 99 names of Allah.

We cannot know Allah. We cannot define Him. But we can know things of Him that He has given us to help us get closer to Him which is our ultimate goal of this life. In the Qur’an, Allah has given us 99 names that we can call Him by. These names suggest characteristics or activities that Allah is or has done. Some of the names include The Creator, The Friend, The All Seeing, The Lover, The Patient, The Teacher, The Light. These are the characteristics that we hope we can witness regularly. But in Islam, the nature of Allah includes characteristics that we fear and that we do not hope for, such as The Debaser, The Giver of Death, The Humiliator. However, despite fearing these aspects of Allah Muslims submit to them because Allah is the Greatest. We know that this life is not all pleasure and fun and Allah’s plan is bigger than whatever we think of it. Allah is transcendent; that is to say He is greater than our understanding of Him could ever be and greater than the finite world which cannot contain Him, however He cares for His creation and responds to prayers and through this He demonstrates his immanence.

Two of the most important names of Allah are The Merciful and The Compassionate. When Muslims begin anything, we appeal to these two names. Although there are aspects of Allah that we fear, His Mercy is greater than His Wrath and we can see that in our day to day lives.

I believe in The Merciful because I bear witness to Him every second of every day; when I get fed, when I get to sleep, in the comfort of my family, in the very fact that there is a variety of fruits all with exquisite flavours designed especially for our enjoyment. The Mercy of Allah is everywhere if we just look.

We believe in Allah because it is one of the 6 beliefs, because the Prophet Muhammad taught us about Allah, because He speaks to us through the Qur'an and because the Imams in mosques and our parents tell us that this is so. But also there is the intuition, the answered prayers, the secrets whispered in your dreams and the sublime creation that surrounds us in which every single item in existence is a sign of Allah if you just look at it in the right way.

Task: Read through the following testimony and make a chart showing:

All: What Muslims believe about Allah

Most: Why they believe in Allah

Some: Divergent views