

INTRODUCTION TO DA‘WAH

The Arabic term *da‘wah* is derived from the verb دَعَا *da‘aa* which means “to call; to invite; and to supplicate, i.e. to call on God”. It is used to refer to the act of conveying or calling people to the message of Islaam. In that context it is a contraction of the phrase *ad-da‘wah ilallaah* (calling to Allaah).

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ

“Say: This is my way and I invite to Allaah with certain knowledge ...”

(*Soorah Yoosuf*, 12: 108)

Virtues of Da‘wah

Da‘wah was the basic mission of the prophets of God. They were raised up among their respective people to call them to the worship of Allaah alone and to abandon the worship of the various false gods that they had invented.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“I have sent to every nation a messenger [proclaiming:] Worship Allaah and avoid the [worship of] false gods.” *Soorah an-Nahl*, (16): 36

There are numerous verses in the Qur’aan which describe how the former prophets invited their people to Allaah. These stories serve as examples to the last Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers. Furthermore, there are a number of other verses in which Allaah specifically exhorts the Prophet (ﷺ) to convey the message of Islaam to people.

وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Call to your Lord and do not be among the pagans.”

Soorah al-Qaṣaṣ, (28): 87

Consequently, Allaah praises those who engage in this noble endeavor as being the best in speech.

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Who is better in speech than one who calls to Allaah, does righteous deeds and says indeed I am among the Muslims.” *Soorah Fussilat*, (41): 33

The best words that any human being can speak are words of guidance inviting people to the purpose of their creation; the worship of God. This being the case, the reward for giving *da‘wah* must be tremendous. Thus, it is no surprise to find that the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed the great reward for this righteous pursuit saying,

((مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَىٰ خَيْرٍ فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ فَاعِلِهِ))

“Whoever directs someone to do good will gain the same reward as the one who does good.”¹

He was also reported to have said,

((مَنْ دَعَا إِلَىٰ هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورٍ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ))

¹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1050, no. 4665.

شيئا)).

“Whoever calls to guidance will receive the same reward as the one who follows him without any decrease in the reward of [his follower].”²

As a show of divine grace, Allaah has promised that every good deed would be rewarded tenfold and more.³ According to the Prophet (ﷺ), one who guides others to do good deeds gets a reward equivalent to their reward for doing good. Consequently, people guided to righteousness earn, throughout their lives, good deeds for those who guided them. Such an immeasurable reward is specifically granted to those involved in the prophetic mission of *da‘wah*.

As an illustration of the magnitude of the reward for guiding others to Islaam, the Prophet (ﷺ) was also reported by Sahl ibn Sa‘d as saying:

((لَأَنَّ يَهْدِيَ اللَّهُ بِكَ رَجُلًا خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَكَ حُمْرُ النَّعَمِ))

“For Allaah to guide someone by your hand is better for you than having red camels.”⁴ Camels were considered the most valuable property in ancient Arabia and the red variety was the most prized of all. Consequently, the Prophet (ﷺ) here indicates that guiding others to the truth is worth more than our most prized possessions in this world. This fact is further reiterated in Chapter al-‘Asr where Allaah declares humankind in a state of loss with the exception of “those who advise each other with truth.”⁵

Allaah also hinged the label of honor, “best of humankind,” granted to the Muslim nation on the fulfillment of their *da‘wah*-duty of calling humankind to righteousness and prohibiting sin among them.

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

“You are the best nation raised up for humankind. You enjoin righteousness, forbid corruption and you believe in Allaah.” *Soorah aal-Imraan*, (3): 110

Thus, the Muslim nation has been given the status of the best nation because of their belief in Allaah, their promotion of morality and their opposition to vice. If they fail to believe in Allaah by applying the *Sharee‘ah* in their governments and promote vice by permitting *ribaa* based economies, the production of alcohol, and the spread of lewdness, they may sink below the worst of disbelieving nations. Consequently, Muslim nations top the list of the most corrupt nations on earth today. Muslim students in Bangla Desh riot annually for the right to cheat in their exams.

Obligation of Da‘wah

Calling to Allaah is generally considered by scholars of Islaam as an obligation on every Muslim according to their abilities. It has been instructed by Allaah in the Qur’aan and by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in his *Sunnah*. With regard to its obligation, Sh. Ibn Baaz said the following:

“Da‘wah is an obligation on everyone who has the ability, from scholars to Muslim rulers

² *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1406, no. 6470.

³ *Soorah al-An‘aam*, 6: 160.

⁴ *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 4, pp. 156-7, no. 253.

⁵ *Soorah al-‘Asr*, 103: 3.

and missionaries, until the message of Islaam reaches every corner of the earth in the various languages of the people. This is the type of propagation that Allaah has commanded. He, Most High, instructed His Prophet (ﷺ) [to disseminate the message of Islaam as follows]:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ

“O Messenger, convey what was revealed from your Lord.”

(Soorah al-Maa'idah, 5: 67)

Thus, it was obligatory on the Messenger (ﷺ) to deliver the message in the same way that it was obligatory on all the messengers of God – peace and blessings of Allaah upon them and upon all who follow them in conveying the message.

...Therefore, it is obligatory on the whole nation, from rulers and scholars to businessmen and others to convey this religion from Allaah and His Messenger (ﷺ), and explain it to people in their various languages.”⁶

However, scholars have made a distinction between the individual obligation of *da'wah* and the community obligation. Sh. Ibn Baaz stated the following:

There are two levels of *Da'wah* to Allaah: The first is *Fard' ayn* (an individual obligatory duty) and the second is *Fard' kifayah* (a collective obligatory duty). It is *Fard' ayn* on you when no one in [your] country, region or tribe takes up the responsibility of enjoining good and forbidding evil, if you have knowledge. It becomes obligatory on you specifically to give *da'wah*, to enlighten people to the rights of Allaah, to command what is good and prohibit evil. However, if there are present those who give *da'wah* teach people and guide them, then it would be *sunnah* and not obligatory for others who also have knowledge of the *Sharee'ah*.⁷

Regarding the obligation of *da'wah* in this age, Sh. Ibn Baaz also said:

“At a time when there is a shortage of callers, when evil is prevalent and ignorance dominates, *da'wah* becomes *fard' ayn* on everyone according to their ability.”⁸

Proof for the community obligation of *da'wah* can be found in the following verse and others similar to it:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Let there arise among you a group inviting to all that is good, enjoining righteousness and forbidding evil. Those are the successful ones.”

(Soorah Aal 'Imraan, 3: 104)

Allaah states that a group of the believers should shoulder the responsibility of promoting virtue and prohibiting vice in the society. Because religion is not merely a personal affair as perceived in the secular West, it forms the very fabric of society. Policing the society should not be left up to the government alone but should be shared by members of the communities which constitute the society.

On the other hand, the individual obligation of *da'wah* can be seen indicated in the following verse:

⁶ Words of Advice Regarding *Da'wah*, pp. 47-8.

⁷ Words of Advice Regarding *Da'wah*, p. 18.

⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

أذْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good preaching.”

(Soorah an-Nahl, 16: 125)

The Prophet (ﷺ) is personally addressed in this verse and by extension all individual believers are instructed to invite people to Islaam. In case this instruction was perceived as limited to only certain individuals like scholars or groups, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself broadened the scope of responsibility by making it the individual responsibility of everyone who had any knowledge saying:

((بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً))

“Convey from me, even if it be only a single verse.”⁹

Every Muslim must learn some verses or chapters of the Qur’aan for their daily prayers. Among the shortest and most popular chapters is *Soorah al-Ikhlāaṡ* which states: “**Say: He is Allaah the Unique, Allaah the Self-subsistent. He did not give birth nor was He born. And nothing is similar to Him.**” Every one of these verses contains a crucial message about Allaah about which most religions are ignorant. Each verse clearly distinguishes God, the Creator, from His creatures. The vast majority of Muslims knows this short chapter and can share its messages to the idolatrous world around them. Consequently, virtually no one is excused from giving some *da‘wah*.

