

IlmNotes

Shield of Honor Transcription

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Assalaamu' alaykum warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu,

Alhamdulillah rabb'il a'laameen, wassalaatu wassalaam 'ala ashrafil ambiyaa'ee wal mursaleen, wa 'ala aalihi wa sah'bihi ajmaa'een.

Thumma 'amma ba'ad, fa'aa'uudhubillaahimin-ash-shaaytaanirajeem, "Surah Isra' Ayah 8", Allahumma la taj'alna minhum. Rabb-ishrah-lee sadree, wayassir-lee amri, wah'lul uq'da'tam mil-lee-saani yaf-qa-hu-qowli. Allahumma thabit-na 'endal mawti bi laa ilaha illa Allah, wAllahumma aj'ja'lna minalaadheena aamanu wa 'amilus saalihaat, watawaaso bil haqq, watawaaso bis-sabr. Ameen ya rabb'al a'laameen.

I wanted to make this first session insha'Allahu ta'ala, and dedicate this one session to what I feel is one of the most pressing issues in the lives of Muslim youth, one that I have come to experience myself personally at one point in my life, and I've- as I've had the opportunity to travel more recently and interact with many, many young people across the country, I'm noticing it's not a program localized to one community or limited to one specific kind of person, but rather it's happening pretty much almost universally and I guess I want to term it a crisis of faith, and a crisis of confidence in the religion.

You know, Alhamdulillah, many of you that are sitting here are Muslims that are eager to learn something more about their religion and they want to advance further, and insha'Allahu ta'ala you guys are the hope for becoming the ambassadors of religion not just to non-Muslims but even to your struggling Muslims friends and family that are Muslim but they're barely holding on to their faith, and they're barely holding on to any semblance of Islam in their lives, and you are, at this point, the only connection Allah has provided for them to Islam. So the fact that you are here is already speaking volumes for the kind of commitment you have and you might not think very highly of yourselves, but actually, I do- and perhaps Allah ('azza wa jall)

holds you in very high regard and may Allah accept this gathering and gatherings like this one, and make us sincere in them.

Now what I wanted to talk about, this crisis of faith, I'll share a couple of stories with you and then I'll talk about it in general. The first story is from a couple of years ago, I gave a khutbah in a city that I don't want to name... and at the end of the khutbah, a father came up to me and said "I'd really like you to have lunch at our house, I want you to talk to my daughter." I said okay, I guess, I have time. So he was right next door to the masjid, too, so he took me to his house, and he said "If you're okay with it, my daughter has some questions about Islam, etc etc, if you don't mind could you help her answer some of them?" So his daughter comes out- (by the way, this is a Muslim family, born and raised Muslims, parents are born and raised Muslims, you know, children are raised Muslims) - and she comes out and she has piercings in strange places on her face, like on the side of her eye, and like... a couple on her forehead - weird places - places you look at and you go "ouch!". But anyway. So she sits down, I'm kind of weirded out at this point, but okay, you know what, let's have her ask her questions... and she had about 30 of those. She had about 30 questions. And I didn't answer any of them, I just said "So what else?" I kept saying "What else?" and she kept adding stuff, and she had questions like "Well, you know, I have some friends in high school, and they're gay, and they're not bad people, they haven't killed anyone- so why do we hate them so much? And why did God make a hell, why did He have to do that, like... what's the point? And if He wanted to make a Hell, then why did He create us to begin with if He knows we're going to go there? - Then why'd He do that to us?", and she said "And what's so bad about having a boyfriend, it's not like murder, you know. I'm not that bad. What's the big deal? Why do we make such a big deal out of everything?"

And I said- I mean at this point, internally, I've already had three heart attacks, but externally, I'm saying to her, "What else?" And she just keeps going, and going, and going... And mind you, her father is sitting there, so if I'm having seizures- [laughter] ... you know, I felt really sad for him, I really did.

