**When Muslim Work Together 1**

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**Transcript**



O you who have believed, do not violate the rites of Allah or [the sanctity of] the sacred month or [neglect the marking of] the sacrificial animals and garlanding [them] or [violate the safety of] those coming to the Sacred House seeking bounty from their Lord and [His] approval. But when you come out of ihram, then [you may] hunt. And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram lead you to transgress. And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty. (5:2)



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He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]. (42:13)



And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord [postponing the penalty] until a specified time, it would have been concluded between them. And indeed, those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are, concerning it, in disquieting doubt. (42:14)



So to that [religion of Allah ] invite, [O Muhammad], and remain on a right course as you are commanded and do not follow their inclinations but say, "I have believed in what Allah has revealed of the Qur'an, and I have been commanded to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds. There is no [need for] argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination." (42:15)

**The intention of these talks is to create a resource for Muslims who are involved in any kind of Islamic work whether that be at a masjid, a school, a charity organisation, a student society like MSA a youth group like Youth Club, a religious Jammat or any sort of collectivism.**

**Every Muslim knows that the Quran is a book of guidance for us. What a lot of Muslims don’t realise is that the Quran doesn’t give us guidance on individual worship or personal matters but it has guidance on all aspects of life. So Allah (swt) doesn’t just give us guidance just at the individual level but also at the collective level. At the level of the community and communal works. So in the efforts we make as a community we have guidance in Allah’s book for that. So these lectures are a glimpse into that guidance and they should hopefully bring barka or blessing into that work.**

**3 Types of Struggles**

**So this first session is the overview or the laying of the conceptual framework and I want to begin by saying that all human beings are essentially involved in a struggle and that struggle is on many levels. For example the struggle to survive, to earn a living. This struggle is also common to animals for example the bird leaves its nest to find food for itself and its chicks etc. Another struggle above this occurs when your immediate needs or basic necessities are met. Maybe it has to do your family, your neighbours your community etc. For example you want to reduce crime in your neighbourhood. You want to make sure there are enough stop signs on the streets of your locality and you approach your councillor or county official for these purposes. So you become involved at a community level and you struggle for something more than just your personal needs. Along these lines you may also have people with political concerns like working for disadvantaged groups. This is something not just limited just to Muslims but applies to most humans in general..**

**Then there’s a struggle beyond that. That is the struggle towards a cause. A belief. This may not be something physical or tangible like the cleaner neighbourhood or better schools. So it may be harder to understand. These people have a belief in an idea or a cause or an ideology. For Muslims it’s Islam. That is that everyone should know about this beautiful religion and its true teachings. There could be someone equally passionate about Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Atheism. So they would want to propagate or spread these ideologies and religions. So they struggle to spread these in the world. So these are not struggles for tangible goods but for a cause or a belief or an idea. And maybe you will not see the fruition of that idea in your lifetime because the idea is too big for even yourself.**

**In the non-Muslim sphere you might have people struggling for justice or a better way of life for example the Enlightenment or the French Revolution. These were struggles against the Church for the cause of freedom, popular democracy or they wanted human beings to be sovereign over their own fate as a community as a government. Whether they see it materialise in their lifetime or not they are ready to fight for it; even to the extreme extent of giving their life for it.**

**So to recap there are three levels of struggle, 1. At the level of the individual, 2. At the level of the tangible goals within a community, 3. Intangible or abstract ideals beliefs and causes in a society.**

**Struggle For Islam**

**Now let’s paint these three struggles with the brush of Islam. Not just in the worldly sense but also in the other worldly sense. Islam asks us to make a struggle at the level of the individual. I have to fight my nafs, I have to fight shaytan, I have to fight my laziness, my anger. These are struggles I have to make with myself. I have to struggle with myself to become better in my ibadah. So many dua’s we make are about these personal struggles. For example Allhuma a’inna ala zikrika, wa shukrik, wa husna ibadatika.’ Oh Allah aid me in your remembrance, your thankfulness, and in perfecting your worship.’ That’s a struggle with your ego, nafs or soul.**

**Then we go a little bit past that and you say I shouldn’t just worry about myself. We need a place where other Muslims can worship Allah, so Masajid got built and when masajid got built there was a bigger concern; the education of Muslim children, so Sunday schools and Islamic schools got built. Then there were even more concerns. The need to spread the message of Islam to others, so dawah organisations were created. So there were additional struggles that started from the individual level then reached the community level then beyond that target and aimed for spreading Islam throughout the country and the world.These might not be tangible goals, rather they are open ended targets and those trying to working for them are not turned off by not seeing tangible results. It s enough for them that it’s a worthwhile activity.**