Furthermore, whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed people, he used to say:

((لِيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْعَائِبَ فَإِنَّ الشَّاهِدَ عَسَى أَنْ يُبَلِّغَ مَنْ هُوَ أَوْعَى لَهُ مِنْهُ))

“Let those present convey what they heard to those absent. For, perhaps he may inform one better able to understand it than him.”¹⁰

Allaah’s Curse

In order to stress the gravity of *da‘wah* as a duty on Muslims, Allaah warned those who did not fulfill their responsibility in this regard of His curse and the curse of all His creatures.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ

“Indeed those who hide the clear messages and guidance that I have revealed after I have made it clear to people in the scripture; those are cursed by Allaah and cursed by all who curse.” *Soorah al-Baqarah*, (2): 159

The Prophet (ﷺ) further stressed the gravity of the sin of hiding knowledge saying:

((مَنْ كَتَمَ عِلْمًا مِمَّا يَنْفَعُ اللَّهَ بِهِ فِي أَمْرِ النَّاسِ أَمْرٍ الدِّينِ أَلْحَمَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِلِجَامٍ مِنَ النَّارِ))

“Whoever hides knowledge by which Allaah benefits people in their affairs of religion, Allaah will bridle him on the Day of Resurrection with a bridle from the Hellfire.”¹¹

⁹ *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 4, p. 442, no. 667.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Kitaab: al-‘Ilm; Baab: Rubba Muballagh.

To have knowledge of Islaam but not convey it to others constitutes “hiding knowledge.” Hiding knowledge may be a deliberate act wherein a person has the intention to keep the knowledge away from other people. This may occur in cases where people are asked about Islaam but refuse to reveal its teachings due to racial or tribal concerns. For example, in years past, some Indians of Guyanese or Trinidadian origin refused to teach African Guyanese and African Trinidadians due to their racist belief that Islaam was only for Indians. Likewise, some African Americans following the racist doctrines of the “Nation of Islam” or influenced by them have refused to explain Islaam to European Americans as they considered them to be devils or simply the enemy. Hiding knowledge may also be a passive unintentional act whereby a person has the knowledge but neglects to convey it due to reasons of shyness or feelings of inferiority. An example of passive hiding of knowledge may be found in the case of many immigrant Muslims who live, study, and work among non-Muslims for many years without ever saying a single word to them about Islaam.

¹¹ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. , p. , no. , *Sunan Ibn-I- Majah*, vol. , p. , no. , *Sunan an-Nasai*,

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALL

The pillars or foundations of *da'wah* consist of three elements: The Call, The Caller and The Called. Each has its own particular characteristics, prerequisites and goals. For the effective fulfillment of the responsibility of *da'wah* the requirements of each pillar must be thoroughly met.

The Aim or Goal of *Da'wah* is to spread the teachings of Islaam in their pristine purity. It is to enlighten disbelievers about Islaam and to correct mistaken beliefs among Muslims. The Prophet (...) said:

((إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا وَسَيَعُودُ غَرِيبًا، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ))

“*Islaam began as something strange, and it will return as something strange, so give glad tidings to the strangers.*”¹

قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! وَمَا الْغُرَبَاءُ؟ قَالَ:

When the companions asked, “O Messenger of Allaah, who are the strangers?” He replied,

((الَّذِينَ يُصْلِحُونَ عِنْدَ فَسَادِ النَّاسِ))

“*Those who rectify [themselves and others] when people become corrupt.*”²

The goal of *da'wah* is expressed in the following verse and others like it.

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ

“**Call to the way of your Lord ...**” *Soorah an-Nahl*, (16): 125

Abul-Hasan ‘Alee Nadawee said the following regarding this verse: “The verse does not ask [the Prophet (...)] to invite people to faith, correct beliefs, prayers, good manners or call on people to respect human rights. No such things have been mentioned in particular since all these are covered in the phrase “... **to the way of your Lord.**” ... These words are profound and comprehensive.”³

Sh. Ibn Baaz elaborated on the verse saying,

“The way of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is submission, the straight path, the religion of Allaah with which He sent His Messenger (...). Therefore, this is what must be called to, not the *math'hab* of such and such a person nor the opinion of any individual. ... The way of Allaah is that which the Noble Qur'aan and the pure authentic *Sunnah* of the Messenger (...) directs one to... It is necessary for the Muslim missionary to call people to the whole of Islaam and not to cause division among them, nor to be a blind follower of a *math'hab*, a tribe, a shaykh or a leader, etc. Rather his aim should be

¹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. , p. , no. .

² *Sunan at-Tirmithi*, 2765 (*Those who correct what people have corrupted of my Sunnah.*) Reported by at-Tabaraanee in *al-Jaami' as-Sagheer*, no. 290.

³ *Inviting to the Way of Allah*, p. 11.

to affirm and clarify the truth and establish people upon that truth, even if it contradicts the opinion of so and so or such and such a person.”⁴

The call to Islaam, meaning the Qur’aan and Sunnah, should be in accordance with the understanding of the early righteous generations of Muslims (i.e., the *salaf*). As there is only one “way of Allaah”, i.e., “religion of Allaah”: Islaam, there is only one way to follow that religion. The Prophet (...) did not leave behind him a multitude of different ways to follow Islaam. Division and differences are not blessings, as some would claim based on fabricated narrations attributed to the Prophet (...). Allaah, Most Great and Glorious condemned factionalism saying:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

“Do not be of the pagans; of those who split up their religion and became sects, each sect rejoicing in what it has.” (*Soorah ar-Room*, 30: 31-2)

And He alluded to the necessity of following the understanding of the Companions of the Prophet (...) in the following verse:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ
وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

“Whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has been made clear to him and follows a way other than that of the believers, I will leave him to his choice and place him in hell. And worst indeed is that destination.” (*Soorah an-Nisaa*, 4: 115)

Allaah stated this despite the fact that opposing the Messenger (...) alone guarantees punishment. At the time when the verse was revealed “the believers” was none other than the Companions of the Prophet (...).

Ibn Mas’ood said, “Allaah’s Messenger (...) drew a line for us [in the dirt] and said, ‘*This is the path of Allaah.*’ Then he drew other lines branching off to the right and to the left and said, ‘*These are the paths at the end of which is a devil calling people to it.*’ Then he recited:

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ

“This is my straight path, so follow it and do not follow the [other] paths, for they will separate you from His path.” (*Soorah al-An’aam*, 6: 153)⁵

This *hadeeth* proves that the way is only one. Ibn al-Qayyim commented on this as follows: “This is because the path leading to Allaah is only one, and it is what He sent His Messengers on and sent His Books with. No one reaches Him except along this path. Even if people take every path and try to open every door, these paths will be blocked

⁴ *Words of Advice Regarding Da’wah*, pp. 33-35.

