

## **MODULE 1**

**Class Title:** What is Islam? – Part 2 of 2

**Aim of Lesson:** To see that Islam is a complete way of life, not just a set of religious beliefs

**Category:** *Aqeedah*

**Lesson Format:** Power point presentation with discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli*

(Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Teacher: Do you remember what we talked about in the last class? What did we talk about in the last class?

Student: We talked about the five pillars of Islam and we said that no house is complete with only the five pillars.

Teacher: Yes. We else did we talk about? We talked about *ahadith*?

Student: We talked about what Islam is.

Teacher: Exactly, thank you.

Student: Yes. Misconceptions that people have about Islam.

Teacher: We talked about how one word can mean different things to different people, right?

In order to understand a concept we must understand what it stands for. That's what we talked about, remember? We had an exercise in which I gave said a word and I asked you guys to draw your interpretations of it.

What we will do today, *inshaAllah*, is find the meaning of Islam. Last time we talked about how, to understand a concept, we need to know what it means.

Slide 2 and 3:

What is Islam? These days there is a lot of talk going on about what Islam is. Do you hear it? You hear it on the news and all these discussions about the various aspects of Islam; somebody saying Islam is this and somebody is saying Islam is that. Do you read newspapers or listen to the news?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: That is the kind of attitude that is prevalent these days: let's talk Islam, let's find out about Islam, even non-Muslims are trying to find out about Islam. Are you aware of what is going on around you? Because if you're not aware then you should be; you should read newspapers and you should listen to the news. How old are you? Eleven, twelve, thirteen year olds, smart kids, you're old enough to know what is going on in the news.

Slide 4:

A lot of people, which includes Muslims as well as non-Muslims, are trying to find out what Islam is all about. Some people are saying Islam stands for peace, I think some of you said that in the last class, when I said asked you what Islam means to you. Some people are saying it stands for humanity and faith, other people are saying it stands for terrorism.

Slide 5 and 6:

So what is Islam? We hear this question is today more than we did some years ago.

Slide 7 and 8:

And, because of all of this dialogue and discussion, Islam is also misunderstood a lot of the time. Just like we discussed last time, if I say 'mouse', some people might think of a rodent (you know what a rodent is, right?), some people might think of the computer mouse and then, some people some people might think of Mickey Mouse. So, Islam too somehow means different things for different people. But we need to know the definitions of things so that we can use them the way they are meant to be used.

Slide 9:

For example, what is this?

Student: An apron.

Teacher: And is she wearing it the wrong way?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: So, because she doesn't know what this thing is, that it's supposed to save her clothes from being splattered by her cooking, and she doesn't know the definition of an apron, she doesn't know how to use it.

Sometimes when we don't know what things actually stand for, we may do something completely different with them. For example, if a child doesn't know what a refrigerator is, she might just use it as a cupboard, without even plugging it in. That's a possibility, isn't it?

It looks like a cupboard, her clothes can fit in very neatly in the different shelves and she can put the shoes in the vegetables section. Somebody who is unaware of what a refrigerator is used for might simply not plug it in and just bring it in their home and use it as a cupboard, right?

Slide 10:

As little children, when you went to kindergarten, the first thing you were told was to put different shapes in different slots, right? Why is that exercise done? So that you can connect that certain things fit somewhere and certain things don't fit somewhere. So, we need to know the definitions of things.

Slide 11:

Three questions to answer today:

Is everybody's idea of Islam correct?

Is there a clear picture of Islam?

Can we go on believing our own perception of Islam?

I am not going to give you any answers but we are going to find out the answers to the questions together.

Slide 12 and 13:

In the last class we talked about the five pillars. *Alhamdulillah*, we are aware that Islam has five pillars, but we discussed last time that, Islam is not made up of only the five pillars.

Slide 14:

When there are five pillars standing somewhere, it could mean that it's some place which was standing before and is now in ruins; because you see that in places, you know? You see buildings that have fallen down and you see only their pillars standing, right?

Slide 15 and 16:

Or, it could be a building under construction. However, just the pillars do not make a complete house. The pillars are an important part of the structure, but they do not complete the structure.