**Self Help**

**One thing it is essential for every Islamic worker to understand at the beginning is that any of these efforts that we make for others are at the end of the day more than any one else are benefiting first and foremost ourselves. They benefit us. They don’t necessarily benefit anyone else because we are not capable of that. The Prophet (s) benefited humanity more than any other human being but Allah commanded him to say, *‘La amliku ahadun naafun wala darrun,’* ‘I don’t posses the power to benefit you nor the power to harm you.’ Think about that. The Prophet (s) is more beneficial than any other human being and he is commanded to say , ‘I don’t posses the power to benefit you.’ So the benefit he has given us, the credit for it goes through him to Allah (swt). And that should be the attitude of the believer. That is that whatever good I’m doing I’m not benefiting anyone but myself . That’s whom I am benefiting at the end of the day. If I’m giving sadaka I’m giving to myself , if I’m helping out at the masjid or at a school or a charity organisation I’m helping myself and the benefit which comes to others is not from me its from Allah. That’s the attitude one should seek to develop and mantain.**

**Coming back to the different level of struggles we need to understand that these three struggles, for yourself, for tangible goals in the community and the struggle for the propagation for Islam, are interconnected or married to each other. You can’t be an activist who doesn’t worry about himself. You have to be worried about yourself. Sometimes people get so active or involved in an activity or organisation that they don’t have time to pray or worship properly.**

**They begin to have a diminished role in one struggle and an inflated role in the other struggle and that’s something that’s not acceptable in our religion. Things are interconnected and one of the things we are going to do is see how they are connected.**

**Mind Your Own Business**

**Before we talk about that we need to clear up one issue arising to a great misconception about Islam. This comes from comparing Islam to other religions. Religion generally in post-modern society in the West and increasing so in the east, is considered as something personal . So we have for example in the US constitution freedom of religion, just like the freedom of speech, the freedom of choice etc. etc. and these freedoms that we enjoy in this country is because religion is regarded as personal matter. Nobody can stop me from praying and I can’t stop someone from worshiping the devil if they want to. It’s up to them if they believe in a God or not; it’s their business or choice. It’s a free market place for ideas and beliefs and it’s a personal thing. But in Islam it is the total opposite.**

**Islam isn’t concerned with just itself. If you are a Muslim, Islam is not just a personal business. Islam by definition and default needs to be shared. Islam by definition seeks to benefit others too. If Iam a believer in Islam I can’t say that my Islam is limited to myself. That I don’t have to worry about anybody except myself. So long as I’m praying, so long as I’m giving charity, and going to Hajj, so long as I’m fasting, I don’t have to worry about anybody else. That is something our religion doesn’t let us do. At its core it is concerned with others. This responsibility or duty is mentioned in one of the shortest yet profound suras of the Quran; Surat Asr. If Islam was just about you, the Sura would stop a, *Illala zeen amino wa amilusalihaat*, Except those who believe and do good deeds. But the following verse says, Wata wa sow bil haqi wata wa so bis sabre-‘They mutually enjoin the truth and mutually enjoin patience...’ That is necessary engagement with others. That means necessarily sharing religion with others. It is something inherently inside our religion. It is not something that needs proving. The fact that we are sitting inside a masjid, that fact that we have volunteers recording this is an example of collective work.**

**There are people that could just be sitting at home and eating halal food waiting for the zhur or asr or the next prayer and think to themselves, ‘My Islam is done, I’m not doing anything haram or wrong you know,’ or, ‘We’ve built a community,’ or ‘We’ve engaged in this kind of work etc.’ So we can understand that this is a limited or distorted understanding of Islam. This religion requires a struggle beyond ourselves.**

**Understanding The Zeitgeist**

**Then there are a couple of other of realisations that are very important in this discussion. One of those is that we have to understand the time in history we are living in. If I was giving this talk fifty years ago my contents would be different based on the reality of that time. We need to understand that the times we are living in are unique. The challenges we are facing as individuals and as an ummah are unique and particular to the times we are living in for example the transmission of anti-islamic values through the mass media. It can even be said that as Ummah we have never ever in our history faced the type of challenges we are facing in the current epoch. And if we (especially the youth) fail to understand the nature of these threats we are likely to harm rather than help the cause of Islam. And this is what we and our enemies have led us to.**

