

**MESSENGERS
OF PEACE**
A C A D E M Y



OPERATION SALAM
DA'WAH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Module Four:

Calling to the Belief of One God

Module 4

In this module

- Learn the Priorities of Da'wah
- Learn about the absurdity of life without God
- Learn the Qur'anic Argument for the Existence of God
- Learn the Islamic Response to Evil and Suffering

Unit One: Priorities of Da'wah

Have you ever been asked questions like these?

- Why are all Muslims terrorists? Why do Muslim men beat their women? Why do you force your women to cover up? Why do Muslims hate gays? Why are you forcing shari'ah law on us?

And the list goes on...

There are excellent answers to all of these questions. But there is a much more effective method to answering these questions.

We can end up spending hours answering the different questions people have and then ending up back to where we started without having achieved anything. We don't satisfy the questioner in this way.

So the point here is the wrong method would be to try to answer every single question a non-Muslim asks you, because you will fall into useless arguments. You won't be leading the discussion. You won't be calling to Allah.

The reality is the questioner will not be satisfied with your answers because they see the world differently to you. It's like you have glasses on and you can see different colours while they have black and white glasses on. You are trying to show them something that is blue and green but they are debating that it is black and white.

So what do you do?

You take off their black and white glasses and you put your glasses on them so they see the world through your eyes. How do you do that?

You introduce the foundations of Islam so they understand your world view. Then they will be able to understand why we do what we do in Islam.

Here's an example of how to initiate the da'wah:

Janet: Why do you cover your hair, it is so hot! Don't you feel imprisoned wearing that?

Maryam: I totally see why you would think that. I used to think the same of women wearing the headscarf when I did not wear it. But I really appreciate you asking. Janet the thing is, for you to truly understand why Muslim women dress the way

they do you must first understand the foundations of Islam. Do you have 5 minutes for me to explain this to you?

From here Maryam can go straight into Tawhīd (God's Existence and Oneness) rather than having a useless discussion.

This method uses a logical and systematic approach in giving Dawah, firstly by explaining God's existence and oneness then going onto explaining revelations and prophethood. This approach calls to focussing on three key areas;

1. Monotheism (Tawhīd)
2. Prophethood (Risālah)
3. Next Life (Ākhirah)

By explaining tawhīd first, you establish a firm foundation and explain the essence of Islam and why Muslims do things. You explain it is reasonable and the logical thing to do. In doing so, you avoid difficult issues and cut out potential arguments.

In this module, we will focus on the belief in one God.

Unit Two: The Absurdity of Life Without Allah

No Ultimate Hope

A life without Allah, ultimately points to a life of no hope, as Arthur Schopenhauer, the German philosopher writes:

“We are like lambs in a field, disporting themselves under the eye of the butcher, who chooses out first one and then another for his prey. So it is that in our good days we are all unconscious of the evil fate may have presently in store for us—sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason.”

A Muslim lives a life of purpose, a life of hope and optimism.

“Certainly no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy, except the people who disbelieve.”

[Qur’an, 12:87]

No Ultimate Value

If I put you in a room with all your favourite toys, gadgets, friends and loved ones, food and drink, but you knew there would only be 5 minutes until you, everyone and everything in it were destroyed. What ultimate value would all the above really have?

What is 5 minutes and 657436 hours (equivalent to 75 years)? It is just time.

No Ultimate Purpose

Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an:

“So where are you going?” [Qur’an, 81:26]

“Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose” [Qur’an, 3:190]

“God did not create all these without a true purpose; He explains His signs to those who understand.” [Qur’an, 10:5]

Think About It...

The chair you are sitting on has a purpose, most inanimate objects do. Yet what about you?

Accepting no purpose is self-defeating. Without purpose a lot of the things we have achieved as human beings most probably would not have been happened. As many of the people who have accomplished amazing achievements, including the discovery of penicillin, would not have had the drive to attain what they did.

A sense of purpose is essential to progress. Is it a necessary delusion or does it indicate our lives have purpose too?

No Ultimate Meaning

If we are just matter, then does it really matter?

If we all just end up as *worm buffet*, what ultimate significance or meaning can we give to our lives?

What difference does it make if we spend our whole lives fighting crime or committing crime?

Our ends are just the same!

Explains Nothing!

D. Wood, a teaching fellow at Fordham University aptly writes:

“Atheism explains, quite literally, nothing. Atheism doesn’t explain the existence of our universe or the fact that our universe is finely tuned. It doesn’t explain the origin and diversity of life. It fails to explain the rise of consciousness or objective moral values...The point here is that if atheists expect theists to take the denial of theism seriously, they must offer a hypothesis at least as powerful as theism. Yet atheism can’t explain even the most basic facts about the world....If we’re going to reject hypotheses because they fail to explain the data, we must reject atheism long before we reject theism.” [*Evidence for God. Edited by William A. Dembski and Micheal R. Licona. Baker Books. 2010, pp 45-46.*]

“Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they have no firm Belief.”

