

MODULE 1

Class Title: Beautiful Names of Allah (swt)

Aim of the lesson: To introduce concept of *Tauheed* through the names of Allah (swt)

Category: *Aqeedah* (belief)

Lesson Format: Power point presentation with narration. Discussion

Handout: small booklet/pamphlet of Names of Allah with meanings and/or audio cd

(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)

Slide 1:

What is written on the screen? Can someone say it out loud?

Student: *Al-Asma-ul-Husna*

Can somebody tell me what that means? *Al-Asma-ul-Husna* means what?

Slide 2:

It actually means 'the beautiful names' but we use it for the beautiful names of Allah (swt).

"He is Allah (God), the Creator, the Originator, The Fashioner, to Him belong the most beautiful names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth, do declare His praises and Glory. And He is the Exalted in Might, The Wise. (Surah Al Hashr 59: Verse 24)

Slide 3:

We are, *inshaAllah*, going to talk about the beautiful names of Allah (swt) today. Can somebody take a guess as to why we're going to do that?

Can anybody take a guess and tell me why it is that we pay so much importance to the names of Allah (swt)?

Student: Because every name represents a different quality of Allah.

Student: Because they describe the personality of Allah (swt) and we get to know about Him.

Teacher: Absolutely correct.

Who is our Lord and Master? Allah (swt). **How do we get to know Him?** We can't see Him. A lot of times, we see somebody or something and that is how we get to know them or we hear

something and then we get to know them. Isn't that true? I mean, we're sitting over here and getting to know each other. By interacting with each other, seeing each other, and hearing each other, we form an idea of who we are in our minds.

But how do we do this with Allah (swt)? We can't see Him or hear Him. The 99 names of Allah (swt) are one profound way of getting to know who Allah (swt) actually is.

Slide 4 and 5:

Why should we try and understand the names of Allah (swt)?

Allah (swt) asks us to do so in the Qur'an Himself.

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 180, "The most beautiful names belong to Allah so call on Him by them." (Surah Al-A'raf 7: Verse 180)

Slide 6:

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "To God belong 99 names, hundred minus one, anyone who memorizes them will enter Paradise." [Bukhari]

The Prophet (pbuh) again and again instructed and advised his companions to keep their hearts always illuminated with the remembrance of Allah.

In the Qur'an Allah (swt) says: "...and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest, and Allah knows what you do." (Surah Al 'Ankabut 29:Verse 45),

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." (Surah Ar Ra'd 13:Verse 28)

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "... Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart.[Bukhari]

This means that the heart is the source of good and bad thoughts and deeds. If our heart does not have remembrance of Allah, bad ideas and thoughts occur in it. And we end up doing bad stuff - sins. When our heart is full of remembrance of Allah, bad thoughts and ideas are suppressed and good ones happen which lead to good deeds – good stuff eh!

Memorizing or contemplating the beautiful names of Allah, will result in remembering Him; remembering Him will result in the goodness of the heart; this good heart will result in good deeds; and the good deeds will take us to *Jannah* by the permission of the Lord Of the worlds Allah.

Was that too hard to understand?

When you listen to the names of Allah (swt), they sound very beautiful and they aren't that difficult to memorize. If anyone of us wants to go to *Jannah*, one way of getting there is to memorize these 99 names. When it comes to memorization, the thing that you internalize very well, that you understand very well, that is what actually stays in your head. Otherwise you forget very easily.

Have any of you tried memorizing the names of Allah (swt)? Does anybody here know the names of Allah (swt)? *Alhamdulillah!* You know some of them with their meanings? It's a good idea to understand the meanings as well if you want the names to stay in your head for a long time.

Slide 7, 8 and 9:

Another reason we learn about the names of Allah (swt) is because we say *la illaha illallah*, there is no god but Allah.

When we say it, we are declaring that Allah (swt) is single. He is unique, He is unequal, He is independent, He is our Creator and He is Our Master. He is the One we pray to, He is the one we obey, He is the One we ask for help, He is the One we think of in times of need and He is the One we thank in times of joy.

Do you guys ever think about Allah (swt)? Seriously, do you ever, consciously think about Allah (swt)?

Yes, you do think about Allah (swt)?

When do you think about Allah (swt)? Sometimes when you've prayed for something and it comes true so you thank Him. Another time you think about Him is when you are praying to Him, isn't it? So when you need something or want something, who do you turn to other than mommy? I want a burger today. No I'm quite serious, when you want to have McDonalds for example, a BigMac or a McCrispy or whatever, what do you do? I'm not joking. So you want to have Mcdonalds, this is a very serious question, what do you do?

