

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



OPERATION SALAM
DA'WAH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Module Six:

Characteristics of the Caller

In this module

- Learn the importance of sincerity in da'wah
- Learn the importance of kindness and gentleness in da'wah
- Learn the importance of knowledge and wisdom in da'wah
- Learn the importance of moral excellence and its impact in da'wah

Unit One: Characteristics of a Caller

Allah says in the Qur'an,

"And who is better in speech than he who invites to [belief in and obedience to] Allah, and does righteous deeds and says, "I am one of the Muslims" [Fussilat, 33]

The above verse describes calling others to the path of Allah as the best deed or statement - indeed, what could be better than applying Islam yourself and calling others to Islam? You are not only obeying Allah yourself, but you are also encouraging others to be faithful to Allah. Da'wah is the process of teaching others what is right and guiding them to the straight path. This is a deed that is very pleasing to Allah and He rewards it graciously.

When 'Ali ibn Abu Talib was preparing to march to face the Jews of Khaybar, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not tell him to simply go there and fight the disbelievers. Instead, he told him to go to the Jews and to call them to Islam. That is, he told him to go to the Jews and to call them to Islam. That is, he told him to make da'wah to them first. He told Ali to tell them what were Allah's rights upon them. This shows that for them to embrace Islam is much greater and more important than for them to be defeated in battle. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) then told 'Ali,

"By Allah, if Allah were to guide one man through you it would be better for you than the best type of camels". [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

In fact, when you guide someone to what is correct, you will be rewarded for the good deeds that person performed based on your guidance and instruction. This is a sign of how pleased Allah is with those people who instruct and guide others based on the knowledge they have. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"Whoever guides (another) to a good deed will get a reward similar to the one who performs it" [Recorded by Muslim].

Not only that, when you guide people to what is correct and teach Islam everything makes prayer for your reward. This was also pointed out by the Prophet (ﷺ) who said,

"Allah and His Angels and even the ant in its hole and the fish in the sea, invoke blessings for the one who teaches people what is good". [At-Tabarani, sahih see al-Albaani, Sahih al-Jami as-Sagheer, vol.1, p.376, no. 1838]

In fact as is shown in another authentic hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) the good that you

teach and pass on now is something that you may continue to receive rewards for even after you die.

Therefore, da'wah, calling people to the truth, teaching the people about Islam and how to apply Islam, all of these acts are very pleasing to Allah. Allah rewards them in a special way as we can see above.

This should make us all very desirous to be from those people who are calling others to the path of Allah. However, if we are serious about making da'wah then we should know, as we can see in the Qur'an and Sunnah, that there are certain characteristics that we should possess while making da'wah and calling others to Islam. These are actual characteristics that we should all possess, but especially if we wish to call people to Islam these characteristics become of even greater importance.

The first of these characteristics is gentleness and kindness. Obviously, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) came with the clear truth and with clear arguments on behalf of that truth. However even with respect to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Allah has made it clear that if he did not spread this message of Islam in the proper way, then the people would not have listened to him and responded to his message. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you"

[Al-'Imran, 159]

If this was true with respect to the Prophet (ﷺ) whose noble character and honesty were well known, don't you think this would be even more so true with respect to us. One of the gravest mistakes that is made when trying to make da'wah to others is that you present the information or talk to the person in such a way that he

begins to hate what you say, not because he does not believe in or agree with what you said, but because he does not like the way that you presented it to him. Therefore, instead of bringing him to good, one may end up driving the person even further away from the good.

We are calling to the path of Allah. We should want to present that path in the best and most correct way as possible. In this way, the person we are calling to Islam will begin to love Islam. This was the way of the Prophet (ﷺ) and it should be our way also.

In another verse, Allah once again emphasises the way in which one should call others to the path of Allah -

"Invite to the Way of your Lord with wisdom [the teaching of the Qur'an] and fair exhortation, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided". [Al-Nahl, 125]

You should not try to force anyone to believe or do what is right. Belief is in the heart and you will not be able to actually force anyone to believe - no matter how hard you desire it. Therefore, you can only politely guide them and advise them sincerely from your heart. Even if what you are saying is the absolute truth and clear - like what the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) preached - if you say it in the wrong way, it could have a very negative effect.

