

Madrasa Tajweedul Quran

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Eesa (A.S.) & Christmas

Guidance notes for teachers:

1. This is a briefing sheet for teachers. The aim is to create awareness within our Madrasa children regarding our Aqaid and beliefs regarding Eesa (AS), Christmas, Nativity etc. At this time of the year schools also focus on this, thus it is important our children are aware of what our beliefs are. Otherwise there is confusion.
2. The aim of this awareness is to also create "respect, tolerance and understanding" of other beliefs, but at the same time strengthening our own Aqaid and being able to distinguish between Islamic beliefs and other beliefs.
3. This activity must be carried out in your classroom from around 8th December.
4. It must be spread over 4 to 5 days (with a weekend in between).
5. Approximately 10-15 minutes must be spent on this everyday.
6. Make it interesting and interactive! Ask questions, look for pre-knowledge, use the whiteboard etc.
7. This activity is for all age groups, however the teacher must ensure classroom delivery is in a manner that takes age / ability etc into consideration. Thus, there must be more detail and depth for older children and basic awareness for younger children. It is very important teachers take age / ability into consideration.
8. Information in the footnotes is intended to help the teacher, and can be discussed with older age groups.

Day one - Festivals

1. A Festival is a day of happiness for a group of people (usually of the same religion). Different religions have different festivals.
2. Muslims celebrate *Eid*.
3. We have 2 Eids. *Eid-ul-Fitr* (after Ramadhan on 1st Shawwal) and *Eid-ul-Adha* (10th Dhul Hijjah).
4. Eid is a time of Allah's blessings, mercy and happiness.

Christians

1. Christians celebrate *Christmas*.
2. Christians celebrate Christmas to mark the birth of Jesus (Eesa A.S.).
3. However, it is **not** known if Eesa A.S. (Jesus) was really born on this day¹.

¹ Quote: The Bible does not tell us when Jesus was born. However, we know that the angels announced the birth of Christ to the Bethlehem shepherds in the open fields who were tending their flocks by night.. This fact certainly implies that the birth of Jesus could NOT have been on the 25th of December. "The cold of the night in Palestine between December and February is very

4. Some Christians believe Jesus was born on 6th Jan.
5. No one knows exactly when Eesa (as) was born so it is incorrect to designate 25th Dec or any other date as his birthday. 25th Dec was actually the date of a pre-Christian pagan² festival which was later turned into a Christian feast.
6. Recently, in the last 30-40 years, Christmas has become more about "consumerism", where big companies want to make profits in the name of Christmas. Also, many people who celebrate Christmas have no real religious attachment to Jesus (Eesa A.S.) or to his teachings. Infact many may not even know who Jesus (Eesa A.S.) is.

Other Festivals

1. Hindus celebrate Diwali.
2. Sikhs celebrate Baisakhi - a festival to celebrate the New Year.
3. Jews (amongst other festivals) celebrate Passover remembering the time when they were freed from Pharaoh.

Respect & Tolerance

We must respect other people for what they believe. We do not celebrate Christmas and other non-Muslim festivals; however we must not laugh, belittle or make fun of those who celebrate these festivals. Rather, we must make an effort to understand their beliefs and at the same time reflect upon our own beliefs. Islam teaches us to live in peace, respecting each other's differences.

Day two - Muslim beliefs

Carry out an interactive recap of what was discussed on day one before starting day two.

Muslim beliefs regarding Eesa (A.S.)

1. Muslims believe in Jesus as a **Prophet of Allah**, not as the Son of God (like most Christians do). We know him as Prophet Eesa (A.S.).
2. His name has been mentioned many times in the Quran and Ahadith.
3. His mother's name was Maryam (Christians call her Mary), and there is a Surah in the Quran named after her.
4. Eesa (A.S.) was born without a father. This was a miracle from Allah. Allah created prophet Adam (A.S.) without a mother and father. Allah can do anything. Christians believe Jesus had a father called Joseph.

piercing, and it was not customary for the shepherds of Judea to watch their flocks in the open fields later than about the end of October." Hislop, A., The Two Babylons, Loiseaux Brothers, Neptune, N.J. pg 91.

² As it has NOTHING to do with Christianity. It isn't the birthday of Jesus (A.S.) and many Christians know this. Christmas is depicted as being lots of snow, Christmas trees, Santa Claus, Reindeers, magical things – nothing to do with Christianity. It does not snow in the Middle East, there are no Christmas trees there, no such thing as Santa Claus, and no such things as flying reindeers – absolutely nothing to do with Jesus (A.S.). So what we are actually engaging in has no basis in any religion and as Muslims are supposed to be religious, then this is not correct. Christmas has nothing to do with Allah or the Prophets, so as Muslims; it has nothing to do with us.

5. An angel told Maryam (A.S.) that she will have a child without a father. Maryam (A.S.) left Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and gave birth under a palm tree. When people asked her where she got the child from, she pointed towards Eesa (A.S.), who then spoke. This was a miracle from Allah.
6. Eesa (A.S.) said to the people:

"I am a servant of Allah"

"Allah has given me a book" (Injeel)

"Allah has made me into a prophet"

"Allah has made me blessed"

"Allah has told me to perform Salaah and give Zakaah³, and be good to my mother".

The above is mentioned in Surah Maryam.