Student: you nag your mom.

Teacher: Suppose you're going home from school and you want to have McDonalds. What is the first thing that comes to your mind? Who do you ask?

Student: I think of Allah (swt) that Allah (swt) please make my mom say yes.

Teacher: How many of us can actually claim we also do that? *Alhamdulillah!* You guys are way up there! That's wonderful!

Slide 10:

You see when the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) needed anything, even if it was a shoelace, they would ask Allah (swt). Yet a lot of times our connection with Allah (swt) is not like that. We don't think of asking our *Rabb* for small or mundane things.

You think I need to ask mom, can I go to Nandos with my friends - but what has Allah (swt) got to do with it? The whole purpose of getting attached to Allah (swt) through His names is that the first thought that should occur to us when we want **anything** is to ask Allah (swt) for it.

Student: we unconsciously use Allah's name all the time.

Teacher: That is wonderful. However, we should strive to develop consciousness of Allah (swt) to the extent that whatever I want, I'm going to ask Allah (swt); even if it's fantastic or weird or something very small. Whatever I do, I should think of Allah (swt). Whatever I say, I should have Allah (swt) in mind.

Student: You mean maybe Allah will convince my mom to buy me McDonalds?

Teacher: It's not **maybe** Allah (swt) will convince, if He wants He **will** convince. It is not a question of maybe. Once you contemplate on the names of Allah, you realize that the power of Allah is absolute. There is no maybe with Allah (swt). He can do anything. Period. Do you understand the difference? If He doesn't will then it won't happen, if He wills then anything is possible.

This concept is called *tauheed*. You must have heard about it. The concept of calling upon one Allah for each and every thing is called *tauheed*.

Slide 11:

The names and attributes of Allah (swt) are an essential part of *tauheed*. That is how you recognize Allah (swt) for who He actually is.

Slide 12 and 13:

There are lots of misconceptions about God in different religions and different cultures. The image of God in western culture is sometimes an old man with a long, white beard who is sitting on the clouds.

Slide 14 and 15:

They have different images of Jesus (as) who they consider a son of God. You see pictures and statues depicted in various different ways. Have you heard of the artist Michelangelo? Michelangelo painted an image of God in the Sistine Chapel.

Slide 16:

There are various Greek gods; do you know of any Greek gods? I don't know all the names. There are different Greek and Roman gods as well. I always get confused between the names of the Greek and the Roman gods! Well, they have this whole idea of gods with families and human weaknesses like jealousy, spite, hatred etc. So that is one concept of god.

Slide 17:

Some religions have a god of good and a god of evil. They say that all the good things that happen are from the god of good and all the bad things that happen are from the god of evil. So there are two different sources working in opposition.

Slide 18:

Some religions believe that anything that looks more powerful than man is god. This is a very common misconception in old religions and can involve almost anything. It could be an elephant, it could be the sun and it could be a tree.

Slide 19, 20 and 21:

Some religions worshiped inanimate objects like the sun. Some religions have personified animals, like snakes or cows, as being supernatural or sacred. Some religions say a holy person is god-like, like Buddha.

Student: Hindus believe in gods like that?

Teacher: Yes, in the Hindu religion they believe there are different gods. Some of their gods are part human and part animal.

Slide 22:

The most common misconception about God is that He is everywhere and **in** everything.

This is one of the most misleading misconceptions. Even a lot of Muslims might believe that God is in everything and that God is everywhere. The power and the presence of God is everywhere. He controls each and everything 24/7. But God is not **physically** everywhere. Do you understand the difference? This is very important! The power of God, the *qadr* (power) of God, the Supremacy of God, the Sovereignty of Allah (swt) is everywhere. A leaf can't fall without Allah's (swt) permission, knowledge or command.

We are sitting here. I'm moving this finger. Some of you are fiddling and some of you are half asleep. All of this is with the *idhn* (permission) of Allah (swt). Allah (swt) is controlling us right now, each and every one of us. But does that mean that He is here in this room? No, not

physically. His power over us is all the time, He's seeing us all the time, He's hearing us all the time but His physical Presence is not there.

Student: Allah lets us do what we want though?

Teacher: Allah does that with us, Allah gives us a choice. Allah has given free choice to two of His creations; one is the human being and the other is *jinn*. Both these creatures are going to be accountable for what they do. And for accountability, you need to have a choice. Allah (swt) has given us a choice, choose this or choose that. Whatever we do, Allah (swt) allows us to do BUT we don't do it without His knowledge. That's the difference.