And she just kept going and going, and at the end of her thirty questions, I said: "Okay. I'm willing to spend time with you and discuss these issues with you... but I'd rather you just answer one of my questions first. If you could do that, then we can probably have a good, well-

directed conversation.” There was a copy of Qur’aan sitting on the dining table, I picked it up- I said “Do you really actually believe this is like- this is from God? Sent by an angel – through an angel to a man, (SAW)? And whatever this has is perfect instruction for you and for me to live our lives in the best possible way, and if we live our lives this way we’ll find happiness here and forever, and if we don’t, we’ll find misery here and forever? Do you actually believe that?” She goes “No I’m not so sure.” So she told me flat out “I’m not so sure.” I said “Well then... all of those other questions don’t matter. None of that stuff matters.”

That’s what I would call a crisis of faith. That’s the first crisis of faith. And she’s not the only one. I’ve seen this story play itself out and a lot of people have those kinds of questions but they don’t ask them. They don’t ask them. A lot of people – and you know I’m not just picking on girls here, Muslims guys, you know, they’ll be raised in a religious family and they’ll know certain things are haraam, and in their head they’ll say “Why is this haraam? Why can’t I do that?” And then they’ll hear “Well Allah said so.” “You say that for everything!”

And then if somebody was to ask them, so what’s Islam? “Everything’s haraam, here’s my summary.” [Laughter] You know, Islam equals don’t smile, don’t have fun, don’t live life, because all of that stuff is haraam, it’s forbidden. And of course it’s reinforced because when you come to a typical masjid across the country, all you see is people that are frowning. All the time. It’s like, like “mam’nu’u at-tabassum”- right, “it’s forbidden to smile here” like if they even see a child running a little bit with a smile- “Hey! Masjid! Don’t you see the sign that says “Sadness- Only!” [Laughter] It’s like a depressing thing.

So a child, even growing up, in a Muslim community, in an Islamic school (I’m not knocking on any Islamic schools here in Maryland, I don’t know enough!) but generally, it’s run by some very angry aunties. [Laughter] Kids that are in class are just seeing angry people all the time, and the more religious they are, the angrier they are, right? You know, the longer the beard gets the bigger the frown gets, you know like it’s very hard to smile. So they’re in this environment all the time and there are some questions that start popping in their head- “Why am I even Muslim? Everybody around me is so miserable. We can’t do anything! Every time I want to do something fun, they say haraam! They say wrong! And all the friends I have in school, they say they’re going to hell! What do you want me to do!?”

Internally, internally, a young man, a young girl, a young boy starts getting a little turned off by the religion. They start getting turned off by it. And then on top of that, you know most parents, let's be honest, most parents, even if they want to put their children in Islamic Schools, they can't afford to. It's a tough economy, it's not easy to afford, you know, so most of our kids go to public school, that's a reality and it's not something you should embarrass people about, it's just a reality of Muslims living in this country. They go to public school. So parents feel guilty that they're not themselves able to give a quality religious education- they're certainly not getting one at school- might as well put my child in Sunday School! Right? That'll help!

It won't. It doesn't. Ask your child if it helped.[Laughter] I asked a controversial question, ask- you know, if you wanna gauge- and I love Sunday Schools by the way, and I think they're a blessing, and they're an important effort in the effort to educate our children. Nonetheless, ask the average child that is sitting in Sunday School, any given Sunday, you just take one random kid, especially a teenager, 12-13, older - pull 'em aside and ask them one question "Do you wanna be here?" Just ask them that one question: "Do you want to be here?" What is the overwhelming answer you will find? Uh-uh.

