

The Art of *Da'wah*

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. (Adh-Dhariyat 51:56)

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

This is the word of Allah SWT which declares the purpose of our existence on this earth. If we live according to the purpose for which we are created, we can attain pure joy and happiness. However, if we try to fulfill our soul with other than what the Creator wants for it, then we will instead be filled with anxiety and sorrow.

One of the highest forms of service to Allah is to invite His creation to His oneness and that in Islam is called *d'awah*. *Da'wah* in Arabic means invitation to a feast. This by extension means that the person who is intending to invite people to the feast must have made preparations because if he hasn't prepared the banquet, he is not only going to turn his guests hungry, he is also going to ruin his own reputation and lose their trust. Another important factor in *da'wah* is the quality of service and preparations, since this is what makes any feast or occasion memorable. A person can arrange a beautiful party but if food runs short or its quality is low, then the feast will be a failure.

Just like this, *da'wah* to Allah SWT requires a lot of preparation and quality. It requires an untarnished character with high moral and ethical credentials. Allah SWT chooses certain people and decorates them inside out with the His choicest qualities until they are ready for the noble job of inviting people to the Creator--to His oneness and His obedience. This requires calmness of character and wisdom because as history teaches us bearing this message is not easy; it usually generates a lot of opposition from influential people in power, from ignorant and prejudiced masses, and jealous competitors. Therefore, this job is very difficult and delicate and requires a lot of wisdom and quality.

In my video sessions about *Da'wah*, I have emphasized the most important pillar to be that the person has to live the message, believe in it with complete conviction, and disconnect his heart from all except the Creator who is the owner of all qualities and the one who will be supporting him with all means possible. Today, we will talk about some of the major elements which I consider very important for anyone who wishes to invite others to goodness on a personal or societal level.

1. The key focus should be the inner, not the outer:

It is imperative that a *Da'ee* (the one who invites others to Allah SWT) focuses in building the main core of the faith inside people's hearts and souls, and not to start with the outer part. He has to protect himself from being quick at making judgments based on the way people dress or behave—this is called the *fiqh* of priority.

Let me give you an example: When human beings commit sins or are involved in any action or reaction, it can be divided into two categories: the sins from outside and the sins from within the heart. Let's examine the first sin committed on earth: Adam AS disobeyed Allah SWT and ate from the tree, but right away he humbled himself and went to Allah and asked Him SWT for forgiveness.

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتَ لَهُمَا سَوْءَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا

مِنَ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ ﴿١٣١﴾

ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ وَفَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And Adam and his wife ate of it, and their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And Adam disobeyed his Lord

and erred. Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him]. (Taha 20:121—122)

Allah SWT accepted his repentance, forgave him, opened for him and elevated him to the level of prophet-hood. On the other hand, *Iblees*, who was elevated to the level of angels due to his knowledge, plunged to the status of Satan due to his arrogance and jealousy. When Allah created Adam, He commanded angels to prostrate to him; everyone obeyed except *Iblees* who refused due to his ego and then blamed Allah SWT of tricking him.

قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾

[Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error. (A'raf 7:16)

On one hand we see Adam who upon committing sins blamed himself and sought forgiveness and Allah SWT forgave him, and on the other *Shaytaan* who was arrogant and blamed Allah which prevented him from seeking Allah's forgiveness. At this point, I want you to stop and reflect: Adam's sins were outer, and upon showing humbleness and humility his sins became meaningless and Allah SWT forgave him. *Iblees'* sins were inner, from the diseases of the heart which caused his destruction.

Today a lot of people worry about the way they look, the way they dress, and outer appearance while they ignore the inner reality. Prophet SAW informed us that no one will enter *jannah* who has an atom of arrogance in his heart. How many of us try to remove the arrogance from our hearts? How many of us are looking to the mistakes of others and are ignorant of our own mistakes to the point it is drowning our hearts in the diseases that can destroy us? From here also, we can see that all the sins from outside are easier to make *tawba* (repent) from whereas the diseases of the heart are very difficult to change. Sometimes the person is not even aware of their existence because he is so busy focusing on the outside and blaming others.

