



# *A Grassroots Guide to Establishing Learning Circles and Empowering Communities through Knowledge and Action*

## *Introduction*

My dear Muslim brothers and sisters, do not be lazy and neglect establishing learning circles (*halaqahs*) of sacred learning in your area for children, adolescents, and adults—for your Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, on the authority of Abū Hurāyah ﷺ, “Whosoever calls to guidance will receive the same reward as those who follow him, without decreasing anything from their reward.” [Muslim]. He also said ﷺ on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ﷺ, “Convey [this message] on my behalf, even if it be only a verse.” [Bukhārī]. The Prophet also said, “Indeed God, the Angels, those in the heavens and on the earth, even an ant in its ant hole and a fish in the sea, send peace upon the one who teaches others goodness.” [Tirmidhī – sound hadith]. Also, on the authority of our Master ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib ﷺ, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ “By God, if God guided one man through you, that is better for you than red camels.”<sup>1</sup> [Bukhārī & Muslim].

And your Lord ﷻ said, ﴿Why not have a group from every band of them stay behind to apply themselves to understanding the religion and to preach to the people, when they return to them, that they may be aware?﴾ (9:122), so beautify your intention and have sincerity in achieving your goals, for deeds are based on intentions: ﴿Is it not to God alone that sincere faith is due?﴾ (39:3). Seek God’s assistance and trust in Him: ﴿And whoever trusts in God, God suffices him﴾ (65:3).

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<sup>1</sup> Find a commentary on “red camels”

Be humble and modest when reflecting upon these principles and strategies. Also, have a strong connection with the righteous and upright people in your area. And be unaffected by naysayers. Let not your desire or determination be wavered by the censure of cynics, the criticism of pessimists, the jeering of the audacious, or the doubts of the skeptics. When beginning an endeavor like this, pessimism often arises/surfaces, even from the people of good. This occurs as an ordeal, test, and assessment, but there is no incentive and no declaration greater than the incentive and declaration of God, His Messenger, and the righteous members of this *Ummah* – so pay attention and be a witness.

The Proof of Islam, Imām Al-Ghazālī, may God have mercy on him, said in his book “The Revivification of the Religious Sciences” (*Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*),

Know that anyone sitting in their homes, wherever they may be, is not sheltered from wrongdoing in these times. [This is because] someone sitting at home is holding back from advising people, teaching them, and encouraging them to goodness. Most city-folk are ignorant of the *Shari’ah* in regards to the conditions of the Prayer, not to mention those living in villages and on the outskirts. It is necessary to have a jurist (*faqīh*) in every mosque in the city to teach the people their religion, and it should be so in the villages as well. It is obligatory for someone who has learned their individual obligations (*fard ‘ayn*) and has moved on to learning communal obligations (*fard al-kifāyah*) to visit the surrounding cities and areas ... to teach others their deen and the obligatory aspects of the *Shari’ah*.

Every layman who learns the conditions of the Prayer must teach someone ignorant of that knowledge or else the learned one is a partner in the ignorant man’s shortcoming. It is well-known that humans are not born with knowledge of the *Shari’ah*, but they have to learn it from those who do have knowledge, and whosoever learns even one issue, then they are considered knowledgeable in that issue.

Delusions, misconceptions, and erroneous excuses are much of what cause people to stumble and become lazy in calling to God. Listen to and reflect upon the words of Imām ‘Abdullah Al-Haddād from his book, “*Ad-Da‘awah At-Tāmmah*” (The Complete Call). He writes ﷺ,

Sometimes the people of knowledge are affected by certain delusions, stopping them from calling to the Real سُبْحَانَكَ and disseminating knowledge. They might think, “I’m not acting upon what I know, so how can I teach others ~~what I know~~ and call them to action – especially bearing in mind the punishment promised for those who do not practice what they preach?”

It should be said to him, “Teaching others is part of acting upon what you know, and one who teaches others and is not fully acting upon that knowledge is much better than one who does not act upon it *and* does not teach it. And if you cannot perform every act of goodness, then do not fall short of performing some of it. It is incumbent upon you to teach others while [simultaneously] struggling to act upon that which you teach. There is no doubt that the punishment promised one who does not act upon that which one teaches is even more justifiable and severe upon one who neither acts nor teaches, because God made two things obligatory [acting upon knowledge, and teaching knowledge]. In the case of the first person, he fulfilled one obligation and fell short in the other; the second abandoned both obligations, so he is more deserving of warning and is more likely to be punished.”