He has given us a choice and that's our test.

Slide 23:

The other misconception is that God is in everything. A lot of idol worship begins with people saying that God is in everything. That is how it starts; God is in this tree so I'm going to worship this tree, God is in fire so I'm going to start worshiping fire, etc. God is not in everything. Yes, He's controlling everything but He's not physically in it. It's very simple to understand, nothing complicated. It's just that these are very common misconceptions.

Student: The Qur'an says that Allah breathed His spirit into man. Does that lead to this misconception?

Teacher: According to the Qur'an, when Allah (swt) created man, He breathed His Spirit into it. Some people misinterpret that, you're absolutely right.

Slide 24:

Allah (swt) Himself has given us an idea about what He is like. We can't even form an idea about Allah (swt) on our own. We are not allowed to use our own little noodles over here and form an idea about Allah (swt). This is because Allah (swt) is beyond our capacity to understand; our intellect and senses are too small, our experience too limited by life on Earth for us to be able to comprehend who Allah (swt) is. Do you understand what I'm trying to say over here? Yes?

Student: Any time, anyone mentions Allah (swt) I end up with an image in my mind, a picture of Allah (swt).

Teacher: Ok. Are you talking about a physical image of a person? Not a person that you know but still a physical image of a human being? The thing to do about that is to remember that Allah (swt) doesn't look like anybody.

Allah (swt) doesn't have any characteristics that are like anybody. He doesn't have a physical presence that can be comparable to anything else. So if an image does come in your mind, try to

remove that and replace it with what Allah (swt) has said about Himself. If you keep contemplating on Allah's 99 names, eventually the image will go away and you will end up with a broader picture of Allah (swt). When I say a picture, I don't mean a physical picture. Is this too difficult for some of you?

It is natural for us to attach 'images' to Allah. As children we like to put things in a physical perspective. You say apple and an image of an apple comes to mind. Abstract concepts are difficult for children.

Nor do adults find them easy to grasp. But *insha Allah* as you get to know Allah (swt) Himself, it will get easier. It's a process to get to know somebody; you don't know somebody by just meeting them once. You're talking to me right now but can you claim that you know me and that I know you? No, it's going to take a while to build up that relationship. Same with Allah (swt). That is why, as we reflect on the names of Allah (swt) the picture will get clearer, *insha Allah*.

Slide 25:

Do all of you know Surah Al-Ikhlās? For some of us, this is the only *surah* that we read in our *salah*. In this *surah*, Allah (swt) Himself has described Who He is. The disbelievers used to come to the Prophet (pbuh) and ask him questions like who is Allah (swt) and what does He look like? And then Allah (swt) revealed this *surah* to explain who He is.

- Say (O Muhammad) He is Allah, (the) one.
- Allah the Self Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need
- He begets not, nor was He begotten. This basically means that He doesn't have any children nor is He anybody's child.
- And there is none co-equal or comparable to Him.

So you can't have any physical comparison of anything you have ever seen to Allah (swt).

Slide 26-35:

Understanding Allah's (swt) names means to understand with knowledge, clarity and sincerity who we are worshiping.

Slide 36:

There are four classes of Allah's (swt) names:

Slide 37 and 38:

The first class is the Proper name of Allah (swt). 'Allah' is the proper name of Allah (swt). Nobody else can be called Allah (swt). The Proper name, 'Allah', includes all the meanings, qualities, characteristics and attributes of all His names.

Slide 39:

Having a Proper name of Allah (swt) means that we can't say *ArRahman* is Allah or *ArRahim* is Allah. We say that Allah is *ArRahman* and Allah is *ArRahim*. Nobody else can be given the proper name of Allah (swt). Thus we name people Abdullah, servant of Allah, but we do not name people 'Allah'.

Slide 40:

The second class includes those names of Allah which define a characteristic of Allah's (swt) self. Please remember, when I say self, that doesn't mean His physical self. Sometimes it gets difficult because we are so used to looking at things physically. We don't go beyond that. Yet to recognize Allah (swt) we need deeper insight. This might seem Latin to you, but *insha allah*, it will all come together once you start contemplating.

At the end of the day, what we need to do, whether young or old [and you people aren't that young that you can't do that] is to actually sit and think about Allah (swt). We need to sit and have that Allah-time. Only then will we start understanding Him.