Slide 17:

*InshaAllah*, today we are going to look at some key points about Islam which will give us a better understanding of the three questions I just showed you.

Slide 18:

The first thing to understand about Islam is that Islam is ‘of the people, for the people but it is by Allah (swt).’ Have you heard the saying ‘Of the people, for the people, by the people’? Islam is not by the people as democracy is said to be. Islam is ‘of the people, for the people, **but** it is by Allah (swt).’ It is the *deen* that Allah (swt) has chosen for the best of his creation.

Slide 19:

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al Maida, “*Al yauma akhmalu lakum deenukum wa athmamtu ‘alaykum nai’mati wa raditu lakumul islaama deena.*” That means, “This day I have perfected for you your *deen*, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your *deen*.” (Surah Al Maida 5: Verse 3). What word is Allah (swt) repeating? Look at the Arabic word ‘*deen*’ and over here also, *deen*. Did He say religion? No.

Slide 20:

Islam is a *deen*; it is not a religion. It is a *deen*, and what is a *deen*? *Deen* means a way of life; Islam is a complete way of life. Let’s just have a look at a few ways of life. What does the term ‘way of life’ mean? It means how you live your life.

Slide 21:

If I say that someone is sporty and you don’t know that person and all I tell you about them is that they are sporty, what kind of person will come to your mind?

Student: Someone who is active. Very athletic. Someone who likes to play a lot of sports.

Teacher: Yeah, what else?

Student: I’ll picture her running.

Slide 22:

Teacher: Okay, and wearing anything particular, will she be wearing like a skirt?

Student: No, she would probably be wearing a tracksuit.

Teacher: Will she be wearing high-heeled sandals?

Student: No, she would probably be wearing some kind of trainers or joggers.

Teacher: Will she be carrying a cute little purse?

Student: No, she would probably have a training bag.

Slide 23:

Teacher: You picture a certain kind of person when I say the word sporty. Even though you don't know the person, when I say sporty, you picture a certain kind of person. You'd also imagine that she would be eating healthy and would not hog on junk food.

Slide 24:

What about when I say that someone is a 'goth'? What comes to your mind?

Student: Black.

Student: Scary.

Student: Loves rock music.

Student: Mean.

Student: Not active.

Student: Reclusive and mysterious

Student: Introvert.

Slide 25 and 26:

Teacher: All these sort of things, right? It makes you think of certain types of clothes and black is the predominant thing that everybody thought of. So, just by hearing the word 'goth', you think of these things. If I say someone is a goth, then you form a certain impression in your mind, wouldn't you? Even if you didn't know that person. They even have goth dolls, did you know that? A goth's room would probably look something like this.

So, you have an image in your mind about a certain lifestyle and all the different aspects of life that it is reflected in.

Slide 27:

What if I say 'zen'?

Student: Calm and peaceful.

Student: A certain kind of décor.

Student: Ikebana.

Student: Serenity.

Student: White colour.

Slide 28 to 30:

Teacher: It's a Japanese, a Buddhist, zen kind of lifestyle. It's very clean, crisp and extremely healthy. The food is also extremely healthy, fresh and extremely neat and crisp and clean and yoga- a kind of exercise- is also found in such a lifestyle. If I say that so and so is a zen person, they follow a zen lifestyle, their lifestyle would be different from a sporty person's lifestyle. A certain kind of lifestyle comes to mind, yes or no? Yes, right?

When we say 'I am a Muslim' what does that mean? Let's put it this way.

Student: If you're saying that she is very religious...

Teacher: Ah! I'm not saying that she is religious, Islam is not a religion; Islam is a *deen*. That is what I'm trying to tell you

Slide 31:

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That is the beauty of Islam. When someone calls themselves a Muslim, what kind of lifestyle do they follow? What is the Islamic lifestyle? Islam presents the most accommodating lifestyle under the planet. You will never expect a Goth to be sitting and doing yoga, would you? For example, think of a very famous athlete these days... that famous tennis player Raphael Nadal. Do you think he will sit down and eat three *kebab rolls* {*kebabs in fried bread*}? No, he wouldn't, because he would be used to eating certain kinds of food.