They've already served five days in prison at school. Prison for a child is behind a desk. And what do parents do? You need to serve some extra time. Here's a sixth day in prison. By definition, kids hate class. When the bell rings for recess, you should look at- you know, I used to be a teacher at a school, and one of the ways I would punish students if they were misbehaving is the bell for recess would ring, and I would say "You can't leave yet, you have to finish ten more problems." And you see all these kids sitting there. And as the bell rings, the temperature in their seats rises. And it hurts to stay inside your seat. And then they look outside the window and they see others entering the gates of Paradise. [Laughter] And they're like "awhhh..." "Can we go?? Please, please, please!?" Just anything but here! They hate being in class, and you know what we do- we stick them in another class! And we stick them in another class- oh well at least it should be fun, right? No- it's not going to be fun either. Somebody's gonna come... and they're gonna- okay, my second story now, my second story.

This is actually happened in a Sunday school I used to be a part of- the class next to me was a bunch of preteen boys, like 11-13, younger guys. Teacher walks in and says "Today, children,

I'm going to tell you the best story of all time. The best! Do you know what it is?!" This kid raised his hand. "Yes, you could tell me what it is."

"Dragon-ball!"

This kid next to him goes "No! Yu-yu-Yugio!.. Yu-yu-hakishay!" something... This other kid goes "Naruto!" and this other kid- and they start arguing with each other "No! That's the best story! No- that video game had the best storyline! And the sequel was even better 'cause it went backwards in time! And the other one goes "No did you see that movie, oh my God it was awesome! Have you seen the third season of this, or that or the other?"

Oh my goodness, this argument breaks out in class, and the teacher is standing there in shock, his jaw is dropped and he doesn't know what to do, like: "No! No! No, this is all wrong! I meant the story of Yusuf (AS) in the Qur'aan!" 'Cause you know Allah says "Nahnu naqussu alaika ahsanal qasas..." kama qa'laa subhanaahu wa'tala. He said it Himself, "We are narrating unto you in fact the best of all possible stories!" - This is a claim made by Allah! And so he was expecting the child who raised his hand to say "Yes, I know the best of all stories, it's the story of Yusuf (alayhis salaam)!" But nobody said that! It wasn't even a contender! It wasn't even a contender! So he says "No, no, no children, you're all wrong, the best story is the story of Yusuf (AS)!" And the kids go "Awwhh, I already know that one. Okay, yeah, sure it's the best. Mhm."

Do you think they really believe it's the best? Uh-uh. That's a crisis of faith right there. Allah said something- ALLAH said something - and our children- sitting in a Sunday school in the masjid, in the House of Allah - no matter how badly you want them to believe that, they don't. They're just saying it 'cause you wanna hear it. That's a crisis of faith. That's a huge crisis. We have to understand how to address that crisis.

All the other problems we have for our youth, and if you wanna make a list of those, and have programs about those, how FB is a fitnah, how Youtube is a fitnah, how the Internet is a fitnah, how stepping outside of your house is a fitnah, how high school is a fitnah, how the mall is a fitnah, how your friends are a fitnah, how your car is a fitnah, how your cell phones is a- I mean goodness gracious, oxygen is a fitnah at that point, right? I mean the list just keeps going, right?

I'm saying that list is superfluous; I'm arguing that stuff is fluff. We have to look underneath that fluff, and look at what the real problem is- the real problem is a crisis of faith. We need to understand the problem, and the problem is, our youth are not confident, not proud, not in love with Islam. They're not confident in the Qur'aan. They're not confident that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) is the absolute best role model, no one deserves to be loved more, no one deserves to be followed more, no one.

My third story. It's part of the crisis of faith. I mentioned this story at the ICNA convention, too. We're flying to the ICNA convention and I usually take my whole family, all 28 of them. I have 6 children. I lose count sometimes. [Laughter] But anyway, so we're flying together, my kids are little, so you know they're short so they can't really see over the seats in the plane? So they're little, they're sitting there? My wife and I, we're taller, so we can see the TV screen when it drops? Right? So there's a movie playing. We don't wanna see it, but it's in your face right here? And of course Alhamdulillah we don't have headphones, so it's a silent film at that point? And it was the Justin Bieber documentary. [Laughter] Yeah, imagine that. Well thankfully it was a silent film, right?