However, at the same time, some people misunderstand this point and think that in da'wah and ordering good and eradicating evil, the only approach is that of softness and gentleness. In fact, it has got to the point that many people argue that one should not talk about the Hellfire when talking to non-Muslims or one should not present the true Islam but present what is attractive to the people - to bring them

into Islam and then later they can learn all that is correct in the religion. This is not what the verse above from Surah an-Nahl is referring to by any means. This approach to da'wah is wrong and it is just as wrong and just as dangerous as presenting Islam in a very harsh manner.

The Qur'an, on the other hand, presents the truth to the people. It tells the Christians, for example, that they are committing disbelief and that they will suffer the punishment of Allah if they do not change their ways. Similarly, when the Prophet (ﷺ) wrote a letter to the Emperor of Rome, he told him that if he did not embrace Islam, he would bear his own sin as well as the sin of his people - although he wrote that in a polite and respectful manner.

A second characteristic that is very important for the one who wants to call others to Islam is that of sidq or honesty. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in words and deeds)" [At-Tawbah, 119]

If people judged Islam solely on the basis of its teachings - which is the rational thing to do - then this characteristic would not be of such great importance for da'wah. But unfortunately, many times that is not the case. In fact, it is quite normal for the non-Muslims to look at us - the Muslims - and then judge Islam on the basis of our actions. They see us - perhaps we are the only Muslims they may ever meet face to face - and they take us as the representation of what Islam is all about.

Unfortunately I have spoken to many people who are turned off by Islam because of what they see from the Muslims themselves. I even know of people who had actually embraced Islam in this country and then went to live in a Muslim land or even went to make the pilgrimage and then return and either stopped practising Islam or openly left it completely because of what they had seen from the Muslims

themselves. Now, obviously, what they did is wrong, but would any of us like to stand in front of Allah when, because of our bad and un-Islamic example and practice someone left Islam due to us!

Non-Muslims have asked me in the past, "You Muslims claim to have the divine teachings and claim to be following the best religion, yet whenever I see Muslims, I see them lying, cheating, being filthy and so forth. Is this your Islam?" No, this is not Islam at all, but unfortunately some people cannot understand the difference between what Islam is and what the Muslims do. Sometimes, though, you can't blame them. The disbelievers might see you walking down the street with your wife fully covered in hijab and the next day they find you in the classroom or the workplace flirting with every woman you meet. What do you expect them to conclude from such an exhibition they see?

We should all consider our actions and the example that we are setting for the non-Muslims - as well as for other Muslims. Are we actually helping or hurting Islam? Are we actually bringing people to Islam - which is an act that is better for us than this world and all it contains? Or are we driving people away from Islam?

If we want the great reward of making da'wah and we sincerely want to help bring people to the path of Islam, we have to have this characteristic of sidq or truthfulness in our deeds.

In fact, when I used to consider this characteristic of sidq or truthfulness, I used to always think of it with respect to our actions. Then one day I heard a Muslim giving a public lecture about Islam on a campus. He actually stated in that lecture, "Islam gives more rights to women than what the feminists are asking for". What? Do you know the kinds of things that the feminist movements are asking for? Does Islam give women the right to dress in any manner they wish or to go to bed with any person they wish?

This is just a horrendous and ridiculous statement. However, one can many times hear this kind of statement. Speakers think they have to lie about Islam so the people will like it. It seems to me that these speakers don't understand that Islam is the virtual truth and there is no need to try to misrepresent it. If someone truly desires to follow the truth, he will accept it when it is presented to him - honestly and clearly. A statement like the above, in fact, is only going to drive anyone who is interested in the truth even further away from Islam. I cannot express how much this kind of da'wah is harming Islam.

You have to realise how important it is to tell the truth while making da'wah. This characteristic of sidq applies to your speech as well as to your actions. Imagine if a woman had become interested in Islam because of what that speaker had said. What will happen when she discovers it is a blatant lie? What will be her thinking about Islam and Muslims then?

Islam is the religion of Allah. It is the truth. It is the religion that is consistent with the nature of mankind. It is in no need of having people state lies about it or to distort its truths. Whenever this is done in the name of da'wah, it will have a negative effect. Sidq, truthfulness in speech and action, is an essential characteristic of the one who desires to make da'wah. Please always remember that and do your best to possess that characteristic.