Slide 32:

So, we just talked about three different lifestyles. The Islamic lifestyle can be a sporty lifestyle, or it could be a trendy lifestyle, and it can even be like an intellectual or a scientific lifestyle- along with various other types of lifestyles. A Goth can be a Muslim, a sporty person can be a Muslim, and a zen person can also be a Muslim, do you understand?

The Islamic lifestyle is extremely accommodating; as long as certain parameters of the *shariah* are met, it really doesn't matter what other kind of lifestyle you are following. Someone could be a sporty Muslim or they could be a Zen Muslim or they can be a Goth Muslim... they'd just have to stop listening to the rock music and the black colour is not an issue. Islam is the very accommodating, it is important to understand this. We are not talking about Islam as a religion at all; it is a *deen*, a lifestyle. When we make a choice of how we want to live, it is a lifestyle choice and that reflects on each and every area of our life: how we dress, how we eat, etc. If I say that I'm a Muslim, it will be assumed that I do not drink alcohol and that I don't eat pork, right?

Do any of you drink alcohol or eat pork?

No, right?

And if you do see somebody who's a "Muslim" yet still drinking alcohol and eating pork, you are going to wonder, what's going on here, right? If I say I am a Muslim woman, I'm going to be dressed in a certain way. I could be extremely trendy. You see, what I'm trying to say is that a Muslim woman could be wearing high heels and could still be part of the *deen* of Islam. The most common and prevalent misconception about the den of Islam is that people think it is restrictive; it is not. The *deen* of Islam is the most accommodating lifestyle on this planet.

Slide 33 and 34:

Another thing about Islam is that it is not a new *deen*. We're not going to call Islam a religion from now on, by the way. It is a lifestyle. It is not a new *deen*, it was the *deen* of Adam (AS) and all the different prophets that came after him, right up to the last Prophet (pbuh). It was the same *deen* that Allah (swt) gave to Adam (AS) and then He completed it through our Prophet (pbuh). So, it's nothing new, it has been present since the first man was created, who was also the first prophet, right?

Slide 35:

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Imran, "Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian but an upright Muslim and he was not of the *mushrikeen*" (Surah Al e Imran 3: Verse 67).

Slide 36:

Another very important aspect of Islam is that it's a socially responsible way of life. These days many people say (especially environmentally aware people), 'Please be aware of your carbon footprint.' Have you heard of the expression 'carbon footprint'? Because these days fossil fuels are very scarce, environmentalists are insisting that people should try to conserve energy. We even have advertisements on television that asking us to energy saver bulbs. Do

not use the car too much, walk where you can walk or car pool where you can carpool, so spend less energy because the car is running on petrol. So, what kind of carbon footprint are you leaving behind?

Slide 37:

Islam is a socially responsibly *deen*. Islam tells us is that if we go for a walk, we should think about our carbon footprint. It tells us about accepting responsibility and being able to say, "I'm sorry, I have made this mistake." If you do something take responsibility for it. Islam does not believe, as some people say, "Oh! You know so and so is a mass murderer because when he was a child his cat died or his parents were very cruel to him." Does that mean he can completely go off the hinge and start killing people? No, what ever you do, you take responsibility for it. If you are sitting here in class and one of the students at the back starts screaming loudly, they need to be responsible for that act.

Slide 38:

Islam teaches us that we are going to be answerable for each and everything we do throughout our lives to Allah (swt) and our life includes each and every day that we are on this Earth. So, if you think you are going to be mean to somebody, or just lose your temper because you had a bad day at school, well you can't. You had a bad day at school and you come home and beat up your brother. Why? Because you didn't do your work properly and somebody told you off... that's not socially responsible behaviour is it? Islam teaches us to be aware of what our actions and reactions. Do you understand when I say socially responsible? What am I saying tell me?

Student: You're saying that we should be responsible for the acts that we do.