[Interruption]

So, this documentary that is playing, I'm trying to avoid looking at it, but I can't help myself. I can't help myself, because they're showing this kid come and start singing his songs, and girls in the audience are crying. Like you could tell they're just like "We love you so much, I'll die for you." And mothers... bringing their daughters to concerts. And then somebody's handed a voucher that says you get to meet him backstage. You should see the family- how they're jumping up and down in joy. And in the course of that video, I was like "Oh man, these people- these people have nothing to look up to, this is all they have to look up to- they're so happy at this! They're so happy at this, how sad a life can it be? - and next clip, there's a Muslim girl, she's wearing a hijab, she's handed a voucher "You're going to get to meet Justin Bieber!" and she's going round a tree, hugging it, and going crazy. And she's not the only Muslim girl that would do that. She's not. Don't say "Astaghfirullah, what kind of Muslim-" Hah, that's the average Muslim girl. That's normal.

So now, we have a crisis, not just of faith but some of the fruits of faith. What are some the fruits of faith? The faith itself is you're convinced Islam is true, right? That's faith itself, you're

convinced Islam is true. But beyond that, a step above that is, you take pride in it. And a consequence of that is, everything that is NOT Islam, no longer appeals to you. Everything that contradicts Islam, not only are you not attracted to it, you feel sad for people who are. You look at it as something beneath you.

Let me tell you what a great thing for Muslims would be. A point of pride for Muslims would be: Instead of a young Muslim man thinking “I can’t do this, I can’t do that, I can’t do that other, everything is haram, look at my friends, they get to do this, and that, and the other”, instead of a Muslim girl who’s going to high school and she’s wearing hijab, and everybody makes comments at her and pokes fun at her, and says weird things to her, or girls tell her “You look so ugly because of that thing on your head...” and she’s thinking in her head “You know, I wish I could be like those other girls, they get to do whatever they want. I can’t do anything. I can’t have any fun in life. The only thing that’s keeping me from being happy is Islam.”

---- short interruption (personally, I think what he’s trying to get at here is if those young people were instead SAD for those same people who viewed them like that, but he got distracted)

So I didn’t want to just mention the crisis of faith, I wanted to try to mention some of its solutions, how do you address the crisis of faith. It’s easy to talk about a problem, it’s hard to talk about solutions. It’s hard, and my disclaimer will be I don’t claim to have answers- like absolute ones. I have some ideas; I’d like to share those ideas with you. These ideas are the results of discussions with scholars, with counselors, discussions with youth- I don’t want to give you generic kinds of answers, I want to try to give you some kind of practical answers, again, they may not be the absolute solution but insha’Allahu ta’ala with your own discussions amongst yourselves, you’ll come up with some better things.

The first part of the solution is that we have to create a culture around strong friendship. Identity itself, not just Islamic identity, it revolves around who you hang out with, who you spend most of your time with, who you identify with. When you spend most of your time on a computer, you start taking on some of the qualities of the stuff you’re reading, and the stuff you’re watching. It starts invading your thoughts. The kinds of people you spend time with, if they’re studying Islam all the time, you’ll wanna study Islam too. If they’re playing basketball

all the time, you'll develop a habit for playing basketball also. If they're going to watch movies all the time you're gonna want to go to the movies too. Your environment has an effect on you. The people you surround yourself with, has an effect on you. The Muslim community, starting with the Muslim family, and then evolving to the Muslim community, needs to actually have a campaign to ensure our young children are in the company of good role model older kids. Like a Big Brother Big Sister type thing. So when our girls are 12, 13, 14, when they're coming up in their ages, some of the more leading Muslim girls in our community, that are 17, 18, 19 - they're going to college, they're holding on to their religion, they're learning their deen- these girls are role models, they don't even know it. And our younger girls need to be spending time with these older girls, it's really important - that they have someone to look up to, who's strong in their deen. And they aspire to wanna be like them. That's really important.