Sincerity

Sincerity in conveying the Message and detachment from personal gain is the trait of righteous persons. Not only will the insincere Da'ee (caller) be punished on the Day of Judgment for his hypocrisy, but when people observe him craving for a worldly or personal benefit when conveying the Message, they immediately reject his advice and doubt his mission. On the other hand, the sincere Da'ee is respected

by his community, and people usually listen to what he says and observe his recommendations. The Prophet (ﷺ) warned us: **"He who let the people hear of his good deeds intentionally, to win their praise, Allah will let the people know his real intention (on the Day of Resurrection). And he who does good things in public to show off and win the praise of the people, Allah will disclose his real intention (and humiliate him)"** [Bukhari, 8/506]. It is therefore essential for the Da'ee to be sincere, and to separate and openly declare oneself from personal gain, such as wealth, position or power; and thus imitate the example of the Prophets when they said to their people, **"No reward do I ask you for it (my Message of Islamic Monotheism), my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds."** [26:109]

Furthermore, let his motto be Allah's passage: **"Say (O Muhammad): 'Verily, my Salat (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.'" [Qur'an, 6:162]**

Part of sincerity in performing Da'wah is witnessing the Da'ee applying what he is preaching and being among the first to submit himself to Allah.

Allah instructed His Prophet (ﷺ) in this regard: **"Say (O Muhammad): 'Verily, I am commanded to worship Allah (Alone) sincerely. And I am commanded (this) in order that I may be the first of those who submit themselves to Allah (in Islam) as Muslims.' Say (O Muhammad): 'Verily, If I disobey my Lord, I am afraid of the torment of a great Day.'" [Qur'an, 39:11-13]**

As an example for his community, the Da'ee should begin his Da'wah with his family, relatives and close friends in accordance with Allah's command: **"O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones.." [Qur'an, 66:6]** This was the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) as his call was

first directed to his wife Khadijah, his cousin Ali, and his closest friend Abu Bakr (ﷺ).

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) reported that when (this verse) was revealed: **"And warn (O Muhammad) your nearest kinsmen,"** [Qur'an, 26:214] Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: *"O people of Quraish, buy yourselves from Allah (i.e. secure deliverance from Allah by doing good deeds), I cannot avail you at all against Allah. O 'Abbaas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib (the Prophet's uncle), I cannot avail you at all against Allah; O Safiyyah (the Prophet's aunt), I cannot avail you at all against Allah; O Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, ask me whatever you like, but I cannot avail you at all against Allah."* [Muslim, 1/402]

A Da'ees household is always in the critical eye of the community. If they find his wife and children to be careless in their application of Islam, they will take the Da'ee as being incompetent at his job and turn away. The Da'ee will also be held responsible firstly for his family before his community.

Practical Steps to achieve Sincerity:

1. Nurse the intentions

a. Sufyan Ath-Thauree said *"I have never nursed anything more rebellious except my intentions"*

b. Always ask yourself why you're doing something, and if you would still do it if nobody but Allah knew about it.

2. Prevent yourself from the disease Riya - Symptoms of Riya are looking for fame and fear of criticism.

- a. Love of Praise: You must have heard the hadith about first three people to be thrown into the fire of Hell: the scholar, the martyr and the person who gave his money in charity. All three of these people desired the praise of people, over and above the pleasure of Allah.
- b. Fear of Criticism: Some people obey certain commandments of Islam, not for the sake of Allah, but because they fear people will look down on them and criticize them if they does not do it. e.g: praying in jam'ah, woman wearing hijab at mosque etc.
- c. Duaa! The Prophet taught the specific duaa to safeguard oneself from Riya: [O Allah, I take refuge in You lest I should commit shirk with You knowingly and I seek Your forgiveness for what I do unknowingly]
- d. Hiding one's good deeds. Do them where nobody can see!
- e. Reflection upon's one self's shortcomings
- f. Knowledge of Riya, the evilness of it.

Knowledge & Expression

The carrier of the Message must be sufficiently competent in Islamic knowledge and expression qualities, so to convey his thoughts about a certain subject accurately and explicitly. Obviously, an ignorant Muslim or one who is poor in articulation is not fit to convey the Message to the people. In fact, he may do more harm than good to the religion of Allah and may drive people away from him. Some young enthusiastic Muslims erroneously think that Islamic knowledge can be gained from reading magazines or listening to an audio tape in their spare time. The truth is that the sciences of Islam can only be acquired through the systematic process of learning which demands wholehearted approach to time and effort. The Prophet

(ﷺ) said: *"If Allah wants to do good to a person, he makes him comprehend the Deen; and of course knowledge is attained by learning."* [Bukhari, 1/67]

