INTRODUCTION: To Muslims, the Quran contains the very words of Allah (God). The term quran itself means “recitation” in Arabic, and faithful Muslims believe that the angel Jibreal (Gabriel) spoke God’s words to Muhammad, who then recited them. Copying the Quran itself was an act of piety [religious devotion], memorizing it was the starting point for Muslim education, and reciting it was both an art form and a high honor. The Quran is organized into 114 Surahs (chapters) and it was revealed to Muhammad over a period of some twenty-two years.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS:
1. What are the characteristics of Allah?
2. What religious practices are prescribed for Muslims in these passages? What are their purposes in the life of believers?
3. What specific requirements for a Muslim’s social life do these selections contain? How would you describe the Quran’s view of a good society?
4. What attitude toward Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims peoples do these passages suggest?
5. According to the Quran, under what circumstances should Muslims fight? How might the passages discussing war and fighting be misinterpreted?
6. What is the Quran’s stance on the following topics: learning and business?

SURAH 1
In the name of God, the Most Gracious and the Dispenser of Grace. All praise is due to God alone, the sustainer of all the worlds...Lord of the Day of Judgment. Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid. Guide us in the straight way, the way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessing, not of those who have been condemned, nor those who go astray.

And they [Jews and Christians] say, “Be Jews” — or, “Christians” — “and you shall be on the right path.” Say: “No, but ours [our belief] is the creed [belief] of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false. Abraham did not believe things were divine other than God.” Say: “We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ismael [Abraham’s son by his concubine, Hagar] and Isaac and Jacob, and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed [bestowed] to Moses and Jesus; and that which has been vouchsafed to all the other prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them...."

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day: and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man: and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon: and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: in all this there are messages indeed for people who use their reason....
True piety does not consist in turning your faces toward the east or the west, but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day [the Day of Judgment]; and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance [wealth] – however much he himself may cherish it – upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer [traveler], and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage....

Fasting is ordained [intended] for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of God....

And fight in God's good cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression, for verily, God does not love aggressors. And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away, for oppression is even worse than killing. And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship [a mosque] unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense [repayment] of those who deny the truth. But if they desist [cease to be an aggressor] , behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who willfully do wrong....

And perform the pilgrimage to Mecca in honor of God; and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford....

There shall be no coercion [pressuring through force] in the matters of faith....

God has made buying and selling lawful and usury [the lending of money to be paid back with interest] unlawful. Hence, whoever desists from usury may keep his past gains and it will be for God judge him; but as for those who return to it they are destined for the fire....God deprive usurous gains of all blessing, whereas He blesses charitable deeds with manifold [multiple] increase.

**Surah 4**

Men shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, whether it be little or much....

And as for those of your women who become guilty of immoral conduct, call upon four from among you who have witnessed their guilt; and if these bear witness thereto, confine the guilty women to their houses until death takes them away or God opens for them a way [through repentance]. Therefore punish both of the guilty parties; but if they both repent and mend their ways, leave them alone: for behold, God is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace....

And it will not be within your power to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire it; and so, do not allow yourselves to incline toward one to the exclusion of the other, leaving her in a state, as it were, of having and not having a husband.