One might also think to himself, “Calling to God and advising the servants of God the Exalted is an honorable position and a high rank. It is the occupation of the guided scholars and imāms, and I am not like them and undeserving to be so.” His low opinion of himself, humility, and humbleness stop him from calling to God and from the activity of advising people – he is deluded to think that this is praiseworthy humility and part of knowing one’s worth and not letting one’s ego get out of hand. In reality, this is a destructive delusion because truth does not/never stand in the way of truth, and goodness does not detract from goodness. He must struggle and exert a great effort in calling to guidance and in guiding others to goodness while feeling humility, lowliness, and fear and trepidation of God. Admitting one’s shortcomings and feeling contempt towards one’s ego is part of being whole, and is a characteristic of the people of God – those who are not affected by the whisperings of the devil, and are not separated from goodness by the evil illusions and tricks he uses to stand in the way of goodness.

Some of these delusions which we have mentioned and similar ones which we have not mentioned can sometimes plague righteous scholars who are known for their consciousness and fear of God.

May God reward the Imam greatly for his brotherly advice, and we seek God's assistance and success.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon all Muslims who are devoted to establishing their deen and gaining the good pleasure of their Lord to strive to establish educational gatherings by teaching those who are willing to learn and through encouraging others to learn. For this, they must spend their wealth and apply their mental and bodily energy, for whoever is able – ﴿and help each other to kindness and conscience﴾ (5:2) – and may God send His peace and mercy upon the master of teachers and callers to God, the Beloved of God, Muhammad, his Family, and his Companions.

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## *The Four Goals of Learning Circles & Educational Gatherings*<sup>2</sup>

1. Instilling reverence of this religion in the hearts of others.
2. Clearly communicating religious information in a way which people understand.
3. Teaching virtuous, Islamic character.
4. Having people's hearts become attached to calling to God and realizing the importance of bearing the Prophet Muhammad's Message ﷺ.

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<sup>2</sup> "Educational Gatherings" in this booklet refer to gatherings of sacred knowledge and learning.

## *The First Goal:* *Instilling the Greatness of God's Religion in People's Hearts*

*Some ways to achieve this first goal are:*

1. Firstly, you should be full of reverence and exaltation of God in your words, actions, and state. Your heart must be full of exaltation and love when God's name is mentioned, and you should verbally recognize the praises of God, saying, "Subhanahu wa ta'āla," (Glorious and Exalted is He!) - "Jalla jalāluh," (Exalted is His Majesty) - "Azza wa jall," (Great and Majestic is He!) and "Jalla wa 'alā," (Magnificent and Exalted is He!) and similar forms of praise. Also, that you not mention our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, nor any of the prophets ﷺ, without using their proper titles ("Prophet", "Sayyidunā" (Our Master)). Mention them with a sense of love, wanting peace and mercy to descend upon them. Also mention the imāms and scholars of this Community with a sense of reverence, asking God to be pleased with them and asking mercy for them.
2. Constantly remember and remind others of the Hereafter, mentioning what waits ahead of reward or torment, depending on one's actions.
3. Speak about and reflect upon the stories of the Prophets ﷺ, the Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ, and the Righteous.
4. Remind others that this religion is the greatest gift they have been given and the most glorious honor God gives His servants. Also, remind people that through this religion one will have eternal felicity and attain high levels in Paradise; that it saves one from the Hellfire; and that this lowly-world (*dunyā*) is worth less than the wing of a gnat to God.
5. Listen carefully and pay attention when the Quran is being recited. Teach others not to touch a copy of the Quran if they do not have *wudū*-ablutions – and encourage them to have their *wudū*-ablutions during all classes and as often as possible.
6. Pay attention to the way others are sitting during educational gatherings, making sure that everyone is sitting in a way that is proper for classes of Islamic learning.
7. Do not place books directly on the floor or behind your back.

8. You should be careful to hold the books respectfully and treat the book and its pages with reverence.
9. Be silent during the call to Prayer (*adhān*) and respond to its call.
10. Discourage the practice of using bags that place books behind one's back.
11. You should feel a sense of disappointment when you miss out on an opportunity to do good; and, conversely, feel a sense of joy when God gives you success to do good – and feel a strong sense of regret for your wrongdoings.
12. Be very earnest in praying all five Prayers in congregation.
13. Be very earnest in praying *Witr*, the *Duha* prayer, and the *Sunnah* prayers for each obligatory prayer, and other extra prayers.
14. Consistently set a time to recite the Quran and perform the prophetic invocations (*dhikr*) of the morning, evening, and of the various other times and situations.
15. Teach others to always tie their affairs to this religion and to having righteous intentions in all that they do.
16. Holding celebrations when one memorizes portions of the Quran, or after the completion of different books of knowledge. They should invite the Righteous people of the area and respected figures in the community.