Many pious Salaf have said: *"Give knowledge (of religion) everything you have, it will give you some of what it has."* We may now ask: *"How much will knowledge of religion give us if we only give it some of our leisure time?"*

The beautiful style of speech

In preaching Islam, the Da'ee should try when possible to demonstrate rhetoric and literary eloquent speech. This is the style of the Qur'an in addressing humanity and the Da'ees are responsible for acquiring a respectable level of language proficiency to effectively convey the Message. It is worthy to note that all evil channels of communication convey its falsehood and mischief through adorned speech. Allah states:

"And so We have appointed for every Prophet enemies - devils among mankind and jinn, inspiring one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or by way of deception). If your Lord had so willed, they would not have done it, so leave them alone with their fabrications. (And this is in order) that the hearts of those who disbelieve in the Hereafter may incline to such (deceit), and that they remain pleased with it, and that they may commit what they are committing (all kinds of sins and evil deeds, etc.)" [Qur'an, 6:112-113]

Therefore, if the leaders of falsehood use the weapon of garnished speech and styles of expression to deceive the hearts of those who disbelieve in the Hereafter, then the Da'ees are more entitled to use this to call for the truth.

Strong Will & Confidence

It is very desirable that the Da'ee exhibit strong will, positive self-confidence and a capacity to control emotions. These characteristics are gained from sincerity and reliance on Allah and from knowledge and language competency, along with extensive experience and repetition.

The importance of these characteristics becomes evident when knowing that facing the people with different beliefs and concepts with the aim of guiding them to the Straight Path is no less than declaring an ideological war on their beliefs and conceptions that are part of their persons. People will not relinquish their beliefs and thoughts unless they are convinced with better alternatives, and naturally, they would take a cautious stance from, if not oppose, the Da'ee. But when such a Da'ee is garnished with strong will and confidence and is charismatic in speech and presentation, people begin to feel that this Da'ee is a mentor who is keen on their guidance and happiness, and some of them may in fact respond to the call. When few people find the guidance, a group of followers begin to form, and more will follow suite.

Perseverance

In the course of Da'wah, the Da'ee will inevitably face afflictions, temptations and obstacles, that try to lure him off his mission. If he fails these tests, he will fall into the bait of the devil and even though he is wearing the garments of a reformer, he will share in the corruption without him noticing. However, the true Da'ee remains steadfast on truth, seeking reward for his perseverance. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "***A Muslim remains subject to trials (in this world) in respect of self, children and property till he or she faces Allah, the Exalted, (on the Day of Judgment) in a state in which all his or her sins have been remitted.***" [Tirmidhi, 49]

If the enemies don't succeed in their hideous assignment to win the Da'ee to their side, they will at least subject their efforts on abusing him with offensive and threatening language, if not try to hurt him. The Da'ee must be patient and console himself by remembering that he is not better than the Prophets of Allah and their companions, who suffered tremendously on this noble path. He mustn't let their speech grieve him because all honour belongs to Allah who says: **"And be patient (O Muhammad) with what they say, and keep away from them in a good way. And leave Me Alone to deal with the beliers, and those who are in possession of good things of life. And give them respite for a little while. Verily, with Us are fetters (to blind them), and a raging Fire."** [Qur'an, 73:10-12]

Persistence

Not only does the true Da'ee exercise patience during adversities and hardships, but he also continues his mission eagerly and devotes oneself assiduously to Da'wah work even if it was little. The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked: "What deeds are loved most by Allah?" He said: **"The most regular constant deeds even though they may be few."** He added: **"Don't take upon yourselves, except the deeds which are within your ability."** [Bukhari, 8/472]

Moral Excellence

Another really admirable characteristics of a Da'ee is exhibiting kindness, gentleness, courtesy and high manners when dealing with people. Being an active member of the society, the Da'ee would have excellent social relations and would not alienate himself from people. He would initiate greetings with Salam, respond to invitations, offer services, conciliate matters of differences among people, visit the sick, join funeral processions, etc., as reported in many hadiths. The Da'ee should approach all these tasks with leniency and gentleness. The Prophet (ﷺ)

said: **"Allah likes gentleness in all matters."**[Bukhari] Even if the Da'ee is faced with a hypocrite or an offender, he should maintain his friendly trait. 'Aaishah (رضي الله عنها) narrated that a man asked permission to see the Prophet, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "He is a bad member of the tribe." When he entered, the Prophet (ﷺ) treated him in a frank and friendly way and spoke to him. When he departed, I said: "Allah's Messenger! When he asked permission, you said, 'he is a bad member of the tribe;' but when he entered, you treated him in a frank and friendly way." The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: **"'Aaishah! Allah does not like the one who is unseemly and lewd in his language."** [Abu Daawood, 4774]

Wisdom

"Invite to the Way of Your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them In a Way that is better." [Qur'an 16:125]

Da'ee must adjust himself or herself to each situation and use the most appropriate material. Da'ee should concentrate on his delivery of speech, making it beautiful and eloquent so that it will be very easy to achieve his visions.