**One Islam or Many? Which is the right one?**

**One aspect of this is to understand that we are living in a time when there are so many different efforts and so many different movements and so many different labels all working under this big thing we call Islam. There are so many flavours of Islam. There are so many variations within Islam. To give a personal example; most of my adult life was spent in New York. I only left about five years ago so I was exposed to Islam on a serious level in NY. Now depending on which masjid you go to you saw a different brand of Islam completely different from the others. You got exposed to different ways of thinking about Islam. I’m not going to label groups and movements and I’m not talking about outside of orthodox Islam. I’m talking about Sunni mainstream Islam. Within that you have a lot of variety. You have a lot of variation and as I young person I was very impressionable and when I was exposed to one type I thought,’This seems to be the right one.’ But when I came across another version I thought that maybe this is the real one, maybe there’s something wrong with the last one. I kept experimenting. But one thing came very clear and obvious to me at the end of this experimental experience; that Islam and the struggle for Islam is not one thing and it’ll never be owned by one group. It can’t be. That time is over. It’s long gone.**

**Differences of Opinion**

**That time was the time of the Prophet (s). Then Islam was one thing, everybody had more or less exactly the same understanding on every issue and they represented Islam. If there was a difference of opinion they could take it back to the Prophet and he could answer them immediately in the flesh. We now have the Quran and the Sunnah but have thee been differences of opinion on interpretation on the Quran and the Sunnah? Yes.Are there going to be legitimate differences of opinion amongst us? Yes. Are there going to be a different variety of Muslims? Absolutely.**

**Now there are two attitudes you can take in this situation. One of them says that the opinion/version/group/scholars I’m holding on to or following is correct (firq tun najiha-the saved sect) and everybody else is not only wrong, but deviant and corrupt. And they are going to the hell fire. So stay away from them. Keep away from them. Don’t go there, they’ll mislead you. Don’t listen to them, they’ll corrupt you and we have the right Islam. All the others are wrong. What have been the results of this kind of attitude? Further divisions and in-fighting. In fact those groups which start making such claims usually end up splitting into sub-sects themselves, leading to further divisions of an already divided entity. One thing we need to understand is that the first generation of Muslims and a majority of the scholars throughout Islamic history never went around claiming to be the only ones with the whole truth and condemning everyone else to hell. They were too humble to make such claims. But today we have people who cannot read but a line at best in Arabic going around pronouncing fatwas of deviancy and heresy on a majority of the ummah and the scholars of the past. But at the end of the day the more you mature in your understanding of Islam, you realise that the work for Islam is not going to be owned by one group, one community, one jamaat, one scholar, one school of thought. It’s not going to happen. That’s not practically possible.**

**And recently I had the chance to go to hajj and there you realise how much diversity thee is in Islam. You realise that if not any place then at Hajj how widely different Muslims can be. You an also observe this in countries like the U.S and other Western countries. Even in cities like Dallas you are going to find an incredible diversity of Muslims.**

**I don’t agree but I still Love You**

**And so the reason I’m bringing this up and one of the things I want to remind myself and hopefully instil in you is to have respect for good work. It doesn’t matter whether if it’s coming from people that are exactly like you or from Muslims that aren’t exactly like you. So long as it’s good work then it should be respected. It should even be supported. It shouldn’t be that we just support, aid or agree with people that are exactly like us. That’s again impractical. There are scholars that I have tremendous respect for but at the same time I can’t get my self to agree to some of their positions. I just can’t and I’ve told them, ‘I can’t agree with you on this one but I still love you to bits.’ And when they do good things or start good projects I wholeheartedly support them. It’s not that I disagree with one thing and that lends me to say I’m not going to support this person or group because there’s one thing they said which I don’t agree with. I ask you which other human being are you going to agree with one hundred percent? Do you agree with your wife? Does your wife agree with you on everything? Do your children agree with you a hundred percent on everything? How’s that possible? So if we’ve become idealistic that we are not going to work with someone unless we are exactly on the same page on every issue, then it will be impossible for us to work with others.**

**At the end of the day even the companions had differences of opinion amongst themselves. In the interpretation of the Quran of all things.There would be an ayah which in the opinion of ibn Abbass would mean one thing and in the opinion of another sahabi like Abdula ibn Masud would mean something else. But they loved and respected each other. So that’s something that we have to instil into ourselves inshallah.**