[Qur’an, 52:36]

No True Happiness

Imagine you woke up on a train. You had a first class seat with the finest food and drink, and breathtaking scenery. The service was immaculate and the seats were heavenly. Would you be truly happy?

Wouldn’t you be at ease and truly happy if you knew where you were going, and how you got there?

A Depressed Life

A life without God, and without following His message, will lead to a depressed life, as stated by Allah:

“And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind.” [Qur’an, 20:124]

Unit Three: Allah, Worship and Freedom

The correct context is the fact that Allah alone deserves to be worshipped. All verses concerning Allah's creation, Power, Lordship and Wisdom are used as a premise to facilitate the conclusion that He deserves to be worshipped, and not necessarily that He exists.

The Oneness of God:

Tawhid-Ar Rububiyyah or the unity of Allah's Lordship.

Tawhid Al-'Ibadah or the unity of Allah's worship.

Tawheed Al-Asma' Was-Siffat or the unity of His names and attributes.

Tawhid Ar-Rububiyyah: "...is to believe that He alone is the creator of everything. There are not two creators equal in attributes and actions. This tawhid is definitely true without any doubt...In fact, hearts have an inherent tendency to believe in it, more than for any other truth or existence. The messengers questioned their people about this belief in the following manner,

'Is there any doubt about the existence of Allah, the Originator of the Heavens and the Earth?' [Qur'an, 14:10]"

Are You Free? The Myth of Freedom

"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." [To Althea, from prison, Richard Lovelace 1618-58]

Context: We had no choice over our:-

- Biological make-up and DNA.

- Social conditions in which we were brought up in.
- Our parents.
- Siblings.
- Ethnicity.
- Gender.

The moment you were born, you were kidnapped and then sold to the world as a slave. Ever since then you have been fighting for your freedom; to liberate yourself from the shackles of all that which enslaves you.

Ego

We are shackled by our own ego, or lack of sense of who we really are.

The 11th century Scholar Imām Al-Ghazālī in *The Alchemy of Happiness* writes: “There is nothing closer to you than yourself. If you don’t know yourself, how will you know others? You might say, “I know myself”, but you are mistaken....The only thing you know about yourself is your physical appearance. The only thing you know about your inside is that when you are hungry you eat, when you are angry, you fight, and when you are consumed by passion, you make love. In this regard you are equal to any animal. You have to seek the reality within yourself....What are you? Where have you come from and where are you going? What is your role in the world? Why have you been created? Where does your happiness lie? If you would like to know yourself....the reality of your existence is in your inwardness. Everything is a servant of your inward heart.”

“Have you seen he who has taken as his lord his own desire?” [Qur’an, 45:23]

Society

We are shackled by social pressure, norms and social influence. Social norms are generally adhered to and two major motives for conformity involve the need to be right, known as *informational social influence* and the need to be accepted by others, known as *normative social influence*. [See J. C. Turner. *Social Influence*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. 1991; *The Science of Mind and Behaviour*. Hodder & Stoughton. 2001. p 385 – 386.]

Who Controls the Discourse?

“Discourses are intimately tied to the structures and practices that are lived in our society from day to day, and **it is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of truth**. If we accept that men, relative to women, are still in a more powerful position in society, then we can say that prevailing discourses of femininity serve to uphold this power inequality.”

[Vivien Burr. *Social Constructionism*. Second Edition. Routledge. 2003, p. 76.]

Is Liberation Possible?

We are all “enslaved” and “shackled” in some way. How do we liberate ourselves?

Many Slave Masters vs. One?

“Allah presents an example:

A slave owned by quarrelling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah ! But most of them do not know.” [Qur’an, 39:29]

Important Note

Islam can be summarised in the following way. Without Allah we have so many slave masters, and they do not really know what is good for us. Allah is our true Lord who knows us better than we know ourselves and He loves us more than our mothers love us. So take Allah as your Lord.

The Imprisoned Heart:

Ibn Taymiyyah said: “The one who is imprisoned is the one whose heart is imprisoned from Allah and the captivated one is the one whose desires have enslaved him.” [*Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Wabi, p. 69*]

Servitude to God

Worshipping, enslaving, and referring to God liberates you from the ephemeral world. This is true liberation. You become liberated from your ego, society and your context. God knows you better than you know yourself.

Worshipping God defines who you are, it is your nature (ref: *fitrah*):

“And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves.”
[*Qur'an, 59:19*]

Allah Deserves Our Worship

What is worship?