The same goes for the guys- at a younger age- it's not like- you know what we do, we keep the little kids by themselves and the older kids by themselves and it doesn't work out. There needs to be a kind of mentorship happening at the community level, so that our younger boys are spending time with some of the older boys, especially the ones that are mature in their religion. And we have, Masha'Allah, if not a lot of those, we have enough of those. We have enough young people who are mature in their religion, they really wanna learn more about it, and they're good role models! You know, they have youth, they have energy, they have good looks, you know they could go any number of ways in their life and they chose to submit themselves to Islam - that in it of itself is huge, that already makes them a role model, whether they're ever grabbing a mic and speaking publicly or not doesn't matter, they're STILL role models.

And we need to put them in that position. It does two things. One, it gives young people someone to look up to, and two, it gives older kids a sense of responsibility. It makes them realize that other have their eyes on them, that they have to answer to higher standard, because they set the tone for others. It gives them a sense of responsibility too. And that kind of mentorship thing needs to start happening when families start doing that, and utilizing the community as a place where that kind of mentorship can happen. That's one, that's one suggestion.

Another really important suggestion- and this is a long term thing- is that we have to be able to have forums where our young people, can talk about the real questions they have without being afraid of reactions from their parents or their imam or their scholar, or their speaker, and the speaker should NOT be in a position to say “You are so wrong- what you said is so bad, go make istighfar, go slaughter a goat and then come back.” We shouldn’t put them into a position of them feeling intimidated for them to even wanna be able to ask a question. We need to create a space, we need to create an environment where they feel comfortable enough to be able to ask certain kinds of questions. And I say this, because of some experience. Muslim community, generally, we’re very conservative people. We have certain expectations of ourselves, we have expectations of our children and we have expectations of other Muslims. So when our Muslim boys and girls, within even our own family, when they have certain thoughts, or they have certain questions, like if your boy, for the first time, got asked out on a date, or some girl came up to him and said “You wanna go to the prom with me?”, and he’s thinking about it but he’ll never tell his mother. He’s thinking about it but he’ll never tell his dad. Because you know what’s going to happen if he tells his dad, right? Inna lillahi wa inna elahyi ra’jioon, that’s what’s gonna happen! So he can’t talk to his parents about this stuff, even though it’s on her mind, even though it’s on her mind! He can’t talk to her parents, or even the imam, because you know what’s going to happen when she asks the imam? Next week the imam will give a khutbah “You know what this sister came and told me?” They’re afraid of being called out. They’re afraid. There needs to be a space where they can ask their questions. There needs to be a space where they can feel comfortable asking their questions. There needs to be training for our du’aat, for our da’ees, training in how to answer those questions in a sensitive way. Realizing these are not just questions on a piece of paper that you can give a black and white answer to, there’s a person who’s really having problems. There’s a human being who’s really going through some serious struggles. And to wanna spend some time understanding where this problem came from, and the best way to try and help them, this is a training in it of itself. It’s a training in it of itself. It’s not black and white, just telling our youth “This is wrong you can’t do it” isn’t enough! You need to understand, why are they attracted towards it anyway? What led to that? How did they end up in that position?

I’ll tell you a story about a good friend of mine, Abdelrahman Murphy. He used to be a youth director in Chicago and when I saw his work in Chicago I kind of forced him to move to Dallas

with me. And Alhamdulillah he's served as youth director in Dallas for sometime. And this is a huge masjid, I mean there's like a 1000 people easily on a Friday night at Jumu'ah. It's insanely big, 300, 400, 500 people regularly for Maghrib and 'Isha everyday, right. It's a big, big community, lots and lots of youth, lots of youth. This was the first time the community hired a youth director and his announcement was: "If you've got a problem, come to my office and we can talk about it." So this kind of offer has never been made to the youth before. "Come to my office, you can talk to me about whatever and it'll stay between us." First week: "I'm thinking about killing myself." "I think I'm gay." "I've committed the ultimate wrong act, what should I do?" All kinds of crazy stuff. All kinds of crazy stuff. And when he first came- about a hundred people, just coming one after another, "I think I left Islam, I don't think I'm Muslim anymore." All kinds of stuff! The first week he fell into serious depression. Like I didn't realize... how bad things are. And it's not that Dallas is crazy. This is average. This is happening everywhere. But our youth don't have someone to talk to. They don't have someone to talk to.