**Serious Help**

**I have talked about the diversity of the ummah and how we have to respect different kinds of diversities and one ayah or verse which comes to mind in relation to this is in Sura Maida which was one of the last Suras to be revealed. In the beginning of Sura Maida, Allah told us, *Wa Taawanoo alal biri wa taqwa-*tawan is commonly translated as cooperate. So the ayah says cooperate in piety. That’s a rough translation of the ayah but taawon in Arabic language comes from Aown which means aid and serious aid. Not like just any small help but serious or desperate help and that’s the same word as the one used in Sura Fatiha, when we say *iyaka naabudu waiyaka nastaeen* its from the same root aowan. So tawanoo means seriously help one another or help each other a lot on al birr or all things good. Allah did not even specify which good deeds. He just says birr. And by the way birr is probably the most comprehensive word in the Arabic language for goodness. It means anything good. So if any good is happening be a part of it.**

**Where Do I Fit In?**

**This is also a good time to illustrate something else which is very important. That is that there isn’t one cause or one project in Islam. There’s as diverse as communities are. Our needs are diverse; the world of Islam is diverse. So for example educating children is one project, but within that project there could be a hundred smaller projects for example how to educate them in the Quran, how to educate them in history, how to educate them in manners in the sciences etc etc. These are each individual projects. So when we talk about establishing a community or counselling, counselling for teenagers is a project, counselling for middle schoolers is a project, counselling for married couples and counselling for seniors is a project. These are individual projects so when you think of it like that efforts have to be zoomed in on then excelled on. Then you personally and me personally have to ask ourselves, how can I contribute? What can I serve in? What role can I play? Maybe I need to start something new maybe something already exists and I can support it. For example dawah or propagation of Islam. But dawah is not one thing it's a 1000 things. There are efforts happening on very specific forms of dawah, for example brother Mojahid Fletcher is doing dawah in the Spanish community; that's a very particular project and I respect that a lot because that's something which is much needed. But that is one area. Similarly dawah to particular group of people like the Prophet (s) would send Muslims of particular tribes to that tribe (e.g a Yemeni Sahabi to tribes in Yemen) for dawah. What I derive from that is we need to understand our own position. We need to ask ourselves, ‘Where am I going to contribute? You know how people go to a counsellor and ask, ‘What career should I go into? I’m good at math, I like science, I hate art, etc. so what should I do? The counsellor may reply, ‘Well you should be an accountant or you should be into sales or you should be this or that.’ Similarly you and I should think about counselling ourselves. We should try to know, utilise our talents, knowledge, experience, and education to benefit Islam in some way. And it should take into consideration our interests. What are we interested in? What are we passionate about?**

**Be Passionate**

**Because Islamic work is something you should feel passionate about. It shouldn’t be done as grunt work i.e. because you have to do it. You should feel passionate about it. You should do it because you love it. You were made for it. And that’s what you have to find for yourself. So when like minds come together and cooperate with each other that’s epitomizing, *wa tawanoo bil birri*, ‘cooperate in goodness.’ But Allah added ‘wa taqwa’. He added the word Taqwa, which is really beautiful. There is a subtle wisdom behind adding the word taqwa. Taqwa in its origin is protecting yourself. So essentially it is an individual thing. The Prophet (s) said, At-Taqwa Haa Hunna (pointing to his heart).Nobody can look inside your heart, nobody can see in there. On the one hand the ayah began talking about us cooperating with each other i.e. collective work and immediately followed it up by saying that make sure you cooperate in instilling taqwa in each other also. Why? Just because you are doing good work doesn’t mean or guarantee you have taqwa. So remind each other during an event or a conference, ‘’Hey it’s time for salaat.’ Or ‘We need to recite more Quran.’ Remind each other about not backbiting or making fun of other Muslims etc. The spiritual element in our work is embedded inside the process of cooperating. So we shouldn’t just become volunteers at an MSA or YC or TJ or IJT, posting all the flyers, or sending the emails or updating the face book pages and sending the tweets but at the end of all that we should remind each other, 'Hey we should pray some extra nawafil for the convention so that Allah blesses it and nothing untoward or bad happens and Allah accepts all this effort.’ That’s taqwa. So we help each other in bir and taqwa.**

