



CALLING TO TAWHEED..IN THE WEST

GOALS AND METHODOLOGIES OF DA'WAH
IN THE WEST

By

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INTRODUCTION

Indeed, All Praise belongs to Allah. We praise Allah, we seek his assistance and we beg for his forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own selves and from the evil of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, no one can mislead and whomsoever Allah allows to go astray, none can guide. I bare witness and give open testimony that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah, who has no associates and I bare witness that Muhammad is His Servant and His Messenger. To proceed:

And who is better in speech than he who invites men to Allah and does righteous deeds, and says; 'I am one of the Muslims' [The Noble Qur'an 41:33]

Indeed, inviting or calling to the worship of Allah is one of the most important actions that a Muslim can do, especially in an environment where the proper worship of Allah is either deficient or non-existent. It is indeed the right of every neighbor, relative, classmate, or co-worker. It is their right to be told who his or her Creator is and what this All Powerful Lord demands of them. It is their right to be invited to the submission to His will. However, we are in an age where non-Muslims and some Muslims are totally confused as to the purpose of their existence and destination of us all. In the west particularly, the current atmosphere of political correctness, public relations, assimilation, and ignorance of Islam have caused many Muslims to deny this right to our fellow human beings with the misunderstanding that to declare Islam to be the only true way and call to it without compromise is somehow 'extremist'. It is especially critical in these times to actually define what true da'wah is and what the objectives of da'wah are so that Muslims who migrate to western countries as well as those who are indigenous to those countries have a clear understanding of their purpose for living amongst non-Muslims. Regrettably, I have witnessed up close the misuse of the word da'wah to mean everything from voting and contributing to political campaigns to participating in non-Islamic religious services. In an environment like what is found in non-Muslim countries such as the United States, da'wah is used as an excuse to assimilate into non-Islamic cultural practices, to attend haraam gatherings, and to inter-mingle with the opposite sex. So it becomes necessary to define what exactly da'wah is and its obligations, objectives, and methodologies for Muslims who live in this sort of environment and to form this approach specifically for the mindset of those we live amongst. The purpose of this study is not to redefine da'wah nor is it a lofty dissertation of the methodology and characteristics of the call and the caller *per se*. The scholars of the past and present have done an excellent job of teaching the knowledge of da'wah and the duties of the *daa'ee*. I could never approach their level of dedication and understanding and may Allah *Tabaaraka wa ta'aala* reward them for their efforts. I do however, with Allah's permission, intend to delve into some specifics of da'wah with regards to the various mindsets, attitudes, and religious thought unique to the West as well as to focus on avoiding some of the pitfalls and mistakes that we are prone to make when discussing Islam with non-Muslims. One of the most common reasons for the lack of successful da'wah efforts is the lack of knowledge of Islam. What I mean by knowledge of Islam is not knowledge on the level of the '*ulama*'. I am not suggesting that we cannot give da'wah unless we reach the level of Imam Maalik or Ibn Al-Qayyim (May Allah have Mercy on them). The knowledge that I am referring to is the

knowledge which is necessary and required of every Muslim in order to properly worship Allah and attain the proper understanding of his or her faith. The knowledge of *Tawheed* and *Eemaan* is not only required of the '*ulama*' but of all Muslims. Unfortunately, these are some of the most neglected topics among the gatherings of Muslims, especially in the West. Understandably, the most important aspect of Islam may not be properly conveyed to the people, hence, the message of Islam may be delivered incorrectly or not at all. Most importantly, it is a simple reminder to myself, as well as others, to remember the main point that we must be conscious of when speaking to others about Islam. It is that the purpose of this life, in reality, is to worship Allah, Glorified and Exalted, alone, the way He has ordained. In other words, we must establish the Tawheed in our lives and call others to it.

DEFINITION OF DA'WAH AND ITS OBLIGATION

It has become necessary, in these times, to revisit the real meaning of da'wah within the scope of Islam so that we may know if we are indeed calling the people to Allah. If we fail to achieve the actual essence of the da'wah, we must then be honest enough with ourselves to admit that somewhere, the focus of the da'wah has been lost and begin to work toward accomplishing what Allah has required of us. *Da'wah* comes from the word *da'a*, simply meaning to summon, call, invite, etc. From this root, we derive a similar word known within Islam as *du'aa*. Within the context of Islam, *ad-du'aa* is the call of the servant to his or her Lord, Allah, Most Exalted. The one making *du'aa* calls out to or beseeches Allah to answer a particular need. In the relationship between Allah and the slave of Allah, the *da'wah* is the supplication to Allah and the *daa'ee* is the one who is performing this action. Allah, Perfected is He, describes in the most beautiful manner this intimate relationship between the Called upon (Allah) and the caller in the verse from the Noble Qur'an:

And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad, *sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam*) about Me, I am indeed near (by My Knowledge). I respond to the *da'wah* of the *daa'ee* when he calls on Me. So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be guided aright. [2:186]

This gives us an idea as to what the pure meaning and essence of da'wah is. This relationship of da'wah between Allah, Most High, and His slaves is so important and so sensitive, that in order to establish complete Tawheed in worship, we are forbidden to call on anything other than Allah or seek intermediaries between us and Allah for Allah has said:

Say (O Muhammad, *sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam*): 'I have been forbidden to worship those whom you call upon (*tad'oona*) besides Allah.' Say: 'I will not follow your vain desires. If I did, I would go astray, and I would not be one of the rightly guided.' [6:56]

Allah uses the word da'wah or du'aa as a verb (*tad'oona*) known in Arabic grammar as *Jam'u Mudhakkir Mukhaatib* or the 2nd person male plural referring to the pagans that the Prophet

(sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) was commanded in this verse to respond to. The pagans made du'aa or called upon false gods which Allah clearly forbids in this verse and similar verses. The call (du'aa/da'wah) in Islam is so important that it forms the very foundation of worship. The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said; '*Ad-du'aa* is the worship' [At-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawood, Nasaa'i, Ibn Majah] and in another narration found in the Sunan of at-Tirmidhi; '*Ad-du'aa* is the *mukh* (essence) of the worship'. Now, you may wonder what all of this has to do with calling non-Muslims to Islam. Well, there is the da'wah that we make to Allah, Mighty and Majestic, for His Mercy, Blessings, Forgiveness, etc. and there is the da'wah that we make to the people in that we call them to the worship of Allah. Each is rooted in the same verbiage and both have distinct criteria that have to be met in order to properly achieve both. Once we begin to study the *asl* (foundation) of this word da'wah, we can establish the correct standard whereby we can measure whether we have met that standard or if we have fell short. This makes it a bit easier to distinguish between true da'wah and simple inter-action amongst non-Muslims.

The command to call or invite the people to the worship of Rabbul-'Aalameen is given in the verse of the Qur'an:

Invite to the way of your Lord with Hikmah (wisdom) and beautiful preaching and argue with them in a way that is better... [16:125]

According to the 'ulama', this command is not only for the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) but it is also a command for the Muslims in general. So when Allah in His Speech commands *Ud'u* (Invite), He, Subhaanahu wa Ta'aala, is speaking to this Ummah as well. From this understanding, we can measure whether or not we have actually invited to the way of Allah, which of course is Islam. Allah, The Mighty, says:

And let them not turn you (O Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) away from (preaching) the ayat of Allah after they have been sent down to you: and ad'oo (invite) to your Lord and be not of the Mushrikeen (pagans). [28:87]

At the present time, many atrocities are happening to the Muslims worldwide. Many Muslim groups and individuals have taken a variety of different paths in an effort to combat these atrocities either by political means, physical confrontation, fund-raising, protests, etc. Some of these means are halaal and some are haraam. In the United States and possibly other western countries, some Muslims are actively working with other religious groups and political parties in an effort to unite together to fight the injustices that are happening to Muslims throughout the world. They have brushed aside their differences to endorse politicians, hold rallies and fundraisers and to march in the streets. Whether this is the correct approach to solve the conditions of the Ummah or not is another topic all together. However, in order to justify involving themselves in activities that are sometimes at odds with the shari'ah and an obvious compromise of Islamic traditions, some have promoted the idea that this is da'wah. I will not argue the fact that displaying the proper manners of a Muslim can be a form of indirect da'wah. The proper *akhlaaq* is something that is necessary for every Muslim, at all times, in all circumstances. This is something that, inshaa'Allah, we will touch upon later. However, by definition, *da'wah* is an invitation, a call, as Allah commands, '*Ud'u ilaa sabeeli Rabbika...*' – '**Invite to the way Your Lord...**'. With any inter-action with non-Muslims whether under these circumstances or otherwise, if we have

not actually told them about Islam and gave them the glad tidings of paradise for those who submit and warned them of the hellfire that awaits the rebellious disbeliever, we cannot say that we have fulfilled the duty of da'wah in its purest sense. Even on an individual level, some Muslims make the mistake of trying to convince a non-Muslim acquaintance of the suffering of Muslims in Palestine or Iraq or of the dubious nature of the media in order to gain some form of political ally or a sympathetic ear while at the same time neglecting the most important thing that can be discussed with a non-Muslim. The most important thing that can be discussed with a non-Muslim is the obligation to submit to Allah. So it is an active invitation or summons. To what? To sympathize with the oppression of Muslims in Palestine? No. It is a call to the way of Allah. Hence, it is an active, direct call to the worship of Allah, which is Islam. It is not that the Palestinian issue or any other issue concerning the oppression of Muslims is not important. Indeed they are very important. However, this cannot be confused with giving da'wah to Allah. And as a priority, calling people who disbelieve to Islam is more important than calling them to sympathize with Muslims on a political, secular level. The reason for any evil on the Earth is a result of not adhering to what Allah has revealed. The first of which is maintaining Tawheed. The answer to any situation is first and foremost to establish the Tawheed. Once the worship of Allah is established, the other issues can easily be dealt with. This is the way of the Prophets (may Allah grant them peace). This is the way of Nuh, Ibraheem, and Isma'eel. This is the way of Shu'aib, Lut, Saalih, and Musa. This is the way of the one whose way we should follow, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Him and all of the Prophets). Submission to Allah's will is the first priority so it has to be the first thing that we call to. Allah says:

Let there arise out of you a group *yad'oona* (inviting) to *Al-Khair*, enjoining *al-ma'roof* and forbidding what is *al-munkar*. And it is they who are successful. [3:104]

The Interpreters have said that *al-khair* and *al-ma'roof* (the good) refers to everything that Allah has commanded, the first of which is the worship of Allah. *Al-Munkar* (evil) is to be fought against by the Ummah and the greatest evil is disbelief in Allah. Again, we have the verb *da'a* (call/invite) in the 3rd person masculine plural form *yad'oona* meaning that this is an active task of calling the people to Islam. Yes, we as Muslims should fight for justice and fight against injustices where ever they may occur but we should remember that the greatest injustice and the root of all other forms of evil is the rejection of Allah. Ibn Katheer writes that the early Qur'anic interpreter Ad-Dahhaak comments about verse 3:104:

'They are a special group of the Companions and a special group of those after them, that is those who perform Jihad and the scholars.'

This verse is also a proof that, at the least, da'wah is a *fard kifayah* upon this Ummah. However, as Ibn Katheer has stated, this does not absolve the individual from calling to Islam in whatever capacity one is able:

'The objective of this Ayah is that there should be a segment of this Muslim Ummah fulfilling this task, even though it is also an obligation on every member of this Ummah, each according to his ability.'