And I'm saying I'm not even qualified, and for those of you are activists, that wanna serve Islam in some capacity, think a little outside the box. Yes, we need scholars, yes we need dua'at, yes we need khateeb, yes we need speakers, but man we need counselors! Really badly! We need people properly trained in psychology both in the Western sense and the Islamic sense. We need these people! We need teen counselors... mentors! We need leadership trainers! People that instill a sense of confidence and love in youth! This stuff is important! It's really important! And to me, these things come first. And when these things are in place, then Islamic education on top of that makes sense. It makes sense because the people that are trying to learn now, are already convinced of what they should be learning. Our assumption for a long time has been "If we give people knowledge, automatically they'll be convinced." It hasn't worked! It hasn't worked! Our kids will tell you about the life of the Prophet (SAW). Really intelligent children, that are really good readers, children that get good grades in social studies, in English, these reading subjects, you give them an Islamic studies textbook, they're gonna read it, they'll be really smart at understanding the text, they'll get hundreds on the texts. But that doesn't mean they've internalized any one of those principles. That just means they're good readers and they're good at taking tests. And they're gonna get an award at the end of the school year for getting a hundred on that test. That does NOT mean they've internalized anything! Anything! That just means they're good at taking tests! Our gauges of

instilling Islam into our youth, our measures for that, are very shallow. It's not the same as measuring whether your kid is doing well in math. It's not the same! They're two very different things. And then our children are very smart, kids are very adaptive, especially teens- are like cunning. They'll tell you exactly what you want to hear. "What's the best story of all?" Yusuf (alaisy salaam)! (Haha got 'em again!) They'll tell you because they know that's what you want to hear! The scariest thing I've ever seen. Scariest thing. Murphy was doing a youth program, and he asked "How many people believe that when you make dua'a, raise your hands and make dua'a to Allah, that Allah is actually listening?" Everybody raised their hand. Then he said okay- "Think about it for one whole minute, and then tell me." Three people raised their hand. Three people- scariest thing. That's the scariest thing. This is the crisis of faith. This is what we have to address first.

This is at the younger youth level. I wanna talk a little bit about the older youth. The next level of crisis I want to talk to you about- this is more psychological in nature. But there's one higher up that's more intellectual in nature. A fundamental crisis, again. You know we're living in a time now where obviously Islam is constantly under attack. Actually when you think of Islam, you think of criticism before you think of anything else. And there are certain ideas that are associated with the word Islam, with the word Qur'aan, with the word Shari'ah- so if you ask an average person- you say the word "Shari'ah", what are the things that come in their head immediately? Without you adding any adjectives yourself? What are some ideas that immediately pop into their head? Beheading, cutting hands, barbarism, stoning- this kind of stuff. This is what comes into people's heads. This is popular society. And you cannot imagine, you cannot assume, that Muslims that live in a society- where Islam is constantly being bashed- not even a society, a world - where Islam is constantly being bashed- will not have an effect, some residual effects, on them also. It will. It has an effect on us. It impacts us.

So our youth already have some - a little bit- contamination in their views of Islam, because they're mixed in with what others say about Islam and what they've come to learn about the deen themselves, and a lot of times the real foundation isn't there to begin with. Then they go to college. And when they go to college, they already felt bad about looking Muslim, being weird, being different, being the guy that's being criticized all the time- and then they end up in Philosophy 101. And they end up in Anthropology 101, and they end up in Middle Eastern Studies 101. And you know what happens in those courses, right? You know what happens in

those college courses? Basically now, this youth- let me tell you what's going on. This youth, who felt bad about Islam this whole time, they didn't feel confident in the faith to begin with, and it was something they were almost embarrassed about- now they have some philosophical arguments in their hands, that justifies "Well, yeah I'm not that interested in Islam anymore, because you know... how do we really know if God exists? I took this course about whether God exists or not, and you know- there's all these arguments!" But the real problem isn't that they have new philosophical arguments, the real problem is, they never had a real love and conviction and loyalty to Islam to begin with- these courses only made it easy for you to make an excuse- hide behind the façade of an intellectual excuse. That's all it is. But they're being equipped with those excuses.

