

Muslim understanding of jihad is much different from that presented by those who characterize jihad as an extremist movement to wage violent war on the non-Muslim world. Translation or meaning of jihad is not “holy war” but closer to “to struggle.” Jihad is holy war only in the sense that it is a personal struggle to come to live under God's laws and to positively influence the world around you that is not living by God's laws (or in a better case scenario, to maintain a world around you that is following God's laws).

Qur'an allows for self-defense but does not allow for terrorism or for Muslims to wage war against non-believers simply because they are non-believers. True jihad is divided into greater (or personal) jihad and lesser (or world) jihad. They are fought simultaneously.

When significant progress is achieved in the greater jihad, a person gains advantage in the lesser jihad. Personal jihad is greater because the world jihad cannot be won without winning the personal jihad and because the primary obligation of a God follower is to get the self in a position to go to heaven even if no others around the person are struggling to put themselves in position for heaven.

Greater jihad is a personal holy war to submit the will to God - to live by God's laws. Lesser jihad is the second responsibility of true followers. It is the struggle to survive within and influence the world around them. In the lesser jihad, true followers influence others to follow God by providing role models, teachers, and mentors in the greater jihad. A goal of the greater and lesser jihads is to bring about a state of non-violence and just behavior within the self and world.

Individuals and coalitions can experience some success in world jihad though influencing family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances, and even entire communities to move toward the ways of God. The ultimate victory of world jihad, however, is for true followers to work together to establish a kingdom (or nation state) of God of earth. This depends upon a community of jihadis (people advanced to a certain level in the greater jihad) coming into existence as a nation to allow for the rule of true sharee'ah law. Liberal democratic forms of government allow for such rule provided the people elected to office – and the people electing them - understand and adhere to true sharee'ah law in the values and behaviors they practice. Sharee'ah law does not need to be enforced through passage of laws restricting behavior, it is enforced on the self by the self through individual choices of behavior.

Jihad is not a concept exclusive to Islam. In his book, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, John Piper - Baptist minister for more than 25 years and lifelong student of the Bible - lists 50 demands he has chronicled from the words of Christ in the Christian scriptures. Demand 22 is titled, “Strive to Enter Through the Narrow Door, For All of Life is War.” Referring to and interpreting Christian scriptures, Piper argues the words of Christ imply “we must struggle, wrestle, and exert ourselves” in a battle to enter God's kingdom. Piper explains this struggle or battle does not mean we wage war on people but upon sin itself, “especially our own . . . (for) it is only our own sin that can keep us from entering the kingdom.” Hence, Piper states a Christian understanding exactly the same as that of Islam of the greater jihad or struggle to submit our will to God as a battle we must win to enter heaven.

Citation:

Joseph Ali bin Muhammad. "What Is Jihad?" <http://SpokaneJihad.com>