⁵ Collected by Ahmad, an-Nasaa’ee and ad-Daarimee, and authenticated by Ahmad Shaakir in *al-Musnad*, vol.6, pp.89-90, no.4142.

and the doors will be locked, with the exception of this One Path. For it is connected to Allaah and leads to Him.”⁶

‘Abdullaah ibn Lu’ayy narrated that Mu’aawiyah ibn Abee Sufyaan got up among them and said, “Indeed the Messenger of Allaah (...) stood up among us and said, ‘*Certainly those before you from the People of the Book split up into seventy two sects and [the followers of] this religion will split up into seventy-three sects, seventy-two of them in the Fire and one in Paradise; that is the group [jamaa‘ah].*’ ”⁷ In another narration, when he was asked what the one sect was, he replied, “*What my companions and I are following now.*”⁸

Some aspects of Islaam are more critical than others; therefore priority must be given to the most important principles. The first pillar of Islaam is the declaration that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah and the first pillar of Eemaan (faith) is belief in Allaah. Furthermore, the only unforgivable sin is to worship other than Allaah. Consequently, the call to Allaah should focus on *Tawh_{ee}d*, which is exactly what the Prophet (...) instructed his companions whenever he sent them. For example, Ibn ‘Abbaas reported that when the Prophet (...) sent Mu’aath_u ibn Jabal to Yemen he told him:

((إِنَّكَ تَقْدُمُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ أَهْلِ كِتَابٍ فَلْيَكُنْ أَوَّلَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيَّ أَنْ يُوحِّدُوا اللَّهَ تَعَالَى فَإِذَا عَرَفُوا ذَلِكَ فَأَخْبِرُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمِهِمْ وَلَيْلَتِهِمْ فَإِذَا صَلَّوْا فَأَخْبِرُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ زَكَاةَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ غَنِيِّهِمْ فَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فَقِيرِهِمْ فَإِذَا أَقْرَأُوا بِذَلِكَ فَخُذْ مِنْهُمْ وَتَوَقَّ كَرَائِمَ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ))

“*You will be going to Christians and Jews, so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertion of the oneness of Allaah, Most High. If they realize that, then inform them that Allaah has made five daily prayers obligatory on them. If they pray them, then inform them that Allaah has made the payment of charity from their wealth obligatory on their rich to be given to their poor. If they accept that, then take it from them and avoid the best part of people’s property.*”⁹

The call to *Tawh_{ee}d* should address Allaah’s unique unity with respect to His lordship and sovereignty over His creation, His names and attributes and His right to be worshipped alone, without any partner. This belief in *Tawh_{ee}d* should also be manifest in human relations with God, in their social interactions among themselves and in their relationship with the world in which they live and the creatures of that world that have been subjected to them.

⁶ *At-Tafseer al-Qayyim*, pp. 14-5.

⁷ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. , p. , no. .

⁸ *Mustadrak al-Haakim*,

⁹ *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 9, pp. 348-9, no. 469 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol.1, pp. 15, no. 28.

Thus, whatever subject the *da'wah* may begin on, whether *hijaab*, terrorism, polygamy, etc., a conscious effort should be made to divert the topic ultimately to that of *Tawheed*. For it is only the acceptance of *Tawheed* which will provide the one being called with success in this life and the next. If he is convinced of the reasonableness of *hijaab*, and the unfairness of labeling Muslims as terrorists, and that polygamy is logical and natural, but he has not accepted the unique oneness of Allaah and that He alone deserves our worship, and dies in that state, he has failed and destroyed his opportunity for success in the next life. Whereas, if he accepted Allaah's unique oneness and worshipped Him alone, but was confused about the obligation of *hijaab*, terrorism and polygamy, and died in that state, his place in paradise would be guaranteed according to Allaah's promise and that of His Messenger.

A classical example of diversion in *da'wah* can be seen in the case of Prophet Yousuf in prison when two prisoners asked him to interpret their dreams.

Then it occurred to them, after they had seen the proofs to imprison him for a time. And there entered with him two young men in the prison. One of them said: "Indeed, I saw myself pressing wine." The other said: "Indeed, I saw myself carrying bread on my head and birds were eating from it." [They asked:] "Inform us of the interpretation of these things. Indeed, we believe you are one of the righteous." He replied: "Whenever food came to you as your provision, I informed you about it before it came. That is from what my Lord has taught me. Indeed, I have abandoned the religion of a people who did not believe in Allaah and the Hereafter. And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we would never attribute any partners whatsoever to Allaah. This is from the Grace of Allaah to us and to humankind, but most people are not thankful.

O my two prison companions! Are many different lords better than Allaah, the One, the Irresistible? You are only worshiping besides Him names which you and your fathers made up for which no authority was revealed by Allaah. Judgment belongs to Allaah alone. He has commanded that you worship none besides Him; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know.

O my two prison companions! As for one of you, he will pour wine for his lord to drink and as for the other, he will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. This is the case judged concerning which you both inquire." (Soorah Yousuf, 12: 35-41)

It is also important to remember that the call is to the message of Islaam and not necessarily conversion to Islaam. It is an invitation in which the message of Islaam should be conveyed in its pristine purity and its comprehensive beauty. If that is the case, then people's negative reactions are not important, as long as they are not a result of faults on our part. Furthermore, the message should not be compromised in such a way as to water it down until its essence is lost. The essence of the message, *Tawheed*, must be conveyed wherever and whenever possible and as directly as possible.

The popular phenomenon of "Interfaith dialogue" attempts to blur the essential issues and put all religions on an equal footing. Since all religions call to goodness and righteousness, they should be tolerant and accepting of each other. Meaning, there is no need to try to convert each other's followers. Peaceful co-existence is what is needed and

not a battle for souls. Such a call is dangerous as it is fundamentally false. There is only one true religion, Islaam, and all others are false. Other religions, in an attempt to slow or halt the wave of conversions from their religions to Islaam, have introduced the interfaith dialogue concept after centuries of vilifying and demonizing its final Prophet, Muhammad (...).

As for dialogues and forums where knowledgeable Muslims have an opportunity present their evidences for the superiority of Islaam and its teachings to masses of non-Muslims, these are acceptable as long as the clear message of Islaam is not compromised.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALLER

The individual who has accepted the duty of calling others to Allaah must possess certain characteristics to effectively convey the message. These attributes are mentioned in the Qur'aan and preserved in the record of the divinely guided lifestyle of the Prophet (...).

1. Knowledge

The foremost quality that the *daa'ee* (caller) should have is that of knowledge which is itself a prerequisite for faith. One must have sound knowledge of what one is inviting others to. If the Muslim missionary is ignorant, his message will appear weak and incapable of withstanding close scrutiny. This does not mean that the *daa'ee* must know all of Islaam before inviting others. However, it does mean that he should have clear knowledge of whatever limited area of Islaam he is inviting others to. Allaah, Most Great and Glorious, instructed the Prophet (...) to inform others that his call to Islaam was based on knowledge.

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ

“Say: This is my way and I invite to Allaah with certain knowledge ...”

Soorah Yoosuf, (12): 108

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (...) made the pursuit of knowledge an obligation on all Muslims.

2. Kindness / Gentleness

It is essential that the *daa'ee* be soft in conveying the message because harshness could easily discourage people from listening to the truth. Allaah addressed this issue with regard to the Prophet himself saying:

لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

“If you were harsh and hard hearted, they would have fled from around you.”

Soorah Aal 'Imraan, (3): 159

Furthermore, it was as a result of Allaah's mercy that the Prophet (...) was gentle to those he invited to Islaam.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ

“And by the mercy of Allaah you dealt with them gently.”

Soorah Aal 'Imraan, (3): 159

The *daa'ee* must always consider the fact that Allaah instructed Prophets Moosaa and Haaron to gently communicate the message of Islaam to Pharaoh who was, at that time, claiming that he was God.