Some would argue that enjoining *al-ma'roof* and forbidding *al-munkar* can mean organizing politically to advance the cause of Muslims, rallying with other groups sympathetic to the plight of the Muslims, sending letters to politicians, etc. This indeed may be true and I do not argue against it. However, da'wah to Allah cannot be confused with this type of activity. As stated before, the worst type of injustice in the sight of Allah is disbelief and if we are going to enjoin *al-ma'roof* and forbid *al-munkar* in the way of our salaf, we must call to the worship of Allah first. This is the right that mankind has upon us. This is something that has to be done for the betterment and benefit of mankind. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) commented about the verse:

You are the best peoples ever raised up *lin-Nass* (for mankind); you enjoin what is *al-ma'roof* and forbid *al-munkar* and you believe in Allah...[3:110]

'The best for mankind are those who bring them with chains around their necks till they embrace Islam.' [Bukhari]

The *laam* in front of *an-Nass* indicates that the Ummah of Muhammad (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) has been raised up *for* mankind meaning for the benefit of mankind by calling them to the worship of Allah. It is for the benefit of mankind that we call them to the true religion so that they are saved from the eternal punishment of hellfire and enjoy paradise in the hereafter. Shaykh Saalih ibn Fawzaan Al-Fawzaan states in his thesis, *Kitaab at-Tawheed*;

'*Az-Zulm* (wrong, injustice) is placing something in other than its proper place. So whoever worshipped Allah but placed the worship in other than its proper place and directed it to that which does not have a right to it, this is a great injustice.'

'It has been reported to us by Allah, Glorified and Perfect is He, that He sent His Messenger and sent down His book to mankind in order to observe equity and this is justice. And the greatest justice is Tawheed; it is the head of justice and its guardian. And indeed *ash-shirk* (worshipping partners with Allah) is *zulm* (injustice, wrong) for Allah, Most High says; **Indeed *ash-shirk* is a great *zulm* (injustice, wrong)...[31:13]**...so associating partners with Allah is the worst of injustices and Tawheed is the most just of justices.'

THE VIRTUES OF DA'WAH

As with all other duties of Islam, the act of calling people to the religion of Allah brings with it abundant rewards and merits for those who perform this noble deed. Allah himself elevates in stature those who go out and proclaim the message of Islam to others in the verse:

And who is better in speech than he who (da'aa) invites men to Allah and does righteous deeds, and says; 'I am one of the Muslims' [The Noble Qur'an 41:33]

How noble this effort is in the way of Allah that Allah Himself establishes the status of the daa'ee. We also learn specifically from the lessons of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) how virtuous and rewarding guiding others to the truth can be.

Narrated Abu Mas'ood 'Uqbah bin 'Amr Al-Ansari Al-Badri (May Allah be pleased with him): Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said, 'Whoever guides someone to virtue will be rewarded equivalent to him who practices that good action.' [Muslim]

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him): Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said, 'If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him in righteousness without their reward being diminished in any respect on that account.' [Muslim]

It is reported that on the day of the battle of Khaibar, the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) gave 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him) the war flag and instructed him with these words;

'Advance cautiously until you reach their open places; thereafter, invite them to Islam and inform them of what is obligatory for them from the rights of Allah, for by Allah, if Allah guides even one person through you, that is better for you than possessing a whole lot of red camels.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

It is from the mercy of Allah that one can achieve such benefits by simply conveying the message of Islam and be rewarded so much so that there are rewards for the daa'ee by way of the good deeds of the one who was guided through him. This was the focus and motivation of those Muslims who were of the generation of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam). Their focus was to fight and struggle and preach until the word of Allah became dominant. Inshaa'Allah, the one who accepts Islam will perform the duties of Islam and work deeds of righteousness. The one who gave him the message of Tawheed will receive a reward for all of the good works in Islam that the one who was guided performs. The daa'ee gets some reward for the salaah of the guided one. The charity, fasting, Hajj, and other contributions to Islam may be a means of reward for the one who may have simply had a 20 minute conversation with one who was guided by Allah to accept Islam. And Allah knows best. The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said;

'Allah, His Angels, the dwellers of the heaven and the earth and even the ant in its hole and the fish in water invoke blessings on him who imparts good knowledge to the people.' [at-Tirmidhi]

Narrated Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him): I heard Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) saying, 'May Allah prosper the affairs of a person who hears something from us and communicates it with others exactly as he heard it. Many a man to whom something is conveyed retains it in his memory and understands it better than the one who has heard it.' [at-Tirmidhi]

FORTIFICATION OF THE DAA'EE

Now that the definitions and merits of da'wah have been explored, we must indeed turn to the daa'ee (caller) to understand what exactly is required of one who calls to the way of Allah especially in the midst of non-believers. In Islam, all deeds are accredited according to the *niyyah* (intention) of the one performing them. So the act of da'wah must be rooted in the correct intention. The daa'ee must have the correct and pure intention of giving the da'wah purely for the sake of Allah. The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said,

'Indeed, deeds are but by intention and the person will get the reward according to what he has intended.' [Bukhari and Muslim].

The guidance contained in this hadeeth is such that Imam ash-Shaafi'ee stated that it is a third of all knowledge and that it can fill up seventy chapters of fiqh. 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with them both) said, 'Man is only protected to the extent of his niyyah.' [Al-Adhkaar, an-Nawawi] It should be mentioned that in order to reap the beautiful rewards mentioned in the previous section, one must have *ikhlaas* (sincerity) of intention. This point can never be stressed enough with regard to any act of worship in Islam. It is very easy to fall prey to our desire to be accepted and admired even in doing service to Allah. A lot of times, our intention is pure at the beginning of an endeavor but in the course of doing the act, accolades from the people can eventually become gratifying to us and our intention very subtly changes from seeking the pleasure of Allah to seeking the praise of people.

Fudayl ibn 'Iyaad (d.187 A.H.) said, 'Leaving the deed because of the people is riyaa' (showing off) and deeds for the purpose of people (seeing them) is shirk.' [al-Adhkaar]

Because traditional da'wah involves contact with people, the lure of ash-Shaytaan can become very strong indeed, so much so, that du'aat can become competitors with one another as to who can dazzle the people the most with fine speech, who can win the most debates, or who gives the most 'shahadaahs'. Whatever one's intention is, it is surely known by Allah. Allah, Most High says;

Say (O Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam): Whether you hide what is in your breasts or reveal it, Allah knows it. [3:29]

In explaining the importance of intention, The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said,

'There is no Hijrah after the conquest (of Makkah) but (only) Jihad and Niyah...' [Bukhari and Muslim]

Narrated Abu Musa al-'Ash'aree (may Allah be pleased with him): Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) was asked, 'One man fights to show bravery, one fights for self-esteem, and one fights to show off; which of them fights in Allah's path?' He (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) replied, 'He who fights so that Allah's word may be exalted, fights in Allah's path.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'Abdullah ibnul-Mubaarak (b.118-d.181 A.H.) is reported to have said, 'It is very possible that a small deed will be magnified (in rewards) by its intention and it is very possible that a large deed will be diminished by its intention.' [Jaami' ul-'Uloom wa'l-Hikam]

It is well understood by the scholars of Islam that *'ilm* must precede the *'amal* in that one must be knowledgeable that a deed is lawful and that it is in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam). Furthermore, one must have knowledge in the proper manner of performing the deed before actually doing it. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said;

'The statement is not beneficial except with deeds. And neither the statement nor the deed is beneficial except with (pure) intention. And neither the statement, nor the deed, nor the intention is beneficial except that it agrees with the Sunnah.' [Jaami' ul-'Uloom wa'l-Hikam]

For example, if one were to begin making wudoo', yet the person had not acquired the knowledge of how to make an acceptable wudoo' and therefore does this action according to his own intellect, his wudoo' is invalid because he has not fulfilled the requirements for a valid wudoo'. Thus, he makes an invalid salaah and his actions are ruined due to lack of knowledge. However, *ikhlaas* of *niyyah* must precede *'ilm* in that a deed done by one who in fact has knowledge is only accepted by Allah if it is done with a pure intention. That is, solely for the pleasure of Allah. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said,

'Indeed, Allah does not accept any deed unless it is done sincerely for Him, seeking His pleasure.' [Sunan an-Nasaa'ee, Saheeh Sunan Nasaa'ee, al-Albaanee]

Also from the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) in a Hadeeth Qudsi:

Indeed, Allah, Blessed and Exalted has said, 'I am the Most Self-Sufficient of all associates, although I am in no need of having any associate. Thus, he who does an action for someone else's sake as well as Mine, I will leave him with whoever else he associated with me (i.e. he will not benefit from the action) [Muslim]

We should remember that we are calling to Allah, The Creator, Most Exalted and not to ourselves. If our intention is pure and we only seek the reward from Allah, we will not be as concerned with whether or not we have 'won' a debate or impressed an audience. That is not to say that charisma, debating and oratory skills are not part of effective da'wah. Indeed they are. However, we must not slip into thinking that our pride or reputation is at stake. Many people will want to argue for the sake of arguing and not because they are seeking truth and guidance. Once it becomes apparent that someone is going to be antagonistic with anything you say, especially if they are using coarse language, it is best to end the conversation and move on. In Suratul-Furqaan, Allah describes the attributes of *'Ibaadur-Rahman* (servants/worshippers of The Beneficent), one of which is in the following verse:

And *'ibaadur-Rahman* are those who walk on the Earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them, they reply with mild words of gentleness. [25:63]

When it becomes clear that a person is confrontational and argumentative despite the truth being told to him, it is best to courteously excuse oneself from the conversation. The temptation to subdue his viewpoint and crush his argument for the sake of 'winning' the debate can be very attractive. However, if he has been informed about Allah and His Oneness and has been shown clear proofs then he has been sufficiently called and warned. Any debate beyond this only serves personal ambitions and motives, thus subtly changing the niyyah of the daa'ee. Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said;

'I guarantee a home in Jannah for a person who gives up arguments and disputes even if he is on the truth.' [Abu Dawood]

Al-Hasan Al-Basree (b.21 - d.110 A.H.) is reported to have said, 'The wise man does not argue or seek to overcome with stratagem rather he propagates his wisdom. If it is accepted he praises Allah and if it is rejected he praises Allah.' [Reported by Abu Nu'aim ibn Hammaad in his Zawaa'id `alaz-Zuhd libnil Mubaarak]

The daa'ee is sort of like a postal carrier. His job is to deliver the mail to the homes of the people. He does not seek favor or reward from the people he is delivering to. When he has fulfilled his duty of delivering the mail, the responsibility of accepting the mail and acting upon whatever was conveyed in the mail is the responsibility of the recipient. The reward of the mailman comes from the agency that employs him to fulfill his postal duties. His reward is not diminished if a recipient does not open his mail. The mailman is not held responsible if the electricity bill he delivered was not paid by the recipient. It is to the benefit of the recipient that they act upon what is found in their mailboxes. The daa'ee must remember that their duty is to deliver the message of Tawheed. The daa'ee is not held responsible for guidance. The reward is with Allah whether they accepted the message or not so it is best to remain patient and remember the goal of da'wah is to invite to Allah. Allah says:

So if they dispute with you (O Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) say: 'I have submitted myself to Allah and those who follow me.' And say to those who have been given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and to those who are illiterates (pagans): 'Do you also submit yourselves (to Allah in Islam)?' If they do, they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, your duty is only to convey the Message; and Allah is baseer(all-seeing) over His slaves. [3:20]

As discussed briefly before, *ilm* (knowledge) is required of the Muslim before engaging in any action for the obvious reason that if it is to be accepted and blessed by Allah, it has to be in accordance to what He has revealed. This is especially the case when conveying the message of Islam to others. The daa'ee is under a great responsibility to deliver the clear and correct message for he is to be the first source of Islam for the one being called. This is a great responsibility. The message of the daa'ee may indeed be the foundation that the new or potential Muslim bases his faith upon and if it is flawed, the foundation will be flawed. It is clear that the seeking of knowledge (of Islam) is the responsibility of every Muslim so it is in fact a pre-requisite of da'wah. In other words, there is no da'wah without knowledge. Allah says:

Say (O Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam : 'This is My Way. I invite to Allah upon *Baseerah* (clear vision and understanding) – I and those who follow me. And I am not from the Mushrikeen (polytheists).' [12:108]

It is this correct understanding of Tawheed that is the basis for correct da'wah. Many people call to a variety of different beliefs but it is only the correct understanding of Allah, Most High that produces firmness in faith. If we do not have the correct understanding of Allah and His Power and Uniqueness, we may deliver a message that will not produce the type of taqwa and eemaan necessary to combat the whisperings of ash-Shaytaan and unlawful desires. Incorrect or deficient faith cannot motivate one to fulfill the duties that Allah demands from us and is pleased with. It is only those who have the knowledge of Tawheed who will be elevated and have the proper taqwa to be successful in this life and in the hereafter.