**Our Enemies**

**The next part of the verse says *wala taawanoo bilisme wal adwaan*, The original word in Arabic is tatawanoo and one ta is removed and it means do not cooperate in the least bit in sins. Now the reverse applies when you can’t cooperate in goodness and taqwa. With goodness the project was mentioned first but here when we are being told about not cooperating, the spiritual problem or sin or ithm is mentioned first. Don’t cooperate with each other in sin. Someone may suggest, ‘Hey the convention is over want to go and grab a sheisha? Want to go and hang out later, want to grab a movie, do this that and the other.’ The verse says, ‘Don’t cooperate with each other in sins.’ That is, don’t let that happen to you. When people are together the collective responsibility also goes down. Young people can testify to that. When young guys are together and one of them says, ‘Hey man lets go and watch a movie,’ then even if one of you is thinking, ‘This doesn’t seem such a good idea’, you just along, you don’t feel as guilty. There’s a collective dropping of guilt. Just the opposite is true when there’s a bunch of people and one of them says, ‘Hey lets go to the masjid and pray.’ Everybody will go its easy to encourage a group to do good and vice versa. So Allah says, ‘Make sure you cooperate with each other in good things and make sure you don’t cooperate in bad things,’ because its very easy for the entire group to cooperate in sin. What happens when young people get together and talk too much? They start making fun of each other and then they start backbiting each other. They start making inappropriate remarks about each other and thing turn bad really fast. For example you go to a dinner and initially the conversation starts off productively but eventually it turns into a really bad or sinful conversation and it goes on for an hour. This is ithm or sin. When your heart becomes dirty with sin it creates the opposite of cooperation; discord or division. No more co-operation but adwaan or animosity. So now you start turning into a cult, a gang. You guys hang out together and bash the other guys and trash about them. The more you meet the more cut off you become from everybody else and that’s one of the great dangers of Islamic work. When you are involved in a youth group at your masjid and you guys get together then its easy to bash the other youth groups or jamaats. ‘Oh we schooled them this time. Our programme was so much bigger and better. Those guys don’t even know how to organise an event. Its so tempting to talk like that, to build that animosity.**

**Golden Rule**

**But I started off by saying that all Islamic efforts have to be respected. I would like to share a recent example. I got a call from a brother in Australia whom I previously met at an ISNA conference. He was here to see how we hold conventions because they are trying to do Islamic work in Australia and he said he was interested in our Arabic programme, but he was very hesitant in asking for assistance saying things like, ‘ I didn’t have to share the tips or the syllabus if I thought they were propriety of Bayyinah etc.’ I said, ‘Bro, take the curriculum, I can’t come to Australia, take it and use it, go do it. Do whatever you can.’ So if there’s a youth group here and another in Plano and in Fort Irving, all the better, the more the merrier as they say. That’s a really needed resource. So wataawanoo bilbirri wa taqwa. This is the golden rule for working collectively as Muslims. We have to cooperate in all good things. We have to forget our labels, or that we have to further or promote the organisation or the jamaat. Our primary loyalty is not to organisations but to the work of the deen. That’s it. Allah will not ask us under which banner did you do your work. Allah will not ask, ‘which logo did you put on the flyer?’ We are going to be asked on the intentions on the sincerity and the openness with which we worked with others. If we get so hung up on names, labels and logos, the name of your brand, the name of your project should be on it, if that becomes at the forefront, then you definitely create a culture of animosity and division. You create competition. You create unnecessary division. Why is this happening? Why is that happening? You start seeing your effort as something that’s competing with other efforts. Subhanallah. This is not the direction Islamic work should go in. This is not how a healthy community flourishes.**

**Many Builders One Building**

 **Sura Shuraa says establish the deen and don’t be divided in it. Establishing the deen is not one struggle. It’s a million struggles and each one of them is part of a bigger effort. The establishment of the deen can be compared to constructing a building. A building is made up of bricks. Everybody is working on one brick or another. So don’t think that other bricks are not part of establishing the deen. Your effort and every other effort is part of a bigger picture or project. You may not see the full building yet, but the more people are at work, the more people are involved covering different areas; one is handling this room, the other is handling the other room the further the establishment of the deen is going. This is how it progresses slowly, gradually. Even Allah himself gives the example of Islam as a tree. *Wa masalu kalmia tayaiba kal shajara tayibah*, meaning that la illaha ill allah or islam is like a tree. Does a tree grow all of a sudden? No. It takes a long time, it takes years, the roots have to be deep and the branches have to spread in the same direction or different directions? They don’t go in one direction. They go in every which direction. That’s the diversity of the Ummah. And each one of those directions has to be respected. So that was a bit of an overview that I wanted to share with you.**

**What Motivates Us?**

**The next session is about what should motivate you and me to volunteer. What should motivate us to do this work? I’m going to take a passage from Sura Shuraa and discuss how it instructs us about establishing Allah’s deen. I’ll talk about the Prophet (s) is motivated to do this work. So this is how Allah motivated his Prophet (s) to do his work and in turn we should be motivated as a result.**