And then of course you take Islam- people wanna study Islam in the west, and they wanna study Islam at the university of Chicago, or they want to do a Master's in Islamic Studies from George Mason, or wherever else, all over the country there are Islamic Studies programs now- these are ANTI-Islamic studies programs, these are UN-Islamic Studies programs. The entire idea behind them is: criticism. The religion you've learned to appreciate, and love, and admire your entire life- now you're going to do a Master's degree- the entire time your teachers will constantly be doing one thing with Islam- what will that be? Criticism, criticism, criticism, criticism, criticism. You don't think that will have an effect on you? You don't think that'll start messing with your head eventually?

I met a friend who's doing a Master's degree in Islamic studies at Harvard. And he told me, you know, he was learning Islam in high school, he got really interested, he went to Syria and did some Arabic studies, when he came back he said "Man, I should learn more about Islam, so I decided to join the Master's program at Harvard." So he joined. One semester into the program- one semester- the first semester was "Introduction to Hadith". Sounds awesome. You know what the premise of the textbook was- the premise of the textbook was: "The more saheeh a hadith is, if it's agreed upon by both Muslim and Bukhari, that just means the authors went out of their way to tell people that it's authentic, so the more authentic the Muslims say it is, actually that's the more fabricated it is." That was the premise of the course. That was the premise of the course. Introduction to Hadith! You take that for a semester and see what happens to you. Are we even equipped to handle that stuff? No. No, we're not. And I'm arguing, that that's already happening. A good number of youth are in Islamic studies programs, and

they're developing some very strange understandings of Islam. Very strange understandings of Islam. And these are going to be movers and shakers in the world. You think that these people that are on CNN- that come out, the Irshad Manjis of the world... are weirdos? There's a whole army of them on the way. There's a whole slew of them on the way. You think that's wacky? You haven't seen anything yet. The real show's about to begin.

We haven't equipped our own youth intellectually. Our Islamic Schools should not be there to protect children from the "world of kufr"... our Islamic Schools are supposed to be: "This is what you're going to find them saying about Allah's deen, and this is how we respond." So when you go out there, you're not there to answer their questions, you become the people that follow the nation of Ibrahim (AS) - he's not asked questions, he's the one ASKING the questions! He's not shaking about his faith; he makes other people shaking about their false beliefs. It's the other way around. Our entire approach to Islamic education has become entirely defensive- "There's too much fitnah out there, we need to save our children, and hide them from what's going on outside" - "I fear for them when they go to college." No! Everybody else should fear when the Muslims go to college. It should be the other way around! We should be the carriers of confidence! That's what it should be. It needs an entire rethinking, on our part, on how Islamic education is conducted. We're constantly on the defense.

This is my last point about this, building this kind of character and mindset. We're continuously, continuously on the defensive. It's- I'm tired of it! I'm tired of it, personally. We don't have to constantly explain ourselves. You know, that's a really easy strategy, that was employed even at the time of the Prophet (alayhi salaatu wassalam)- keep asking him all kinds of questions. Just keep him busy answering those questions. If he's constantly answering your questions, he'll never get around to asking YOU any questions. So some members of Bani Isra'eel in Madinah, some Jews of Madinah- "So, uh, who brings you revelation? Jibreel? Oh okay, that's interesting." "Who are these people of the cave? Oh, okay, you know who they are? All right, okay." "What's the ruuh? What's the ruuh? Oh you got an answer for that too? Oh okay." "How come sometimes a boy is born and sometimes a girl is born?" ... And if he answers that, what are they going to do? Ask another...and then ask another, and then ask another. And you'll be explaining yourself. So Allah answered a few. And then they moved on to another question. [ARABIC] They said "If we're going to be reduced to decayed bones- nothing- we're going to be created again? Really?" This time Allah did not explain. Usually He does, right? He

