



The roots of Sufism go back to the Middle-Eastern and Near-Eastern founding of Islam. As Islam spread from Arabia to other parts of the world, it began to interact with new cultures and philosophies. Some Muslims came under these influences, and began to develop a more mystically-oriented version of Islam that was centered less on sharia law and more on a hunger for God and longing for union with Him (though sharia was rarely dispensed with completely; it was usually reinterpreted mystically). It took the emphasis on God's love from the Christian mystics, an emphasis on ascending spiritually through secret, esoteric knowledge from the Gnostics, and an interpretation of "union" with God from the pantheism of both Neoplatonism and the Indian religions.

Early on, mainstream Muslims persecuted the Sufis. However, they eventually brought Sufism within the mainstream of acceptable Islamic thought. The Sufi path is marked by the eventual absorption or annihilation of one's personal identity, first into one's spiritual guide and then into God.

At the core of most Sufi belief is a deep yearning for intimacy with God. Despite the pantheism which is often mixed in with the Sufi understanding of God's nature, Sufis often have a more biblical understanding of God's character related to His love for humankind rather than the stern understanding of more orthodox expressions of Islam.



► Pray

- Pray that God would reveal Himself directly to Sufis who are truly "hungering and thirsting for righteousness."
- Pray for the Lord to raise up more people with a desire to reach Sufis, as well as discernment and boldness for them in their witness of Jesus.
- Pray against the powers of darkness who want to keep Sufis from grasping "...the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor 4:6 [NKJV]).