*Nuh and Da’wa – Part 1*

*Ramadan – Ashton Central Mosque – 27/07/13*

Prophet Nuh spent 950 years doing Da’wa. I wonder if any of you has invited someone during this week. Has anyone put into practice all the things we have previously talked about? Does anyone feel yearning for his religion as much as Prophet Nuh did? He did not do that for just a week – a period during which we forgot and became half-hearted – but he endured for almost a thousand years. How shameful of us to become half-hearted after a week’s time while Prophet Nuh persevered for centuries! Nonstop work! Our religion deserves all this endurance and patience. He had been calling for Allah for almost ten centuries while we worry about 30 or 40 years. You even find a twenty-year-old giving up on people while he/she had just started. This is the essence of today’s session.

***What Did His People Do To Him?***

He endured many trials: People physically harming and hitting him, humiliation, mockery, false accusations, once accused of being a liar and another time of being insane. On other occasions, they threatened to stone him.

“They said, “Indeed, decidedly in case you do not refrain, O N‍uh, (Noah) indeed you will definitely be one of the stoned.” (26: 116)

At other times they would tell him

“The chiefs of his people said, “Surely we indeed see you in evident error.” (7: 60)

 “Decidedly he is nothing except a man (seized) by a madness.” (23: 25)

“…whenever (some) chiefs of his people passed by him, they scoffed at him.” (11:38).

All that happened so many times! On the other hand, you feel offended quickly when a friend of yours makes fun of you! You would say, “I was humiliated, I will never talk to anyone about religion!” Days, years and centuries went on and Prophet Nuh persevered in his call to Allah in spite of all the hardships he endured! His people also persevered in their disavowal, generation after generation, to the extent that a father - at the moment of his death – would will his sons into disavowal! Can you see how huge the difference is between our situation nowadays and that of Prophet Nuh? He was faced with a vehement disavowal while we live among people who love religion! Our situation is far better than his and hope for us is much greater.

***Let Us Consider Together The Ayahs Of Surat Nuh In Details.***

In the fifth ayah, we feel that Nuh is standing before Allah after a thousand years recounting what he did in trying to guide his people saying that he did his best and could not do more than that. What about you? Will you be able to find as many good arguments as Prophet Nuh’s while accounting for your deeds before Allah on the Day of Judgment?

Allah says what can be translated as, “He said, “Lord! Surely I have called my people by night and by daytime,” (71:5).

I was working day and night. It made no difference for me whether it was day or night nor that others were sleeping while I was awake!

“Yet my calling increased them (in nothing) except in flight.”(71:6).

You see the result? Allah says what can be translated as, “And surely whenever I call them that You may forgive them, they set (Literally: made “up”) their fingers in their ears, and enveloped themselves with their clothes, and persisted, and waxed proud (with insolent) arrogance (Literally: in “arrogant” pride).”(71:7).

Consider the word “whenever”, that is I never stopped, I worked continuously, I did not care whether my people were busy or did not listen to me! Can you see the extent of their obstinacy? In spite of all this, I kept trying and decided to talk to them through gestures. However, they covered their faces with their clothes so that they would not see me.

I did not give up and tried something else, so, I talked in a loud voice with hope that they would listen to me.

“Thereafter, surely I called them aloud,” (71:8).

Faced to this persevering disavowal, Prophet Nuh diversified his means of da’wa, this may teach us not to use one single means of da’wa but try to diversify as much as possible.

“Thereafter, surely I called them publicly, and I secretly (spoke) to them in private (Literally: in secret “conversation”).” (71:9)

What a perseverance and love for his religion!

Does anyone love Islam in this same way? Is anyone ready to devote 60 years trying to guide people thus making of da’wa his lifetime cause? There are five categories of people:

The first category, which is rare among religious people, contains people who just listen, who are ready to attend any religious lesson or conference, and have a huge amount of information about religion. Nevertheless, they do not make good use of all of this. The only relationship they have with religion is their ears and nothing else. They do not pray, nor do they reflect on the sins they commits!

The second category is better than the previous one, it contains people who perform prayer, fast in Ramadan and do not commit major sins, but their hearts are not with Allah. They are quite satisfied with this and do not feel the need to progress.

The third category of people perform prayer, fast in Ramadan and avoid major sins just as the second one but exceed them by trying to get nearer and nearer to Allah. They are trying to submit themselves all the time. This, of course, has nothing to do with age. Therefore, this may be the case of a fifty-year-old person.

The fourth category is the same as the third one in their quest for Allah’s love and their closeness to Him, but with some differences: in addition to their elevated religiosity, these people try to guide others!

The fifth and highest category includes those people whose only desire is to please Allah. Therefore, everything they do is intended for the sake of Allah. They study, work, make the best homes, raise their children, try to promote themselves into a high social level, earn a lot of money, etc., all with a unique aim: getting closer and closer to Allah and gaining His love and satisfaction! We are telling the story of Prophet Nuh who fits in the fifth category because we want to aspire to be in this category. If we want to be the same as the people of the fifth category; the same as Nuh, we have to love our religion beyond anything else!

The first lesson we get from these five ayahs is the importance of da’wa! You may think it is a difficult task since there are a lot of unveiled girls and young people who are beginners in prayer among the people you know. However, da’wa indeed is quite an easy thing to do. Da’wa means you invite your friends, neighbours and relatives to the call of Allah. Have you ever tried to guide them or help them at least one step towards Allah?

Some people would say that they could not do da’wa because they know very little about religion, but the Prophet says, “If you know just one verse you have to relay it to others”.