- To know Allah
- To love Allah
- To obey Allah
- To perform all acts of worship to Allah alone

Reasons

1. It is our purpose in life and in line with our nature

“I did not create the Jinn, nor mankind, except to worship Me.” [Qur’an 51:56]

“Every new-born child is born in a state of fitrah.” [Sahih Muslim]

2. He created and sustains universe and everything in it

He created the heavens without pillars that you see and has cast into the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shift with you, and dispersed therein from every creature. And We sent down rain from the sky and made grow therein [plants] of every noble kind. This is the creation of Allah. So show Me what those other than Him have created. Rather, the wrongdoers are in clear error. [Qur’an, 31:10-11]

It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. [Qur’an, 2:29]

And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darkneses of the land and sea. We have detailed the signs for a people who know. [Qur’an, 6:97]

Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe? [Qur’an, 21:30]

3. Produce your proof!

Say, [O Muhammad], “Praise be to Allah, and peace upon His servants whom He has chosen. Is Allah better or what they associate with Him?” [More precisely], is He [not best] who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you rain from the sky, causing to grow thereby gardens of joyful beauty which you could not [otherwise] have grown the trees thereof? Is there a deity with Allah? [No], but they

are a people who ascribe equals [to Him]. Is He [not best] who made the earth a stable ground and placed within it rivers and made for it firmly set mountains and placed between the two seas a barrier? Is there a deity with Allah? [No], but most of them do not know. Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Little do you remember...High is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. Is He [not best] who begins creation and then repeats it and who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Say, "Produce your proof, if you should be truthful." [Qur'an, 27:59-64]

4. So how are you averted?

He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver. He created you from one soul. Then He made from it its mate, and He produced for you from the grazing livestock eight mates. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, within three darknesses. That is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs dominion. There is no deity except Him, so how are you averted? [Qur'an, 39:5-6]

5. Allah's Favours & Provision

O mankind, remember the favour of Allah upon you. Is there any creator other than Allah who provides for you from the heaven and earth? There is no deity except Him, so how are you deluded? [Qur'an, 35:3]

O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous - [He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allah equals while you know [that there is nothing similar to Him]. [Qur'an, 2:21-22]

Say, “It is He who has produced you and made for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful.” [Qur’an, 67:23]

6. Ample Favours

Do you not see that Allah has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favours, [both] apparent and unapparent? But of the people is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening Book [from Him]. [Qur’an, 31:20]

7. He is The-Loving, The Compassionate

“Surely Allah is indeed Ever-Compassionate, Ever-Merciful to mankind.” [Qur’an, 2:143]

“Most surely Allah is Compassionate, Merciful to men.” [Qur’an, 22:65]

“And He (Allah) is the All-Forgiving, the All-Loving.” [Qur’an, 85:14]

8. If we love ourselves, we must love Allah

We all want pleasure, happiness and to prolong our existence. This is a form of self-love. If we love ourselves, we must love Allah. Because, it is He who sustains us, created us, created the causes in the universes to achieved pleasure and happiness. He is the source of love!

Al-Ghazali (may God have mercy on him) on God and love: “Therefore, if man’s love for himself be necessary, then his love for Him through whom, first his coming-to-be, and second, his continuance in his essential being with all his inward and outward traits, his substance and his accidents, occur must also be necessary. Whoever is so besotted by his fleshy appetites as to lack this love neglects his Lord and Creator. He possesses no authentic knowledge of Him; his gaze is limited to his cravings and to things of sense.”

[Al-Ghazali. Love, Longing, Intimacy and Contentment, Book 36 of the Revival of the Religious Sciences]

Unit Four: The Qur'anic Argument for God's Existence

Makes You Think!

Associate Professor of Islamic Studies, Rosalind Ward Gwynne comments on this aspect of the Qur'an: "The very fact that so much of the Qur'an is in the form of arguments shows to what extent human beings are perceived as needing reasons for their actions..." [Rosalind Ward Gwynne. *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments*. Routledge. 2004, p. ix.]

This was the obvious motivation behind the desire for Islamic scholars to development arguments that provided a positive cogent case for Islamic thought. Gwynne concludes in her book that: "Reasoning and argument are so integral to the content of the Qur'an and so inseparable from its structure that they in many ways shaped the very consciousness of Qur'anic scholars." [Rosalind Ward Gwynne. *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments*. Routledge. 2004, p. 203]

Reason and God's Existence

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah writes: "The pious predecessors (*Salaf*) and their followers knew that both revelational and rational proofs were true and that they entailed one another. Whoever gave rational and certain proofs the complete enquiry due them, knew that they agreed with what the messengers informed them about and that they proved to them the necessity of believing the messengers in what they informed them about." [Cited from Jon Hoover. *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Brill. 2007, p. 31.]

"Or were they created by nothing? Or were they the creators (of themselves)? Or did they create heavens and earth? Rather, they are not certain." [Qur'an, 52:35-36]

Things that began to exist were...

1. Created from nothing
2. Self-created
3. Created by something created
4. Created by something uncreated

– Applies to Everything that Begins

“Or were they created (*khuliqū*) by nothing? Or were they the creators (of themselves)? Or did they create heavens and earth? Rather, they are not certain.”

Although these verses specifically refer to the human being it can also be applied to anything that began to exist. As the term *khuliqū* means they were created, made, originated. [Muhammad Mohar Ali. *A word for word meaning of the Qur’ān Vol III. JIMAS, p 1713.*]

Ibn Taymiyyah’s View:

“He informed that He created the heavens and the earth in an interval of time and from matter. The Qur’an did not mention the creation of anything out of nothing (*min lā shay’*). Instead, it mentioned that He created the created thing after it was nothing. Similarly, He said, ‘I have created you before, and you were nothing’ (Q. 19. 9), in addition to His informing that He created him from a drop of semen.”