**The Prophet (s) had basically three major audiences besides the Muslims; the Mushrikoon, the idol worshippers of Makkah, and the Jewish and Christian communities. Both of them were called the Ahl-ul kitab in the Quran. And of course to all these three groups he’s trying to deliver the message of Islam. And there are a lot of people around that are discouraging the Prophet (s). All of us know the effect discouragement has on a person. When people discourage the productivity of your activity by saying things like ‘Why are you even bothering, ‘What’s the point of that? You are wasting your time.’ When you hear that over and over again, it can have a detrimental effect on your motivation. It can wear down your motivation. That’s just a human thing. With regards the Prophet (s) it isn’t any body that is discouraging the Prophet (s). It’s the elders he’s come to know and respect in his entire life. It’s these knowledgeable people of the Jews and Christina that are the source of discouragement.**

**But in the verses I’m about to share with you the discouragement is not coming from them, it seems that it is coming from Allah swt. He says, ‘An Aqeem ad deen wala tatafarqoo fehi,’ that is,’You should establish the deen and not be divided in it.’ This means establish the deen amongst the people of Makkah and He says that it’s too big a deal for the people of shirk to accept what you are calling them to. It’s too heavy for them. Now if somebody else was telling the Prophet (s) he might not be de-motivated because, so what if they say it? But who is saying it to him? Allah is saying it to him. Allah is saying to him Kabrun Maktun, ‘It’s too hard for them to accept what you are calling them to.’ So then the Prophet (s) thinks what’s the point to invite them. If Allah is saying it, it must be it’s a big deal. But the next part of the ayah answers him.**

**Scholars for Dollars**

**‘Allahu yajtabee man yashaa…’ Allah is the one who selects towards him who he wants. ‘Wa yahdee elahi man yashaa ,’ or ‘And He guides towards him who turns to him.’ But the first apparent de-motivation is that the people of shirk have no experience with the book. They have no previous prophets, they have no knowledge about the akhira or the hereafter. All of this is new for them, so it’s too hard for them to accept the message of Islam. So now the Prophet’s hopes turn to the people that have knowledge, the Jews and Christians. Supposedly they are a better hope because they have knowledge. The next verse says, *‘Actually they didn’t fall into disagreement until after knowledge came to them.’* So knowledge was not the reason they accepted the truth. Knowledge actually became the reason for them rejecting the truth. Because they used knowledge as a means of power, as a means to further their ends or worldly goals. Knowledge to them was a weapon or tool and when they owned it they had control. So they used their knowledge to say no. ‘We can’t give anybody else that authority.’**

**Now we come to another ayah about the duel nature of knowledge in collective Islamic work. For example dawah. This is one of the major areas of Islamic work. So this area of Islamic work requires knowledge. You can’t be teaching somebody if you don’t have knowledge. And the other area of knowledge depends on what you are teaching.**

**Now if you do have knowledge and you are teaching and you have a following, people are listening to you and then somebody else comes along and apparently they have more knowledge than you do and your audience starts slipping away. And you are feeling like, ‘Hey what’s happening?’ That guy he took all my crowd. So maybe I should prove to the people with my knowledge that that guy is really no good and they should stay with me. Now this knowledgeable person who is supposed to be sharing knowledge for the sake of Allah, he’s now using that knowledge as a weapon. To hold onto his market share to put it crudely. It’s become a commercial materialistic exercise.**

**We need to understand that the knowledge of the Taurat and Injeel at the time of the Prophet were exclusive classified information. Not any Christian or Jew knew about the Bible or the Taurat. Only the scholars of these faiths knew these books. ‘So if you wanted to know about your religion you had better come to us,’ was the attitude. So now this Prophet (s) comes along and he’s making the knowledge of Allah’s book available to everybody. He’s not saying, ‘I have knowledge of the book,’ he’s teaching it to every companion or to use computing terms making it open source. If it becomes an open source, who loses their market share? The people who had knowledge and because they had knowledge they were the ones you had to go to.**

**The other thing about knowledge is that it can be misused. For example let’s suppose you have a car problem and you go to a mechanic and he realises that you don’t know anything about cars. You went for an oil change and he say’s, ‘Mister you need a new fan belt, a your gearbox also needs replacing and your engine is weak a list of a dozen things that need replacing or repairing.’ Is there any way of telling whether he’s lying of telling the truth? No**