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

“So speak to him, both of you, mildly in order that he may reflect or fear God.”

Soorah Taa Haa, (20): 44

The Prophet (...) also prayed saying:

“O Allaah, be hard on whoever acquires control over the affairs of my nation and is hard

on them. And be kind to whoever gains control over the affairs of my nation and is kind to them.”¹

Gentleness in *da‘wah* affects the hearts of those being invited and makes them want to listen to the message. The Messenger of Allaah (...) was reported by his wife, ‘Aa’ishah to have said,

((إِنَّ الرَّفْقَ لَا يَكُونُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ وَلَا يُنْزَعُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ))

“Whenever gentleness is in a thing it beautifies it and whenever it is withdrawn from something it defaces.”²

And he was quoted by Jareer as saying,

((مَنْ يُحْرَمَ الرَّفْقَ يُحْرَمَ الْخَيْرَ))

“One deprived of gentleness is deprived of all good.”³

3. Wisdom

In disseminating the message of Islaam, the *daa‘ee* must adjust himself or herself to each situation and use the most appropriate material.

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom ...” *Soorah an-Nahl*, (16): 125

Some scholars of *tafseer* explain that “wisdom” mentioned in this verse refers to the Qur’aan and the *Sunnah* due to the wisdom which they contain as well as the guidance to righteousness and happiness.⁴

In reference to wisdom Sh. Ibn Baaz said:

“A part of wisdom is to clarify the meaning and explanation in effective ways. [The caller] does this in the language of the one whom he is calling so he can understand [the message]. The *daa‘ee* continues in this way until the one being called has no doubt remaining in his mind, and the truth, which may have been hidden due to a lack of explanation, or persuasive *da‘wah* in his own language ... now becomes apparent to him... If there is a need for religious admonition, then the *daa‘ee* should preach mentioning the suitable verses and *hadeeths* which concentrate on encouragement and warnings. The heart of the one called will then awaken and be attracted to the truth.”⁵

4. Patience

Most people who come to Islaam do so after a faith-seeking journey. Consequently, only a very few begin their search and end it with the same person. When declarations of faith are given it is after many stops on the road. Someone may start the person off and many help on the way and someone else helps the person finally declare their faith. Therefore, the responsibility of the *daa‘ee* is to convey the message and not to put faith in peoples hearts. As Allaah informed His Messenger (...) and his followers:

¹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 1016, no. 4494.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1370, no. 6274.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1370, nos. 6270-6271.

⁴ *Tafseer Ibn Kathir*, vol. , p.

⁵ *Words of Advice Regarding Da‘wah*, p. 66.

إِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ

“Your responsibility is only to convey [the message] and the accounting is on Me.”
(Soorah ar-Ra‘d, 13: 40)

5. Morality

Great stress has been placed in Islaam on good moral character. Prophet Muhammad (...) summarized the essence of the Islamic message saying,

((إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ))

“Indeed, I was only sent to complete the most noble of character traits.”⁶

And Allaah said in the Qur’aan,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ .

“Surely you (Muhammad) have a magnificent character.”

(Soorah al-Qalam, 68: 4)

The Prophet’s companion, Ibn ‘Abbaas explained that “character” here meant “religion”, i.e., Islaam.⁷ By using the term “character” to refer to the religion of Islaam, Allaah stresses the importance of morality in relationship to the religion. It was also reported that when the Prophet’s wife ‘Aa’ishah was asked about the Prophet’s character, she replied, “His character was that of the Qur’aan.”⁸ That is, his manners were according to Allaah’s instructions in the Qur’aan. Consequently, the development of good character depends on closely following the Qur’aan and the teachings of the Prophet (...). In this regard, Allaah also said in the Qur’aan:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

“Indeed you have in the Messenger of Allaah a beautiful example (of conduct)...” (Soorah al-Ahzaab, 33 :21)

Thus, the rites and rituals of Islaam cannot be separated from good manners. An-Nawwaas ibn Sam’aan quoted the Prophet (...) as saying,

((الْبِرُّ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ وَالْإِثْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي صَدْرِكَ وَكَرِهْتَ أَنْ يَطَّلَعَ عَلَيْهِ النَّاسُ))

“Righteousness is good character and sin is what itches in your heart and you dislike that people would find out about it.”⁹

Islaam teaches man how to lead a morally righteous life by pointing out the proper way to live. Any Muslim who displays bad manners such as swearing or lying is either a

⁶ Narrated by Aboo Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, al-Haakim and al-Bayhaqee in *Shu‘ab al-Eemaan*. It has been authenticated in *Saheeh al-Jaami‘ as-Sagheer*, vol.1, p.464, no.2349.

⁷ *Tafseer al-Qur’aan al-‘Atheem*, vol. 4, p. 429.

⁸ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, pp. 358-360, no. 1623, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 1, pp. 351-2, no. 1337 and *Ahmad*.

⁹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, pp. 1358-9, no. 6196.

hypocrite pretending to be a Muslim or a very weak Muslim. Faith is inseparable from action. Aboo Hurayrah quoted the Prophet (...) as saying,

((أَفْضَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَحْسَنُهُمْ حُلُقًا)) .

“The believer whose faith is most complete is he whose character is best.”¹⁰ Consequently, throughout the Qur’aan, whenever Allaah instructs humankind to believe, He always links faith with command to do righteous deeds. Aboo Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (...) did the same, saying, for example,

((مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُؤْذِ جَارَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ)) .

“Whoever believes in Allaah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbor, he should be kind to his guest and he should either speak good or be silent.”¹¹

That being the case, there should be an underlying principle of morality at the base of all Islamic teachings. Islaam covers all aspects of human existence; spiritual, social and economic. Consequently, there is in Islaam a network of moral principles governing all human relations with God, with other humans, as well as with the environment in which humans exist. For example, from an Islamic perspective, worshipping others besides God would be considered morally wrong and bad character, in the same way that lying to others or littering the environment would be considered morally objectionable. Therefore, it may be assumed that each of the pillars of Islaam and *Eemaan* were designed to develop a particular set of moral characteristics. Without understanding the moral and spiritual goals of the pillars, they remain empty rituals which cannot benefit anyone in the next life.

¹⁰ *Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmitheeh*, vol. 1, p. 340, no. 928.

¹¹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, p. 32, no.76.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALLED¹

KEEP OBJECTIVES FOREMOST

Conversion or Clear Communication?

Before entering into our main topic, I would like to make three introductory remarks, the first of which is that we have to keep in mind that our primary objective in *da'wah* is not to convert the individual whom we are inviting. Conversion is in the hands of Almighty Allaah. He said in the Qur'aan:

أَلَمْ يَكُن مِّنكُمْ رَّسُولٌ مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَمَتَىٰ يَأْتِيهِمْ آيَاتُهُ يَتَزَكَّىٰ لَهَا لَوِ اتَّخَذَتِ النَّاسُ مِثْلَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَأَرْسَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَبِيلَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ رَسُولًا لَّا يَرْجُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُوهَا كَخِيفَتِهِمْ فِي قَوْمِ إِثْرِي

“Indeed you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He wills.”

(*Soorah al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28: 56)

Our job is the same one that was given to all the prophets and messengers, and given to the Prophet Muhammad (...). It is to convey the message clearly, as Allaah said:

أَلَمْ يَكُن مِّنكُمْ رَّسُولٌ مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَمَتَىٰ يَأْتِيهِمْ آيَاتُهُ يَتَزَكَّىٰ لَهَا لَوِ اتَّخَذَتِ النَّاسُ مِثْلَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَأَرْسَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَبِيلَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ رَسُولًا لَّا يَرْجُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُوهَا كَخِيفَتِهِمْ فِي قَوْمِ إِثْرِي

“The only obligation on the messenger is to give the clear message.”