“There are two views concerning His statement, ‘Were they created without anything (*min ghayr shay’*) or were they themselves the creators?’ (Q. 52. 35). Most hold that the meaning is, ‘Were they created without a creator or, even, of pure non-existence?’”

[*Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya’s Hadith Commentary on God’s Creation of this World. Jon Hoover. Journal of Islamic Studies 15:3 (2004) pp. 323-324*]

In the Beginning There was Nothing

The Prophet ﷺ said, “First of all, there was nothing but Allah, and (then He created His Throne). His throne was over the water, and He wrote everything in the Book (in the Heaven) and created the Heavens and the Earth.”[Bukhārī]

Did the Universe Begin to Exist?

Discussion Point...How do we know the universe began?

Some Points

- “Big Bang”
- The Argument from Dependency
- 2nd Law of Thermodynamics
- Al-Ghazali’s Orbits Argument
- *Anymore?*

- **Created from/via Nothing?**

Al-Khattābi: writes “Or were they brought into being without a creator? That could not happen, because the creation must inevitable be connected to the Creator. There has to have been a creator. If they deny the Divine Creator, but they could not have come into being without a creator creating them, then did they create themselves?”[*Al-Bayhaqi, Al-Asma was-Siffat*].

Quantum Vacuum = Nothing?

Professor Krauss’s Nothing - Linguistic Gymnastics

Krauss’s use of the word “nothing” implies something, as he admits his nothing is something.

[See here where he claims “something” and “nothing” are physical quantities
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=0NoqplPyBfQ#t=920s.]

It is like saying:

“I had a wonderful dinner last night, and it was *nothing*.”

“*Nothing* is tasty with salt and pepper.”

Science Can't Address Nothing

Science cannot address the idea of nothing or non-being because science is restricted to problems that observations can solve. The philosopher of science Elliot Sober verifies this limitation of science, he writes in his essay *Empiricism*:

“At any moment scientists are limited by the observations they have at hand...the limitation is that science is forced to restrict its attention to problems that observations can solve.”

[Elliot Sober “Empiricism” in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science*. Edited by Stathis Psillos and Martin Curd. 2010, pp. 137-138.]

Admission

“I stress the word ‘could’ here, because we may never have enough empirical information to resolve this question unambiguously.”

“Because of the observational and related theoretical difficulties associated with working out the details, I expect we may never achieve more than plausibility in this regard.” [Lawrence Krauss. *A Universe from Nothing*. p. xiii & p. 147.]

Self-Created?

Al-Khattaabi:

“This is even more fallacious argument, because if something does not exist, how can it be described as having power, and how could it create anything? How could it do anything? If these two arguments are refuted, then it is established that they have a creator, so let them believe in Him.” [Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Asma was-Siffat*.]

Created by something else that was created?

- The Sniper
- Dominoes
- Created by something else that was created?
- Created by something uncreated?
- Eternal & Everlasting

“O Allah, You are the First, there is nothing before You. You are the Last, there is nothing after You” [Muslim]

“As for the author’s words, ‘He is Eternal without a beginning, Everlasting without an end,’ they explain the meaning of the Divine names, the First and the Last...Who necessarily exists by Himself in order to avoid an infinite regress.”

[Al-'aqidah At-Tahawiyyah. Commentary On The Creed of At-Tahawi. By Ibn Abi Al 'Izz.]

Al-Ghazāli

The 11th century theologian and philosopher al-Ghazāli summarised the existence of an uncaused cause or an uncreated creator in the following way:

“The same can be said of the cause of the cause. Now this can either go on ad infinitum, which is absurd, or **it will come to an end.**”

[Cited from Lenn E. Goodman. *Ghazali's Argument from Creation (I)*. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jan., 1971), pp. 67-85.]

A Created God = Delusion

“I can hear an Irish friend saying: ‘We'll, it proves one thing- if they had a better argument, they would use it.’ If that is thought to be a rather strong reaction, just think of the question: Who *made* God? The very asking of it shows that the questioner has created God in mind. It is then scarcely surprising that one calls one's book *The God Delusion*. For that is precisely what a created god is, a delusion, virtually by definition - a Xenophanes pointed out centuries before Dawkins. A more informative title might have been: *The Created-God Delusion*. The book could then have been reduced to a pamphlet - but sales might just have **suffered...For the God who created and upholds the universe was not created - He is eternal. He was not ‘made’ and therefore subject to the laws that science discovered; it was he who made the universe with its laws. Indeed, the fact constitutes the fundamental distinction between God and the universe. The universe came to be, God did not.**”

[John C. Lennox. *God's Undertaker : Has science buried God?* 2013. p. 183.]