**So when knowledge is in the hands of a one or two or a few is there a possibility that they can use it to take advantage of others people? Certainly. But, if I know abut cars I can say, what are you talking about? Show me the fan belt? Then the mechanic is exposed.**

**Now the leadership of the Jews and Christians were they not using knowledge for their advantage? Allah calls this the ‘Selling of the Ayaat of Allah’’. They were using the knowledge as a source of manipulation so they did not want this knowledge to be taken away from them and used that knowledge to keep that division going because it was through those divisions that they benefited.**

**Now I’m not here to talk about Jews and Christians, I’m here to talk about us’.**

**Does this phenomena exist in the Muslim ummah? People using knowledge; Islamic Knowledge to basically hold onto to a market share and to basically nullify everybody else’s efforts and to literally turn the knowledge of Islam into a cultish industry. (And when politics and states become involved these reaches really worrying levels and leads to fighting and even death e.g. Iran vs. Saudi ‘s during 80’s and 90’s).**

**The Prophet (s) hopes were, ‘O.k. the mushrikoon are not knowledgeable, they can’t accept Islam, its too big a deal, Allah said so, but these people of knowledge (Jews and Christians), it should be easy for them because Allah says it’s actually because of their knowledge that they disagree with each other. ‘Out of the urge to rebel against each other.’ They used that knowledge as a means of making themselves more arrogant. Knowledge is supposed to make you humble . The end of Sura Isra is about that. But their knowledge made them arrogant. They didn’t want to be put down. Why would they accept the supremacy of an Arab messenger of all things?**

**‘Wamatafarqoo min bade ma jaa…’ I just want to share with you that there was one demoralising statement, mushrikoon are not going to accept the truth, and there was another demoralising statement that those with knowledge i.e. Jew and Christians used their knowledge for the exact opposite purposes. Instead of coming to guidance they used that knowledge to further their arrogance. So the Prophet (s) is thinking about them just like he will think later about the people of Taif, ‘If they can’t become believers , who can? Their children!’ So his hopes will now go to the next generation. Now the ayah concludes ‘No doubt there were those who were given the book in inheritance after them,’ the people who are going to inherit this religion from people that disagree with each other they are in doubt, they (the inheritors) are not sure about it either. Can’t say much about their iman. So he’s got three levels of problems; the mushrikoon will not accept, the people of the book have knowledge but they use it for corruption and not for guidance and their future generations are riddled with doubt.**

**Problem after problem after problem. Do you know what’s weird? I started this session by saying that I will show you how why Allah motivates his Prophet (s). But so far what does it sound like? Allah seems to be de-motivating his Prophet (s). One of the most remarkable verses on this subject is this, ‘Fa zalika fadoo…’ They contain a world inside them. Allah says, ‘Then for that reason invite,’ What is the Prophet’s job at the end of the day? Inviting people. That’s his job. And Allah says that, I have listed before you three major, major, problems with the audience you have in front of you. Enough for anybody else to say that there is no point to invite them. There’s no point, no purpose. Allah says actually because these problems are so major, that is why you have to invite them and that is why I chose you (s). This is not just any man’s job. If the problems were small it wouldn’t need the greatest messenger of all humanity. It is because these problems are so big you are needed. Falizalik fadoo. What is the motivation given to the Prophet ? The motivation given isn’t , ‘Oh your path is going to be easy, they are going to accept what you say right away, don’t worry about it, no, no, no. Tthe motivation to him is, these are the toughest crowds anybody has ever had and you will deal with them directly. Previous prophets, some dealt with the mushrikoon, some dealt with the people of the book, one dealt with one problem, the other with another problem. Some dealt with the ignorant, some dealt with the arrogant, and some dealt with the knowledgeable. Isa (as) dealt with the people of the book. Zakariya dealt with the people of the book.**

**But this Prophet has to deal with everybody and the worst of all and he has to deal with them directly. And Allah says, ‘That’s why you have been chosen.’ So what am I telling you and myself? If you look around and this is coming back to us, when Muslims get together for dinner, eid, parties, chai, pani shani, what do we discuss?**

**Problems, we love discussing problems. ‘Man this is going on, they are doing this, they’re doing that, the politicians, the Americans, the Jews etc, We love discussing problems. And you know some of us are seasoned problem experts. We have spent our entire life discussing problems. You know what Allah says? ‘Yes there are huge problems,’ but you, Allah decided you and I will be alive in 2013 around all those problems. In the same way every generation of Muslims which Allah raised, did they see problems around them? Yes. And Allah raises generations of Muslims he knows are qualified to solve the problems-because of those problems you and I exist. Because these problems have to be solved you and I have been given air to breathe, that’s why we are here.**