Allah bears witness that *Laa ilaaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He), and the angels, and those having *'ilm* (knowledge) (also give this witness) [3:18]

It is only *al-'ulamaa'* (those who have knowledge) among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, Oft Forgiving. [35:28]

It is an obligation to be of those who understand and have knowledge about Allah if we truly intend to worship Allah properly. As was mentioned before, knowledge on the level of the scholars is not what is being stressed. It is simply the proper understanding of faith that is needed by all Muslims.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen (May Allah have mercy upon him) said, 'The seeking of knowledge in detailed matters of religion (shari'ah) is *farid kifaayah* (communal obligation) (and) if some meet the obligation, it becomes sufficient for the rest of the people and this is preferred; and the seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon everyone meaning it is *farid 'ain* so that the people can properly offer worship to Allah with (correct) 'ibaadah, for indeed it is an obligation upon him that he should know how to worship Allah with this 'ibaadah.' [Fataawa Islamiyyah, Volume 1p.175]

Surely, one can only worship Allah properly if one has the knowledge of how to worship Allah and in calling to the worship of Allah, it is most necessary that one possess this basic knowledge lest someone be led astray. One would think that if it is so simple why is it even necessary to discuss it? The fact is, some individuals and groups have taken foreign ideologies and dressed them in Islamic garb either deliberately or not and have passed them off to an unsuspecting public as 'real' Islam. Some people, especially in the west bring their western or Christian concept of God as baggage with them even after they enter into Islam. Others from around the world bring cultural baggage with them into Islam. Some of these un-Islamic concepts and practices go back centuries and are deeply rooted into the fabric of the society. It is only through actually learning the religion of Islam through the authentic sources that these false notions can be purged from our consciousness. The knowledge of this is necessary when calling others to Islam in that we do not allow them to form correlations that do not exist between their understanding of 'God' and the true Tawheed.

However, if we have not purged these concepts from our own understanding, we may in fact be leading the people into further misguidance due to our ignorance. Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said;

'When Allah wants good for someone, He bestows upon him *fiqh* (understanding) in religion.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'Allah makes the way to Jannah easy for him who treads the path in search of *'ilm*.' [Muslim]

It is the knowledge of Islam that is necessary for calling to Islam. It is this understanding, this *fiqh* – *fiqh in deen* - that is required to be an effective daa'ee. Imam Abu Haneefah is reported to have said,

'The *Fiqh* (understanding) in deen is superior to the understanding of secular matters.' [Fiqh-al-Akbar].

Allah instructs the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) to say , '**...I invite to Allah upon Baseerah (clear vision and understanding)...**' [12:108]. Should we not follow the example of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam)? Of course we should. So it is necessary to equip ourselves with this *'ilm*, *fiqh*, and *baseerah* as the mujaahid equips himself with weapon and armor. It is a weapon in that it strikes down all false claimants to their respective paths as the truth and it is an armor to protect us from doubt, weakness of faith and the evil and deviant concepts we encounter as we call to Allah. How can someone ignorant of Allah call to Allah? It is this clear understanding that refutes all false resistance to its truth. Additionally, some people misunderstand the hadeeth of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) when he said , ' *Convey what you hear from me even if it is one verse...*' [Bukhari] to mean you should not have to have some knowledge before giving da'wah. First, it is a proof that it is an obligation for da'wah in that he gave us a command. Second, to show that it is a shared obligation, the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) made the conditions very easy so that no one would have an excuse not to share this message. He (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) commanded '*balighoo 'annee... - (Convey from me...)* not '*ta'allamoo 'annee... (learn from me...if only one verse...)* so the obligation is clear that the da'wah must be spread even if you only can pass on the knowledge of one ayah. Even if one were to convey the message of just one ayah, it goes without saying that the person must have some knowledge about the one ayah. This is not a command to stay ignorant of our religion. Indeed, we have proven through previously quoted ahaadeeth the merits and virtues of seeking knowledge as told to us by the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) himself. This false notion is also completely refuted by the words of Allah, Ta'aala when He commands, '**Invite to the way of your Lord with Hikmah...**' [16:125]. The wisdom behind the Prophet's (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) command is that not everyone will be a great public speaker or writer or what have you but one still has the obligation to convey by whatever means is suitable for the person. This can mean handing out literature or tapes or simply inviting someone to the Masjid to speak to someone about Islam. The point is that the message must be delivered and delivered with Hikmah (wisdom). One very important aspect of the knowledge one must have before calling the people is to know the difference between that which is eemaan (belief) and that which is kufr (disbelief). In the west in general and in the United States in particular, efforts are being made to blur the lines between Islam, the true faith, and other religions in the name of inter-faith cooperation. One of these measures

is to sway the leadership of the Muslims to change the position in Islam that Christians and Jews are disbelievers. In modernist language, they instead are 'Abrahamic' in faith, hence the brethren of the Muslims. Unfortunately, some Muslims in the west are the main proponents of this dangerous idea. It must be understood by Muslims in this part of the world that Christians and Jews are kuffaar, without a doubt. This is extremely important to know when inviting them to Islam because it provides a clear and firm motivation. The motivation being that the people have no other alternative to turn to for guidance and ultimate salvation except for accepting Islam. If this belief is not firm in the daa'ee, then his da'wah will be weakened severely in that if he does not believe that by dying a Christian or a Jew, one will enter hellfire, he will not convey the uncompromising message of Tawheed. This, in fact, presents the Christian or Jew with a valid reason to remain a Christian or Jew. However, Allah says;

Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam... [3:19]

And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be one of the losers [3:85]

Never will the Jews and Christians be pleased with you until you follow their *millah* (way, religion) [2:120]

Say: 'O' People of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians)! Why do you *takfuroona* (reject, disbelieve) the Ayat of Allah while Allah is a Witness to what you do?' [3:98]

O you who believe! If you obey a group of those who were given the scriptures (Jews and Christians) they would indeed render you disbelievers after you have believed. [3:100]

This day have I perfected your religion and completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion [5:3]

Allah refutes the misguidance that the Jews and Christians are of Ibraheem ('alayhi-salaam);

Ibraheem was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim *Haneef* – and he was not of the Mushrikeen (pagans, polytheists). Verily, among mankind who have the best claim to Ibraheem are those who followed him (in his time) and this Prophet (Muhammad, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and those who have believed (Muslims). And Allah is the *Wali* (protector) of the believers. [3:67,68]

The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said;

'I have been commanded to fight the people until they testify that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and that they establish the prayer and pay the Zakaat and if they do this, then their blood and their wealth is free from me except for the rights of Islam, and their reckoning is with Allah.' [Bukhari]

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him): Allah's Messenger said, 'By Him in whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, there is none from amongst the Jews and Christians (of these present nations) who hears about me and then dies without believing in the Message with which I have been sent, but he will be from the dwellers of the hellfire.' [Muslim]

Abu'l-Bukhtaree (student of Abu Hurayrah and ibn 'Abbaas – d.82 A.H.) said about the verse; **They take their priests and their rabbis to be their lords beside Allah. And they take (as their lord) Christ, the son of Mary, yet they were command to worship Allah alone...[9:31]** and the Hadeeth of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) in which he , sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, stated that by following the saints and rabbis in making permissible what Allah has made prohibited and vice versa, the Christians and the Jews in fact worshipped them:

'As far as they did not pray to them even if they were ordered to worship them and not to worship Allah, they did not obey them (in this). However, they (the priests and rabbis) made what Allah permits prohibited but what He prohibits they made permissible and they obeyed them (in this). And this is (giving them) *ar-ruboobiyyah* (lordship), and this is shirk (worshipping entities other than Allah.' [Majmoo'al-Fataawa Ibn Taymiyyah, Volume 7]

Ibn Taymiyyah states, 'Thus they believe in making lawful what Allah prohibits and prohibiting what Allah makes lawful as part of following their leaders, though they know that they have contradicted the path of the Messenger. This is indeed kufr, and Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) considered it shirk even though they did not pray or prostrate to them. He who follows other than Him (the Messenger, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) contrary to religion, knowing for a fact that it is contrary to religion, and believes in what he has said in derogation of what Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) have said, is certainly considered a polytheist.' [Majmoo'al-Fataawa, Vol.7]

Shaykh 'Uthaymeen has stated concerning the current notion that Jews and Christians are not disbelievers;

'Indeed it can be disbelief (to say Jews and Christians are not disbelievers) and this is because Allah, Mighty and Majestic, has made *takfeer* of them in His Book. Allah Most High says, **The Jews said 'Uzayr is the son of Allah and the Christians said that the Messiah (Jesus) is the son of Allah, that is their statement from their mouths, imitating the words of the disbelievers who came before them; The Curse of Allah is upon them...[9:30]** – so it is evident that they are those who are *Mushrikoon* (polytheists). And Allah makes it evident in other ayat that they are disbelievers (for example) **Verily they disbelieve who say that Allah is the Messiah, son of Maryam [5:17,72] ; Verily they disbelieve who say that Allah is one of a Trinity [5:73] ; Those who disbelieve from the Children of Israa'eel were cursed by the tongue of Dawood and 'Iesa, son of Maryam [5:87] ; Indeed those who disbelieve from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) and the polytheists will be in the fire of hell. [98:6]** – and there are plenty of verses and ahaadeeth on this matter. So whoever does not know of the kufr of the Jews and the Christians are those who do not believe in Muhammad (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) and has rejected him and indeed has rejected Allah, Mighty and Majestic. And the rejection of Allah is kufr and whoever has doubt about the kufr of the People of the Book, then there is no doubt about his kufr.' [Fataawa Islamiyyah, Vol.1]

The necessity of this understanding is crucial because if one gives the impression to a Jew or Christian that their religion is acceptable to Allah, then there is no motivation for them to accept Islam. Indeed, Islam is the only true religion and this idea must be understood by the daa'ee first. Why should a Christian accept Islam and get up to pray Salaatul-Fajr everyday or fast during Ramadhan if they can receive Allah's blessings and rewards by remaining a Christian and not have to do any of those things? That is not to say that the daa'ee should be pointing his finger yelling, 'kaafir!, kaafir!' to the Christian or Jew. Allah says to call with Hikmah and good admonishment so a Muslim should always be conscious of manners and politeness. However, it must be made clear that God's path is one and that path is total submission to His will, i.e., Islam.

Suffice it to say that the daa'ee cannot be ignorant of his religion. The Muslims in general and people who convey the message of Islam to others specifically must take advantage of gatherings that dispense the knowledge of Islam. Benefiting from the people of knowledge by attending classes, halaqahs, seminars, and personal study must be a part of the lives of those who give da'wah in order to strengthen them for the task.