My Heart Almost Began to Soar

Jubayr Ibn Mut'im:

I heard the messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace) reciting Surah at-Tur in maghrib [prayer]. When he reached this passage...[Q52:35-37]...my heart almost began to soar. [Bukhari]

Al-Bayhaqi said that Abu Sulaymaan al-Khattabi said:

The reason why he was so moved when he heard these ayat was because he understood the ayat so well and because what he learned from the strong evidence

contained therein touched his sensitive nature, and with his intelligence understood it. [*Al-Bayhaqi, Al-Asma was-Siffat.*]

If There's No Difference, They're Identical

For two concepts or entities to exist, they must be different in some way.

For example, if you have two trees, they will differ in size, shape, colour and age. Even if they had identical physical attributes there would be at least one thing that allows us to distinguish that they are two trees. For instance, placement or position.

You can also apply this to two twins; We know there are two twins because there is something that makes them different. This could even be their position and the mere fact they can't occupy the same place at the same time.

Apply This To Polytheism

Suppose we imagine that two Gods exist, called God X and God Y. Also suppose that whatever is true of God X is true of God Y. For instance, God X is All-Powerful and All-Wise; so, God Y is All-Powerful and All-Wise.

If A is identical to B, then whatever is true of A is true of B. We can turn this law into a hypothetical proposition "if whatever is true of A is true of B, then A is identical to B".

Since the polytheist (or sceptic) agrees that whatever is true of God X is true of God Y, then God X and God Y are identical. This means God X and God Y are the same entity and not two different entities.

Unit Five: The Argument from Fitrah (Primordial Disposition)

Summary

Two main arguments:

- The existence of the *fitrah*
- God is a *basic belief*.
- God is a basic belief:
- God’s existence does not require evidence, God is a “basic belief”.
- A basic belief is a self-evident or universally recognized truth that doesn’t require any evidence.
- In science a properly basic belief is that “the real world exists”.
- To deny God is equivalent of denying that the world is real.

What is the *fitrah*?

The Prophet, upon whom be peace, reported that God said:

“I created My servants in the right religion but the devils made them go astray.”

[*Muslim*]

The Prophet also said:

“Every new-born child is born in a state of *fitrah*. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth)?” [*Muslim*]

Scholarly Views

Ibn Qayyim argued that *fitrah* is truly an inborn predisposition to acknowledge Allah, the Oneness of Allah and the religion of Islam. [*al-Asqalani, Fathul Bari, p. 198*].

According to Ibn Taymiyyah every child is born in a state of *fitrah*; in a state of innate goodness, and it is the social environment which cause the individual to deviate from this state. There is a natural correspondence between human nature and Islam; man is suited for the religion of Islam and responds spontaneously to its teachings. *The religion of Islam* provides the ideal conditions for sustaining and developing man's innate qualities. [Ibn Taymiyya *Dar'u Ta'arud al 'Aql wa al Naql*. Vol. 8, ed. Muhammad Rashad Sa'im. (Riyadh: Jami'at al-Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1981), Vol. VIII, p. 383 and pp. 444-448.]

We are Born Believers

“Scientific research on children’s developing minds and supernatural beliefs suggests that children normally and rapidly acquire minds that facilitate belief in supernatural agents. Particularly in the first year after birth, children distinguish between agents and non-agents, understanding agents as able to move themselves in purposeful ways to pursue goals. They are keen to find agency around them, even given scant evidence. Not long after their first birthday, babies appear to understand that agents, but not natural forces or ordinary objects, can create order out of disorder...This tendency to see function and purpose, plus an understanding that purpose and order come from minded beings, makes children likely to see natural phenomena as intentionally created. Who is the Creator? Children know people are not good candidates. It must have been a god...Children are born believers of what I call natural religion...”[Justin L. Barrett. *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*. Free Press. 2012, pp. 35 - 36.]

Psychology of Religion

“The possibility that some religious beliefs are universal (e.g., basic belief in a non-anthropomorphic God as creator of the natural world) seems to have a stronger empirical foundation than could be inferred from religious texts. Some of the initial findings of research into early religious understanding are consistent with other areas of developmental research which suggest that there are cognitive universals

in a number of domains of human knowledge...”[*Key Psychological Issues in the Study of Religion. Olivera Petrovich. psihologija, 2007, Vol. 40 (3), str. 351-363*]

Sanctification Instinct

Fitrah is related to the need or capacity to worship.

Many societies, even atheist societies, display signs for the capacity or need to worship, something which can be called the sanctification instinct.

Consider communist China or Russia, they would revere and sanctify statues of Stalin, Lenin and Mao.

From the monotheist to the atheist, the instinct of worship manifests itself as a reverence for something or someone that is regarded as higher than oneself. The object of veneration can be God or many gods, objects, people and even ideas and beliefs.

How to ‘awaken’ the *fitrah*?

Arguments, ideas, concepts and values from the Qur’an and *Sunnah*;

“So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. **Adhere to the *fitrah* of Allah upon which He has created all people.** No change should there be in the creation of Allah . That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.”
[*Qur’an, 30:30*]

Reflection, pondering, meditating and introspection;

“Thus do We explain in detail the signs **for a people who give thought.**” *Qur’an 10:24*

Using sound reason;

“The originated being itself knows **through clear reason** that it has an originator.”

