

Core Curriculum

2 Foundations of Islam - Theology

2.1 **Entering Islam: The Shahada**

The door through which one enters Islam is called the shahāda. Shahāda literally means to testify or bear witness similar to how one would testify in court. The shahāda in the Muslim religion is to testify that 1) there is no deity but Allah alone and that 2) Muhammad (s) is the Messenger of Allah. The first part of the shahāda means that we should reject polytheism and affirm monotheism* only.

It also means that we should worship God only and make Him a priority in our lives. If one makes the world and its contents (like money, power or fame) the sole object of one's love, then one is, in reality, worshipping a "god" other than Allah. We cannot emphasize this point enough. Worshipping in Islam simply means to surrender one's heart, soul and mind to something.

The second part of the shahāda is affirming that Muhammad is a Prophet and Messenger sent by Allah to guide humankind for people's salvation. It also means that as the last and final Prophet and Messenger from Allah, we are to take his teachings as the blueprint of how to lead the proper religious life.

This not only includes various ritual practices, but also proper mannerisms and behavior. If a Muslim wants to perfect his or her Islam, he or she must also pay heed to the Prophet Muhammad's command of following his Ahl al-Bayt (as). The Ahl al-Bayt were the divinely guided successors after his death.

Simply believing and performing ritual practices, however, is not

enough. A Muslim needs to go further by always struggling to better himself or herself and always being mindful that Allah is watching. The only way that bettering oneself, that is, transforming one's inner self, can come about is through inner humility. For it is only in humility and not in arrogance that the human heart truly surrenders itself to God.