Teacher: Absolutely. You should be responsible for your acts. And that by the way includes all the different environmental problems that we are facing these days. The Prophet (pbuh) told us to not waste water. Conserving all the different energies that we have is definitely a part of Islam because that is social responsibility. We can't do *wudhu* with tons and tons of water because that would be wrong, that would be wastage. Socially responsible behaviour means taking complete responsibility of things that we use and the way we interact with other people.

Slide 39 and 40:

Islam is the *deen* of all babies; everybody is born a Muslim. Each and every human being that Allah (swt) has created is born a Muslim and then later they are inducted into some other religion.



Slide 41:

Prophet (pbuh) said, “Each child is born in a state of *Fitrah*,” which means that, upon birth, the *deen* of each human being is Islam, ‘then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian the way an animal gives birth to a normal offspring. Have you noticed any that were born mutilated?’ [Bukhari and Muslim]

Slide 42:

In another *hadith*, the Prophet (pbuh) reported that Allah (swt) said, “I created my servants in the right religion, but devils make them go astray.” [Bukhari and Muslim] Because Allah (swt) has said, “I have chosen your *deen* for you.” (Surah Al Maida 5: Verse 3). And He has chosen what as your *deen*.”

Student: Islam is my *deen*.

Teacher: So all babies are what?

Student: Muslims.

Teacher: All babies are Muslims, that’s cute.

Slide 43 to 49:

Also, Islam is colour blind; you can have Muslims with all sorts of complexions and all sorts of features; all kinds of Muslims, that is the most amazing aspect of Islam. If Allah (swt) had created somebody who was blue, there would be blue Muslims also. Islam is totally universal and this connects very clearly with the different lifestyles that it accommodates. So, you could be a Chinese Muslim and what kind of food would you eat?

Student: Chinese food.

Teacher: And you could still be a Muslim?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And if we lived in, say, France, what we would be eating?

Student: French food.

Teacher: We would still be Muslims?

Student: Yes.

Slides 50 to 73: (show these slides slowly, one by one to bring home the point that Islam is a universal deen)

Teacher: Yes, it's a totally universal *deen*, all sorts of people and all sorts of cultures are Muslim and have been Muslim for ages. No other way of life can accommodate so many types of people. So you have British Muslims and you have American Muslims and Scandinavian Muslims and you have Australian Muslims, Tunisian Muslims, Palestinian Muslims, Malaysian Muslims and Chinese Muslims and Indian Muslims, all sorts of Muslims everywhere in the world. There is hardly any place in the world, actually, where there is no Islam. And then you see people following various different fashions in Islamic dress as well, don't you? But they are all Muslims.

That is the beauty of Islam, which no other lifestyle possesses; it accommodates so many different people from around the world and yet it retains its purity. That is a true miracle. If you go anywhere in the world and meet any Muslim in the world, you may not speak their language but if you say '*la ilaha illallah Muhammad ur rasullallah*' they will all understand what you are saying. Isn't that true?

Have any of you been to *Hajj*?

When you go on *Hajj*, it is amazing how many different types of people you see and you want to hug absolute strangers. You're so overwhelmed by the different types of Muslims that you see and what are they doing? They are all saying '*labbaik allahumma labbaik, labbaik la sharika laka labbaik*'. They come from different parts of the world and speak different languages, eat different foods, wear different clothes but, when they are all doing their *Hajj*, you realize the diversity as well as the purity which is impossible for any other lifestyle to uphold.

Slide 74:

It retains the purity of '*la ilaha illallah Muhammad ur rasullallah*' and yet has its diversity. You know different cultures have different ways of celebrating things and wear different clothes, right? *Alhamdulillah*, this is the age of information so you do see that around you, on the television and on the internet, how many different kinds of Muslims there are. So that is another very important thing that we need to understand about Islam.

Slide 75:

So many different types of *Qur'an*; you pick up a *Qur'an* from any part of the world and not a single word is going to be different, it's going to be exactly the same, that's a miracle, wouldn't you say? It seems almost impossible and some people get completely mind-boggled by this fact.