## *The Second Goal: Clearly Communicating Religious Information in a Way Which People Understand*

*Some ways of achieving this second goal are:*

1. When talking to others, speak in an audible voice, making it easy for those listening to hear and understand.
2. Speak clearly and at an understandable pace – a hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ used to speak saying one word at a time, so that if one listening wanted to count how many words the Prophet used, he would be able to. In other words, the Prophet ﷺ spoke at a moderate pace so that others could follow along.
3. Use certain gestures and hand movements to clarify and highlight important points, but do not be excessive in using them.
4. Make eye contact and look at the people during a class, lecture, or speech to make sure they are focused and listening.
5. At the end of the class or speech, repeat the most important points of the lesson and give a summary of what was just covered.
6. Open the floor for questions and make sure to clarify any misunderstandings.
7. Encourage participants to take notes. They should write down all important information, especially if what they hear is a new to them. Also, they should have separate notebooks for different lessons.
8. Ask questions at the beginning of each lesson regarding the points taught in the previous lesson.
9. Periodically, create quizzes and tests. These can be made weekly, monthly, at the end of a chapter, or at the end of the course.
10. Encourage participants to constantly review their notes, memorize important information (e.g. Important verses, hadiths, or *fiqh* rulings), and focus on improving their pronunciation.
11. Say something appropriately humorous when the participants seem bored and tell them stories to gain their attention and refocus their concentration.



12. Give examples and illustrations of how to implement certain acts that need implementation (e.g. *wudū*-ablutions, prayer, etc).
13. Avoid lengthy lessons that become boring and make sure to end the lesson while the participants still have the desire to listen.
14. Give special attention to those who have a hard time understanding, so that they may keep up with the others.
15. Suggest extra-curricular readings and classes for the advanced students so that they may deepen their understanding more and potentially move on to higher levels of learning.
16. Give moderate praise to anyone who answers correctly, asks an intelligent question, is on time, or has outstanding and consistent attendance.
17. Have competitions with prizes, and give prizes to those who perform excellently in order to encourage them and others to continue on and improve.
18. Stick to a trustworthy curriculum and method. Some suggested topics to teach are:
  - The Majestic Quran
  - The Noble Hadith
  - *'Aqīdah* (Creed)
  - *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence)
  - *Usūl*
  - *Sīrah* (Prophetic Biography ﷺ)
  - *Sulūk* (Sufism/Purification of the Heart)
  - Arabic Grammar

### THE MAJESTIC QURAN:

*A study of the Quran should focus on the following aspects:*

- Memorization
- Reading the Quran

- *Tajwīd* (proper pronunciation)
- *Tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis)
- Other Quranic Sciences

#### MEMORIZATION:

1. The way to memorize is to repeat 5 or 10 verses of the Quran over and over until memorized. After one memorizes the verses, they should recite the verses at least 25 times from memory. If one recites them 41 times, that is best and solidifies one's memorization.
2. If one has weak pronunciation of the Quran, they must read the verses they want to memorize with a teacher or someone advanced in *Tajwīd* to improve his or her pronunciation of the verses before attempting to memorize them.
3. One's memorization is not complete until the student recites properly, clearly, and audibly (if able).
4. You (or someone with proper *Tajwīd*) should begin by teaching students to recite the *Fātiha* properly (as this is the most important chapter in the entire Quran), then the short chapters of the Quran. You should teach the participants one or two short chapters a week (or whatever they are able to memorize), and on the next day, listen to them recite what they memorized. Also, after hearing what the participants recently memorized, you should ask them to recite other, older chapters from memory.
5. Intermediate students should be given one chapter from the 30<sup>th</sup> *Juz'* of the Quran (*Juz' 'Amma*) to memorize each day. Once a student recites what they should have memorized that day, they can recite 5 chapters previously memorized as a review. After the 30<sup>th</sup> *Juz'*, students should begin memorizing the 29<sup>th</sup> *Juz'* (*Juz' Tabarak*). Students should also read a portion of the Quran together every day (it is recommended to read a *Juz'* every day). It is also highly recommended to memorize the chapters *Al-Kahf*, *Ya-Sin*, *Al-Sajdah*, *Ad-Dukhān*, and *Al-Wāqi'ah*.

6. After memorizing the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> *Juz*'s, whoever has the drive to memorize the entire Quran should begin memorizing from *Baqarah* (Chapter Two of the Quran), memorizing one-eighth of a *Juz*' every day (one-fourth of a *Hizb*, of which there are indicators in most Qurans). At this stage, students should review and recite half a *Juz*' from memory and read two *Juz*' every day.