Slide 41-43:

Who is my Creator? Who am I dealing with? Who has got my life in His Hand? Understand Him that way. For example, *As-Sami*, the All-Hearing. That is a characteristic of Allah (swt). Allah (swt) is not only *As-Sami*, that is only one part of Him. *Al-Basir*, the All-Seeing, *Al-'Alim*, the All-Knowing. These are some names that tell us about Allah (swt).

Slide 44:

Category three are those names that indicate negation, nullification or impossibility of any imperfection or fault. Allah (swt) has absolutely no fault.

Do you understand the difference of not having any possibility of any fault? For example, let's look at ourselves. Suppose I say that Hira doesn't lie, Hira always tells the truth. Does that mean, by my saying that Hira always tells the truth, that there will never ever be an incident in the life of Hira that she will not tell the truth? The possibility of fault is there. Although she is not a liar, she is a truthful person but the possibility of the fault is there just because she's human. But with Allah (swt) there's not even a possibility. It just doesn't happen! Total nullification.

Slide 45 and 46:

I'm just giving you a few examples because we have limited time. For example, *Al-Quddus*, Allah (swt) is The Holy and that is that. Period. You know period is a good word to understand that. *Al-Quddus*. Period. That's that. He is The Holy, that's it. *As-Salam*, He is the source of peace, that's that.

Slide 47-51:

The fourth category are those names which characterize Allah's (swt) actions, what He does. *Al-Khaliq*, The Creator, *Al-Bari'*, The Evolver, *Al-Musawwir*, The Shaper of Beauty. He's the One Who has made your beautiful faces. *Ar-Razzaq*, The Sustainer, the One Who provides sustenance, Who provides us with yummy food. Is this too complicated for you? Please don't be embarrassed to ask.

The most important thing to understand is that Allah is not in everything. We need to go beyond the physical aspect and try to understand Allah (swt) without the crutches of a physical sense. When we talk about a physical sense then we are limited. We say this is a shoe bag and there are shoes in it. That's it, end of story. I have described it, finished, done for. It's an object. Even if you describe a human being, you say so & so is overweight and fills up a lot of space. Thus you are finished where the physical sense is concerned. We cannot do that with Allah (swt). Allah's (swt) self is so much larger and so much greater that we can't comprehend it all.

Student: Isn't it our nature to think of things physically?

Teacher: We've been trained to think in a physical sense. That's why we need to consciously think about Allah (swt). The whole purpose of this class and of getting to know the 99 names of Allah (swt), is to realize that we have to make a conscious effort to get to know Allah (swt). It is not going to happen by itself. We can't just say that I'm a Muslim and I say the *kailmah* so I know Allah (swt). We can't say that. We have to put in some effort, put in a little bit of work. We have to sit with the card of 'Names of Allah', read the names, read the meanings and then think about them.

What does this mean? Are we all on the same page or we are sleeping? Same page, OK *alhamdulillah*.

Are you still struggling with the physical image thing? That's fine. We have to struggle a little to get something which is so much mightier, so much higher than us. For some it's going to be easier and for some a little harder. From today onwards, we should make a resolution with ourselves that as frequently as we can, we will contemplate on Allah (swt). I will not say do it every day or once a week but as frequently as you can. The morning and evening du`as you do or

the little time you do *dhikr* after your *salah*, both are very good times to think about Allah (swt); consciously think about Allah (swt), who Allah (swt) is, consciously think about it.

In the end, I want to recite to you this little poem which I absolutely adore:

Slide 52-72:

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wide and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.
Each little flower that opens
And each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors,
He made their shiny wings.
The purple-headed mountains,
The rivers flowing by,
The sunset, and the morning,
The brightness of the sky.
The cool winds in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them everyone.

Allah (swt) has said in the Holy Qur'an that 'look at My signs and recognize Me.'

I'm not going to say anything anymore. I just want you guys to look at these pictures and try to see who the Creator of all of this is. Don't look at me or anywhere else. Just look up at the screen and concentrate on the pictures.

Slide 74-77:

When we see anything beautiful that Allah (swt) has created, we say *subhan Allah*. Learn to look for the signs of Allah (swt) and to recognize Him through those. *Insha Allah*, this is something that we can and will train ourselves to do.

(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*

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCE:

- Names of Allah, Harun Yahya (available as free download on harunyahya.com)
- Exemplary Principles Concerning the Beautiful Names and Attributes of Allah (Revised 2nd Edition), Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen, Troid Publications, July 2003, Oct. 2009 (<http://www.troid.org/store/images/D/exemplaryprinciples-bk.jpg>)