You know, there was a group of non-Muslims (I don't know whether they were actually Christians or not), who were trying to prove that there is something wrong with the *Qur'an*, so they went through countless copies (I'm not sure how many though) of the *Qur'an* (a copy of the *Qur'an* is called a *mus-haf*). They went through various different *mus-hafs* from many time periods as well as different geographical areas to see if they could find a single discrepancy in any single one of them. Typing errors, I suppose, can happen but no discrepancy anywhere. That is the miracle of the *Qur'an*. What are the miracles of the *Qur'an*? *Allah* Allah (swt) has promised to preserve it and Allah (swt) has preserved it, *alhamdulillah*.

Slide 76:

Islam is a hands-on-*deen*, you understand what that means?

Slide 77:

Do all of you play on the wii or have you ever played on the wii... who plays on the wii? So what is cool about the wii, tell me?

Student: The cool thing is that you can just like do this, mine is a paddle game, so we have to do canoeing and all with it so you can do this, this, this, this. (Demonstrates how to use a wii)

Teacher: So you have to do something, right?

Student: Yes

Teacher: Do you just sit there? Will something happen if you just sit there and vegetate?

Student: It would stop.

Teacher: There is no point in having a wii, why not just sit and watch a movie or something? But not with a wii, with a wii you're involved; it's very interactive, very hands-on. So that's how Islam is, if we just sit there with Islam, what happens? Nothing happens; it's like having a 'wheel' and sitting with it. Islam is very hands-on, you have to be involved, and you need to be doing it, rather than just reading it or listening about it.

Slide 78:

Somebody said a beautiful thing about the *Qur'an*, "These are verses to do, and these are not verses to read." It's an action plan, just like with the 'wheel'... there's something to do. You have to be involved with the *Qur'an* and actively practice what it teaches you.

Slide 79:

So, JUST DO IT, as 'Nike' says.

Slide 80:

The beauty of Islam can only be realized when you actually start doing it. You know, many times we just stand at the edge of the house of Islam, we don't enter, or we stand on the doorstep, at the threshold and the door is open but we don't go in, and we don't step back either because we were born Muslims, weren't we? So we are standing at the edge, that's that. It's like putting the remote of the 'wheel' right here and saying that nothing is happening. Obviously, nothing is happening because you're not doing anything. Nothing will happen unless and until you do something and you enter into Islam completely.

That is what Allah (swt) has said "*Udkhulu fis silmi kaafaa*,":

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً

"O you who believe, Enter into Islam perfectly" [Surah Al Baqarah 2: verse 208]

When you enter Islam completely, you will understand what this lifestyle is all about; just praying five times a day and keeping our *rozahs* in Ramadan and going for *umrah* and paying *zakat* doesn't bring out the beauty, the entire beauty of our *deen*. Those are just the five pillars, as we discussed last time, they are extremely important but it's not that complete beautiful house itself.

You said that the five pillars stand but you have to put some bricks between them. The bricks are the lifestyle, the bricks is everything else, and you cannot put these bricks into place cheating when you can cheat. You can get an A, you don't know the question, you are sitting very close to somebody and you know that nobody will notice, you can just peek into the other person's paper and copy out the answer, you will end up getting an A. What does Islam tell us is? Do not cheat. When you realize that you did not work hard enough and will probably end up getting a B, but still do not cheat, you are putting a brick in between the five pillars.

Or when someone is mean to you, a friend or a relative and you are dying to go and backbite about them but you control yourself and don't say anything about them you are putting a brick in between the five pillars. These are the bricks that make the house complete, you see? It's a whole package deal and unless you take that package deal, you are standing at the edge and saying, "Uh, I really don't understand what this is all about." You know how scientists sometimes have a 'bing!' moment that is what it feels like... you have a 'bing!' moment when you fully enter and understand the beauty of Islam. Then you understand what it's all

about. So that's the beauty of Islam; it's a hands-on *deen* which one has to do, not just read about.