7. When Eesa (A.S.) got older, he invited people towards Allah. He also told them not to commit sins, and be good people. Due to this, some people turned against him, and some of them tried to kill him. Allah saved him and lifted him to the heavens and he was NOT crucified. The Quran clearly states "they did not kill him, and neither did they crucify him".
8. Christians believe Eesa (A.S.) was arrested, tried and then crucified⁴. We believe that another person was given the resemblance of Eesa (A.S.), and the people crucified this person.
9. Our belief is that he will return before Qayamah, and kill Dajjaal⁵. He will not return as a prophet, as the last prophet is Mohammed (SAW). He will return as a follower of Mohammed (SAW).
10. He will then live in the world and die a normal death. He will be buried in Madinah, in the sacred chamber of our beloved prophet Mohammed (SAW) and his two companions.
11. We believe in ALL the prophets of Allah. A prophet can never be the son of Allah. Allah has no sons or daughters or parents.

Collective Mashq: What should we say after a prophet's name?

You can also request worksheets on this awareness theme. This is for Levels 4+. These can be completed in class on days 4/5.

Day three - What should we do?

Carry out an interactive revision of what was discussed on days one and two.

Our Responsibilities

1. We should first understand and know what our beliefs are regarding Eesa (A.S.), Maryam (A.S.) and the reality of Christmas.
2. We must respect all other faiths, beliefs, cultures and religions.

³ Helping the poor.

⁴ Explain this term to children.

⁵ Anti-Christ.

3. At the same time we will firmly hold on to the teaching of our beloved prophet Mohammed (SAW), and the Quran.
4. If we want to acknowledge a non-Muslim neighbour who is celebrating Christmas, and who may have given you a card and / or a present, we must do this with the correct intention.
5. Our intention must be to "observe our neighbour's rights" (something emphasised a lot in Islam). With this intention we can at anytime of the year give presents, send food and even give a card. Our card can highlight our beliefs about Eesa (A.S.). We can give this to our school teachers and friends as well.
6. Our Madrasa every year sends such cards to all our neighbours, highlighting our beliefs about Eesa (A.S.). This is to create better understanding and to build a good relationship with our neighbours.
7. If you want a copy, tell your parents to email the Madrasa for the message.

Celebrating Christmas

Without going into too many details, note:

- a) It is not permissible to celebrate any aspect of Christmas.
- b) It is Haraam to celebrate any aspect of Christmas.
- c) You may think this is extreme. Actually, it isn't. Christmas is a Pagan festival which has been connected with the Christian concept of Prophet Eesa (A.S.). In Christianity, Jesus is God and this is plain Shirk.
- d) Committing Shirk is a MAJOR sin. Allah says in the Quran that he *can forgive all other sins except Shirk*.
- e) Shirk is to make partners with Allah. Allah is one, he is eternal, he is absolute⁶.
- f) When we try to copy and celebrate other festivals, our Iman (faith) becomes weaker, we lose respect for the Quran and Sunnah, and we slowly become a Muslim who tries to be "an all-rounder". Sometimes, if a person goes too far, they lose their Iman as well.
- g) We must always explain to our friends, neighbours and teachers what our beliefs are. This must be done respectfully.

Nativity Plays in Schools

Note: This section must only be covered with children aged 10+ and "within context" and "understanding". It is also there to address questions children may raise about school nativity plays. The teacher must be able to successfully articulate this section otherwise a "mixed" message will be sent out.

We have learnt that Eesa (A.S.) as a prophet of Allah has nothing to do with Christmas. To link such a great prophet to what is typically "music, alcohol, getting drunk, nudity,

⁶ Older children can look at Surah Ikhlaas.

⁷ Nativity means "birth". It also refers to a "festival commemorating the birth of Jesus".

consumerism, falling into debt, magical things" etc is not just a great injustice, it is also lowering the lofty status of a prophet of Allah.

Thus, Muslim children should not take any part in a school nativity play. This obviously raises many issues in schools with teachers, parents, etc. To address this, there needs to be mutual cooperation. Examples are:

- a) Muslim parents themselves first need to understand and appreciate the issues at hand and related consequences⁸.
- b) Schools headteachers must be informed about Muslim beliefs. A delegation of 5 to 6 parents, consisting of Ulama, Imams, professionals etc should meet and explain to the headteacher our beliefs (ideally in early October). This briefing paper can be given as reference.
- c) Muslim children must be given the option of opting out from the school nativity play. This must be without pressure or any "fear" of consequences. Many Muslim parents are afraid to raise this issue for fear of being stigmatised.
- d) This issue must be tackled in a respectful and professional manner. There must be cooperation and understanding on both sides.
- e) In schools where there are a lot of Muslim children, parents, Imams, Ulama, community volunteers etc must organise a "play" that highlights Muslim beliefs. This can run parallel to the school's nativity play. This will also highlight different beliefs, and a culture of mutual respect can be promoted. For this to be successful not only do we need support from the school, parents etc must also be ready to help and give time to make this project a success.
- f) Muslims are not "offended" by school nativity plays, rather we respect all other beliefs, but at the same we want to be able to adhere to our own teaching and beliefs. Schools do not need to be "afraid of offending" parents / pupils of other faiths, rather there must be an open culture of "cooperation and collaboration.
- g) The media can really dramatise issues relating to the school nativity play. This is unfortunately their hallmark. We must continue with our efforts and promote better understanding, respect and harmony.

And Allah knows best.

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⁸ Before Islam, Arabia was a pagan country. But none of the pagan customs survived after Islam. There was no such thing as 'the people wanted it very much so the Imam allowed it.' Islam completely eradicated not only the beliefs but also the practices and the symbols of paganism. This in itself is a miracle that serious students of comparative religions must reflect upon. Where as in Christianity, the church has made huge concessions to please people. Islam has countered this by prohibiting innovations in Deen.

Appendix

Further reading:

Isa - A Prophet of Islam

By: Shaykh Muhammad Saleem Dhorat

Published by: Islamic Dawah Academy - Leicester UK

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