(*Soorah an-Noor*, 24: 54)

Therefore, we have to constantly remind ourselves whenever we are in a discussion with an individual or giving a lecture to a group, that we are not there to win the argument or the debate. Our goal is to make sure they properly understand the true message of Islaam in its pristine purity. It may be impossible to convince them in an hour or a day to change the course of their whole life, but at least they should understand the reality of what you are calling to, the Oneness of Allaah, the finality of Muhammad's (...) prophethood, the certainty of the Day of Judgment, etc. Therefore, what is most important regarding those being called to Islaam is that the message should be crystal clear.

Listen Before You Speak

The second point is that we should strive to listen before we speak, to understand the other party and the other side, before we explain our points of view. If we care about the person that we are giving *da'wah* to and if we care whether they receive this message or not, then we should take care to listen to them. Many times when we are in a *da'wah* situation, we are more interested in getting our point of view across than in hearing their opinions. Either because we have already heard their arguments before, and or we know their opinions are wrong anyway, so what is the point in listening to them? “Jesus is not the son of God because of reasons one, two, three, four, and five. Furthermore, the Bible says this and the Qur'aan says that, and this Christian scholar said this and Paul said that, etc., etc.” But the person you are telling that may not be interested in it because he does not believe that Jesus is literally the son of God, or he or she may be interested in some other issue. They may have some confusion about formal prayers in Islaam, why Muslims have to pray five times a day? So, we should take some time out and listen to

¹ This chapter was delivered as a lecture by Ubayd Qadhi and edited by Dr Bilal Philips.

the person before we begin our discussion, and allow further time during the discussion listen to them.

Put Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes

The third and final point is to put ourselves in their shoes. After discussions, people generally do not remember what was actually said, the particular words that were used, the precise issues which were discussed, but how it was said, the way the words were used and the issues presented. They do not really remember what we say, yet we spend so much time bringing points and explaining proofs, because this is the style we have developed in learning Islaam. Consequently, we want to use texts from the Qur'aan and *hadeeth* to prove our points. However, if we stop and think for a moment, we know that most of the non-Muslims whom we give *da'wah* to do not understand this style of speaking. They do not understand, "Allaah said," "The Messenger (...) said," "The Companions said," "Shaykh so and so said," etc." They do not understand this type of terminology, nor its significance. So, we should put ourselves in their shoes and be gentle with them. We should try to be conscious of the impression we are giving them.

Let us try our level best to keep these three critical points in the back of our minds whenever we are in a discussion with somebody else.

READING THE SITUATION

When you find yourself in a situation, you have to read that situation in a way similar to the way you read a book. When you enter a room and find yourself in front of a group of people, or you go to a shopping center and you see somebody interested in Islaam, you have to read that situation carefully before making any statements. Meaning, you have to be conscious of the unique elements of the situation and tailor your approach accordingly. We must be conscious of two main things: first the environment, and second the actual individual.

Timing

When it comes to the environment, the first thing to be remembered is the timing, finding the appropriate time. Is it a suitable time to talk about this subject or not? The Prophet (...) used to select certain times to give his lectures. On one occasion one of 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood's students came to him and said: "We love your lectures and sermons. Please give us more!" as he only used to give one lecture a week. He replied: "I wish that I could give more. The only thing that prevents me is the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (...). He used to take care of us in giving sermons by selecting a suitable time, so that we would not become bored."² From this incident we can see that the Messenger (...) knew the characteristics of the called better than they knew themselves. People, in their enthusiasm and excitement, usually want more lectures in the beginning of any new

² *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, no. 68. Ibn 'Abbaas also said, "Lecture the people once per week, if you must, then twice, and if you must be frequent then thrice. But, do not make the people bored of this Qur'aan. Do not let me catch you going to people when they are in conversation, and you relate some story to them, cut their conversation and make them bored. Instead be silent and if they request that you speak to them, talk to them while they desire it. And beware of rhyming supplications and avoid them, for I was used to the Prophet () and his companions not doing that." (*Fat'h al-Baaree*, vol. 11, no. 6337, p. 151 [Kitaab ad-Da'awaat, Baab: Maa Yukrahu minas-Saja').

program. However, the reality is that if you give too much or you speak for too long, they will eventually become bored. It is the nature of human beings to become lazy with time. Thus, the common saying “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Yes, there will be a few who are keen and will remain enthusiastic due to their sincerity and high level of commitment. However, in such cases, we have to consider the norm and not the exceptions. Consequently, we have to consider our timing. We must ask ourselves, “Is this the right time? Am I giving them too much?” In another *hadeeth*, the Prophet (...) said, “Among the signs of an individual’s understanding of his religion is the length of his prayer and the shortness of his speech.” Therefore, we have to think about the length of our discussion, to insure that it is not too long, and we also have to think about the time we wish to engage in discussion, to insure that it is not at an inappropriate time. So read the environment, look around you. If you are in a busy market place, is it a suitable time to talk about the reality death, will you get your point across concerning punishment of the grave when everything around him is reminding him of the material world? Perhaps another topic would be more appropriate, or if you need to talk about reality, then take him alone in a room and have that discussion.

Audience

The second principle governing the environment is the audience. We have to read the audience as we read the circumstances and the situations. Are we talking to a group or an individual? There is a difference. Remember that when you are in a group of people you cannot convince them. Look at the example of *as’haabul qaryah* (People of the Village), mentioned in *Soorah Yaaseen*. Allaah, Most High, sent a messenger to the village, and village people rejected him. Then he sent another messenger, and they also rejected him. The scholars of *Tafseer* say that they imprisoned them and tortured them. So, Allaah sent a third messenger to support them against this group, but still they would not listen. Later, Almighty Allaah said:

أَفَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ آيَاتٌ أَنْ يَسْمَعُوا وَأَقْبَلُوا رَسُولَهُ أَفَلَمْ يَتَذَكَّرْ إِنَّ أُولَئِكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا آيَاتُهَا فَلَمْ يَلْتَمِسْ عَذَابَ آلِ كَارٍ

“A man came running from the farthest corner of the village, [saying], ‘O my people follow the messengers!’ ” (*Soorah Yaaseen*, 36: 20)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَكُم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا سُلُوكَهُمْ تَقِوهُمْ عَمَّا ذُكِّرُوا وَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

“Follow those who do not ask any reward from you, and they are rightly guided.” (36: 21)

أَفَلَمْ يَرَ أَنَّ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُ إِذَا شَاءَ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمِ أَفَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

“And what is wrong with me that I do not worship the One who created me and to Him I return.” (36: 22)

The story continues, with another person from the village who accepted the message trying to convince the villagers. Although he used logic and emotion to convince them, they remain unconvinced because they were a group. The scholars say that he was killed and he has his reward with Allaah Almighty.

أَقِيلُ قُلُوبَ قَوْمِي بِأَمْرِ رَبِّي أَنِّي إِذْ أَتَيْتُ الْقَوْمَ لَأَذْهَبَنَّ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءًا مِّنْهُمْ

“He said: ‘If only my people knew that my Lord has forgiven me and put me among the honored.’ (36: 26-7)

The point here is that there is a difference when you are talking to a group and when you’re talking to an individual. This is why Allaah Most High advises humankind:

أَقِيلُ قُلُوبَ قَوْمِي بِأَمْرِ رَبِّي أَنِّي إِذْ أَتَيْتُ الْقَوْمَ لَأَذْهَبَنَّ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءًا مِّنْهُمْ

“I advise you with one thing to stand before Allah alone or in pairs and reflect.”