Those who call to Islam in the lands of non-Muslims also have a responsibility to distinguish themselves from the non-Muslims as much as they can. Some people misunderstand the significance of being different from the non-Muslims and underestimate the wisdom behind it. In an environment of disbelief, it is extremely critical that the Muslim not imitate the customs and practices of disbelievers for if this happens, there is nothing to separate the Muslim from the non-Muslim. There has to be a barrier to separate guidance from misguidance in order to establish the proof of Islam as the truth to the people. The character of the Muslim has to be the noblest of character in order to expose the misguidance of the other ways that people follow. It is not befitting of the Muslim to engage in behavior that is not in accordance with the pattern of behavior established by Islam. The Muslim must maintain the proper etiquettes and modesty with regard to the opposite sex. The Muslim is humble and should avoid vain and vulgar speech. Allah says about the believers;

And those who turn away from *al-laghw* (dirty, false, evil, vain talk) [23:3]

And the statements of Allah about His servants;

And *'ibaadur-Rahmaan* are those who walk on the Earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them, they reply with mild words of gentleness. [25:63]

And those who do not bear witness to falsehood, and if they pass by some evil play or evil talk, they pass by it with dignity [25:72]

Establishing this *akhlaaq* can only be accomplished by following the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) who was the best of creation and had the noblest of character. Allah the Almighty himself says about the *khuluq* of Rasulullah (sallallahu'alayhi wa'sallam);

And Verily you (O' Muhammad, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) are on *khuluqin 'adheem* (excellent, great character) [68:4]

It can be difficult to convince the people of the beauty and superiority of Islam if one is not adhering to the principles of good character and actions. Even if one was skilled in rhetoric, debate and persuasive speech, it is of no value if non-Muslims perceive hypocrisy in the Muslim or worse yet, fallibility in Islam. Hence, the evil actions of a Muslim can be the excuse that a non-Muslim uses for not having to accept Islam. This can sully the image of Islam in the minds of people who, unless Allah guides them, become closed minded about Islam from then on. It is also important to be physically distinguishable from the non-Muslims. The importance of this is sorely underestimated by some. However, it was not underestimated by the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam). He would encourage his followers to distinguish themselves from the disbelievers on many levels including appearance.

Narrated Naafi': Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) said,' The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said, Do the opposite of what the Mushrikeen do. Keep the beards and cut the mustaches short.' [Bukhari]

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him); 'The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said, 'Jews and Christians do not dye their hair so you should do the opposite of what they do.' [Bukhari]

Tirmidhi reports that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said;

'The distinction between us and the Mushrikeen is the turbans over our caps.'

It is obvious that no affair is insignificant in Islam and the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) held appearance to be an important factor in distinguishing between the believers and the disbelievers. For the daa'ee who is among non-Muslims, appearing 'different' can lead to many opportunities to convey the message of Islam to others. Since the daa'ee is always looking to call to Allah, yet at the same time knows that it is impossible to chase down every single person in the area, attracting the curiosity of non-Muslims by just dressing different is a very effective way to initiate da'wah. Allah only knows how many people are seeking guidance and just hoping for someone to teach them the truth, yet many do not know where to go for guidance. How shameful it is that many opportunities are missed because Muslims are out amongst the people, yet they are not distinguishable from the rest of the society. Hence, if a person who was interested in Islam and wanted to know about Islam came in contact with them, they would not even know that they were in the presence of Muslims because of the lack adherence to the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) in all respects. Yet the Muslim who maintains the etiquettes, manners, and appearance of Islam, will be readily available to the people as a mercy to them in that they have the opportunity to seek the guidance of Allah. 'Why do you have that thing on your head? Are you a Muslim?' This can be an introduction into calling them to Tawheed. 'Why is your beard so long?' 'Why do you dress like that? Is it religious?' or a woman might ask, 'Why didn't you shake my hand? That's never happened before.' All of these simple interactions can be opportunities for da'wah but the Muslims must make themselves visible and available to the people by setting themselves apart from the rest of the society. Otherwise, the people are denied the opportunity to know Islam from those (the Muslims) who should be teaching them Islam and may get their understanding of Islam from their church or T.V. and the Muslims may be blameworthy. Allah knows best.

Finally, one of the most important things that the daa'ee must know in preparation for da'wah is that guidance comes from Allah. We do not have the ability to change the hearts of people nor did the Prophets ever have this ability. The task of the daa'ee is simply to deliver the clear message of Tawheed.

...Then if you turn away, you should know that it is our Messenger's duty to convey the message in the clearest way. [5:92]

The duty of the Messenger is nothing but to convey the message. And Allah knows all that you reveal and all that you conceal [5:99]

The daa'ee must know that one cannot force faith into the heart of someone, despite the clarity and truth of the message. It is an issue that is easily forgotten in the midst of da'wah which can lead to frustration and even the altering of one's intention. Indeed, it is amazing that there are some people who, even after hearing clear proofs and in some cases agreeing wholeheartedly with the message of Islam, can remain upon disbelief and shirk. This, however, should not discourage us, but should make us even more grateful and obedient to Allah, Most High that He guided us to Islam out of all of the people He could have guided. Allah says;

There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in *Taaghoot* (false deities) and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower [2:256]

And had Allah willed, He could have made you all one nation, but He sends astray whom He wills and guides who He wills. But you shall certainly be called to account for what you used to do. [16:93]

Verily you (O' Muhammad, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) guide not who you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who are guided. [28:56]

CALLING NON-MUSLIMS TO TAWHEED

So far, we have discussed the meaning and virtues of da'wah as well as a few fundamentals that the caller must establish in setting out to call to Islam. Now, we come to the essence of the message of da'wah, indeed, the essence of every single aspect of Islam, at-Tawheed (the absolute Oneness of Allah). It is, in reality, the goal of telling others about Islam. In fact, it can be said that there is no da'wah without the call to worship Allah, alone without any associates, as He has prescribed. Even if the process begins with simple discussions about other areas of Islam that non-Muslims may be interested in such as the *hijaab* or dietary laws, there is a point that the daa'ee must bring them in order to have fulfilled the duty of da'wah. In other words, if the conversation starts out on why women cover, the daa'ee must tie this and any other topic in Islam into the Oneness of the Creator and our duty to submit to Him.

A common pitfall in da'wah is to become sidetracked addressing secondary issues that may take up the few precious minutes the daa'ee has with his audience. While it is important to listen and be courteous to the person we are speaking to, it is more important to control the movement of the conversation to the extent that the main goal of life is established and clearly explained. It is improper to focus too much on the specifics of the acts of worship in Islam without first addressing on the motivation of that worship. The daa'ee should not try to teach non-Muslims fiqh by spending a lot of time explaining the steps of our salaah or the rites of Hajj without clearly explaining the foundation of the worship. The foundation is that there is nothing deserving of worship except Allah, Who has no associates, and that the purpose for our existence is to submit to His will and obey Him. Allah says;

Worship Allah and join none with Him in Worship [4:36]

The Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said,

'Islam is built upon five; To testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, the offer the prayer, to give the zakaah, pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) and fasting in Ramadhan.' [Bukhari]

Tawheed is the doorway to the worship. Proper worship can only be accomplished by first establishing total affirmation that Allah is One, with no partners and that He is the only One deserving of worship. There can be no salaah without Tawheed. There can be no fasting, no zakaah, no Hajj without first establishing Tawheed. So it is crucial that before we spend too much time on other matters, that we call the people to their purpose in life. Allah says;

O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may become *Al-Muttaqoon* (pious). [2:21]

This is the model of the Prophets. When the Prophet Yusuf ('alayhi-salaam) was asked by his prison-mates to interpret their dreams for them, He informed them that in due time, he would answer their request because of the favor that Allah had bestowed upon him (the ability to interpret dreams). However, his first priority was to inform them of the Oneness of Allah and the grave error of associating partners with Allah.

'Verily, I have abandoned the religion of a people that believe not in Allah and are disbelievers in the hereafter. And I have followed the religion of my fathers – (Ibraheem, Ishaq, and Ya'qoob) and never could we attribute any partners whatsoever to Allah. This is from the grace of Allah to us and to mankind, but most of mankind thank not. O' two companions of the prison! Are many different lords (gods) better or Allah, the One, The Irresistible? You do not worship besides Him only names which you have forged – you and your fathers – for which Allah has sent down no authority. The command is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him; that is the straight religion, but most men know not.' [12:37-40]

It is clear in these verses that the caller to Islam must seek to inform the people of the greatest crime one can commit and that is the worship of others beside Allah. Even though the audience may not perceive the importance of this issue, it is upon the daa'ee to clearly communicate the importance of this message. When the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam)

sent Mu'aadh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) to Yemen to call them to Islam, he stressed calling the people to pure Tawheed before anything else;

Narrated Ibn 'Abbaas; When Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) sent Mu'aadh to Yemen, He (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) said, 'You will come upon the People of The Book. Let your first act be to command them *yuwahhidoollah* (to establish the Tawheed of Allah) and if they obey you in this, inform them that Allah has prescribed for them five prayers in every day and night. If they obey you in this, inform them that Allah has imposed upon them the duty of charity to be levied from the rich and distributed to the poor.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

What we can take from the wisdom of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) is that in taking the message of Islam to the people of the West, most of whom are Christians and Jews, our main goal is to call them to recognize the Oneness of Allah in His Lordship and that the dominion of the heavens and the Earth belong to Him. This is what is known as *Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyah*.

All Praise is for Allah, The *Rabb* of Everything that exists [1:2]

To Him (Allah) belongs everything that is in the Heaven or the Earth... [2:255]

To Allah belongs the dominion of the Heavens and the Earth and Allah has power over all things [3:189]

All praises and thanks be to Allah, Who (Alone) created the heavens and the earth, and originated the darkness and the light, yet those who disbelieve hold others as equal with their Lord. [6:1]

He is the only One to whom we offer our worship. We do not ascribe partners to Allah for this is *shirk* and is the opposite of Tawheed. Allah has sent to every people a Messenger commanding them to worship Allah alone and avoid committing shirk. This is known as *Tawheed-ul-Uloohiyyah*. This is the area where most of the people go astray and this is where most of the focus of our da'wah should be. Most of mankind acknowledges the existence of The Creator of the universe. However, without guidance, they stray into shirk by worshiping others along with Allah. Even the polytheists of the Prophet's time acknowledged The Rabb of the Heavens and the Earth.

And if you were to ask them: 'Who created the Heavens and the Earth and subjected the sun and the moon?' They will surely reply, 'Allah.' How then are they deviating (as polytheists and disbelievers)? [29:61]

Therefore it is clear that the daa'ee must call the people back to the true and pure worship of Allah alone without associating partners with Him. This was the command given to all of the Prophets and Messengers.

And Verily, We have sent among every Ummah a Messenger proclaiming: 'Worship Allah and avoid *Taaghoot* (all false deities).' [16:36]

Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him in worship, but He forgives other than that to whom He pleases [4:48]

Shaykh Saalih ibn Fawzaan al-Fawzaan states;

Tawheed-ul-Uloohiyyah (Complete Oneness of Worship and Divinity): It means singling out or unifying all of one's worship (for Allah) i.e., that which in doing so brings the worshipper closer (to Allah) by performing it and that it is from what Allah has legislated like ad-du'aa, fearing Him alone, having hope in Him alone, loving Him more than anything or anyone, sacrificing for Him alone, fearing His punishment, seeking His aid alone, seeking refuge with Him alone, appealing for His help alone, prayer, fasting, spending in the way of Allah as well as everything that Allah has legislated and commanded without associating partners with Allah i.e., no king, no prophet, no saint, etc. ['Aqeedatu Ahlis-Sunnati wa'l-Jamaa'ah]

We do not speak about or describe Allah except by what He has revealed to us as His Perfect Attributes and Descriptions. He is High Above and completely separate from His creation. Meaning, He is not 'everywhere' as some people erroneously believe.