[*Ibn Taymiyyah. Nubuwwat, 266.*]

Sound Reason: And when he saw the sun rising, he said, “This is my lord; this is greater.” But when it set, he said, “O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah . Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.” [Qur’an 6:78-79]

For Those Who Give Thought: “And your Lord inspired to the bee, "Take for yourself among the mountains, houses, and among the trees and [in] that which they construct. Then eat from all the fruits and follow the ways of your Lord laid down [for you]." There emerges from their bellies a drink, varying in colours, in which there is healing for people. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought.” [Qur’an 16:68-69]

“Say, ‘Observe what is in the heavens and earth.’ But of no avail will be signs or warners to a people who do not believe.” [Qur’an 10:101]

“It is He who made the sun a shining light and the moon a derived light and determined for it phases - that you may know the number of years and account [of time]. Allah has not created this except in truth. He details the signs for a people who know.” [Qur’an 10:5]

Calamities awaken the fitrah: “It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from everywhere and they assume that they are surrounded, supplicating Allah, sincere to Him in religion, ‘If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful.’” [Qur’an 10:22]

Basic Belief

Basic belief: a self evident truth that doesn't require inductive or deductive arguments to justify.

Example: the real world is real. We cannot really "prove" that assertion, as our brains may be on Mars and an Alien has probes in our brains making us think and feel what we are thinking and feeling now! Yet its self evident.

God = Basic Belief

"I argue that the reformed rejection of natural theology is best construed as an inchoate and unfocused rejection of classical foundationalism. What these Reformed thinkers really mean to hold, **I think, is that belief in God need not be based on argument or evidence from other propositions at all. They mean to hold that the believer is entirely within his intellectual rights in believing as he does even if he doesn't know of any good theistic argument** (deductive or inductive), even if he doesn't believe that there is any such argument, and even if in fact no such argument exists. **They hold that it is perfectly rational to accept belief in God without accepting it on the basis of any other beliefs or propositions at all. In a word, they hold that belief in God is properly basic.**" [*Is Belief in God Properly Basic?* Alvin Plantinga. *Noûs*. Vol. 15, No. 1, 1981 A. P. A. Western Division Meetings (Mar., 1981), pp. 41-51.]

The 'Great Pumpkin'?

If God is a properly basic belief, what about the existence of the 'Great Pumpkin'?
Can I believe in it without any evidence?

"Thus, for example, the Reformed epistemologist may concur with Calvin in holding that **God has implanted in us a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us; the same cannot be said for the Great Pumpkin.** There being no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to accept beliefs about the Great Pumpkin." [*Is Belief in God*

Properly Basic? Alvin Plantinga. Noûs. Vol. 15, No. 1, 1981 A. P. A. Western Division Meetings (Mar., 1981), pp. 41-51.]

Basic beliefs do not need information transfer. The existence of God or “supernatural” agency can be known without information transfer. However a non-basic belief such as belief in the ‘Great Pumpkin’ requires information transfer.

Flat Earth = Basic Belief?

A basic belief could have been that the world is flat and future evidence corrected that belief.

However when it comes to God’s existence, empirical data can never deny His existence, only affirm...*let’s discuss...*

No Doubt

God’s existence is part of your nature. Rejecting God is like rejecting the real world is real!

You do not need complex rational arguments to prove that which is self-evident.

The question is NOT does God exist, but what reasons do you have to reject God’s existence?

“Their messengers said, ‘Can there be doubt about Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth?’” [Qur’an 14:10]

If you ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and the earth?’ they are sure to answer, ‘God’. [Qur’an 39:38]

Unit Six: Know God, Know Good

Summary

- If morals are objective, it necessitates God's existence!
- Is killing an innocent 5 year old objectively morally wrong?
- If so, God must exist.

What we are not saying...

- “You can't be an atheist and display moral or good behaviour.”
- “You have to believe in God to have moral traits such as defending the innocent or feeding the poor.”
- “Just by being a believer you will have good behaviour.”

What we are saying...

- If God does not exist then there are **NO** objective moral values.
- Moral values such as “**Murdering innocent people for entertainment is wrong**” and “**Defending the innocent is good**” are merely social conventions without God.
- Just like saying it's wrong to burp loudly at the dinner table.

Why?

- Because without God there is no foundation for objective moral values:

God is the only concept/idea/truth that transcends human subjectivity.

- Other possible foundations fail

to provide an objective basis:

- Biology
- Social pressure
- Moral realism

What do we mean by objective?

- Not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts.
- Not dependent on the mind for existence.
- In the context of morality:
 - Not based on personal feelings or opinions.
 - Not dependent on individual perceptions in one's mind.

Examples

- If the whole world agreed to the fact that eating a dead person is a good thing to do, it would still be an immoral thing to do.
- If the whole world claimed that it was morally ok to kill an innocent person, it would still be immoral and abhorrent.