(*Soorah Saba*, 34: 46)

If you really want to convince someone about something, you need to talk to them one on one or maybe two. Once I went to a church, and I began addressing my audience about *Tawh*eed and the realities of *Laa ilaaha illallaah*. After the talk, I realized from their questions that they were not interested in *Tawh*eed. No one asked any questions about *Tawh*eed, instead all their questions focused on what Islaam had to say about homosexuality. And in the course of their questions I came to realize that I was in a homosexual church and the members of my audience were mostly homosexuals and lesbians. Consequently, the time was not appropriate for the subject of my lecture. I was giving them the message of *Tawh*eed and they were interested in what Islaam says about homosexuality. However, once I have read the audience and found myself in a group of homosexuals, do I tell them that the punishment for homosexuality is death, or should I inform them that they are to be thrown off the highest mountain? No. This is neither the appropriate time nor the suitable circumstance. They are in a group, so it is likely that they will not listen properly. Instead, I gave them a general answer, and after the talk and the answer session, I went to them and talked to them individually about purity, about relations with a wife, and about the blessings of having a wife, or a spouse, etc. As individuals they listened for another hour, but as a group they just wanted a quick answer then they left. So we have to carefully read the situation and determine if our topic is suitable for a group of people or if it is more appropriate for individuals.

Location

The third thing to look at is your location. For example, Mount *Safaa* in the time of the Prophet (...) was used for announcements. So the Prophet (...) went there to make his point. He chose that particular location because he knew the people he was inviting to Islaam. He knew their nature and characteristics, so he chose Mount *Safaa*. He climbed up to its summit and addressed his people saying: “O people of Quraysh, if I were to tell you there was an army behind this hill would you listen to me?” He used his location to make his point.

As one calling to Islaam must choose the most suitable time to address a given audience, he or she must also choose the most suitable location. The location may be a public hall, a university auditorium, a school classroom, a mosque, an Islamic center’s hall, etc., or it may be a restaurant, a coffee shop, a park, the beach, out on the desert, etc. One must choose the appropriate location for the type of message one intends to deliver. What may be said over lunch in a restaurant may not be suitable for a university auditorium and vice versa.

INDIVIDUAL

Demographics

Almighty Allaah said:

أَلَمْ أَرْسَلْ إِلَىٰ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ مِّنْ نَّاسِيهَا رَسُولًا بِاللُّغَةِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُذَكِّرَهُمْ

“I did not send any messenger except that he spoke the language of his people to explain to them.” (*Soorah Ibraaheem*, 14: 4)

There is great wisdom in this principle. In general, the best person to talk to people is one who shares a similar background with them. I, as an American, understand the American society and culture in general, but, because I am descended from Indo-Pakistani emigrants to America, I know that I have limitations in addressing certain American audiences. It is better to get a reverted or converted Muslim from America to go give certain talks. Similarly, here in Qatar there is a wide mixture of people. Although it is good to give *da‘wah* to any and everybody, we should know our limitations. At times, some people would only feel comfortable to listen to certain things from somebody of the same background. Someone from Philippines or one who has visited Philippines and has intimate knowledge of their culture can make their talks more effective and relevant to a Filipino audience by giving local examples. Similarly, someone from England, or from Germany, etc. will likely have a greater impact on Brits and Germans, respectively. Their impact may be far greater than a very knowledgeable foreigner.

There are three elements that we must keep in mind when giving *da‘wah*: Islaamic knowledge of the Qur’aan and the Sunnah is one element you may use to talk to somebody. However, a great scholar quoting Allaah and His Messenger (...) not touch the heart of the person being called. Besides knowledge, one needs a degree of eloquence. Evidences and proofs are important, but for them to reach the audience, you need to have a good speaking manner. Even if you can quote the whole of *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*, you still may not reach that person unless you can speak to them in an eloquent manner. The Prophet (...) was given *jawaami‘ul-kalim* (concise effective speech), to convey his message. However, even that is not enough, you also need to build relationships and that is where it becomes important to get someone from the same background as the person being called. To build a relationship with somebody, you have to have some common background. Perhaps you do not come from the same culture, but you speak their language or you work in the same profession. Wisdom becomes manifest when you are able to link your knowledge to eloquence in speech and your ability to build relationships. That is true wisdom.

Education

The second point concerning an individual that must be considered is their level of education and understanding. Talking to somebody who is a university graduate is different from talking to someone who is a common laborer. One may quote many things to a university graduate which the average laborer would not normally understand. Complicated ideas and philosophical concepts like the trinity, and discrepancies in Bible manuscripts are not suitable for discussion with people of limited education. A perfect example of that is Thul-Qarnayn mentioned in *Soorah al-Kahf*. Thul-Qarnayn went to three groups of people. One group of people who were a strong nation, according to the

scholars, he conquered and made very clear statements regarding them. He said: “I will punish whoever does wrong and is unjust, and I will give a reward to whoever believes in and does righteous deeds.” He talked to them in a precise law-giving manner, because they were a civilized nation, and a strong community. But when he went to the other side of the world, he met a group of people who couldn’t understand what Thul-Qarnayn was saying, and he could barely understand what they were saying; a completely different group of people. Did Thul-Qarnayn tell them to either believe or suffer punishment? No. He saw that these people were a mild people. Some scholars said that they were lazy, because they were not able to build a wall to prevent the Gog and Magog and they had to ask Thul-Qarnayn to do it. Perhaps they were a materialistic people as they offered Thul-Qarnayn money. Or perhaps, they were ignorant of advanced methods of construction and were not educated in the ways of great civilizations. They were used to paying other people to do jobs for them. So what did Thul-Qarnayn do with them? He told them that he did not want their money. Instead, he instructed them to help him do the job. This was not because he needed their help as he had an army with him, but because he wanted to educate them about hard work. He wanted to teach them about what it means to take matters into your own hands, to defend yourselves. So he dealt with them in a different manner than he dealt with the first nation. Consequently, you have to look at the level of education and understanding of the people you’re talking to and deal with them accordingly.

Misconceptions

The third issue we have to look at is preconceived ideas and misconceptions those being called to Islaam may have. Of course, that can only be determined if we allow them to express their thoughts, if we listen first, before trying to teach them. Once we have heard a misconception, we have to decide whether to spend a lot of time trying to correct the misconception or to choose another tactic, or another topic. For example, raising the sun from the west. This is in reference to the story of Prophet Abraham when he went to the king and said:

أَمْ لِي مُدْرِكَةٌ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّي إِذْ أَنَا مُبْطِئٌ

“My Lord is the One who gives life and causes death.” And the king said:

أَمْ لِي مُدْرِكَةٌ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّي إِذْ أَنَا مُبْطِئٌ

“I can give life and cause death.” Obviously the king had a misunderstanding about the meaning of giving life and causing death, a misconception. What did Abraham do? Did he spend time trying to explain to the king the correct meaning? No. Instead he chose another way. He challenged him saying,

وَأَنذَرْتُكَ نَارَ الْكُوفِيِّينَ

أَمْ لِي مُدْرِكَةٌ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّي إِذْ أَنَا مُبْطِئٌ

“Indeed Allaah brings the sun from the east. Raise the sun from the west,’ and the disbeliever was dumfounded.” (Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 258)

He was stupefied and completely unable to respond. Similarly, rather than stopping to explain each and every time a misconception is raised, and becoming so bogged down in defensive explanations, the situation may be avoided by raising issues which clearly demonstrate Islaam's superiority. For example, when misconceptions concerning polygamy in Islaam are raised, those raising them may be asked if monogamy is actually being practiced in the so-called monogamous countries of the West, or if one wife and innumerable girl-friends, mistresses, etc. can realistically be called monogamy. Furthermore, it may be noted that Islaam is the only religion whose scriptures explicitly say to marry only one wife.

أَمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِمَا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ بِإِلْقَائِهِمْ آلَاتٍ مِنْ سَمَوَاتِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

“And if you fear you will not be just, then marry only one.” (*Soorah an-Nisaa*, 4: 3)

That statement often stupefies the detractors as neither the Bible, Torah, Gospel, nor the Hindu Scriptures (Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, etc.) contain such a statement. Instead, their scriptures encourage unrestricted polygamy. On such occasions it is important to read the circumstances accurately, to see where the discussion is going. Whether it is a case of honest misunderstandings which need to be cleared, or deliberate misconceptions being thrown out to disable the caller.

CHOOSING YOUR APPROACH

Choice of Subject

Next we have to choose our approach. After reading the situation carefully and correctly, you must now choose the subject. What are you going to talk about? Prophet Muhammad (...) told Mu'aadh ibn Jabal, “You are coming to a people from *Ahl al-Kitaab*, so the first thing you should invite them to is *Tawheed*.” Notice the logic. You are coming to some People of the Scripture; therefore choose to talk to them about *Tawheed*. When you know the people, the situation and the circumstance, now you choose your topic.

There was a time some years back when enthusiastic Muslims used to continuously engage Christians in discussions concerning the Gospel of Barnabus. The origin and history of the Gospel of Barnabus is a long story. It is enough to note that there is mention in it that Prophet Jesus was not crucified, and that a prophet would come after him by the name of Ahmad. Consequently, Muslims spent a lot of time trying to convince Christians about the authenticity of the Gospel of Barnabus. Was that really important? If they believed in the Gospel of Barnabus, would it save them on the Day of Judgment? No. Is everything mentioned in the Gospel of Barnabus the Gospel truth? No. In fact there are passages and concepts contained in it which are incorrect and go against Islaamic teachings. Consequently, we must choose our topics wisely. We should ask ourselves: “What does this person really need to know to fulfill my obligation of conveying the clear message of Islaam to them? What do I have to give this person so that on the Day of Judgment I can say to Allaah: ‘O Allaah! I conveyed Your message,?’ The message which I have to give them is none other than *Tawheed*. We may begin our discussions by talking about the trinity, but many Christians do not believe in the trinity. Some believe that there is only one God and that Jesus Christ was a prophet of God. In such cases, there is no need to go into a long debate about the trinity, since they have already rejected it. Consequently, we have to find out what their actual beliefs are and not preach to them based on assumptions. We have to take some time out to listen, as was

mentioned earlier. If we do so, we may find that it would be more beneficial to talk about Prophet Muhammad (...). Thus, the choice of topic to discuss or share is as important as reading the situation correctly.

Method of Delivery

The next thing which we need to keep in mind when approaching others is our method of delivery. We have to decide how we are going to communicate our message. Are we going to use an emotion approach? Although, emotional arguments are to be avoided in general because they tend to cloud the issues and the facts, sometimes they are the best method. On one occasion, the Prophet (...) gave a sermon in which his eyes became red, voice became loud and his anger increased.³ However, that may be appropriate in a Friday Sermon, because people are there in the Mosque for a particular religious reason. It is also important for motivating people for Jihaad, or for giving in charity, etc. At other times logic may be most appropriate. One of the Companions by the name of Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam, mentioned that he came to see Prophet Muhammad (...) after converting to Islaam, and he found him making his prayers, so he joined the prayers. When one of those praying behind the Prophet sneezed, so he said, "Yarhamukallaah [May Allaah have mercy on you]," while praying. The other Companions turned and stared at him in the prayer and he asked, "What are you all staring at?" So they started hitting their thighs to make him quiet. When the Prophet finished his prayer he simply said:

((إِنَّ هَذِهِ الصَّلَاةَ لَا يَصْلِحُ فِيهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ كَلَامِ النَّاسِ))

"Indeed, the speech of people is not suitable for this prayer."⁴

He gave Mu'aawiyah a simple logical reason for not talking during formal prayers, as opposed to raising his voice and screaming at him for his error.

Where possible, visual aids should be employed in conveying the message as it helps get the message across. People today are very much visually oriented. TV, video, computer, CD, DVD, etc., etc. have become the most popular media for communication. Consequently, using power point presentations, or charts and over head projectors are great aids in conveying the message today's audiences. The Prophet (...) himself employed visual aids in teaching his companions. On one occasion he prayed on top of the *mimbar* (pulpit) and then informed his companions that he only did so for them to learn his method of prayer.⁵ On another occasion he drew a straight line in the dirt and other lines branching of from either side to demonstrate the significance of his straight path and the abundance of deviant paths leading away from the true path. And on another occasion he said, "*The Last Hour and I have been sent like these two*," and he joined his forefinger and his middle finger,⁶ in order to indicate how close the Final Hour was.

Everyone likes to hear information relayed in the form of a story. The human mind seems to relax and be comfortable in the psychological environment created by narratives. Consequently, stories from the bards and storytellers of the past to the authors

³ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 410, no. 1885.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 271-2, no. 1094.

⁵ *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 2, pp. 18-9, no. 40 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, pp. 274-5, no. 1111.

⁶ *Sahih Mus.im.*, vol. 2, p. 410, no. 1885.

of fiction of the present are held in high esteem by societies throughout the world. Oftentimes, social criticisms have found their widest audiences through the vehicle of the story. For example, in *David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens attacked the exploitation of children by Victorian society; likewise, in *1984*, George Orwell commented on state interference in the lives of its citizens. The 90's movie, *Primary Colors*, taken from a book by Joe Klein, was a thinly disguised account of President Clinton's philandering while campaigning for office of the president.

Stories about people and civilizations of the past are especially interesting because they represent mysteries to the people of the present. Hence the Qur'aan and the Sunnah has, in a number of instances, employed the narrative (*qissah*) format in order to convey its message to human beings in a most intriguing manner. It should be noted, however, that while many of the most popular narratives are made up by their authors, the Qur'aanic and hadeethic stories are all true. They are not made up by Allaah and His Messenger () to convey His message, but are in fact true historical examples of the message. This fact has been emphasized in the Qur'aan in numerous passages. For example, Allaah refers to the Qur'aan as truth:

: وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ ٩

“I revealed the Book to you in truth.” (*Soorah al-Maa'idah* (5):48)

Likewise, Allaah repudiates the idea that these narratives are invented. At the end of the story of Prophet Yousuf (Joseph) and his brothers, He says,

: مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ٩

“It is not an invented story but a confirmation of the previous (scripture). (*Soorah Yoosuf* (12):111)

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that the use of examples from human life to illustrate points in the message is very effective.

