

TOPIC 3: PREREQUISITE FOR DAWAH: KNOWING ALLAH

DISCUSSION

Why is "knowing Allah" a vital pre-requisite for dawah?

Knowledge of Allah is essential!

This knowledge is actually the entire foundation and basis for our dawah, because Allah tells us that the ultimate purpose for why He created jinn and human beings was to worship Him. Allah says, ["I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me"](#) (51:56). Therefore, understanding this reality in light of God means we need to understand who Allah is and why He is worthy of worship! We cannot worship something we are ignorant of. That is, in order for us to call to Allah, we must know who Allah is first!

To know Allah means that we affirm He is the sole creator and maintainer of everything that exists (known as Oneness of God's Lordship). It also entails that we affirm His names and attributes in the context of recognising that they are unique and that nothing can be compared to Him (known as Oneness of Allah's Names and Attributes). Knowledge of Allah also means that we must know that He is unique in His Divinity; He alone is entitled to all acts of worship (known as Oneness of Allah's Divinity). It is also critical to affirm that nothing whatsoever shares in Allah's creative power and ability, names and attributes, and Divinity. All forms of anthropomorphism are completely rejected. Allah is transcendent and maximally perfect - He has no imperfections. The concept of oneness of Allah is referred to as tawheed, which linguistically means to affirm oneness or to make something one or unique.

Oneness of Lordship

The oneness of Allah's Lordship is to affirm and recognise that Allah is the sole creator, master and owner of everything that exists. He is the One who sustains, takes care of, and nourishes everything. Allah says, ["Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the Maintainer of everything"](#) (39:62) and ["No calamity befalls 'anyone' except by Allah's Will."](#) (64:11). In other words, Allah is one and unique in His actions, such that no creature shares His power in creating and managing the universe. He owns and sustains the entire creation, He is the One who nourishes and takes care of everything.

Anyone who denies this has associated partners with Allah, which is referred to as Shirk (polytheism). Anyone who believes that these descriptions of Allah can be shared by any created thing has deified that thing. Therefore, they have associated partners with Allah.

Oneness of God's Names and Attributes

The oneness of Allah's names and attributes means to describe Allah only by the names and attributes that He has described Himself by in the Qur'an and Prophetic teachings. These names and attributes, such as The-Loving and The-Subtle, are affirmed but they are not comparable to creation. Allah's names and attributes are perfect without any deficiency or flaws, as Allah says: "The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on Him by them." (7:180) and "There is nothing like Him and He is hearer and seer of all." (42:11)

Believing in Allah's Names and Attributes has an enormous influence on both our soul and for our worship. The impact includes that feeling of being connecting to Allah, by attaching our hearts to Him. This is because, as you ponder and learn more about His names and attributes, the nearer you draw to Him and the more you love Him. When that love is alive in your heart, it develops you as a person (your character and manners) and as a worshipper (your spiritual side – your heart and soul)

Allah is maximally perfect. Therefore, the one who compares these names and attributes to creation has committed humanisation, and has associated partners with Allah (Shirk). The one who compares any created thing to Allah has committed deification, which is also a form of associating partners with Allah.

Oneness of God's Divinity

The oneness of Allah's Divinity is that we must affirm that all acts of worship must be directed to Him alone. As stated, Allah says, "I did not create the Jinn and Mankind except for My worship." (51:56). He also says, "We have indeed sent a Messenger to every people saying: worship Allah and leave all that is worshipped besides Allah." (16:36) and "And We did not send a Messenger before you except that We revealed to him: that there is none worthy of worship but Me, so worship Me." (21:25). Someone who directs acts of worship to other than Allah, and the one who seeks reward from other than Allah in any act of worship, has associated partners with Him.

The Gravest Sin - Shirk

Associating partners with Allah is the gravest sin. The consequence of this sin is that the one who dies in such a state and has not repented, dies in a state of disbelief. This will never be forgiven by Allah, as He says, “Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with God has certainly committed a tremendous sin.” (4:48). The one who has associated partners with Allah and has never repented, and dies in that state, has essentially oppressed themselves by closing the door to His mercy. Their hearts have ‘eternally’ rejected Allah’s guidance and mercy; therefore, they have alienated themselves from the Divine.