If we go to Qur'an we find out that from the beginning to the end, it deals with the inner not the outer; and if that is the case then we have to set priority according to how Allah SWT prioritized. This is where the distinction between Qur'an Makki and Qur'an Madani becomes important. Qur'an Makki is the portion of the Qur'an which was revealed in Makkah and it is 2/3 of the book; it focuses on developing the inside—the faith and relationship with the Creator. If this pillar is strong, everything would be strong. Now the persons' manners will be according to the Qur'an, their criteria of dealing with others will be according to the Qur'an and at this time they will have justice and good manners with everyone they deal with.

2. Justice:

Justice signifies justice of the eyes, ears, tongue, and heart—and so, justice in all actions. This should be the core of everything we do and should reflect in all our relationships—with Allah, ourselves, and other humans. If we succeed in doing that it leads us to the next point of *elevation*.

3. Elevation:

We have to be elevated from the state of emotions, of hasty actions without rational thinking and reflection, to the level of wisdom, calmness, simplicity, realistic thinking, and awareness of the consequences of our actions. Meaning, we need to learn how to cast aside emotions and deal with situations with wisdom, patience, compassion, intelligence, knowledge and justice; and this leads us to the next point.

4. Caution against Exaggeration:

The extreme exaggeration when looking at things or dealing with them with either too much love or emotion causes two major obstacles for us:

It makes us deny our thinking and drowns us in fantasy and fake behavior, or it generates hostility and anger which leads to hate-filled actions and reactions according to our emotions.

By this way exaggeration in thinking or action can cause a lot of problems and prevents us from dealing with others with justice.

5. Hastiness in Seeking Results:

Our hastiness to produce results causes us to skip many steps and generates a lot of problems. Hasty actions are bereft of the blessing of Allah SWT as RasulAllah SAW has told us:

“Consideration is from Allah, and hastiness is from Shaytaan” (Muslim)

We have to deal with others with *rahma* (mercy) and with the intention of benefitting them; we have to respect who we are talking to and address them according to their level.

RasulAllah SAW said:

“Talk to people according to their level of understanding.” (Bukhari)

We cannot set agendas according to what we want and rush to bring people to the level of perfection; rather we have to take them step by step until they develop a level of maturity and strength to handle the next level of knowledge.

A general mistake that some Muslims make when inviting others—Muslim and non-Muslims—to Islam is that they advise them of hijab or halal and haram instead of focusing on developing the faith. This can result in the person becoming overwhelmed and abandoning the message completely. All because the *da'ee* couldn't wait for the results and hastened the *da'wah*.

6. **Two fatal qualities—quick anger and hastiness:**

These are absolutely unacceptable if you want to be an inviter. This condition applies to your *niyyah*, actions and reactions. These qualities can destroy everything from the base, even your *niyyah*. If the inviter has a quick temper and is hasty, he will not be able to judge any situation with rationality and wisdom. In fact, he will not be able to implement any of the elements mentioned here.

7. **Respect the *Qadr* (Decree of Allah):**

It is imperative for an inviter to respect the condition and situation, study it according to Qur'an and Sunnah of Allah, and behave accordingly. It is important for a *Da'ee* to study the *sunan* of Allah SWT so he will know what to expect in certain situations and conditions and how to deal with them. This belief and knowledge will help crystallize all the other elements mentioned above in his character.

The awareness of the place, time, age etc is called the *fiqh* or the comprehension of the condition of the present status, where it is coming from and its roots.