Figurative speech is generally a more moving and effective method of communication than direct commands and detailed explanations. Hence, Allaah has also used them frequently in the Qur'aan:

" وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ "

“Certainly I have made all kinds of comparisons (*mathal*) in the Qur'aan for humankind that perhaps they would reflect.” (*Soorah az-Zumar*, 39: 27)

There are also numerous examples in the statements of the Prophet (...) where he relied on the *mathal* to get his message across.⁷

Gradual Progression

Read your progress by analyzing the level of your audience's internal motivation. This is a technique used by motivators to assess where somebody is relative to the point they are

⁷ They are too numerous to begin to list, but just as a tiny sample, refer to the simile of the people who observe the limits set by Allaah and those who do not as people on the upper and lower decks of a ship (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 3, p. 406, no. 673). See also *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 278, no. 468, for a simile of the believers as a structure whose bricks support each other.

trying to get across and to gradually get the person to agree with their point. By reading the person's body movements one can assess the person's response position and his or her progress according to the scale. At the bottom of the scale is "neglect – indifferent." If you are talking and somebody is ignoring you, it means that they are completely indifferent to what you have to say and to the topic on which you are speaking. This is what is known as a "difficult person", because they just do not care about your point of view. Convincing them is virtually impossible, because they have no interest in what you have to say. They are simply out of your reach. So rather than trying to convince them to agree with you, you have to find something emotional to get them into the discussion. The ten-point scale show how a person can gradually evolve from being indifferent to being hostile, to being neutral, to being curious, to finally agreeing. You have to take a person based on where they are and gradually get them to a point of agreement. What happens is, for instance, you meet somebody who is very hostile. You know the person is hostile because they continually interrupt you saying, for example, "No, I don't agree with you." Having read their language and assessed their hostile stance, do you then argue back insisting that they have to agree with you? Will such a response produce a positive result or simply degenerate in a shouting argument? You cannot change somebody from feelings of anger and opposition to agreement immediately. In such a circumstance, the method which should be used is called the PAR (Probe, Align, Raise) method. Probe your adversary, meaning, ask them why are they so hostile? Find out the reasons for their hostility. Then align yourself to their level. See the situation through their eyes. Empathize with them. Then try to raise them to a point of neutrality. Say to them, for example, "Would you mind if I tried another point with you? Is that ok? Can I try another point?" "Ok, yes?" Once they respond positively, you have brought them to neutral. So, rather than confronting their negativity with negativity and ending up in a wrestling match, try to think instead how you can get the hostile audience to a neutral point. Neutral is the same as saying, "I'm willing to listen." He may be reserved, but at least he is now listening. The next step is to get them interested and then to get them excited, before they finally agree.

If somebody is fearful, saying, for example, "I'm very afraid of Muslims. You're all terrorists," will you be able to get them to believe in *Tawh^heed* in five minutes? You have to first remove the fear, you have to get them to be willing to listen, then you have to get them interested, then you can finally get them to agree. This process may take days or weeks before you raise the person above their negative feelings and emotions. It is a skill requiring that we read the situations and the people, respond to their needs appropriately. Like a doctor who does not start prescribing medicine for the patient as soon as they step in his office, but, instead he listens patiently to the patient's complaints and assesses their illnesses, which may require further tests, then and only then, does he prescribe the appropriate medicine. We should also have long-term goals, one month, three months, and six months, before expecting people to commit. Human beings have to grow through these emotional stages and levels. Humans cannot, like a light bulb, go on and off immediately. Anger to happiness and back to anger, joy to sadness and back to joy all take time.

Gradual progression can also be seen in the declaration of faith itself. First false gods are negated, then the One True God, Allaah is affirmed. This principle is applicable in many *da'wah* situations. Where, for example, a Christian says that he believes in the

divinity of Jesus because his prayers to Jesus were answered. Logical arguments about Jesus' divinity do not work because he has practical experience which is enough to win his emotional commitment. If we ask him about the prayers of a Hindu to his god of stone being answered, the Christian will agree that the stone god did not answer the Hindu's prayers, he will affirm that it was the true God who did. However, by doing so, he has also cancelled the basis of his argument for the divinity of Jesus and we can then affirm that it was the One True God who answered his prayers and not his imaginary god, Jesus. Gradual progression in Islaamic law is usually illustrated by the gradual prohibition of alcohol. Similarly, if a person drinks alcohol, fornicates and worships idols, we should not try to get him to quit everything all at once. We prioritize and work our way from the most important to the very important and from there to the important.

ENGLISH
TECHNICAL
TERMS FOR
DA'WAH

Useful Vocabulary for Da'wah

Words	Definitions	Derivatives
adultery	unlawful sex committed by married people with other than their spouses.	adulterer, adulteress
alcoholism	the habit of drinking alcohol.	alcoholic, alcohol
amputation	to cut off a part of the body.	amputate
apostasy	abandonment of religious beliefs.	apostate
ascribe	to explain as coming from a particular source or cause.	ascription
associate	to join in a relationship.	association
atheist	a person who does not believe in God.	atheism
believe	to accept as real or true.	belief, believer
chastity	staying away from illicit sex.	chaste
command	to order.	commandment
conform	to make similar in form or character.	conformity, conformist
convert	to adopt a new religion or belief.	conversion
convey	to make known; communicate.	conveying
Darwin	the man responsible for the theory of evolution.	Darwinism, Darwinist
deity	God, holy being supreme being.	deism
destiny	divine fate.	destined
devote	to give oneself completely.	devotion
disbelieve	to refuse to believe to believe in to reject or deny.	disbelief, disbeliever
divine	related to or being a deity.	divinity
diyah	blood money paid for the killing of another.	
essence	basic nature, its being.	essential
faith	belief and trust in God.	faithful
fornication	unlawful sex between unmarried people.	fornicate, fornicator
guidance	counseling, advising.	guide
homicide	a killing of one person by another.	homicidal
hudood	Divinely revealed boundaries and punishment prescribed by Allah.	
illegitimate	illegal, unlawful.	legitimate
inheritance	money or property left by a dead person given to relatives, friends, and charity...etc.	inherit, heirs
intercede	intervene, mediate, plead, to ask on ones behalf.	intercession
interest	usury; a charge for a loan.	
intolerance	unable to respect other beliefs or opinions.	intolerant
invalid	not valid, not correct	validity
mission	a task to be carried out.	missionary
monotheism	the belief and worship of one God.	monotheist

morality	the quality of being virtuous.	morals, moralist
obligation	a binding responsibility.	obligatory
oppose	to disagree with.	opposition
pedophile	an adult who buys sexual favors from children.	pedophilia
polytheism	associating partners in worship with God.	polytheist
principle	a fundamental truth.	principles
prohibit	to forbid or ban by law	prohibition
propagate	spread or broadcast.	propagation
purify	to make clean or pure.	purification
purpose	goal, intended or desired result.	purposeful
retaliate	to return like punishment.	retaliation
rebellious	stubbornly disobedient	rebellion
rectify	to make right or correct.	rectified
reincarnate	the act of rebirth in another body.	reincarnation
repentance	regret (a sin), seeking forgiveness.	repent
resurrect	returning from death to life.	resurrection
retribution	a suitable return.	retribute
sacrifice	Offering something to God.	sacrificial
sanctioned	allowed, legal.	sanctions
scriptures	Religions sacred books (i.e. Bible).	script
secular	worldly, not religious or spiritual.	secularist
slander	false statement said: or spread about a person damaging his reputation.	slanderous
slaughter	to kill an animal for food.	
spiritual	referring to the spirit or soul.	spirituality
supplicate	to make a humble appeal to God.	supplication
terrorism	systematic use of terror	terrorist
testimony	a formal declaration or affirmation.	testify
theory of evolution	development of more complex forms of life (plants, animals) from earlier and earlier forms.	evolved
treason	Betraying	
unique	being the only one of its kind.	uniqueness
veiling	complete outer covering from head to toe of a Muslim woman.	veil
vice	Immoral habit.	vices
virtue	moral righteousness.	virtuous
worship	to love or admire devotedly.	worshiper