- If the whole world claimed that it was morally good to set up unjust trade agreements with Africa, it would still be wrong.
- **Prof. of Theology Ian Markham**
 - “Embedded in the word ‘ought’ is the sense of a **moral fact transcending our life and world...**The underlying character of moral language implies something universal and external.”

[*Against Atheism: Why Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris are Fundamentally Wrong*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2010, p. 34.]

Interesting Atheist Position

- In *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, J. L. Mackie opens by boldly stating that
 - “**There are no objective values...**The claim that values are not objective, are not part of the fabric of the world, is meant to include not only moral goodness, which might be most naturally equated with moral value, but also other things that could be more loosely called moral values or disvalues - rightness and wrongness, duty, obligation, an action’s being rotten and contemptible, and so on.”

[J. L. Mackie. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin. 1991, p. 15.]

No God = No Objective Morals

Philosopher Ian Markham explains:

- “God explains the mysterious ought pressing down our lives; and **God explains the universal nature of the moral claim**. As God is outside the world, God the creator can be both external and make universal commands.”

[Against Atheism: Why Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris are Fundamentally Wrong. Wiley-Blackwell. 2010, p. 34.]

What About Biology?

- Charles Darwin provides us with an interesting “extreme example” of what it means when biology or natural selection forms the foundation of morality.:
 - “If men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our un-married females would, like the worker-bees, **think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters**, and no one would think of interfering.”

[Charles Darwin. The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex. Second Edition. New York. 1882, p. 99.]

Biology/Evolution?

- It is no wonder that the self-proclaimed atheist and academic Daniel Dennet once said that the notion of rights from a Darwinian perspective is:
 - “**nonsense** upon stilts”

[Daniel Dennet. Darwin's Dangerous Idea. Simon & Schuster. 1995, p.507.]

Natural Selection?

- Now one may argue that natural selection can provide that necessary objective foundation for moral values. But this is wrong.

- All that natural selection can do is provide the capacity to formulate ethical rules. As the moral philosopher Philip Kitcher writes:
 - “All that natural selection may have done for us is to equip us with the capacity for various social arrangements and the **capacity to formulate ethical rules.**”

[Cited from “The Moral Argument” by Mark D. Linville in The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology. Ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland. Wiley-Blackwell. 2009, p. 400.]

Is there an alternative?

- Well there is. Some atheist philosophers would argue that there are objective moral values, but they are not grounded in human opinion or evolution, they just are.
- This can be called **Moral Realism**. There are a few problems with this position. What does it mean for instance that justice just exists? Or objective morally good behaviour just exists? It seems that they are trying to have their cake and eat it!
- Also, with Moral Realism, moral duty or moral obligation doesn't make any sense. How does justice, mercy, tolerance etc., result in any moral obligations for me? Why should I have such an obligation? Who or what lays down such an obligation?

Euthyphro’s Dilemma

- There is a strong contention to our argument so far, and that is Plato's or Euthyphro’s dilemma. The dilemma states that “*is it good because God commanded it, or is it good because the commands of God are good?*”

- As Professor of Philosophy Shabbir Akhtar in his book *The Qur'an and the Secular Mind* writes:
 - “There is a third alternative: a morally stable God of the kind found in scripture, a supreme being who would not arbitrarily change his mind about the goodness of compassion and the evil of sexual misconduct. **Such a God always commands good because his character and nature are good.**”

[Shabbir Akhtar. *The Qur'an and the Secular Mind: A Philosophy of Islam*. Routledge.2008, p.99.]

Why is God Good?

- God is definitive of what good is. Why is God the definition of good? Because He is the only being worthy of worship and the only being worthy of worship is the most perfect and moral being.
- Moral truths are ultimately derivatives of the divine will.

Some Notes

- This is not about moral *epistemology*, meaning how we get to know what is moral.
- This is about moral *ontology*, meaning the foundations and nature of morality.
- For instance, if something is good, is it objectively good? If it is objectively good, then it necessitates God's existence, as He is the only foundation for objective good.

God?

- **Misunderstanding the Argument**
- Some atheists, and even some atheist academics, misunderstand the argument by conflating moral *epistemology* with moral *ontology*.
- For example, Dr. Victor Stenger writes,
 - “As we have seen from an examination of the empirical evidence, God cannot be the source of commonly accepted human morals and values. **If He were, then we would expect to see evidence in the superior moral behaviour of believers compared to non-believers.**”

[God: The Failed Hypothesis – How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist.

Prometheus Books. 2007, p. 210.]

Islamic Basis:

Objective Good/Evil

- “If any good reaches them, they say, “This is from Allah,” but if any evil befalls them, they say, “This happened because of you.” Say: “All things are from Allah.” What is wrong with these people that they do not understand any word?” *Qur’an 4:78*
- “It is Allah who creates you and what you do.” *Qur’an 37:96*
- “Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs.” *Qur’an. [Qur’an 39:62]*
- These verses imply that the nature of “good” and “evil” are objective.

Ibn Taymiyya

- “**God commanded and prohibited according to His knowledge** of the benefits and detriments to servants in the command, the prohibition, the thing commanded and the thing forbidden.”