NOTE: You (or if a more qualified Quran teacher is available) should allow participants to memorize more if they are willing, have a strong memory, and have proper pronunciation. Also, to strengthen and reinforce participants' memorization, it is recommended for them to recite what they have learned during the Prayer.

#### READING THE QURAN:

1. One **must** learn the rules of *Tajwīd* if they do not recite properly.
2. Advanced Quran readers should read at least one *Juz*' together everyday. A beginner should follow along with them, strengthening his or her recitation, until reading through the entire Quran.
3. When reading Quran in a group, one person should recite at a time while the others attentively follow along. If the one reciting makes a mistake, the person sitting to the right should correct him and the group should not all correct him together at one time.

#### TAJWĪD:

1. Children should be exposed to *Tajwīd* at a young age. Others should recite to them with proper *Tajwīd*.
2. Participants in a *Tajwīd* class should be taught the basic rules of *Tajwīd*, then should study beginner, then intermediate level books on *Tajwīd*.
3. Pay attention that the participants are putting the rules into practice. Participants should recite certain verses during the class to make sure they are practicing the rules and becoming accustomed to them.

4. Also, attention should be paid to a student's *Tajwid* during the student's memorization class, when the student is reading Quran, and during the Prayer.


#### TAFSĪR:

1. Participants performing well in their recitation and who have memorized the 30<sup>th</sup> *Juz'* of the Quran should begin learning the *Tafsīr* of the short chapters taken from *Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn*, or another trustworthy and simple *Tafsīr* text.
2. Students should then move on to the *Tafsīr* of the entire 30<sup>th</sup> *Juz'*, then move on to the 29<sup>th</sup> *Juz'* and so on.

#### OTHER QURANIC SCIENCES:

- Students should read Imam Al-Nawawi's book "Etiquette with the Quran" Translated by Shaykh Musa Furber and available through Starlatch Press.

#### THE NOBLE HADITH:

1. Beginners should be taught short hadith. You should have beginners memorize each hadith and be taught its commentary and meaning. Participants in these classes should repeat the hadith out loud in a clear voice. Recommended texts are "The Content of Character" translated by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, then "Selection of Noble Prophetic Traditions" compiled by Al-Habīb 'Umar b. Hafiz.
2. Participants should then memorize Imam Nawawi's 40 Hadith . A recommended text to use is ... translated by Denys-Davies. The participants should be taught each hadith's meaning and commentary. When learning to quote the hadiths, participants should be taught to say "Bismillah," then "Alhamdulillah," followed by sending peace and mercy upon the Prophet, his Family, and his Companions – then comment on the hadith based on what they learned. Finally, participants should end with a short *du'a*, and send peace and mercy upon the Prophet, his Family, and Companions.

3. At this point, participants in Hadith classes should move on and begin memorizing the hadith collection “The Light of Faith from the Words of the Beloved” compiled by Al-Habīb ‘Umar bin Hafīz.
4. After completion of the above-mentioned books, participants should begin Imam Yusuf Al-Nabahāni’s abridgement of “*Rīyād Al-Sālihīn*” (“Gardens of the Righteous”), focusing on the important aspects of its commentary. Also, students should attempt to memorize whatever hadiths within this book are easy for them.

### HADITH SCIENCES:

- After memorizing and studying the commentary on Imam Al-Nawawi’s 40 Hadith, students should then study the didactic poem, *Al-Bayqūniyyah*. Students should memorize and study its commentary.

### CREED:

1. “The Creed of Imam Al-Tahawi” by Imam Al-Tahawi (Translated by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf).
2. “*Aqidat Al-Islam*” (The Islamic Creed) by Imam Abdullah Al-Haddad.
3. “*Jawharat Al-Tawhid*” (The Jewel of Monotheism) by Imam Ibrahim Al-Laqqani.
4. “77 Branches of Faith”

### FIQH:

#### *Shāfi‘ī Fiqh:*

1. Beginners should start with the *Fiqh* section in “The Glorious Treasure” by Al-Habib Umar b. Hafiz and available through *x* Press.
2. “The Essentials of Islam” by Imam Ahmad bin Zayn Al-Habshi translated by ... and available at [www.guidancemedia.com](http://www.guidancemedia.com).
3. “*Safīnat Al-Najab*” by Shaykh Salim Al-Hadrami.
4. “Reliance of the Traveler” by ... translated by Shaykh Nuh Keller.