And He is the Irresistible, above His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, Well Acquainted with all things. [6:18]

They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded. [16:50]

His *Kursee* extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. And He is the Most High, the Most Great. [2:255]

If Allah The Mighty, The Majestic was 'everywhere' or 'within' His creation, by definition He would have to be in garbage dumps, restrooms, and other filthy places unbecoming the Lord of the Majestic Throne. High is He above that and all other falsehoods.

(He is Allah) Owner of High Ranks and Degrees, the Owner of the Throne. He sends the Inspiration by His Command to any of His slaves He wills, that he (the person who receives inspiration) may warn (men) of the Day of Mutual Meeting (i.e. The Day of Resurrection). [40:15]

Glorified be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne! Exalted be He from all that they ascribe (to Him). [43:82]

To Allah belong the most beautiful names and lofty descriptions.

And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names. They will be requited for what they used to do. [7:180]. [

Say (O Muhammad): "Invoke Allah or invoke the Most Beneficent (Allah), by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the Best Names. 17:110]

Allah! *Laa ilaaha illa Huwa* (none has the right to be worshipped but He)! To Him belong the Best Names. [20:8]

To Him belong the Best Names [59:24]

This is known as *Tawheed ul-Asmaa' wa's-Sifaat* The Imams of Ahlus-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah in their explanation of Imam at-Tahawi's 'Aqeedatut-Tahawiyyah have said concerning the Tawheed of Allah's Names and Attributes;

'It is the belief in all that has been mentioned in the Book of Allah, The All Powerful and in the authentic Sunnah from the Messenger of Allah, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, concerning the Names and Attributes of Allah and affirming them as belonging to Allah in way that befits Him without distortion and without negating and refraining from speculating on the manner of His Names and Attributes and without likening them to anything of His Creation for Allah has said;

Say He (Allah) is One, Allah the Self-Sufficient Master, He begets not nor was He begotten, and there is none comparable to Him. [112:1-4] and Allah Glorified is He has said, **There is nothing like Him; and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.[42:11]** And Allah says; **And to Allah belongs the most beautiful names so call on Him by them. [7:180]** and; **And for Allah is the highest description, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [16:60]** and the meaning of these numerous ayat is that the highest and loftiest description is the attribute with no imperfections in it and this is the statement of Ahlus-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah from the companions of the Prophet (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) and those who followed them in right guidance and we take and affirm the verses and ahaadeeth of Allah's attributes as they have come to us with their apparent meaning without likening them to His creation and without rejecting or negating them.' [At-Ta'leefaatul-Athareeyah 'alaa al-'Aqeedatut-Tahaaweeyah li'a'immatid-Da'watus-Salafeeyah, Ibn Maani', Ibn Baaz, al-Albaanee]

Of course, there is no need to go into minute detail of these concepts in giving da'wah. The goal is to deliver the clear message. There is no need to go into the technical Arabic terms for these concepts with non-Muslims. However, this 'aqeedah must be *understood* by the daa'ee beforehand so as to prevent Him from delivering an incorrect message or concept to a non-Muslim. The goal is be as clear and as understandable as possible and that means that the daa'ee must speak in way that people can understand and comprehend. This is the Prophetic model.

And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them. Then Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills. [14:4]

This does not change the content of the message. After this, we can provide help with *how* to worship Allah, i.e., the prayer, the fasting, etc.

Since the purpose for our existence is the worship of Allah, we should encourage the people to ponder their existence and explain with clear proofs that our purpose is for the servitude of Allah, our Creator. Allah says;

And I (Allah) created not the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone). (The Noble Qur'an 56:51)

Some people may contend that they may have other ideas as to what the purpose of life is and question the validity of the Islamic position. Why should they just accept us telling them that the purpose of life is to worship Allah? They may argue that the purpose of life can simply be 'to be a 'good' person'. If this is true, what is the criterion for determining what is good? What is the standard by which we can judge 'good'? Is it ours? If this were true, history is filled with behavior that during its time was considered normal and 'good' but as time evolved, man's outlook changed and so did his concept of right and wrong. There was a time in ancient Europe when soldiers would eat the brains of their enemies after beheading them in order to gain their opponents' strength and abilities. At the time, it seemed normal, but as man's circumstances change so does man's opinions and concepts. In these times, if someone were to commit this act, it would be universally condemned as barbaric. Three hundred years ago in the United States and Europe, people would burn women and girls at the stake for the crime of witchcraft, when in fact, most of the victims were only guilty of literacy or similar 'transgressions'. Was this correct? It seemed correct at the time. So man's degree of knowledge in the matters of what is good and proper is very, very limited. So we are in need of the One Who possesses perfect wisdom and knowledge to guide us to that which is truly good. There can be no 'good' without worshipping Allah first and foremost without joining partners with Him. Allah says;

Say: (O Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) Shall we tell you who lose most in respect of their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought they were acquiring good by their works? They are those who deny the signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him. Vain will be their works, nor shall We, on the Day of Judgment give them any weight. [18:103-105]

Some will say that the purpose of life is to be a good father or mother. Some people say, 'I live for my children'. In other words, 'The purpose of my life is my children'. But how can one make that which is not everlasting the purpose of one's life? If the purpose of someone's life was to be a good parent to their children, and their children were killed in a car crash, what would be their purpose in life then? If someone said that their career was the purpose of life, yet the corporation that they have worked so hard for went bankrupt, and left them with no employment, what would be their purpose then? Does life stop just because a company goes out of business? What about an athlete who says that his purpose in life is to compete in sports. What happens when he injures himself, ending his career? What is his purpose now? There are countless examples of how these arguments are baseless because in putting temporal things at the center of our lives, we risk disappointment, humiliation, and crisis if these delicate things we hold so dear are abruptly taken from us. Therefore, the center and purpose of our lives must be above that which is temporary and fragile. In order to truly live in peace and harmony with the rest of creation, as well as put ourselves and those things we hold dear into the proper perspective, we must devote ourselves to the One who is Everlasting and never dies and Who provides for us.

Furthermore, when we consider the purpose of existence, the very goal of life itself, then there must be a consistent answer that is applicable to all. The purpose for our being here on this Earth cannot be one thing for one person and something else for another. The proof is that all the things that culminate into and is common throughout life are consistent throughout humanity. Everyone agrees that the purpose for eating is to live. The purpose for drinking is to live. The purpose for clothing is to cover and protect. The purpose for housing is to shelter. The purpose for working is to make a living to maintain oneself and family. The purpose for education is to better ones life. The purpose for sex is to satisfy natural desires and to reproduce. All of these things are but components that make up life itself and humanity unanimously agree to their necessity. Then what about the very thing all of these are necessary for? It is similar to everyone knowing the topic of a chapter in a particular book yet no one knows the overall subject of the book itself. So the purpose of life has to be consistent throughout humanity and has to be applicable in all circumstances for all people in spite of differences of race, gender, age, culture, wealth, health, etc. By Allah's mercy to humanity, He has given us a way of life and a means of worshipping Him that everyone can fulfill no matter what their circumstances may be. Islam makes worshipping Allah the Almighty the center of life and whether one loses his wealth, his family, or his health, he is still able to worship his Lord, hoping for His mercy and fearing His punishment. Allah has given honor to mankind in that He has made us *Khaleefah* upon the Earth.

And Remember when your Lord said to the Angels: Verily, I am going to make in the land *Khaleefah* (succeeding generations)...[2:30]

He has given mankind nobility and honor.

Verily, We created man of the best stature (mould), [95:4]

He has made the rest of creation to be at the service of mankind.

Allah it is He Who has subjected to you the sea, that ships may sail through it by His Command, and that you may seek of His Bounty, and that you may be thankful, And has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; it is all as a favor and kindness from Him. Verily, in it are signs for a people who think deeply. [45:12-13]

The moon and the stars are for man's benefit in that they are guides of time and direction in the dark night. The oceans and rivers that give transport, food and drink are for mans benefit. The sun is for the benefit of man. It warms and nurtures, causing photosynthesis in plants and trees in combination with the rain that Allah has sent down to produce the vegetation to feed mankind as well as produce the oxygen man depends on for survival. The vegetation that is brought for from the Earth, even when it feeds the animals, is ultimately for our benefit, survival and pleasure. The animals that we use for food, transportation, clothing, milk, hunting, and protection are at our service to be domesticated servants of humanity. So much so, that even the chicken, lamb, or beef that you, the reader, ate for dinner last night was bred, conceived, born, nurtured, raised, fed, throughout its entire life,

only to be slaughtered and to ultimately end up on your dinner plate, to provide you with some nourishment and about 10 minutes of pleasure, by Allah's permission. Its entire purpose in life was to be a ten minute meal for you, the human being. How then, after understanding this, do we (mankind) have the right to not fulfill our purpose and reject Him who honored us with this position on the Earth, and Who provides and sustains us with His bounty?

And surely, We gave you authority on the earth and appointed for you therein provisions (for your life). Little thanks do you give. [7:10]

Nay! But worship Allah (Alone and none else), and be among the grateful [39:66]

DA'WAH TO CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab (rahimahullah) stated in his work *Shurootus-Salaah* (The Prerequisites of Prayer) about the Jews and Christians, '...And they, the Jews, have with them knowledge but they do not act according to it and we ask Allah to deliver us far from their way. And they, the Christians, worship Allah upon ignorance and misguidance and we ask Allah to deliver us far from their way.'

The reality of da'wah in the west is that for the most part, the people to whom the da'wah is given are Christians, Jews, Gnostics, and atheists. Those who identify themselves as Christians constitute the majority. However, most Christians only identify themselves with Christianity because of family, culture, and nationality. Most of the Christians in the United States are not rigidly locked into the doctrines of Christianity and will readily admit their doubts concerning some tenets of their faith. In approaching Christians about Islam, it is important to know some of the differences among western Christians and how to intelligently approach them according to their level. One approach that has gained some popularity is the 'Deedat' approach. This is based on the efforts of the famous debater and defender of Islam, Ahmad Deedat. With this method, the daa'ee basically brings out the inconsistencies in the Bible and discredits the Christian faith by exposing numerous flaws in their scriptures. It is a very aggressive approach and serves to refute Christian slander against Islam and dishes out a weighty argument against Christianity using their own book. Originally Deedat, may Allah reward him, sought to combat the negative and viscous slander that the missionaries in his area were dispensing about Islam, and to show Muslims that they did not have to just sit around and take it. He showed them that the Christian religion was in no position to try to discredit the validity of any ones religion, especially the true religion, Islam. I personally know people who came into Islam, by way of his books and videos and the method which he pioneered definitely helped to remove the passive, sheepish attitude of Muslims with regard to how they respond to Christians. However, this approach was a reaction to a certain environment and circumstance. This approach may yield some success in some situations and not much in others. That is why the daa'ee must use wisdom in giving da'wah so as to know what method is best for a particular situation. Attacking Christians about their faith and their book up front without any provocation can be very offensive to Christians and they may shut the message of Islam out all together because of the perceived

hostility to their faith. Furthermore, there can be many pitfalls in trying to authenticate Islam by debunking other scriptures and faiths directly to the non-Muslim to whom we are speaking. It can backfire in the sense that the person may become totally distrustful and suspicious of religion all together and reject everything, including Islam. Likewise, if a Christian is adamant in their adherence to the Bible, it probably will not matter what contradictions or fallacies are brought out because who's to say which interpretation is correct? After all is said and done, a lot of time has been spent debating over highly inauthentic material and the actual focus and purpose of da'wah has been lost. Remember, in defining da'wah, we said that it is an active call, invitation, summons, etc. to the worship of Allah upon *baseerah*, a clear understanding. Can we say that the Bible is a source of clear understanding? The source of our clear understanding is the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam. As we have stated before, all of mankind was created to worship Allah, so to begin by getting the Christian to ponder the purpose of their existence is an effective way to begin the da'wah. It is most important to understand their concept of 'God' and to approach and convince them of the true Majesty and Greatness of the Creator. Christians for the most part claim to believe that Jesus, 'alayhi salaam, is either the son of God, makes up one third of God, or is God all together or an amalgamation of all of these concepts. This is why they have been declared polytheists. Since they have not been encouraged to think these concepts through to their logical conclusion and what it actually means to say that Jesus, or any man is God or one-third God, or the son of God, they do not see the full inconsistencies inherent in them. That is why it is important to begin with the issue of The Creator and creation, the attributes that separate The Creator and creation and the purpose for creation. Basically, the daa'ee has to force the Christian to ponder the Creator in ways they have never done before. It necessary to recognize them as polytheists so we can approach them accordingly, which is to show the Greatness and Perfection of Allah and that He is far above His creation. Christians, like all other polytheists do not outright deny the existence of Allah. However, they disbelieve by worshipping His creation, even though they claim that their intention is to worship Allah. Allah Most High says;

