DISCUSSION

Look at the following scenarios. What problems can you identify? (NOTE: these scenarios are taken from real life examples.)

Scenario 1

You on a break at work and your work colleague, John, asks you a question - "Why do Muslims pray?". You answer the question as best you can, but it leads to follow-up questions "Why do you need to wash your feet in the sink?" "Can you not just pray them all at once at the end of the day?" "Why do you need to take an extended lunch on Fridays?". This goes on and on until the break is over, and all you have done is answer his question upon question.

Scenario 2

Your non-Muslim friend from university, David, meets up with you and you get into a discussion over religion. David tells you the reason he does not believe anymore is because he was close to his mother, and when she died, his belief in God also died. After he finishes, you start giving him a rational argument for God's existence, going through the argument from dependency and the argument for the fine tuning of the universe.

Scenario 3

You are at your weekly Islamic Awareness stall in the city centre handing out leaflets on Islam. A lady walks on by and politely tells you she is Christian, that she believes in Jesus and that he is enough for her because he is the son of god who died for her sins. You quickly reel off Bible verses on how Jesus was not God and that he was "ignorant" of the hour, so how is it possible he was God! You say to her with a smile on your face, "how weak is your god that he died on a cross?!"

Scenario 1 – What's the Problem?

Attempting to answer every question may not be the most effective way to give dawah. This is because, on most occasions, the answers will never be satisfactory. The main reason why we believe the Islamic teachings to be true is because of where they come from: Allah, The Highest Authority. However, in our attempt to show non-Muslims the truth of Islamic teachings, we just give them our limited rationalisation. Even if your answer convinced them, what would you do if the next question comes along? You cannot answer questions forever.

In addition, trying to answer all the questions does not lead the discussion. After you answer one question, another one comes along. Usually when someone asks a question, they continue and probe further and may even change the subject. This approach fails because not much dawah is done. Who actually calls to Allah and His worship by answering all the questions and rationalising everything? No-one. Instead, we call people to our limited understanding of things.

This approach also gives a false impression of Islam because we are showing that Islam is not about peacefully submitting to the will of Allah. Rather, it is about being convinced with pseudo-rational arguments about the Islamic rulings. The answers will never satisfy the questioner because you have not given them the "lenses" in which you see our perspective. Everyone has "lenses" that aids our understanding of the world. For example, if I had blue tinted lenses and you have green tinted lenses, what colour would we say the wall is? One would say green and the other would say blue. We will never truly understand each other. The only way to do that is to see Islam from our perspective is to see it through "our lenses". Let people see the world the way you see the world! We believe in Islam because its foundations are true, and whatever comes from truth is true!

Scenario 2 – What's the Problem?

There is a serious lack of emotional intelligence here. You are giving them something that they do not need and you are not in tune with the person you are talking to. Maybe your dawah would be more effective in a different way and if you talked about something that he would relate to more.

In the scenario, there is an emotional reason (as opposed to a rational one) for why David no longer believes in God. To try and rationalise it with him may not make him see the truth about life, God and the universe.

Scenario 3 – What's the Problem?

Look at your character. Is this how we talk to people when we are trying to bring them closer to Allah or to convey the message with "wisdom and beautiful preaching"? In fact, this may go against the verse of the Quran, where Allah says "''O believers!'' Do not insult what they invoke besides Allah or they will insult Allah spitefully out of ignorance.'' (6:108). So, by insulting the one that they worship, you may in turn cause them to curse or insult Allah.

This approach may even push people further away from accepting the message of Islam because they will associate Islam with bad manners, rudeness and attacking. Even if a person does not accept Islam, if we discuss with them in an appropriate manner (especially in relation to this particular scenario), they may become an advocate of Muslims and see the good in Islam. If anything, the bridge to further conversation and discussion is still open and available. However, by being rude and condescending, it may close the door completely to any further discussion, or even worse, you may even be the catalyst for them to hate Islam and actively preach against it.