answers the question? They asked about the People of the Cave? Did Allah explain in detail? He did. When they asked about Jibril (alayhis salaam), Allah explained in detail. This time, Allah drew a line. [ARABIC] “Tell them- forget bones and decay- even if you turn into rock, turn into metal, Allah will bring you back anyway. Which basically means: “Shut up and get lost. I’m done answering your questions. Go ahead, turn into whatever you want, Allah will bring you back. Or whatever your imagination can come up with, that’s even harder to mold? Go ahead.” [Arabic] They say “Who’s going to bring us back?” [Arabic] “Tell them the one who got you back the first time. Now get lost”. Straight answer now.

We have to see the fluff for fluff. We have to see through that. Not just for the sake of others, but for our own youth. We need to build a confidence into our youth, as part of our education of them. If we don’t do that, we will be paying the price for that in the next ten years. I say that very fearfully as I say this to you. We are not- as the leaders of the Muslim community, we are not doing an adequate enough job thinking about how to instill the confidence of faith, how to fight the crisis of faith among our Muslim youth. Muslim youth, when they have philosophical problems, we tell them “Go make wu’du and make two rak’ah over there. And if that doesn’t work, okay come back, and I’ll give you a special dua’a, recite that and your problem will go away.”

Listen! If they have a philosophical problem, and if they have doubts already, the spiritual solution is there, but you cannot ignore the intellectual solution. You can’t! You can’t afford..! Our deen is intellectual! Our deen is not blind faith. Our deen is powerful! We have to believe that! And we have to instill that belief into our kids! Especially at a time where everybody thinks they’ve got something on Islam! They’ve got a reason why Islam is wrong. Everybody! Everybody’s got one! Christians are attacking Islam. Do you know how ridiculous that is?! Do you understand how absurd that is? I live in the South. Or close enough, I live in Texas, and I drive around in the South a lot. And my hobby is listening to Christian talk radio. That’s what I do. When I’m on a road trip, I listen to Christian talk radio. And most Christian talk radio is about Islam... (‘cause they have nothing much to talk about.. you know.) “Oh these Muslims- their Koran - thinks that we’re doing shirk. Us believers are doing shirk! And we’ve got a Koran expert here who’s going to explain everything to us!” And then they’ll have their whole show. And I’m listening to this stuff, and I’m laughing my... It’s such good comedy. It’s quality

comedy. Except- when they're talking about the contradictions in the Koran, and its grammatical mistakes...right? When they talk about that stuff? I'm sitting there laughing... and at that the same time I start crying. 'Cause somewhere, there's a Muslim, listening to this, who has no foundation in faith, and he's listening to this, and saying what to himself or herself? "Oh my God... that makes sense. They're on to something. They got us!"

You know, we haven't yet done our job. Planting the right seeds. That's my only premise- that's my only point. And we have to do that at an early age. And forums like YM, and programs, like regular programs like YM, where youth get together and have company of each other - these are components of building confidence in your faith, because you're around other people who have similar confidence in their faith- confidence feeds confidence. That's one part of it. But now we have to think even further. And we really have to give some serious thought on how to develop these kinds of institutions, and how to evolve our current institutions, and make them ready for these real challenges that are coming, and see the symptoms for symptoms, and see the actual disease that needs to be attacked. Most of the time we talk about the symptoms, we don't talk about the disease. May Allah (azza'wajall) allow us to see the disease, and empower us to be able to find a cure for those diseases through His book and the Sunnah of His messenger (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) BarakAllahuliwalakum, wassalaamu 'alaykum warahmatullah.

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