Surely the Religion is for Allah only. And those who take Auliya' (protectors, lords, patrons, gods) besides Him (say) ; 'We worship them only in that they may bring us closer to Allah.' [39:3]

And they worship besides Allah things that harm them not nor benefit them and they say: 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' [10:18]

So Allah sent the Prophets and Messengers to mankind with clear signs to those who set up associates with Allah. Allah sent the guidance to humanity in order that those who worship other than Him may see the fallacies of their understanding. This is the same approach that must be used with Christians. When a Christian is asked; '*Who created everything?*', they will probably say; '*God*'. If they are asked; '*Who is the Creator?*', they will more than likely say; '*God*'. So they know the difference between Allah and Jesus. Now they should be made to reflect on the error of their worship. '*Why then, do you worship Jesus?*' It is a natural question to ask. If they acknowledge that Allah is the Creator and that He created everything, then why is it that

they do not devote their religion, their beliefs, their actions, and their worship to that very Creator. The knowledgeable daa'ee should know that like most polytheists, they are confirming *Tawheed-ur-Ruboobiyyah*. However, they go astray by rejecting *Tawheed-ul-Uloohiyyah*.

And most of them believe not in Allah except that they attribute partners unto Him. [6:106]

The job of the daa'ee is to call the people to perfect Tawheed. It is amazing to see that the thinking of Christians today is the same as that of the polytheists to whom the Prophets were sent. And Allah, perfected is He, informs us of what their response to these questions will be before they respond.

And if you were to ask them: 'Who created the Heavens and the Earth and subjected the sun and the moon?' They will surely reply, 'Allah.' How then are they deviating (as polytheists and disbelievers)? [29:61]

This approach forces them to think of 'God' in a way that Christians do not normally conceive of Him in that He is Perfect and is far superior to His creatures. The daa'ee should stress the differences between the perfect attributes of Allah, The Creator, and those of His creatures and how it is improper to devote ones worship to any of His creatures. The Christian should be asked questions like; *'Is God perfect?', 'Is God all-Knowing?', 'Is God all-Powerful?' 'Is God ever-existing with no beginning and no ending?' 'Does God know everything that has happened and that is going to happen?', 'Does God die?', 'Does God depend on anyone for sustenance?', 'Is God the most merciful of those who give mercy?'* The overwhelming response from Christians to all of these questions will be, Yes, God does know everything, He is Perfect, He is all-Powerful, He is eternal, He knows the future and the past, He does not die and He does not depend on anyone for sustenance. He is the Most Merciful. The reason they will answer this way is because it is the natural response. It is the simplest and most natural concept yet, most of the people soil this belief with falsehood. Then the daa'ee must persuade the Christian to examine their 'official' belief system. *'Is Jesus Perfect?', 'Is Jesus all-Knowing?', 'Is Jesus all-powerful?' 'Is Jesus ever-existing with no beginning and no ending?', 'Does Jesus know everything that has happened and that will happen?', 'DOES JESUS DIE?', 'Does Jesus depend on anyone for sustenance?' 'Is Jesus the most merciful of those who give mercy?'* If God and Jesus were one and the same or part of the same entity, then the answers to these questions have to match. However, there are contradictory answers between the two sets of questions. First, we said and agreed that 'God' is Perfect and all-knowing. Do these attributes confirm what is written about Jesus in their scriptures? No they do not. If a Christian answered that God does not die, yet part of their doctrine is to believe that Jesus 'died' for their sins, he has in fact been trapped by his own religion and has been forced to believe that God in fact does die, even though his natural disposition is to believe that God does not die. The aim of the daa'ee is to get the Christian to understand the true Tawheed of Allah's Names and Descriptions (*Tawheed-ul-Asmaa' wa's-Sifaa'*) and how they are unique and that His creation does not possess any of His Perfect qualities in the absolute sense. The usual Christian response is to change positions and to acknowledge that God and Jesus are separate but that they worship God through Jesus. All Praise is to Allah for His revealing to us the error of their ways and guiding us to the truth in refuting them.

Surely the Religion is for Allah only. And those who take A uliyaa' (protectors, lords, patrons, gods) besides Him (say) ; 'We worship them only in that they may bring us closer to Allah.' [39:3]

Now that they have acknowledged the difference between Allah and His creation, specifically Jesus, they must be shown that if Allah's creatures do not possess the qualities of Allah, then by their very nature, they are not deserving of worship.

And of mankind are some who take for worship others besides Allah as rivals (to Allah). They love them as they (should) love Allah. But those who believe love Allah more than anything else. If only those who do wrong could see, when they will see the torment, that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is severe in punishment. [2:165]

Do they attribute as partners to Allah those who created nothing but they themselves are created? [7:191]

And they worship besides Allah things that harm them not nor benefit them and they say: 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say: 'Do you inform Allah of that which He knows not in the Heavens and on the Earth?' Glorified and Exalted is He above all which they associate as partners with Him! [10:18]

In order to justify their *shirk*, Christians have been given strange and offensive analogies to explain their false concept of Allah. They will even use these analogies to try to convince Muslims to reject Islam. One of their favorites is the egg analogy. They try to explain the 'trinity' (a concept not even found in their book) by way of the egg. To refute those who question their belief that God is one and three at the same time and by worshipping three, they are not actually polytheists because they are worshipping one, we arrive at the egg. The egg, they say, is an example of the scientific possibility of three actually being one. They explain this by saying that the egg is one entity but it is composed of three parts, i.e., the shell, the whites, and the yolk. To digress, there is a saying we have in America about easy challenges. For example, if a republican is challenged by a democrat, to show that the democrat is an easy opponent and poses no threat, he (the republican) might respond, 'I eat democrats for breakfast!' Well, I, literally eat *eggs* for breakfast. The fact that they believe that this is an argument simply is an example of what Imam Ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab stated, '...And they, the Christians, worship Allah upon ignorance and misguidance...'. As Allah has stated in the Qur'an;

They made not a just estimate of Allah such as due to Him [39:67]

All praise is to Allah for guiding this Ummah to Tawheed. They try to justify shirk by further lowering and likening Allah, Most High to more of his creation, namely eggs. I will not waste the readers time in the obvious logical refutations to this silly argument but this simply illustrates the level of ignorance and misguidance that the Christians are upon. Of course in calling to Islam we do not actually call them ignorant or misguided to their faces. We simply direct them to the signs of Allah so that they may begin to understand just how Unique,

Mighty and Powerful Allah is. Another analogy is the water analogy. They say that water is water although it can exist in three different states, namely liquid, gas, or solid. Again, Allah is the creator of water and created us from water so how can Allah be likened to that which He creates? **They made not a just estimate of Allah such as due to Him [39:67]** Besides, water is a chemical compound of two elements, hydrogen and oxygen and can be broken down into to separate parts so the water analogy is baseless even on a grade school level.

Another way Christians try to prove some sort of divinity for Jesus (because in proving the divinity of Jesus justifies worshipping him) is the fact that he was born of a virgin. Yes, Muslims believe that Jesus was born without a father to a virgin, Mary. However, to use this as a justification for worshipping him is a serious error. If this is the justification for directing their worship to Jesus, then they may as well worship jellyfish, several species of insects and lizards because through a process known as parthenogenesis (virgin birth), these animals are able to reproduce without the aid of a male counterpart. Allah says;

Verily, the likeness of Jesus before Allah is the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then He said to him: 'Be!' – and he was. [3:59]

Christians often times respond to Islam by trying to stress a certain 'love' that God has for mankind and that by adhering to the rituals of Islam, we miss the purpose of His 'love'. Christians will try to appeal to our sense of laziness by trying to explain that because God 'loves' us, He sent His 'son' to be sacrificed so that we would have salvation by simply acknowledging this without any deeds. In other words, God loves us, so He has promised a life of ease without rules and regulations (known in Christian terminology as *The Law*) if we simply say that His 'son' is Lord and Savior. However, since when does an authority show love without establishing rules and prohibitions that are necessary to protect his subjects from things which can harm them that they may not be aware of? A parent who truly 'loves' his children imposes upon the children certain restrictions and commands that, although frustrating to the children, serve to protect them from harm and improve their quality of life by preparing them for life's struggles. He shows love because he knows what is best for them from his knowledge and experience and because they do not have this knowledge, they must depend on the parent for their well being. Who is more knowledgeable about creation other than the Creator? Who is the ultimate authority? Does it make sense that the Creator would create this vast universe, including man, only to allow man to follow his desires, even to his own peril, without sending clear instructions because He 'loves' man? This simply makes no sense. However, in speaking to Christians it is helpful to know in advance their way of thinking so that the appropriate medicine can be administered. They may respond that it is necessary to acknowledge this concept in order to receive forgiveness and mercy (salvation). However, when asked, 'Is God the most merciful of those who give mercy?' Christians will say, 'Yes'. The Christian should then be asked, '*So why then can't He just simply forgive us?*' Christians believe that works or righteous deeds are not required to get closer to Allah but it is the vicarious atonement that brings about His love. Christians claim that they have been freed from servitude to Allah because of His love for them. They do not aim to be slaves of Allah but rather 'friends of God'. But this flies in the face of reality as Allah has informed us not only of our true purpose in life which is to worship Him as we have proven earlier but also that it is in our very nature to submit to His will whether we desire to do so or not. Man cannot be 'freed' from his nature because Allah has created man to submit and our very beings adhere to submission to His order and design. Man cannot escape the design

of Allah. Our bodies are slaves to Allah even if we consciously do not submit to His will. We are slaves in that we must have the air that Allah has designed our bodies to depend upon. We cannot be 'free' of that need. Our bodies must acquire nutrition to grow and function and we cannot willingly rebel against this nature for it is an involuntary compulsion that we must obey. We must be born and we must die. These are aspects of our existence that we have no control over so indeed man's nature is submissive to Allah's design. However, Allah's mercy is ever so near and His mercy extends over the span of creation. One does not have to jump through ideological hoops to obtain forgiveness from the Most Merciful. Allah, The Merciful says;