Develop the Ultimate Manners:

This leads us to the exploration of relationship between manner and will-power, and the importance of dealing with things with the ultimate manner. The ultimate manner is the manner of Allah SWT according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Meaning the way I act or react has to be driven from the attributes and knowledge of Allah and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad SAW. We have certain innate mannerisms that we are created with, but we also have a will; and this will is generated from our knowledge, desires, and goals. This will keeps changing as we grow and acquire more knowledge, and as our desires and goals change. They are all linked to each other like a chain and the glue that holds it all together is called *sidq*—truthfulness.

Truthfulness will lead us to be prepared, and always be alert to our surrounding and in a perpetual state of questioning and learning; and this leads one to the pillar of talking. It is said that to speak one minute you need 30 minutes of preparation and to speak one hour, you need 10 hours of preparation. One honorable scholar was requested to deliver an hour long speech, he asked for one week of preparation time; the person asked him, ok give me 10 minutes speech, he said you make it too difficult for me, now I need one month of preparation. Sincere people think very thoroughly before they talk and they know that this talk is an *amanah*, a trust from Allah SWT for which they will be questioned.

Transparency is the Key:

One of the traits of a believer is transparency; the need to be real, not fake. Don't try to be somebody you are not. This is all the more important for a *da'ee*, someone who is not only representing Islam, but calling others to it. RasulAllah SAW said:

"The worst people in the Sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be the double faced people who appear to some people with one face and to other people with another face."
(*Sahih Bukhari*)

Eloquence Does Half the Job:

You have to think about the benefit of what you are going to say. If you feel it has benefit, say it; if there is no benefit, be quiet. Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

"Should you wish to act, ponder well the consequences. If good, carry on; if not, desist." (*Ibn al-Mubarak*)

Have a polite, wise way of talking— neither too low, nor too high, neither slow, nor fast; pace yourself according to your audience and topic. Don't make your talk too long; keep the duration according to the attention span of the listener. This is justice and mercy.

Prophet Muhammad SAW used to shorten the prayers when women attended with children in order not to discomfort them.

A *da'ee* is open minded and always on a look out to seek new and different kinds of knowledge. Versatility of knowledge and understanding enables him to have command of various topics, which helps him develop confidence and eloquence. Islam is deen, meaning a way of life; all the topics related to life are part of Islam and a successful *da'ee* is one who has knowledge of every day affairs as well as religious knowledge. The more knowledgeable about life a *da'ee* is, the more he will hold sway over people and the more respect he will get.

Always emphasize the message and repeat it. According to the companions of Prophet SAW, he SAW never taught them more than 3 to 5 verses per day. They also mentioned how Prophet SAW used to repeat himself sometimes up to three times in order to emphasize a point.

A successful speaker has three elements:

1. Substance
2. Body language
3. Way of expressing himself.

Points to Remember While Speaking:

- A study determined that in a talk, substance is of only 7% importance; body language is of 55% and speech is of 38% importance. What it really means is that if you master the body language and way of addressing yourself, you can win any speech.
- Don't speak too slow or low so you put people to sleep, neither speak so fast that you lose them.

- Make sure to break your talk into segments; the art here is which word or sentence you stop at and for how long—the pause shouldn't be too long, or too short, just enough to give listeners time to digest your words.
- The speech should be delivered with a clear pronunciation in eloquent words. The words don't need to be sophisticated, rather it is best to use simple terminology.
- Always have evidence of what you are saying and don't ever say things you are not sure of. There is no insult in saying 'I don't know'. If you give wrong answers, you lose credibility and come across as incompetent or a liar.

Actions are based on Intentions:

This entire talk is rendered fruitless if the *niyyah* is corrupted and not purely for the sake of Allah SWT. The sign of corrupted *niyyah* is that the person is focused on showing off his actions and has different personality in front of people than when alone.

This is called sincerity. A sincere person will never give people an advice that he is not living himself.

May Allah SWT make us among those sincere ones who make it their life's mission to invite humanity to the pleasure of Allah SWT; those who seek knowledge, live it and spread it purely for His sake. *Ameen*.