Those who reject Allah will plead to go back to earth to do righteousness, but their hearts have 'eternally' rejected: "[For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind.' No! It is only a word he is saying." (23:99-100). This self-imposed spiritual reality is a form of denial. The person has denied all the just and fair opportunities that Allah has given them to embrace His mercy and love. Allah says, "And God has not wronged them, but they wrong themselves." (3:171) and "This because of that which your hands had sent forward. And indeed, God is not unjust to His slaves." (8:50-51)

It must be noted that if no-one was given the right message of Islam, Allah, The Just, will test him/her on the Day of Judgment, and no-one will be treated unjustly. This is why when someone who was not a Muslim has passed away, it is considered unislamic to pass judgement on their final abode. No one knows what is in someone else's heart and whether someone was given the right message in the right way. However, from a creedal, social and legal point of view, non-Muslims who died will be buried as non-Muslims. This does not mean that this is their final judgement. Allah is the best of all judges. In reality, Allah is maximally and perfectly just and merciful, so no one will be treated unmercifully and no one will be treated unjustly.

Further reading

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The effects of knowing Allah on your life

It is important to note that knowing Allah is not just an academic exercise. When we have built a strong foundation of knowledge and become more intimate in our understanding and knowledge of who Allah is, it has a profound effect on our hearts and minds. We no longer see the world as we once saw it. We have a newfound understanding of love, hope, fear and trust, all of which are unique to Allah. The following are some of the effects that knowing Allah has on our lives:

I. Dignity and self-esteem

Knowing Allah means that Allah is now our absolute authority in all matters - life, death, our worldly affairs, sustenance, etc. Nothing can benefit or harm you except by His will. This makes a person who believes and knows Allah independent of creation and highly dignified. It builds their self-esteem by knowing that nothing or no-one can match the majesty of Allah. As a result, one who believes in Allah would not lower their head and bow down to other than Allah. Their dignity is in knowing Allah is their true helper and sustainer, as reported by ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), who said, *"One day I was riding (a horse/camel) behind the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), when he said, 'Young man, I will teach you some words. Be mindful of God, and He will take care of you. Be mindful of Him, and you shall find Him at your side. If you ask, ask of God. If you need help, seek it from God. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if God had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if God had written so. The pens have been lifted, and the pages are dry.'"* (Tirmidhi)

2. Humbleness and Humility

Knowing Allah makes a person realise they are totally and utterly dependent upon Him for everything. Allah is the one who is able to do all things, the one who knows all things. Therefore, the believer knows he/she is nothing without Allah, and that he/she can do nothing without Allah. They are, as Allah describes them, “The servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say words of peace.” (25:63). Humbleness and humility removes arrogance, pride, self-conceitedness, which we know are traits that lead to the hellfire. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Shall I not tell you about the companions of Paradise? They are every humble person considered weak, but if they gave an oath by Allah it would be fulfilled. Shall I not tell you about the companions of Hellfire? They are every harsh, haughty, and arrogant person.” (Bukhari)

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3. Morality

Knowing Allah protects a person's moral code and keeps them on the straight path. Knowing right from wrong is because they know what pleases Allah and what displeases Allah. In addition, expressing good moral conduct has a strong link to Allah because it is Allah that sees all things, at all times and places. Allah knows what is inside everyone's hearts, the secrets it holds and the intentions behind every action. Therefore, those who know Allah should be moral in every situation because they know Allah is aware of them when others are not. They can try to deceive people, but they will never deceive Allah; hence Allah says, *"Indeed, the most honourable among you in the sight of God is the most pious."* (49:13)

4. Ultimate peace and happiness

When a person knows Allah, they not only know their purpose in life, but how to attain it. They know Allah is the one who can truly make a person happy, as Allah says *"Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."* (13:28). Moreover, in this life of trials and tribulations, knowing Allah and knowing that Allah is the one who will alleviate our difficulties brings us ease and contentment. Know Allah, know happiness.

5. Optimism

Knowing Allah makes our outlook on life a whole lot better! We have a good opinion of Allah and know that Allah will do what is best for us, at all times. *The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Allah the Most High said, 'I am as My servant thinks (expects) I am. I am with him when he mentions Me. If he mentions Me to himself, I mention him to Myself; and if he mentions Me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly greater than it. If he draws near to Me a hand's length, I draw near to him an arm's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.'"* Ibn al-Qayyim said: *"The one who hopes in Allah should always be optimistic, cautious, and hopeful in Allah's bounty, expecting the best from Him."* [Tahdhib Madarij as-Salikin]

6. Bravery

Knowing Allah inspires bravery and courage in our hearts because we know He is the only one truly worthy of being feared. We should not therefore fear creation or fear standing up for the truth. We should not be embarrassed of our religion or practices, because we know Allah loves them. As Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said, *"Indeed, we were a disgraceful people and Allah honoured us with Islam. If we seek honour from anything besides that with which Allah honoured us, Allah will disgrace us."*

7. Total Submission

By knowing Allah, we know who we are: His servants and slaves.