[See Tahsin al-'aql]

Islamic Basis:

Allah is Perfect

- “He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. He is Allah , other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, **the Perfection**, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah , the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” *[Qur'an 59: 22-24]*

- **They Have No Grounding**

- John Mark Reynolds:

– “Morally...the new secularists cheat at every turn. They believe in doing ‘right,’ **but never ground it in anything.**”

[<http://www.civitate.org/2007/05/atheism-ranting-the-pity-and-poverty-of-modern-anti-theism/>]

Unit Seven: The Islamic Response to the Problem of Evil & Suffering

A Summary

It is unbelievable that a *Good All-Powerful* (omnipotent) being exists with all the evil and suffering in the world.

Western Philosophy

- David Hume, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*:
 - “Epicurus’s old questions are yet unanswered. Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”

[David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays on the Immortality of The Soul and Suicide*. Edited by Richard Popkin. Hackett Publishing, 1980, p. 63.]

- **If you reject God due to the existence of evil, you’ll have to accept God due to design.**
- **The Problem of Evil & Suffering**
- “We made good everything He created.” [Qur’an, 32:7]
- Ibn Taymiyya writes:
 - “If God – exalted is He – is Creator of everything, He creates good (*khayr*) and evil (*sharr*) on account of the wise purpose that He has in that by virtue of which His action is good (*hasan*) and perfect

(*mutqin*)...God is Creator of illnesses, aches, hateful odours, ugly forms and noxious bodies like snakes and human excrement on account of a **profound wise purpose in them.** [Minhaj As-Sunnah 3:142/2:25]

- **God Does Not Create Pure Evil**
- “God does not create pure evil. Rather, in everything that He creates is a wise purpose by virtue of what is good. **However, there may be some evil in it for some people, and this is partial, relative evil.** As for total evil or absolute evil, the Lord is exonerated of that.” [Ibn Taymiyya. *Hasana*, MF 14:266]
- **God’s Existence**
- How can the atheist formulate an argument against the existence of God when God is required as an objective basis for the formulation of the argument in the first place?!
- **Purifying Hearts**

“So that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purify what is in your hearts. And Allah is

Knowing of that within the breasts” [Qur’an 3:154]

- **Its All Good**

“Amazing is the affair of the believer, verily all of his affair is good and this is not for no one except the believer. If something of good/happiness befalls him he is grateful and that is good for him. If something of harm befalls him he is patient and that is good for him.” [Sahih Muslim]

- **Expiation of Sins**

“No calamity befalls a Muslim but that Allah expiates some of his sins because of it, even though it were the prick he receives from a thorn.”

[Bukhari]

- **Entering Paradise**

“Do you think that you will enter paradise without any trials while you have known the examples of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted with suffering and adversity and were so violently shaken up that even the Prophet and the believers with him cried out: ‘When will God’s help come?’ Be aware, God’s help is close.” [Qur’an 2:214]

- **The Bad ≠ Good**

Say Prophet, “Bad cannot be likened to good, though you may be dazzled by how abundant the bad is. Be mindful of God, people of understanding, so that you may prosper.” [Qur’an 5:100]

- **God’s Wise Purposes**

- Henri Laoust in his *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimiya*:

- “God is essentially providence. Evil is without real existence in the world. **All that God has willed can only conform to a sovereign justice and an infinite goodness**, provided, however, that it is envisaged from the point of view of the totality and not from that of the fragmentary and imperfect knowledge that His creatures have of reality...”

[Cited in Jon Hoover. *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Brill. 2007, p.4.]

- **Evil is Not Attributed to God**
- “Hence, evil is not attributed to God in any respect. Even if God is the Creator of the servant’ acts – His creation of obedient acts is blessing and mercy, and **He has a wise purpose and mercy in His creation of evil deeds** – this is nonetheless just of Him.” [*Ibn Taymiyya. Hasana.*]
- **Evil is Not Directly Attributed**
- “**Guide us to the straight path: the path of those You have blessed, those who incur no anger and who have not gone astray.**” [*Qur’an 1: 6-7*]
 - The verb ‘anger’ here is not attributed to God. There is a “linguistic” *adab* in the Qur’an that doesn’t directly attribute “evil” to God.
 - Remember the story of Musa and *Khidr*? *Khidr* attributed the perceived wrong to himself and the wisdom behind his actions to God.



Questions for critical reflection

1. Whilst giving da’wah you will be asked all types of questions. Questions you may not know the answer to. How do you best deal with that situation? Making sure you are controlling the discussion and focusing on the key issues, will limit potentially useless debates.
2. Consider how fortunate we are that we have been blessed with Islam. Our life has meaning and purpose. How can we help others understand that purpose?
3. Reflect on the story of Musa and Khidr. How we may perceive something to be harmful but there may be benefit in it.

Summary

- ✓ Prioritise your da’wah on the belief in one God (Tawhid).
- ✓ A life without God, is ultimately a meaningless life.
- ✓ Both the intellect and our fitrah points to a Creator.