### Hanafi Fiqh:

- “Absolute Essentials of Islam: Faith, Prayer, and the Path of Salvation According to the Hanafi School” by Shaykh Faraz Rabbani.

### Mālikī Fiqh:

- “Ibn ‘Āshir” by Imam Abdul-Wahid ibn ‘Ashir (Translated by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf).
- “Akhdari” Translated by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf.

### USŪL AL-FIQH:

- “*Al-Waraqāt*” by Imam Al-Haramayn Al-Juwayni. Translated by Dr. Hatem Bazian?

### PROPHETIC BIOGRAPHY (SĪRAH):

1. “Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources” by Martin Lings
2. “A Portrait of the Prophet: As Seen by His Contemporaries” by Imam Muhammad bin ‘Isa Al-Tirmidhi (Translated by Muhtar Holland).
3. “*Qurrat Al-Absār*” translated by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf.
4. “Muhammad: Messenger of Allah – *Ash-Shifā* of Qadi ‘Iyad” Translated by Aisha Bewley and available through ... Press

### GOOD CHARACTER/SUFISM:

1. Students should begin with “The Glorious Treasure” by Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz. This book should be memorized and acted upon.
2. “The Beginning of Guidance” by Imam Al-Ghazzali and translated by... .
3. “Mutual Reminding” and “Good Manners” by Imam Abdullah Al-Haddād (**Note:** These two booklets are sold as one book distributed by Starlatch Press).
4. “Purification of the Heart” by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf.
5. “The Book of Assistance” by Imam Abdullah Al-Haddād.

6. “Treatise for the Seeker” by Shaykh Abul-Hārith Al-Muhāsibī – translation and commentary by Imam Zaid Shakir.

#### **ARABIC GRAMMAR:**

- “*Al-Ajrumīyyah*” by Shaykh Muhammad bin Ajrum.

#### **OTHER IMPORTANT MATERIALS:**

1. “Islamic Spirituality: The Forgotten Revolution” by Shaykh Abdal-Hakim Murad.
2. “Sunnah As Primordality” by Shaykh Abdal-Hakim Murad
3. Madhahib – Shaykh Nuh’s article, Shaykh AHM’s article
4. Mawlid
5. Dr. Umar’s articles.

## *The Third Goal: To Inculcate Beautiful, Prophetic*

### *Character*

*This is one of the most important goals because the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Indeed, I was only sent to perfect good character.” [Narrated by Al-Hākim]. Some ways to achieve this third goal are:*

1. Constantly read Prophetic narrations that highlight good character and the benefits that come along with having good character in this life and in the Hereafter. Also, teach others how critically important it is to gain good character – the blessings of knowledge, teaching, and being close to the Messenger of God in the Hereafter<sup>3</sup> ﷺ are gained through having good character.
2. You must also describe each good character-trait in detail, explaining its importance and the ways in which to attain it.
3. You must always smile, have a welcoming expression, and look upon the participants with kindness while maintaining a sense of fear and humility when remembering God and speaking of the Hereafter.
4. During classes, you should give appropriate praise to deserving participants who properly recite Quran, memorize with excellence, show good character, or display a high level of understanding and intelligence.
5. You must also be careful to always say and do that which should be emulated by others. You should be an example for others by controlling your *nafs* and by having upright speech and actions.
6. Show respect to elders in gatherings and give them precedence. Also show mercy for children, be patient with them, and teach them in an appropriate manner.
7. Never mention a Muslim in a bad way in the gatherings or classes, ever.

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<sup>3</sup> Hadith about those close to the Prophet on the DoJ.



8. Have participants shake hands with one another and forgive each other for any wrongs they might have done to one another **after each class.**
9. You must remind participants of the benefits and importance of having brotherhood and sisterhood, of loving one another for the sake of God, and of the rights and responsibilities that come along with that.
10. You should also encourage participants to feel that one person's mistake affects them all, and that one person's achievement honors them all. No one should complain about his or her brother or sister, nor should they expose a brother or sister's flaws; rather, each person should strive to rise above any mistakes through kind and good methods.
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12. Strengthen the bonds of love for God by encouraging participants to visit one another at an appropriate time once a week. Also, one should be mindful of his or her friend's absence during a gathering and wish that they were present. You should also organize visits to sick people, whether they be at the hospital or at home, making sure to visit at an appropriate time and not to overextend the visit. Visit during occasions of both joy and sorrow: visit to celebrate your friend's wedding ceremony, their new home, or the birth of their new baby – also be there for them during the passing of a family member and during other difficult experiences people often go through in this life.
13. Choose friends wisely and with discernment, and avoid bad company.
14. Organize events that keep other Muslims busy with beneficial activities such as visits to people, participating in blessed gatherings such as *halaqas* or *mawlid*s, and sports activities (keeping in mind good intentions and good manners).
15. You should consistently be in contact with the guardians of participants in a class, informing them of their child's progress and development. **Building a rapport with parents and elders in the community is essential to a healthy development of the community.**
16. You should constantly recall stories of inspirational people of great and chivalrous character. This is especially effective in reminding and motivating people if the stories focus on contemporary figures, such as Malcolm X, Imam W.D. Muhammad, and others.