Say to my servants who have wronged themselves; do not despair of the Mercy of Allah. Indeed Allah forgives all sins. Verily He is The Most Forgiving, The Most Merciful. [39:53]

The Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said:

'Allah has one hundred mercies out of which he only sent down one for jinn, mankind, animals, and insects by virtue of which they love one another and have compassion for one another; and by virtue of it, wild animals care for their young. Allah has retained ninety-nine (parts) to deal kindly with His slaves on the Day of Judgment.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'When Allah created creation, He wrote in the Book, which is with Him over the Throne: 'Verily, My Mercy dominates My Wrath.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'By the One in whose Hand my soul is, were you not to commit sins, Allah would replace you with a people who commit sins then seek forgiveness from Allah; and Allah would forgive them.' [Muslim]

It is clear in Islam that Allah is oft forgiving and does not make salvation available by way of an indirect, vicarious sacrifice. His Attributes of mercy and forgiveness are numerous as this is how He has described Himself. Allah is *Al-Ghafoor* - the Forgiving, *Al-Ghaffaar* - the most forgiving, *Ar-Rahmaan* - The Most Beneficent, *Ar-Raheem* - the Most Merciful, *Ar-Ra'oof* - The Most Compassionate, *Al-Wadood* - The Loving and so on. So Allah, Most Gracious, is in no need of making one of His slaves responsible for the salvation of the rest of His slaves. Allah is fully capable of forgiving whom He pleases when He pleases for the Creator, *Al-Khaaliq*, has the power to do that. However, the sin that Allah does not forgive is the sin that the Christians are guilty of, i.e., shirk. Allah says;

Verily Allah does not forgive that partners be associated with Him but He forgives sins other than that to whom He pleases. [4:48]

It is also necessary to ask the Christian to ponder some of the marvels of creation and to reflect on how Christianity has tried to shrink God down to some type of primitive tribal god, only serving to be the god of a particular region or time. Because when you study the vastness of creation, one begins to realize that the Creator is far superior to anything that mankind has tried to lower Him to. For example, the galaxy to which our solar system

belongs is called the Milky Way. Contained in it are 400 billion other solar systems including their respective planets, moons, orbits, clusters and nebulae. The Milky Way alone has a mass of about 750 billion and 1 trillion solar masses and a diameter of 100,000 light years and it belongs to a cluster of three other galaxies similar in size along with thirty smaller ones. The visible (to us) universe has a radius of 15 billion light years and is some 300,000 times the size of the Milky Way. To put the size of this into perspective; If the Milky Way was an 8 centimeter wide coffee cup, the known universe would have a radius of about 50 kilometers in comparison to it. Remember the questions; *Is God the Creator?/Is Jesus the Creator? Was the vastness and harmony of this universe created and proportioned by Jesus? Does he (Jesus) have the knowledge of where every single molecule in this universe exists and did he place every molecule in its place? Is this the Creator? Is this the attribute of one who was born in a small village in Palestine only two thousand years ago? Is this the attribute of one who depended on his mother's breast for sustenance?* Allah says;

They made not a just estimate of Allah such as due to Him. And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the Earth will be grasped in His Hand and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand. Glorified be He and High be He above all that they associate as partners with Him. [39:67]

So the Christian should be given the glad tidings of the rewards of accepting the truth and submitting to Allah as well as be warned about Allah's sever punishment which comes as a result of associating partners with Him. Allah's Messenger, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam said;

'He who bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, He is one and there is no associate with Him, that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger, that 'Iesa (Jesus) is His slave and Messenger and he (Jesus) is His Word which He communicated to Maryam, and His spirit (meaning created by Allah), that paradise is true and hell is true; Allah would make him (he who affirms these truths) enter Paradise whatever his deeds may be.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

The approach for Jews, in my opinion can be very direct since they have some concept of law and a long tradition of prophethood. However, they have taken liberty with their own scripture and have lost most of the knowledge that has been revealed to them. In their scripture, they have given Allah, Most High, the attributes of man whereas the Christians have given man the attributes of Allah. They have described Allah as needing rest. But Allah says,

Neither slumber, nor sleep overtake Him. [2:55]

They have described Allah as repenting but Allah is in no need of any of His slaves and He is the one to whom repentance is given. Allah says,

Then Allah stands not in need of any of the '*Alameen* (mankind and jinns). [3:97]

Verily, He is the One Who accepts the repentance and forgives. [110:3]

The Jews should be called to complete Tawheed because like the Christians, they acknowledge the fact that Allah is the Creator, however, they go astray by ascribing to Allah things of which they had no authority as well as rejecting the guidance sent to them. Allah describes their insolence in the Qur'an;

The Jews say: "Allah's Hand is tied up (i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty)." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched. He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills.[5:64]

And the Jews say: 'Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: Messiah is the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouths. They imitate the saying of the disbelievers of old. Allah's Curse be on them, how they are deluded away from the truth! [9:30]

It is clear that the Jews have abandoned the Tawheed that was preached to them by the prophets and messengers that were sent to them, hence, they are disbelievers and should be called back to the true faith of Ibraheem.

Say: "We believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Ibraheem (Abraham), Ismaa'il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qoob (Jacob) and *Al-Asbaat* [the twelve sons of Ya'qoob (Jacob)] and what was given to Mûsa (Moses), 'Iesa (Jesus) and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one another among them and to Him (Allah) we have submitted (in Islam)." [3:84]

It is good to warn the Jews of the punishment of the hereafter for those who reject Allah and of the great reward that awaits the one who submits to Allah and worships Him alone. They have destroyed a great portion of the message sent to them and they have only conjecture as a reference. This is especially true with regards to the hereafter. Allah describes their false understanding in the following verse;

And they (Jews) say, "The Fire (i.e. Hell-fire on the Day of Resurrection) shall not touch us but for a few numbered days." Say (O Muhammad Peace be upon him to them): "Have you taken a covenant from Allah, so that Allah will not break His Covenant? Or is it that you say of Allah what you know not?" [2:80]

The Jews as well as Christians should be given the warning of the ever-lasting punishment of Hell for those who die as disbelievers. Allah says;

Verily, those who disbelieve from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and *Al-Mushrikoon* will abide in the Fire of Hell forever. They are the worst of creatures. [98:6]

The Prophet, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, said;

'By Him in whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, there is none from amongst the Jews and Christians (of these present nations) who hears about me and then dies without believing in the Message with which I have been sent, but he will be from the dwellers of the hellfire.'
[Muslim]

Muhammad 'Abdur-Rahman 'Iwad reports a beautiful story in his book Ad-Dunyaa about how Imam ash-Shaafi'ee (rahimahullah) conveyed this warning of the hereafter to a Jew;

'Once a Jew, who was hurrying and struggling behind his donkey loaded with oil, passed by Imam ash-Shaafi'ee. The Jew's clothes were filthy and his whole manner was repulsive. When the Jew met the Imam who was reclining in the shade and dressed in immaculately clean clothes, he stopped and asked him: 'How is it that people (Muslims) can say that the dunyaa is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the disbeliever?' (indicating the blessings surrounding the Imam and the striving and toil in which he found himself): it was as if he was insinuating that those words were not true and that if they were true then ease should be for the Jew and toil and struggle should be for the Imam who could expect his blessings in the hereafter.) The Imam replied: 'Yes it is true that the dunyaa is the prison for the believer and paradise for the disbeliever, for it is true that the blessings that I enjoy now represent a prison in relation to what awaits me in the next world. And if you realized what torment awaits you, then you would know that this lower world you now enjoy is in fact paradise compared to that.'

They should be told to take heed of the Qur'an and the words of the Messenger Muhammad, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, because he was sent to all mankind.

O mankind! Verily, there has come to you the Messenger (Muhammad sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) with the truth from your Lord, so believe in him, it is better for you. But if you disbelieve, then certainly to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise. [4:170]

O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Now has come to you Our Messenger (Muhammad sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) explaining to you much of that which you used to hide from the Scripture and passing over (i.e. leaving out without explaining) much. Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a light (Prophet Muhammad sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) and a plain Book (this Qur'an). [5:15]

There is no other way to true salvation and safety from the hellfire except by worshipping Allah alone and in accordance to what He has sent down by way of His Prophet Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam. Anyone who grasps onto this with firm belief, Allah has promised a great reward. May Allah make us of those people who are successful.

DA'WAH TO ATHEISTS AND GNOSTICS

There are a number of people in western countries who identify themselves as either atheists (those who claim to believe that there is no God) or Gnostics (those who say they believe in God but not in any particular religion) in the west. Some of this may be attributed to

perceived advances in science and medicine in western countries and the notion put forth by humanists and communists that mankind is no longer in need of 'God' because of the technological prowess of the 'modern' man. Some perceive that because man now has some degree of understanding of agriculture, weather patterns, and developments in science and medicine that we no longer have to call out to a Supreme Being to fulfill our needs. Usually, those who make this claim are themselves somewhat educated and typically do not find it attractive to admit that despite all of their so-called intelligence, they are still inferior to One who has supreme and perfect Knowledge. Based on this scientific, analytical way thinking, the atheist's argument is based on what science has developed as part of its method of observation. In other words, there must be concrete evidence to prove the existence of a Creator and if said evidence cannot be obtained, then the only possible conclusion is that one does not exist. As a professed atheist once told me, *'I cannot look out into the Earth and see anything that proves that there is a God.'* However, the entire basis of their argument is flawed because they seek to prove or disprove the existence of the Creator based on the level of sophistication that man happens to be at, at that particular time. History is replete with outstanding scientific achievements and discoveries at one point in time, only to be debunked at a later point in time due to mans ever changing circumstances and developments. And man is always convinced that the achievement or the discovery of his time is the apex of whatever particular field of study he is involved in at the time. It is only later, after more advances, that man discovers that they have not discovered all that can be discovered and that they have yet to begin to unravel the mysteries of creation. At one point in time, it was considered a scientific fact that spoiled meat could transform into maggots. It was only until technological advances allowed for further study using microscopes and testing in a controlled environment that this theory was disproved. Not to mention other little miscalculations such as the earth being flat or the earth being the center of the solar system. Medical science proved that eggs were high in cholesterol and contributed to high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity. Then, a few years later, it was discovered that someone made a miscalculation and eggs were not as bad as they had once thought. So when does man attain the level of perfection in his understanding of the universe around him to be qualified to prove or disprove the existence of the Creator based on 'science'? What is astonishing is that they are no different than the disbelievers of old who wanted sign after sign, proving that the truth has been revealed from Allah. Yet, they kept on disbelieving even after Allah's signs were made clear to them.

And if they see a sign, they turn away, and say: "This is continuous magic." [54:2]

Let us revisit the statement of the atheist to me; *'I cannot look out into the Earth and see anything that proves that there is a God.'* Well, the Earth and everything else in the creation is the very evidence of Creator. Everything in creation is a sign or ayah of the Creator. It is only the worst of creatures that deny these signs. The Noble Qur'an establishes that if one truly pondered the creation, we would submit to the One Who created it. Allah, in Suratul-Nahl, lays out numerous signs for those who would take heed.

