

# Review: A Concise Guide to the Life of Muhammad

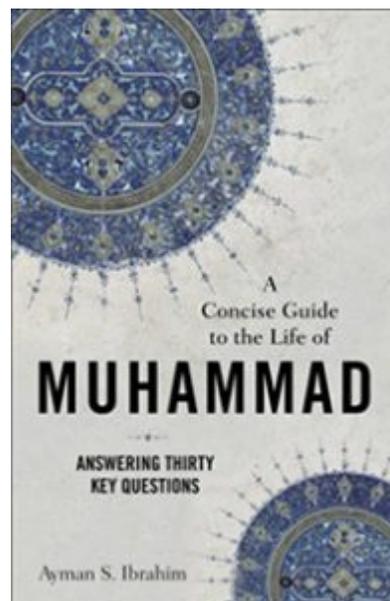
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## *A Concise Guide to the Life of Muhammad*

By Ayman S. Ibrahim (Baker Academic)

This companion to Ayman S. Ibrahim's earlier book, [A Concise Guide to the Quran](#), shares many of the same characteristics. Both are written to answer 30 key questions. Both offer a respectful and nuanced picture of Islamic belief. Both approach their subjects with the keen eye and rigorous investigation of a diligent scholar.

In this book, Ibrahim—director of the Center for Christian Understanding of Islam at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—offers a succinct but incisive exploration of Muhammad's history and his teachings. In one important section, he makes a distinction between three Muhammads—the legendary mythic figure of folk Islam, the prophet revered by observant Muslims and the historical individual known primarily for his military exploits.



Ibrahim also carefully examines the primary source of information about Muhammad—the *hadiths* (sayings or teachings) attributed to him. He

points out none of the collections of sayings are from the time of Muhammad or the generation immediately following his death. In fact, none are from the first two centuries of Islamic history. He notes Sunni and Shiite Muslims recognize different *hadiths* as authoritative. He also acknowledges militant groups hold tenaciously to some *hadiths* that progressive and moderate Muslims do not take literally.

Ibrahim begins the book with a helpful timeline of key dates in the life of Muhammad, and he concludes it with a handy glossary of terms.

Both in terms of the information he provides and the critical-but-respectful approach he takes in handling primary sources, Ibrahim offers valuable insights and a good example for Christians to follow as they seek to talk about matters of faith with their Muslim neighbors. There's something to be said for both "grace and truth."

*Ken Camp, managing editor*

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