17. Encourage generosity and giving by being an example in giving charity, even if it be only a little. Recall to others the benefits and honor of altruism and charity. Participants in *halaqahs* should have an allocated donation box within which they can donate money, which can then be used to buy books, pay for a group trip, or even be collected to give to the needy in the area.
18. Aspire to spread the spirit of altruism between participants in *halaqahs*. One of the most important ways to learn this is by being quick to serve one's brother even in things that might be difficult for one's *nafs*. Always delay the *nafs*' wants and desires, putting it in its place.
19. You should also pay attention to the way in which participants sit during a class, making sure they sit in a respectable manner. Also encourage participants to make it a habit of greeting one another with the "*salam*" and shake each others' hands. Participants should also learn to stand up for their parents, scholars, and the elderly – participants should learn to lovingly kiss their hands in an appropriate and respectful manner, without excessiveness.
20. Correct others' wrongs gradually. If a participant in a *halaqah* makes a mistake, you should indirectly indicate that a mistake has been made. If that participant continues, then advise him or her of the mistake in private.
21. Emphasize that the way sacred knowledge purifies and blesses one who seeks it is through acting upon it, spreading it, and by assisting others by guiding them to what benefits them. And success is from God.

## *The Fourth Goal: To Instill Within Hearts the Importance of Calling to God and of Their Duty to Humanity*

﴿Say, “This is my way; I invite to God based on evidence; I and whoever follows me”﴾ (12:108). Calling to God is an essential pillar in this deen that must be carried out. Deficiency in calling to God causes evil to spread and people to fall into forbidden acts and neglect the obligatory acts of worship. When this happens, trials descend upon people and difficulties become abundant. When people carry the banner of calling to God, goodness spreads and the hearts are revived, deflecting trials and ridding the community of difficulties. ﴿But your Lord would not destroy a population for one error, if its people would make amends﴾ (11: 117). It is imperative for students of knowledge to feel connected to this great and important responsibility. They must also sincerely want good for all Muslims, as well as relay the call to God, assisting, teaching, and directing as many people as they can to the way of the Prophets. Muslims should use their energy and thought in calling to God.

How many have gained a decent amount of knowledge and drawn closer to God, then lived amongst society without any concern for their learning, guidance, or benefit – resulting in not even one person being guided by God through them due to their lack of sincere concern. In some cases these people might even mix with the heedless, misusing their own time. In this case, what these people learned will be used against them on the Day of Judgment because they did not act upon what they learned – we ask God protection from that.

*The ways to properly perform this important responsibility and teach it to others are:*

1. Constantly recall what has been revealed regarding calling to God from verses in the Quran to Hadith to statements from the pious predecessors. For those who read Arabic, they should reference the introduction to Imam Al-Haddād's book "*Ad-Da'awah At-Tāmmah*" (this book has not yet been translated) and reflect upon it.
2. Remind others of the greatness of calling to God – it was the mission of the Prophets and Messengers; the revival and restoration of the *Ummah* depends on it, and the *Ummah's* trials and downfall are caused by abandoning it.
3. Carefully study the Prophetic *Sīrah* (biography), reflecting upon what the Prophet ﷺ faced while calling to God. Also reflect upon the trials his Companions and those who followed them suffered when calling to God.
4. Properly study and understand the reality Muslims are facing, and their need to return, establish, and strengthen calling one another to God with wisdom and insight. Also realize the importance of spreading that call to every other part of the world.
5. Teach participants in a *halaqah* that calling to God is not limited to speeches and sermons; in fact they are only some of the ways to call to God. *Da'awah*, or calling to God, is defined as, "Thoughtfully finding ways to bring people from a state of detachment from and heedlessness of God to one of nearness to Him and consciousness of Him through different means and methods, sincerely doing so for God, seeking His good pleasure."
6. One of the most effective ways to call to God is through maintaining healthy relationships, upholding respectable bonds with people, spreading goodness and beauty, showing people gentleness, visiting people, and giving people useful books and CDs as gifts.
7. Gain experience in giving talks and speeches. One should start with relaying hadiths from memory. Once you are comfortable with relaying hadiths, you should then get accustomed to beginning every speech with praising God ("*Alhamdulillah*"), then sending peace and blessings upon the Messenger of God, his Family, and Companions ("*wa as-Salāt 'ala Rasūl Illāh wa Ālihī wa Sahbihī wa Sallim*"), and ending every speech with a *du'ā* and by sending peace and

mercy upon the Prophet and his Family once again. Once you have become accustomed to that step, add the commentary to the aforementioned hadith. After mastering this step, mention appropriate verses from the Quran and stories that relate to the topic of the hadith.