Slide 81:

It's also very user friendly. It starts off with *Assalam Alaikum*... how user friendly is that? You are sending peace and blessings upon somebody the minute you see their face, you may not know them from Adam and yet you are saying, "*Assalam Alaikum*".... what does that mean? "May peace be upon you," that's how user friendly Islam is.

A Companion (you know who Companions were, right? The people who were around the Prophet (pbuh)... *sahabas*) came to the Prophet (pbuh) and asked him, "What is the best of Islam? So, Prophet (pbuh) (one would have thought it is doing *tahajjud* every night, or doing *hajj* every year) said "No, the best of Islam is to say *salaam* to those who you know and those who you don't know and to feed people. [Agreed Upon] That is the best of Islam. That is a beautiful thing, isn't it?"

Slide 82:

Don't be afraid. Many times, because we don't know what this thing I-S-L-A-M (word is spelt out) is, we're scared, we feel like we're standing at the edge of a whirlpool and are going to be sucked in and that's going to be the end of our lives. You know that's the impression we have sometimes about Islam, obviously because we don't discover it properly. More importantly, the discovery of Islam comes by doing it so, don't be afraid.

Slide 83:

These days you also hear people discussing what the 'trouble' with Islam is today. I was watching a talk show the other day on TV and there was a whole panel of people, grown up adults, sitting and talking about what the problem with Islam is. This is a book written by a lady called '*The Trouble with Islam Today*'. What do you think is the trouble with Islam, can somebody tell me? Why is there all this talk about what the problem with Islam is?"

Student: Its followers, we shouldn't judge a religion by its followers.

Teacher: But Islam is not a religion.

Student: I mean we shouldn't judge a *deen* by its followers, because our *deen* is very nice but our followers are not that nice.

Teacher: Spot on, absolutely.

Slide 84:

If somebody asks you what the problems with Islam are and you tell them that there are no problems with Islam, you are absolutely right; there is nothing wrong with Islam, there is no trouble with Islam and the trouble is with us. And when you say the trouble is with the followers, don't put the blame on somebody else. As we discussed earlier, Islam is a socially responsible *deen*, we say the trouble is with us, each and every one of us, individually. So the *deen* that Allah (swt) has given us is perfect, just like Allah (swt) has given us a perfect planet. Allah (swt) had given us an absolutely beautifully perfect ecosystem everywhere, perfectly balanced atmosphere and we ended up messing it up, didn't we?

Slide 86 and 87:

For example, the amount of plastic bags we use is ruining our planet. Look at this coral reef, it was a coral reef pretty and beautiful and perfect, and the ecosystem of thousands of fish and sea creatures, and this is what has happened. Just plastic bags are doing that, that is a plastic bag stuck to it and the poor coral is dead.

Allah (swt) has said in Surah Ar-Rum, "Corruption has appeared in the land and in the sea because of what the hands of men have wrought." (Surah Ar Rum 30: Verse 41) .We are the ones who are ruining this perfect way of life that Allah (swt) has chosen for us, which is Islam. So there is no trouble with Islam at all, the trouble is with us. Another thing that Islam teaches us is when you point a finger at somebody, how many fingers are pointing at you? Three, so always look at yourself first. Perhaps what I'm doing is ruining the beauty of the lifestyle that Allah (swt) has chosen for me. That is the first lesson that we need to learn.

Slide 88 and 89:

If Muslims have a compass, other than the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, when hunting for a way of life then they will obviously falter, they will fall flat on their face and that is what is happening to us. What is happening to us is that we are looking in places other than the two sources of Islam, the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (pbuh).

Slide 90 and 91:

If something is completely fine, comfortable, looks good as well, is going to last a long time, there is no need to mess with it, there is no need to be overly creative and make it a complete disaster area. That is what we are trying to do with Islam these days.

This is what Muslims are doing to Islam today. Allah (pbuh) has given us a perfect system, a perfect way of life and we are simply distorting it for no reason at all. So, what do we do to fight this distortion? Any ideas?

Student: We should stop littering.

Teacher: We should stop littering, okay, what will that do to Islam? We will become socially responsible, okay fine. But how do we get us Muslims to fix this business. Yeah somebody else had raised their hands

Student: Get out of the edge and go into the middle.

