## **TOPIC 2: WHAT IS DAWAH?**

## **Definitions**

The Arabic word for dawah comes from the root  $\mathfrak{g}$   $\mathfrak{g}$ . The words 'to call' and 'to invite' come from this root. From the perspective of the Qur'an and Sunnah, dawah means to call to Allah and His religion.

Allah says in the Quran, "Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." (16:125). He also says, "And that there might grow out of you a community who invite unto all that is good" (3:104). In this verse, the words "all that is good (al-khayr)" means the whole of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah, said, "Dawah is to call people to believe in Allah and in what His Messengers came with by accepting what they came with and obeying them in what they commanded... Dawah entails calling to all that He commanded and forbidding all that He forbade and that is precisely what is commanding the good and forbidding the evil."

## Guidance is from Allah

It is important to note that dawah is not about converting people to Islam; our duty is to convey the message in the best manner. Guidance comes from Allah alone.

## **REFLECTION**

Read the following passage about Nuh (peace be upon him) and his dawah to his people. Identify and underline the different methods and approaches Nuh used to give dawah.

He cried, "My Lord! I have surely called my people day and night, but my calls only made them run farther away. And whenever I invite them to be forgiven by You, they press their fingers into their ears, cover themselves with their clothes, persist 'in denial', and act very arrogantly. Then I certainly called them openly, then I surely preached to them publicly and privately, saying, "Seek your Lord's forgiveness, "for" He is truly Most Forgiving. (71, 5-10)

Now reflect over this verse about Nuh's dawah: "none had believed with him, except a few." (11:40). All those years of giving dawah and only a few people accepted.

However, would anyone say that Nuh did not fulfil his duty? Of course, he did. His job was to convey the message, and that is what he did. Allah is the one who guides whom He wills. This is the same for us - our job is to convey the message; whatever Allah does after that is up to Him.

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# Being Holistic in our Dawah

Allah says, "And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims." (41:33). In this verse, the call to Allah and being a righteous person in action are combined, as well as being vocal in saying, "this is what a Muslim is" I "This is Islam". That means, speech and action go hand-in-hand.

It is absolutely vital to make the call to tawheed and to Islam. But it is also important to be a person who has Islam in our actions too. As a result, when it comes to our dawah, we can incorporate this by showing the beauty of Islam in our actions, by positively contributing to society through action (i.e. Dawah by Action). The fruits of this will help build credibility and relationships for a conducive environment, in order to build meaningful conversations. This breaks down barriers, so non-Muslims can ask questions they were otherwise uncomfortable in asking.

It will also help us change the current perceptions that non-Muslims have about Muslims. For instance, according to MEND (2014), 61% of Britons do not believe Islam is compatible with British Culture. We can therefore change that narrative through our words AND our actions. Perfection of faith implies not only good character, but also good treatment to all.

The way we do dawah therefore, can be extremely diverse (so long as it is within the boundaries of Islam). Dawah does not just equate to a table in city centre, but it can be through events, exhibitions, or if you do intend to give dawah by action, such as feeding your neighbours, giving gifts to colleagues at work, feeding the homeless, donating blood etc, couple it with your speech in calling to the worship Allah.

<b>DISCUSSION</b> Discuss and write down some "dawah by action" activities you can do to make your dawah more holistic.