**Zalika fadoo was taqim kama oomirt, ‘Stand firm as you have been commanded,’ don’t buckle because you see problems. ‘Walatata biya ahwahe him, ‘Don’t follow their empty desires, meaning don’t be demoralised because all they want is for you not to be motivated. So you should stop worrying about this. Wala tatabio ahwahahum wa kul….’ ‘And tell them, I’ve been commanded, I’ve come to believe in whatever Allah revealed in his book.’ What did he reveal in his book? Allah revealed that he charged me with this mission and I have to invite, so I’ll invite whether you listen or not. I am going to do what I am going to do this is the Quran’s version of the modern saying, ‘Mind your own business.’ ‘We have our deeds and you have your deeds.’ That means you can keep doing all the evil deeds you want. You can keep sending trillions of dollars on your propaganda, go ahead, we are going to do whatever we are going to do, we are not going to give up. That’s lana aamaluna, wa la kum aamalukum, ‘To you your works and to us our works.’**

**You do what you are going to do, you can call on all the forces of shaytan and do whatever you want, we will do our work, that’s the stand of the Muslim. That’s the stand he takes, that’s the motivation.**

**Another important thing to realise is that at the end of the day we are going to work through organisations. That’s just how human societies are organised. You are going to work through a masjid or a national organisation or a madressa or a school or whatever. You are going to work through one of those channels for the sake of the din. You are not going to work by yourself, you are going to work through some collective initiative. But you make dua at the end (Allahu yajmauna bainana) , ‘Allah make union between all of us.’**

**Some Muslims prematurely say,’ Man there’s so many Muslim organisations and Islamic organisations (astaghfirullah) why can’t we just have one Muslim organisation?’ I said at the beginning that that’s not how Islam works. There’s no one effort. There’s going to be thousands of efforts and they all have to be respected. So long as they are addressing something unique. If you are going to start an effort an organisation. Be my guest, do it. All the best to you. Just make sure you don’t start something in competition to something else. You should start something because there was a need and it wasn’t being addressed and you felt that that should be addressed. That’s when you have the need to start a new organisation and not because, ‘Those guys did it and they’re pretty successful, so I’ll start something just like it so I can be successful too.’ No, that’s making competition. Healthy competition is in good deeds, not in undercutting efforts of others. Because at the end of the day, Muslims are a minority in many countries and where there are in a majority the practicing Muslims are in a minority or under attack form the secular Muslims. We have a small population in the US-UK etc. which means financially, and physically we are limited. So if there’s a good effort happening in one area then all of our resources should be put in that and if we want to contribute money in other projects or efforts they should be complementary efforts not competing efforts. We should not compete.**

**Is it easy or difficult to build a high school? Hard. But there are cities in this country where we have two Islamic high schools within half a mile of each other. Why? Because this principal doesn’t like the personality of that principal or he doesn’t follow the same school of thought as the residents. This is ridiculous. Everybody has to suffer because somebody has a personality disorder. Because we don’t know how to work with each other. We need to understand that the work of Islam is greater than ourselves. We have to put personality and individual preferences aside. You have to put them aside.**

**The point I hope I am getting across to all of you is that it is because of these problems that Allah chose this ummah so the problems around us shouldn’t be a reason for us to complain or become passive or inactive or withdrawn.**

**The problems around us are supposed to get us to roll up our sleeves and buckle our belts and get us to work. The problems should make us more serious. ‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going.’**

**Coming back to my hajj trip, so many people go to hajj and get depressed. Its awesome and spiritual but you see some really bad stuff and sad things and you can come back depressed. The state of ignorance of the people, the poverty, the child slavery etc., there’s so many things you see, it can really mess with your head, not to mention the tower with the lights shooting out of it. But you know what? It depends on how you perceive it. You don’t have to get depressed. You can come back with more resolve to do more work to improve the situation. That means we are not doing enough work and work needs to get done and Allah would never leave us hopeless.**

**He will never leave us without his aid. If we were willing to do his work, things will change the baraka from Allah will come. That’s what we have to believe, that’s the motivation. You and I share so that’s the conclusion of the first session. The next session is about balance within our collective work inspired from the last few verses of sura Hajj. ‘Barakallahi walakum fil Quran il hakeem …..’**