

Christianity and Islam: The Nursing Worldview Perspective

Christianity and Islam: The Nursing Worldview Perspective

Rebekah James

NUR 301: Worldview Perspectives: The Christian Nurse

Dr. Elenice Lima

Alliance University

## Christianity and Islam: The Nursing Worldview Perspective

“Treat the patient, not the scans.” This is heard ever so often in the practice of nursing. While relying on diagnostic tests may provide an overall picture of the patient’s physical state, it provides neither knowledge nor a path to the relief of the patient’s spiritual state. In both Christianity and Islam, means are provided to intervene in the spiritual care of patients. First, an understanding of the human being and disease in each religion is needed to understand where spiritual healing stems from. Second, a comparison of both Christianity and Islam’s paths toward spiritual healing will be analyzed with respect to nursing practice as a Christian nurse.

Christian worldviews offer evidence of human existence through the Bible. We can see that mankind was created by God in Genesis 1:27 which states “God created man in his own image”. Furthermore, Genesis 2:7 illustrates the creation of mankind when God breathed life into man. As Christians, our physical, spiritual, and daily social natures should reflect who we are in Christ through our actions. Since we were created in the image of God, this means that we are set apart from this world to live according to God’s will and purpose. “With purpose, Christians strive to achieve peace from within and live in line with Christ’s teachings” (Robinson, 2018).

God created his children with individual purposes. Though we wish to walk this life without suffering, some are burdened with illnesses that can cause them to question their walk with Christ. “Christians are vowed to bare the cross and follow him and learn the path of way, truth, and light” (Robinson, 2018). Through free will and the Ten Commandments, Christians are given the choice to walk with Christ, however, it is the fall of man that brought sin and disease upon mankind, not the will of God nor His image. God encourages his children to live according to the laws He established in the Bible.

Our walks of faith as Christian nurses keep us accountable for viewing each patient as a child of God and encourage us to maintain the utmost standard of care. Each patient will present

## Christianity and Islam: The Nursing Worldview Perspective

with differing types and stages of illness, which should not deter Christian nurses from the treatment plan of the patient. The nurse should be mindful of the fact that the disease portrayed is not an attribute of the person, nor a reflection of God, but rather the consequences of the fall of mankind.

Contrary to Christianity, Islam holds the belief that humanity was created by their God, Allah (Qur'an 38:71-72). Muslims practice their beliefs based on Allah's revelation and believe that caring for others will prove their obedience to Allah. Similar to Christianity, Muslims who practice their faith demonstrate obedience to Allah through acts of kindness to those who are weak and suffer (Isworo, 2022). Islamic teachings found in the Qur'an depict Allah as the creator of the heavens and earth in addition to creating mankind from dust (Robinson, 2018). In turn, Muslims understand that their life was a gift from Allah and that all that comes from him should be glorified.

Muslims believe the words of Allah were revealed through Muhammad, the messenger of God, who compiled prophetic sayings into the holy books of their religion- the Qur'an and Hadith. These holy books, among many other rules and regulations, have guidelines that list how Muslims should act in terms of health promotion and healing as well as how one should live daily. Additionally, Muslims believe that the prophet Muhammad was "preceded by a long succession of prophets before him that include Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, and Jesus" (Islamic Networks Group, 2023). Islamic views understand that through Allah's favor and his grace, unity is most important among all nationalities, religions, and ethnicities (Robinson, 2018). The Qur'an emphasizes that maintaining a healthy relationship with Allah will reveal one's purpose in life.

## Christianity and Islam: The Nursing Worldview Perspective

In most worldviews, illness is seen with a negative connotation. Nonetheless, Muslims believe that physical ailments are Allah's way of testing one's faith and a way to the atonement of sins. If one has good health, it is seen as a blessing from Allah (National Library of Medicine, 2023). Unforeseen obstacles that are permissible through Allah are considered a test of their faith (Robinson, 2018). Muslims believe that whether one has a cure for a disease or not, without divine intervention, one cannot not be healed. Muslims must have faith in Allah and his authority for healing to take place.

Regarding nursing practice, as a Christian nurse, compassion, reverence, and love should be displayed toward all patients regardless of their religion, gender, or beliefs. While Christians act in this manner to reflect their love for God and humanity, Muslims do so to reflect their love for Allah.

Cultural competency is crucial for healthcare professionals such as nurses because it affects their direct plan of care and medical treatment. Understanding specific ethical codes will enable safe and competent patient-centered care while building trust between nurses and Muslim patients. Understanding ethical codes such as maintaining privacy, avoiding physical contact, and adhering to medications and dietary restrictions is required prior to curating treatment plans (National Library of Medicine, 2023). "In a hospital setting, Muslims prioritize gender-concordant care providers, providing food consistent with religious requirements and space for prayer" (National Library of Medicine, 2023). Dietary restrictions, for example, prevent Muslim patients from consuming non-Halal animal fats, pork, or byproducts of pork during hospitalizations. In turn, certain medications that contain gelatin or other pork-based ingredients are forbidden and should be explained to the patient in advance (National Library of Medicine, 2023).

## Christianity and Islam: The Nursing Worldview Perspective

Special meal accommodations must also be made by the healthcare team.

Muslim patients diagnosed with diabetes may find it challenging to comply with dietary restrictions, especially during Ramadan. Ramadan requires Muslims to fast from sunrise to sunset which can result in significant health problems (National Library of Medicine, 2023). Furthermore, medical decisions are based solely on the support structure provided by the patient's family. However, cultural values and decisions made by Muslim families may impede the treatment plan curated by their healthcare provider (National Library of Medicine, 2023).

As nurses, embracing Muslim cultures and traditions are important to their care. Christian nurses should maintain respect, professionalism, and avoid judgment if their Muslim patients deny recommended treatment based on their religious beliefs. Nurses are on the front lines caring for patients daily and by building positive relationships with patients, we can be the source of encouragement they need to facilitate their recovery. The call to serve others through the nursing profession allows us to show God's love to His people. Building a relationship with God will allow his love for us to be poured out to others as referenced in 1 John 4:19 "We love because he first loved us".

References

- Answers to frequently asked questions about Islam and Muslims*. Islamic Networks Group (ING). (2023, March 1). Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://ing.org/resources/for-all-groups/answers-to-frequently-asked-questions/answers-to-frequently-asked-questions-about-islam-and-muslims/>
- Isworo, A. (2022, January 1). *Islamic perspective on nursing and the philosophy of science*. medRxiv. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.04.28.22274408v1.full#ref-11>
- National Center for Biotechnology Information*. Cultural Competence in the Care of Muslim Patients and Their Families. (2023, February 8). Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499933/>
- Worldview comparison: Islam and Christianity*. Russia Robinson. (2018, January 10). Retrieved April 20, 2023, from <https://russiarobinson.wordpress.com/2018/01/10/worldview-comparison-islam-and-christianity/>