8. Also, be aware of during all that was mentioned in the previous point to speak clearly and to look at the faces of those present with mercy, love, and serenity.
9. When speaking, feel that those listening are better than you are. You should also feel that, by speaking to the group, you are going to be shown mercy from God, be benefitted by the listeners' *du'ā*, their blessings, and their intercession (for those who might be given that honor by God on the Day of Resurrection). This is an unseen secret hidden by God within His creation. We cannot say for certain how a disbeliever or a sinner's life will end; therefore, our good opinion with virtuous and righteous believers should be even **stronger**. In other words, you should learn to be suspicious of your own self, while always having a good opinion of others. When doing this, the call to God will become more pure, sincere, and beneficial.
10. One of the most important ways to be consistent in calling to God in the proper way is to never believe any praise directed your way. You must fight your *nafs* from allowing it to seek a high position in the hearts of people and from thinking you have a right over those who have listened to you. The *nafs*, due to its nature, is quick to want these things – therefore, if these feelings and desires are allowed to settle, the *Da'awah* is corrupted and flipped, and the way to guide people has become a way to glorify your own desires. So when calling to God, be very careful and cut off the whisperings in your heart at their first sign. ﴿And whoever believes in God, God guides his heart﴾ (VERSE NUMBER?); ﴿Whoever cleaves to God has already been guided to a straight path﴾ VERSE NUMBER.
11. Pass out well-written literature and CDs to individuals as well as different mosques so that many different people can benefit from them. Also, whenever driving, listen to a beneficial CD that has a lecture or *nasheed* on it so that you, and whoever might be driving with you, are always learning and benefitting.

12. Consciously create alternatives for customs that have impermissible (*harām*) aspects within them.
13. Whenever traveling, pack beneficial books and CDs that you might be able to give out when arriving at your destination.
14. Keep your zeal for the truth in check – do not hold beginning participants in a *halaqah* or the general public to your own high standard. Speak to each group of people with what is most necessary for their respective levels.
15. Maintain a good relationship with those who are concerned with the community's welfare in your area.
16. Meet with those who are advanced in their knowledge and activism and ask their opinions. Whenever discussing something, those working in calling to God should always refer back to the oldest and most knowledgeable in the group (or at least take the decision the majority sees as best). If one or a few people have a different opinion than the majority, they should avoid dissent and humbly accept the group's decision. If not, a dangerous door is left open for the devil to create dissent and cause participants in the group to stumble along the path.
17. You should care firstly about calling your family, friends, and neighbors to God – inviting them to goodness and beneficial gatherings.
18. Choose the most appropriate clothing for every situation, especially for events such as the Friday Prayer. Both men and women should choose clothing that is modest, avoiding any possibility of imitating immoral people.
19. If there are no women who feel they have the ability to teach others, a male teacher should make sure to include women in the *halaqahs*.
20. Inculcate within others a concern for state of the Muslims, encouraging them that they need to take part in the improvement and religious success of other members of the *Ummah*. As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught us, the *Ummah* is like one body – if one part of the body feels pain, the whole body stays up and feels its effects.
21. Outings and trips have a unique effect in spreading knowledge, properly aligning people's character, and creating concern for the responsibility of calling to God in their hearts. Outings

are of several types – the type designed to teach and remind the general public – and another type to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood, advise one another, and help one another call to God. Different types of outings should be organized with these, and other, goals in mind. Keep in mind that you need to choose the appropriate time and place for these outings, and organize useful activities to be done during the trip. And success is from God.

### *Conclusion:*

#### *Advice for Teachers and Organizers of Halaqahs*

To successfully achieve the goals of learning and teaching, you must fulfill the following:

1. You must have an honest direction and determination in seeking knowledge, and in then passing that knowledge on – completely turning your back on any temporary and lowly ambition.

