

The **ISLAM** Project
MODULE GUIDE

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MUHAMMAD'S EXAMPLE IN ACTION



Jameel Johnson
Congressional Chief of Staff
Washington, DC

Recent events have brought heightened attention to Islam, but not necessarily deeper understanding. The Islam Project can help to change that by raising public awareness, offering information, and bringing people together in dialogue. The Project uses as a springboard *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* and *Muslims*, two important documentaries that can help members of your community better understand Islam and the people who practice it. This module, which includes clips from both films, briefly explores the experience of Muslims living in the United States.

FACILITATING A DIALOGUE

Discussions are most productive when people feel safe, comfortable, and challenged. That balance can be difficult to achieve when the topic is religion or politics or prejudice, so you may want to consider finding an experienced facilitator for your event. If you plan to facilitate the dialogue yourself, think about how you will ensure that the tenor remains respectful and everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

In planning an event, be clear about what you hope to accomplish. This module can:

- Help participants **learn** more about Islam and those who practice it.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to **listen** to each other, hear diverse voices, and gain new insight.
- Inspire participants to take the **lead** in their community by resolving to act. Below are suggestions for meeting these goals. Choose the ones that best meet your needs.

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LEARN

For some people, providing basic information will be an appropriate and useful starting point.

Najah Bazy summarizes the role of Muhammad in a Muslim's life: "Our reverence is to God. And our reference is to him [Muhammad]. So how I walk, and how I speak, and how I carry myself, and how I treat my husband, and how I treat my mother and father, and how I behave as a sister and a daughter and a nurse and a friend and a neighbor, that's all Prophet Muhammad in action."

As people view the films, ask them to listen for the specific lessons that Muslims take from Muhammad's example. The module includes all of the following:

- If you want to serve God, serve people.
- Act to correct injustices in the world.
- People, especially leaders, should act with integrity.
- Material wealth is not as important as being a good person.
- Be strong and strive to overcome difficulties.
- Even those who are orphans or immigrants or facing discrimination can succeed.
- Value humility, respect, and gratitude.
- Salvation comes from the acts you do in this world.
- Be respectful of other religions.
- Value life — saving one life is as if you've saved all of humanity.

Compare or contrast this list of values with the values that American media typically associate with Islam.

LISTEN

When we listen actively to others' stories, we're more likely to understand them rather than judge them. What can you learn — about serving the community, for example — from what people in the films reveal?

Concepts of Service

All the people featured in this module are inspired by Islam to serve their communities. What do you hear in their words about how they, as Muslims, define sacrifice, success, work ethic, and responsibility? How are these definitions similar or different from your own?

Part of Muslim faith is to reach out to the poor and to those who are not Muslim. Najah Bazy takes a group of kids to work in a soup kitchen because she believes that charitable work and helping non-Muslims are core precepts of Islam. How might you reach out to help people beyond the confines of your own religious group or neighborhood?

The man who is studying to become a Catholic deacon and is reaching beyond the confines of his group to support the work of the soup kitchen admits that he once knew little about Islam and judged Islam by its most stereotypical or extreme representatives. What might you do to ensure that your community has access to accurate information about Islam? What might you do to involve Muslims in community and interfaith charitable projects?

"If you see something wrong, change it with your hands. If you're not able to, then speak out against it. If you're not able to do that, then feel bad about it in your heart. But that is the weakest form of faith. Wherever possible, the Muslim should try to take action. And not let an injustice go by without calling it what it is and asking for change." — Jameel Johnson

"I know you're all nurses, and I know that you're in this profession just as I am, to serve, to do a good job. . . . When you transcend culture, you arrive at a universal place where our humanness is all the same. . . . We all cry when someone we love dies. When we deliver . . . we all experience labor. . . . [And in serving the immigrant community resulting from the Gulf War there] are families [that] have been torn by war. And so they get here and the helpers are here. And it's quite obligatory to be that helper." — Najah Bazy

"The fire fighter, he'll risk his life to save you whether you're black, brown, red, Jew, Muslim, Christian, atheist. He's not asking you what your philosophy is or looking at your color. He's looking to get you out of the building. That's why many people say that fire fighting is a calling, because of that self-sacrifice. The willingness to just put others before yourself." — Kevin James

The people in the films are inspired by their faith to do good works. How might belief in pursuing justice, putting others before yourself, or serving community be used as a justification for violence? Consider historical examples where this has happened. Compare those examples to the current rhetoric of those who use Islam to justify acts of terrorism.

LEAD

The film clips can help people think of ways to lead their community to action.

Najah Bazy conducts trainings for nurses to increase their awareness of how their stereotypes about Muslims influence the care they provide. How might you arrange for medical and other service personnel in your community to receive such training?

Jameel Johnson emphasizes Muhammad's teaching that a Muslim is called on to correct injustice: "My goal is not necessarily to simply seek votes or campaign money or to be accepted as part of the game. As Muslims we must seek justice, so what I try to do is educate, . . . decrease prejudice, and increase understanding. If I practice my Islam on the job without trying to interfere with anyone else's practice . . . then I make it easier for the next Muslim. . . . If I do a good job, then some of the prejudice, some of the misunderstanding goes away." — Jameel Johnson

As a group, can you come to consensus and name the injustices present in your community? What might you do to correct those injustices?