Brotherhood - Sisterhood

Da'ee is not a person on his own; rather he is among the branches in the huge tree of Du'at who are calling people to the straight path. Hence the Da'ee should focus on building strong relationship among his fellow Da'ees and work with them towards for the greater cause. He should leave aside the differences until it is not against the Qur'an and Sunnah. He should have an open mind to take differences in approach and be ready to sacrifice his opinions for the sake of Allah.

"In a nutshell, Characteristics of Da'ee is the characteristics of the Prophets"

Essentials Traits

- **Kindness & Gentleness**

- Allah commands His noble Prophets Mūsā and Hārūn to speak mildly to Pharoah while giving da’wah to him: “And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition” [Qur’an 20:44]
- Imam al-Qurtubi said concerning this verse in his *tafsir*: If Musa was commanded to speak mildly to Pharoah then it is even more appropriate for others to follow this command when speaking to others and when commanding the good and forbidding the evil. [Al-Jami’li Ahkam al-Qur’an]

- **No Harshness**

- Allah commands the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to argue with good words and in a good manner: “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in a way that is better.” Qur’an 16:125
- Az-Zamakhsharee said: Arguing with them in a way that is better means using the best method of argumentation which is the method of kindness and gentleness without gruffness and harshness.[*Tafsir al Kashshaf*]

- **The Prophet’s Soft Heart**

- People will break away from people who are severe and harsh hearted: “And by the Mercy of Allah you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh heartened, they would have broken away from you.” [Al-Imran 3:159]

- Imam Sufyaan ath-Tahwri said: No one should command the good and forbid the evil except he who has three qualities. He is kind when he commands the good and he is kind when forbids the evil. He is just when he commands the good and he is just when he forbids the evil. And he is knowledgeable about that which he commands to and he is knowledgeable about that which he forbids. [*Abu Bakr Al-Khilaal. Al-Amr bil Ma'roof wan Nahiy anil Munkar.*]

- **No Useless Debates!**

- **Guaranteed Paradise:** “I guarantee a house in paradise for the one who gives up **المراء**, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a home in the middle of paradise for the one who abandons lying even for the sake of fun; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of paradise for the one who has good manners.” [*Abu Dawud*]
- **المراء** means insincere and useless disputes

- **Key Principles**

- **No Ego:** Pride is disregard for the truth and contempt for people. [*Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim*]
- **Avoid insults, abuse and obscene words:** It was narrated that the Prophet [pbuh] never used foul speech, nor did he like to listen to it. [*Sahih Al-Bukhari*]
- **Stick to what you know:** When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah , tremendous. [*Qur'an 24:15*]

- **Talk in a language and level that people understand:** Talk to people with speech that they can understand. Do you wish that people believe in Allah and His messenger? [*Al-Bukhari*]

- **Good manners and polite tongue:** Nothing will be heavier on the Day of Resurrection in the Scale of the believer than good manners. Allah hates one who utters foul or coarse language. [*At-Tirmidhi, hasan sahih*]

- **“Believers, be mindful of God, speak in a direct fashion and to good purpose, and He will put your deeds right for you and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger will truly triumph.”** [*Qur’an 33:71*]



Questions for critical reflection



1. When giving da’wah both the message and the method of delivery are important. You may have a powerful message but if the person sees arrogance and contempt in your actions, your da’wah will be more harmful than beneficial.
2. Pharaoh was an arrogant and oppressive disbeliever, yet Allah commanded His Prophets Mūsā and Hārūn to speak to him mildly whilst giving da’wah to him. Surely the people we will give da’wah to can’t be as bad as Pharaoh.
3. Da’wah is more to do with winning the hearts than winning the debates.

Summary

- ✓ A caller to Islam should inculcate the characteristics of the Prophet.
- ✓ Da’wah should be done with wisdom, knowledge and beautiful speech.
- ✓ Patience and perseverance are the bedrock characteristics of a caller to Allah.