2. Elevate your intention by making your sole honest and sincere desire the pleasure of God, seeking His Glorious Countenance. Your demeanor should also always echo reverence and awe of God, the Real ﷻ. This reverence is reflected in your respect and veneration for the Divine Law (*Shari'ah*), the Deen, and the Islamic sciences that have been passed down from the Chosen One, our Master Prophet Muhammad ﷺ his Family, and Companions.
3. You should feel **overwhelmed** (with honor) that *you* are now responsible for the greatest trust ever left behind, since the position of teaching the Deen is the position of the Seal of Prophets ﷺ, the Virtuous Messenger who came with the final and complete message. Whosoever is placed in this position must know its exaltedness and respect its weightiness; whosoever is in the position the Prophet was in has no right to change or reprioritize anything he who taught this Deen came with ﷺ.
4. You must continuously ask God to show His Mercy towards the entire *Ummah* in general, and especially towards those you teach, advise, and remind.
5. Your heart must be in a state of deep humility before God, and you must have a good opinion of Muslims in general, especially scholars and Imams.
6. Learn to have excellent speaking skills by speaking clearly and in understandable language, while simultaneously feeling care, mercy, sincerity, closeness, and love towards those you speak to. Lastly, you must have an intense drive and high ambition in all that you do.
7. Be prepared to advantage from detractors, for they recognize flaws others might not see or bring to your attention. Accept any suggestion or piece of advice directed towards you, no matter who it comes from.
8. Strengthen your connection with scholars and teachers, which in turn should strengthen your connection with the greatest resource and teacher, the Messenger of God ﷺ his Family, and Companions.

*Sciences and Fields a Teacher Should be Familiar With*



1. You should be well-read in the subject you are teaching, and be prepared for questions related to the topic at hand, even if they be from secondary or tertiary texts.
2. It is exceptionally vital that you (and all those interested in education, especially if they teach Islamic sciences) study the *Sīrah* of the greatest teacher and best educator, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ his Family, and Companions. You should immerse yourself in studying his life, reflecting upon it, and extracting the lessons and directives from it.
3. You cannot do without learning the science of *Sulūk* or *Tasawwuf* (Sufism), especially if you intend to teach others the *Shari'ah*. A teacher must deeply study this science, understanding it intellectually and realizing it experientially.
4. You should be well-read in Islamic History, understanding the different time periods and how the *Shar'iah's* implementation positively affected societies, creating great scholars and virtuous examples. Studying this allows one to appropriately respond to attacks against Islam and Islamic scholarship.
5. Also study U.S. and World history, understanding the society you live in and the way in which the modern world developed.
6. Pursue a degree in a contemporary field – either science, Psychology, Sociology, or Film.

### *Ways in Which Teachers Affect Participants in Halaqahs*

There are two ways teachers have an affect on the participants of a *halaqah* – one outward and one inward.

#### **Outward Ways:**

1. Having excellent oratory skills and a deep understanding of the subject matter.
2. Practicing what you preach by performing all that you teach of obligations and *Sunnahs*, and by avoiding all that is impermissible and disliked.
3. Showing concern for participants' understanding throughout the course, answering their questions, and being aware of any discomfort they might experience.

4. Giving appropriate praise to participants who excel without causing them to become proud or arrogant, and giving the appropriate encouragement to participants who are slow without causing them to feel bad or lose hope.

#### **Inwards Ways:**

1. Sincerely acting solely to please God ﷻ.
2. Having a heart full of mercy and compassion for the students, desiring their safety from all evil and ruin. Also wanting them to be near to their Lord and be connected to the greatest example God chose for us, His Beloved Muhammad ﷺ.
3. Being humble internally.
4. Asking God with sincerity and making *du'ā* during the pre-dawn hours.
5. Always focusing on your shortcomings and asking God to bless you with beautiful characteristics.
6. Depending on God, always returning to Him, and realizing that all success is from Him ﷻ!

The opposite effect occurs if you take on qualities contrary to the above-mentioned qualities, regardless of whether they are outward or inward. If you do so, people will be negatively affected and possibly become arrogant and self-centered, or become prone to jealousy, or not act upon that which they had been taught, as well as many other negative possibilities – all of which occur if you do not embody the founding principles previously mentioned.

This is a brief overview you must pay attention to of the comprehensive practices of learning and teaching. Someone honest and sincere will be shown the way by God, who will guide their decisions, inspire them to **do good**, and broaden their scope of understanding and wisdom. Success is only from God, upon Him we rely and turn to – and may endless peace and mercy shower upon our Master Muhammad ﷺ his Family, and Companions.

APPENDIX: DA'AWAH TABLES

APPENDIX: NEW CONVERTS?