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Test Your Savvy on Religion

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Time for a pop quiz.



Damon Winter/The New York Times
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On the Ground

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The New York Times reported recently on a [Pew Research Center poll](#) in which religious people turned out to be remarkably uninformed about religion. Almost half of Catholics didn't understand Communion. Most Protestants didn't know that Martin Luther started the Reformation. Almost half of Jews didn't realize Maimonides was Jewish. And atheists were among the best informed about religion.

So let me give everybody another chance. And given the uproar about Islam, I'll focus on extremism and fundamentalism — and, as you'll see, there's a larger point to this quiz. Note that some questions have more than one correct choice; answers are at the end.

1. Which holy book stipulates that a girl who does not bleed on her wedding night should be stoned to death?

- a. Koran
- b. Old Testament
- c. (Hindu) Upanishads

2. Which holy text declares: "Let there be no compulsion in religion"?

- a. Koran
- b. Gospel of Matthew
- c. Letter of Paul to the Romans

3. The terrorists who pioneered the suicide vest in modern times, and the use of women in terror attacks, were affiliated with which major religion?

- a. Islam
- b. Christianity
- c. Hinduism

4. "Every child is touched by the devil as soon as he is born and this contact makes him cry. Excepted are Mary and her Son." This verse is from:

- a. Letters of Paul to the Corinthians
- b. The Book of Revelation
- c. An Islamic hadith, or religious tale

5. Which holy text is sympathetic to slavery?

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- a. Old Testament
- b. New Testament
- c. Koran

6. In the New Testament, Jesus' views of homosexuality are:

- a. strongly condemnatory
- b. forgiving
- c. never mentioned

7. Which holy text urges responding to evil with kindness, saying: "repel the evil deed with one which is better."

- a. Gospel of Luke
- b. Book of Isaiah
- c. Koran

8. Which religious figure preaches tolerance by suggesting that God looks after all peoples and leads them all to their promised lands?

- a. Muhammad
- b. Amos
- c. Jesus

9. Which of these religious leaders was a polygamist?

- a. Jacob
- b. King David
- c. Muhammad

10. What characterizes Muhammad's behavior toward the Jews of his time?

- a. He killed them.
- b. He married one.
- c. He praised them as a chosen people.

11. Which holy scripture urges that the "little ones" of the enemy be dashed against the stones?

- a. Book of Psalms
- b. Koran
- c. Leviticus

12. Which holy scripture suggests beating wives who misbehave?

- a. Koran
- b. Letters of Paul to the Corinthians
- c. Book of Judges

13. Which religious leader is quoted as commanding women to be silent during services?

- a. The first Dalai Lama
- b. St. Paul
- c. Muhammad

Answers:

1. b. [Deuteronomy 22:21](#).
 2. a. Koran, 2:256. But other sections of the Koran do describe coercion.
 3. c. Most early suicide bombings were by [Tamil Hindus](#) (some secular) in Sri Lanka and India.
 4. c. Hadith. Islam teaches that Jesus was a prophet to be revered.
 5. All of the above.
 6. c. Other parts of the New and Old Testaments object to homosexuality, but there's no indication of Jesus' views.
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- 7. c. [Koran, 41:34](#). Jesus says much the same thing in different words.
- 8. b. Amos 9:7
- 9. all of them
- 10. all of these. Muhammad's Jewish wife was seized in battle, which undermines the spirit of the gesture. By some accounts he had a second Jewish wife as well.
- 11. a. Psalm 137
- 12. a. Koran 4:34
- 13. b. St. Paul, both in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, but many scholars believe that neither section was actually written by Paul.

And yes, the point of this little quiz is that religion is more complicated than it sometimes seems, and that we should be wary of rushing to inflammatory conclusions about any faith, especially based on cherry-picking texts. The most crucial element is perhaps not what is in our scriptures, but what is in our hearts.

I invite you to comment on this column on my blog, [On the Ground](#). Please also join me on [Facebook](#), watch my [YouTube videos](#) and follow me on [Twitter](#).

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