Teacher: Absolutely, yes. But how do you find your way to the middle? Just go! But how? Just take any compass and go?

Student: With the help of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.

Slide 92:

Teacher: So what will be the first step? Educating ourselves. Where will you go, even if you take the first step, you are blindfolded, you have no clue. By educating ourselves we take the blindfold off. We put on a very clear pair of spectacles which you can see things with. So, we need to find the right path {*sirat-e-mustaqeem*} and how are we going to find it? We have to educate ourselves about Islam which is exactly what we are trying to do right now, *alhamdulillah*, so we are already taking the first step. *Alhamdulillah*, that is why we are here, because we are trying to educate ourselves and find out what our *deen* is all about.

Come back to that first example: if the woman knew about the apron she would be wearing it the right way, wouldn't she? So what comes first? Education. Does anybody know what the first revelation {*wahee*} was that Allah (swt) sent on the Prophet (pbuh)?

'Read!' '*Iqra biismi rabbikal ladhi khalaq,*' that was the first revelation. What does the first revelation teach us?

Read, learn, acquire knowledge, that's the first thing that one needs to do. And many times people unlike us, who are not born Muslims, revert from another religion and become Muslims. Do any of you personally a reverted Muslim?

Student: My aunt.

Teacher: Your aunt is a reverted Muslim and have you met her?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And what do you think about her? Is she more educated about Islam than you are?

Student: Yes. She learnt about Islam before accepting it.

Teacher: She is saying that her aunt is a reverted Muslim so she has first hand knowledge and she has become a Muslim on the basis of that knowledge. So, generally what happens is that Muslims who are reverted Muslims and come to Islam later on in their life instead of being born into Islam are more informed about Islam. Why?

Student: It's because they learn about Islam.

Teacher: Yes and people like us, who are born Muslims, assume that because we are born Muslims we will know all there is to know about Islam, right?

Student: Right.

Teacher: Many times we also ask ourselves why we do certain things in certain ways. *Alhamdulillah*, you guys, who are coming here, have the advantage that perhaps your parents are teaching you the right way or are teaching you from the *Qur'an*. But a majority of the Muslims around us, us included, have an assumption that we would at least know the important things about Islam. That does not happen. We are born Pakistanis aren't we? Was everyone here born in Pakistan? Okay, were the majority of the people here born in Pakistan? Do you know what the constitution of Pakistan is? You don't? Why?

Sidra: I don't know... I was never taught.

Teacher: You were never taught or you never read it, simple as that. Have we been reading the *Qur'an* in Arabic or our own language? The majority of Muslims in the world are not Arabs, they are non-Arabs. Let's talk about Pakistan because we live in Pakistan, so any of you speak Arabic?

Student: I learnt in my school.

Teacher: You learnt it in school; you learnt it as a subject. But would you say that you speak fluently and that you understand the *Qur'an* without its meaning?

Student: No.

Teacher: But, *alhamdulillah*, that's also wonderful, as small children we all learnt the *Qur'an*. And by learn the *Qur'an* I mean, learnt to read it in a language that goes 'zoof' over our heads, right? So, it's like assuming that just because you are born a Pakistani you know the constitution of Pakistan, if you're a born Muslim you would know what is in the *Qur'an*. We cannot make such assumptions.

The first thing to do to is to educate ourselves, and then with the education we have to keep our intentions pure. Intention is everything. Why am I getting myself educated? Why do I



want to know about Islam? Because I want to please Allah (swt), because I want to save myself from the fire and I want to go to *jannah*, simple as that. And then we have to act on what we learn.

It's a very simple action plan, nothing complicated about it. Intentions pure, educate yourself, act upon it, and all three go hand in hand. Educating ourselves about Islam is a lifelong process, just because we are coming to Perceptions once a week does not mean that it's enough for us now, we're done, we're good. No, it's a lifelong process. So, *inshaAllah*, we are all going to try to work on this simple little action plan in our lives from... when? From today, from now.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*