He has created the heavens and the earth with truth. High be He Exalted above all they associate as partners with Him. He has created man from *Nutfah* (mixed drops of male and female sexual discharge), then behold, this same (man) becomes an open opponent. And the cattle, He has created them for you; in them there is warmth

(warm clothing), and numerous benefits, and of them you eat. And wherein is beauty for you, when you bring them home in the evening, and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning. And they carry your loads to a land that you could not reach except with great trouble to yourselves. Truly, your Lord is full of Kindness, Most Merciful. And (He has created) horses, mules and donkeys, for you to ride and as an adornment. And He creates (other) things of which you have no knowledge. [16:3-8]

Allah continues to explain in detail His signs;

He it is Who sends down water (rain) from the sky; from it you drink and from it (grows) the vegetation on which you send your cattle to pasture; With it He causes to grow for you the crops, the olives, the date-palms, the grapes, and every kind of fruit. Verily! In this is indeed an evident proof and a manifest sign for people who give thought. And He has subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon; and the stars are subjected by His Command. Surely, in this are proofs for people who understand. And whatsoever He has created for you on this earth of varying colors. Verily! In this is a sign for people who remember. [16:10-13]

So when one truly reflects on the statements of Allah, Most High, the position of those who call themselves atheists becomes apparently ridiculous. The daa'ee can explain to the atheist that just because we cannot see or hear the Creator, his signs are the proof itself. There are many instances in life where we do not see the cause or the origin of a thing but we know of it because of the thing which it produced. When we see an apple at the market, we automatically know based on logical deduction that it came from a tree. Do we see the tree? Can we prove the existence of the tree while we are in the market? It is simple, the apple itself indicates the existence of the tree. When you see an automobile on the street, the automobile itself indicates the existence of the engineer who designed it, the factory where it was manufactured and the workers who assembled it. Even though we do not see them, we assume they exist because we cannot force ourselves to ignore the clear evidence in front of us. It would be absurd to try to convince someone that the next time they see an automobile, that the alloys, metals, machinations, plastics, glass, fiber-glass and other materials simply bumped into one another and kept bumping into each other until this sophisticated piece of technology was formed without the aid of any intelligence or deliberation whatsoever. Well this is the basic argument of atheists with regard to a much greater collection of materials, i.e., the universe. To be quite honest, I do not believe that there are any true atheists. I sincerely believe that the compulsion to worship the Lord of the creation still exists in every human. Allah, Perfect is He, has stated that all of mankind has at one time testified to the existence of the Creator.

And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed and made them testify as to themselves (saying): "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: "Verily, we have been unaware of this." [7:172]

However, man follows his desires and as a result of doing so, begins to move away from this disposition. The atheist is no different. For an atheist to acknowledge the existence of Allah, he knows that he cannot go on following his desires without acknowledging the punishment of Allah for not submitting to Him. It can be explained to the atheist that throughout human

history, man has had an uncontrollable compulsion to communicate with his Lord. Man has been compelled to construct technological wonders for the purposes of some spiritual connection with a greater power. Without guidance, this urge manifests itself in a variety of misdirected acts of worship. However, it is clear from artifacts and monuments from past civilizations that man has been on a constant quest of spirituality. He has expended vast amounts of energy, time, wealth, and labor to fulfill this need to worship. Also, the atheist should be asked; What is the worse that could happen to the one who believes in his Lord and worships him? If he dies doing this and there was no God, what can happen to him after his death? It could be said that all of his worship was for nothing. However, as a result of proper worship, people can recognize honesty, generosity, good manners, chastity, etc in this person. So even then, one who lived his life in this manner would be well respected and liked by those who knew him. So it would be hard to argue that his worship had no benefit. However, if the Atheist died an atheist and there *is* a God, who would envy the atheist? His destination is everlasting punishment in the hellfire. So which is the safest position to take? It is at this point when most Atheists admit that they believe in God but not religion. In other words, they say that they are technically Gnostics. At this point, it is necessary to inform them that whether professed atheists or Gnostics, they still have taken a lord – their own desires. This is the basis for atheism and agnosticism. Whether they admit it or not they simply want to justify following their own lusts with reckless abandon by professing that there is no divine order and that there will not be a reckoning for what we do in our lives. Allah describes these types of people in the Qur'an;

Have you seen him who takes his own lust (vain desires) as his *ilaah* (god), and Allah knowing (him as such), left him astray, and sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover on his sight. Who then will guide him after Allah? Will you not then remember? [45:23]

Nay, but those who do wrong follow their own lusts without knowledge, Then who will guide him whom Allah has sent astray? And for such there will be no helpers. [30:29]

They belied (the Verses of Allah, this Qur'an), and followed their own lusts. And every matter will be settled. [54:3]

The Prophet, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, said;

'The Hellfire is surrounded with all kinds of desires and passions while Paradise is surrounded with adversities.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

So whether they admit it or not, they have taken a lord, and whether they would like to admit it or not, they have taken a *deen* (a way of life), whether it is cultural, political, societal, or familial, they have taken on some or all of the various systems of thought and patterns of life made available to them in their environment. And this is deen. However, the only correct and perfect deen is Islam.

Truly, the *Deen* with Allah is Islam... [3:19]

Finally, all of the people, whether they be Christians, Jews, Pagans, etc. should be warned of a day when there will be no helper for them and that the punishment for disbelief is the severe torment of Hellfire;

And fear the Fire, which is prepared for the disbelievers. [3:131]

Verily, the tree of *Zaqqoom*, Will be the food of the sinners, Like boiling oil, it will boil in the bellies, Like the boiling of scalding water. (It will be said) "Seize him and drag him into the midst of blazing Fire, "Then pour over his head the torment of boiling water, "Taste you (this)! Verily, you were (pretending to be) the mighty, the generous! "Verily! This is that whereof you used to doubt!" [44:43-50]

And give them the glad tidings for those who accept faith and die on faith;

Verily, The *Muttaqoon* (pious), will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers (Paradise). In a seat of truth (i.e. Paradise), near the Omnipotent King (Allah). [54:54-55]

Among Gardens and Springs; Dressed in fine silk and (also) in thick silk, facing each other, So (it will be), and We shall marry them to *Houris* (female fair ones) with wide, lovely eyes. They will call therein for every kind of fruit in peace and security; They will never taste death therein except the first death (of this world), and He will save them from the torment of the blazing Fire, As a Bounty from your Lord! That will be the supreme success! [44:52-57]

The Prophet, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, said about the Paradise and its inhabitants;

'Their utensils will be of gold. Their perspiration will smell like musk; everyone of them will have two wives; the marrow of the bones of the wives' legs will be seen through the flesh out of excessive beauty. They (people of Paradise) will neither have difference nor enmity amongst themselves; their hearts will be as one heart, and they will be glorifying Allah in the morning and in the afternoon.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'In Paradise the believer will have a tent made of a single hollowed pearl of which the length will be sixty miles in the sky. The believer will have his wives with him and they will not be able to see one another.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'When the dwellers of Paradise enter Paradise, an announcer will call: (You have a promise from Allah that) you will live therein and you will never die; you will stay healthy therein and you will never fall ill; you will stay young and you will never become old; you will be under constant bliss and you will never feel miserable.' [Muslim]

Narrated Jabir ibn 'Abdillah (may Allah be pleased with him): We were sitting with Allah's Messenger (sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam) when he looked at the moon and observed, 'You shall see your Lord in the Hereafter as you are seeing this moon; and you will not feel the slightest inconvenience in seeing Him.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

No other Ummah has been blessed with these descriptions of the hereafter. The Christians' concept of paradise is a combination of myths and speculation and in reality, offers nothing

that can be considered a reward for faith in this world. They take issue with the fact that Islam describes paradise as a place of physical pleasures, yet they believe that hell is a place of physical tortures. Does it make sense that Allah would make his punishment a physical, painful torment and yet make his reward something intangible or *angelic* as the Christians believe? They should be asked very bluntly; Which would you prefer, to be *angel* floating around the clouds forever or a physical, forever young and healthy man (or woman) enjoying the physical pleasures of paradise? The Jews have written the hereafter out of their religion and should be asked to consider the magnitude of the Islamic position of the hereafter. Atheists and Gnostics should be made to face the depressing position that they have put themselves in. They have to struggle in toil as every other human being does; they have to work; they get sick; they lose loved ones; they hurt; they get tired; yet they believe that this is as good as it gets. O Allah, make us to be among those who believe and who enter Jannah, Ameen.

ADVICE CONCERNING NEW MUSLIMS

A brief point should be made about the nurturing and tutoring of those who take that momentous step and enter into Islam. One of the most forgotten aspects of da'wah is what to do if one does decide to become a Muslim. Are they to be left to wander around educating themselves in the specifics of Islam? Do we give them the shahadah then give them over to a kufr environment? The follow-up is a very important phase in developing new Muslims in an environment where they will have forces pulling at them to return to kufr. Muslims have to provide some level of support and guidance for those who come into Islam. If they come from a non-Muslim family, they may be ostracized and there has to be some level of support from Muslims who can help out and offer some protection from disbelieving influences. They must be given a sense of community amongst Muslims and made to feel as though they belong to the community without regard to race, gender, or nationality. Muslims also have the responsibility to guide and educate new Muslims in the practice of Islam. Masaajid and da'wah centers should provide mentoring programs and new Muslim classes to help with the basics of belief and formal acts of worship such as purification, salaah, fasting, etc. They should not be given too much too fast so as to overwhelm them but enough to begin fulfilling the basic obligations of Islam. The Prophet, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, said;

'Ruined are those who insist on hardship in matters of the faith.' [Muslim]

'Make things easy and do not make them difficult, cheer the people up by conveying glad tidings to them and do not repulse them.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

It should be stressed that the successful Muslims are those who cling to the Jamaa'ah. Islam is not a religion of the hermit. One cannot practice this way of life away from the community. Allah says;

And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's Favor on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His *Ayat* clear to you, that you may be guided. [3:103]

The Prophet, sallallahu'alayhi wa sallam, said;

'The similitude of good company and that of bad company is that of the owner of musk and of the one blowing the bellows. The owner of musk would either offer you some free of charge, or you would buy it from him, or at least you would smell its pleasant odor. And as for the one who blows the bellows (the blacksmith), he would either burn your clothes or at least you shall have to smell a repugnant smell.' [Bukhari and Muslim]

'A man follows his friend's religion so you should be careful of whom you befriend.' [Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood]

'Shaytaan (Satan) is man's wolf, as the wolf for the sheep. He snatches away the straying one. Therefore, beware of the ravines. Hold fast onto the Jamaa'ah and the Masaajid. [Ahmad]

CONCLUSION

Da'wah is a very important and necessary deed, especially for Muslims who live among non-Muslims. However, it is extremely critical that we examine the information that we present to non-Muslims and how we present it. It is a requirement that the caller have knowledge of his religion so that he may invite to Islam with certainty and confidence as well as to protect his faith against whatever falsehood he may encounter in the process. As we have discussed, the main focus of any da'wah effort has to be Tawheed. Tawheed is the foundation of the religion and it must be at the forefront of what is communicated to the non-Muslims. It is the right of Allah over us, His slaves and it is the right of the people that they be warned of the consequences of deviating from this. Who else can do this except for the *Muwahhidoon*, those who establish Tawheed? Da'wah in America is an on-going process because wherever the Muslim is, he is surrounded by people who are in need of this message. Da'wah does not end because one is at work or school. Muslims must feel a deep sense of hatred for disbelief not only for himself but for all humanity and we must feel compelled to deliver this message. Muslims must not fear losing status or acquaintances as a result of taking a firm stance against disbelief and working to call to Tawheed. Allah, 'azza wa Jall, has promised that His deen will prevail, whether those who remain upon disbelief like it or not. Allah has made clear;

They intend to put out the Light of Allah with their mouths. But Allah will complete His Light even though the disbelievers hate (it). He it is Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it victorious over all (other) religions even though the *Mushrikoon* hate (it) [61:8-9]

May Allah make us of those who remain steadfast upon Tawheed and affirm it in our hearts, speak it on our tongues, and work according to it with our limbs. Ameen.

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