Take for example, if you know the importance of prayer and the risk taken by those who do not perform prayer, and if some of your friends do not perform it, tell them about it. The Imam Ahmad Ibn-Hanbal said, “If one hears about something, he has the knowledge of it!” You are not asked to talk about things you do not know you just relay what you have heard. Didn’t you come to attend this lecture? Haven’t you heard about paradise, hell, the Day of Judgment, and Allah’s mercy? Then tell your friends! This is what is meant by da’wa!

On the other hand, other people say they do not do da’wa because they need to improve their faith. They say they will do it once their faith is perfect! Scholars say that a person cannot delay doing da’wa until his faith is complete because he may either die before he can reach this end or, he may come one day and say my faith is complete now and I am ready to do da’wa, which is a sign of aberrance and arrogance! Therefore, it is important to do da’wa now; otherwise you will die before your belief is complete!

Others say that they understand they have to do da’wa even if they do not know much about their religion. However, they are reluctant because they cannot get rid of sin! Experience has shown me that the best way to get rid of sins is calling people to the path of Allah, because whenever you guide someone this helps you elevate yourself beyond sins. When you tell your friends to lower their gaze or to perform the fajr prayer you will feel ashamed of yourself and then start performing fajr yourself! Therefore, it will be a good means for your own elevation.

Therefore, da’wa requires intense passion and great love for your religion. If you desperately love your religion you will be able to achieve what Prophet Nuh achieved. Look at Abu-Huraira, his mother was not a Muslim and he really wanted her to convert into Islam. Whenever he talked to her about Islam, she refused. He felt bad about it and went crying to the Prophet, he said, “Oh Allah’s apostle, I call my mother to the path of Allah but she refuses. I have asked her today to worship Allah but she uttered very bad words about you. Do supplicate to Allah, O Allah’s apostle, to guide Um Abu-Huraira.” Then, the Prophet held up his hands and said, “O Allah, grant the mother of Abu-Huraira guidance.” Abu-Huraira said, “Then, I went home and knocked the door and heard her say from inside, “Wait, Abu-Huraira.” Then she opened the door and said, “O Abu-Huraira, there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet”!” How amazing! Did you notice how passionate Abu-Huraira was about his religion?

First of all, improve your relationship with them, knock at the doors of your neighbours, get acquainted with them and have a better relationship with them before talking to them about religion! Get closer to your sister before talking to her about wearing the Hijab. Be dutiful with your parents before telling them to do this or that! The Prophet said, “Command beneficence and forbid maleficence or Allah will send you a punishment that when you invoke him, He won’t respond to your supplications!”

The Prophet said, “O Ali, if one man is guided on the right path (i.e. converted to Islam) through you, it would be better for you than (a great number of) red camels.” That is much better than owing expensive cars, houses, etc.

Try da’wa and you will see! You have to start first with your kinship, your wife, your children and your neighbours. Gather the family around a lunch, for our families are getting dislocated. Endear yourself to them and to their children, and take care of them.

Try to imitate Prophet Nuh, who worked for a thousand years. This does not mean that you go to people and shout at them and force them to do what you want! Absolutely not, you have to love them first and then guide them according to your capacity. Sit down and think of how you can guide your friend. Invoke Allah while prostrating during the night prayer to guide the people around you.

Most people do not understand the reason behind their existence! We exist in order to be Allah’s vicegerents on earth, to guide people to the right path. For instance, if you guide someone to salah (prayer), then all his prayers will be counted within your good deeds, even after your death, in addition to the good deeds of all those people he/she might guide later. All the good deeds of the people of Egypt - prayer, lectures and all the other acts of worship - are and will be on the balance of the good deeds of Amr Ibnul-`Âs, because he was the one who introduced Islam to Egypt! Can you imagine how his balance will be? Of course, you can not. It is impossible to imagine such a thing! Don’t feel envy, but wish that other people’s good deeds be on your balance!

***Let Us Go Back To Surat Nuh.***

 “So I have said, 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord; surely He has been (The) Superb Forgiver;” (71: 10)

The thing Prophet Nuh focused on was Allah’s forgiveness. He focused on Allah’s mercy rather than His punishment! Which implies that when I talk to people about religion for the first time, I should not mention hell. Some people understand Islam the wrong way. They shout at people and talk to them aggressively, arguing that they do this out of concern for religion. Indeed they are wrong. Da’wa does not rely upon violence, terrorizing, impelling nor forcing. On the contrary, it relies on the hope for Allah’s forgiveness! Talk to them about mercy and hope. Don’t close all the doors before them and then ask them to respond to you!

Therefore, if your parents/children need guidance, beware of quarreling with them. On the contrary, be loving with them because Islam is love. It is a religion that tries to bring hearts closer to each other! We, as Muslims, have to understand our religion this way. Furthermore, if your sister does not wear Hijab, never be harsh on her; but endear yourself to her, get closer to her, and try to find out about her problems! Try to understand together why she does not wear Hijab. Guide her smoothly and invoke Allah for her. This is the right approach of da’wa. There is no violence, nor rudeness in our religion!

The Imam Abu-Hanifa had a drunkard neighbour. Every night, Abu-Hanifa performed Qiyam, while his drunk neighbour was raving all night long repeating the same words, “They caused my loss.” It was clear that the young man had some family problems. One day, the police came and arrested him. Of course, Abu-Hanifa was waiting for an opportunity like this to call him on the right path. When you want to guide someone you have to always look out for the right time, because some people are hard to convince. You may do your best to guide them but they do not respond. However, everyone has moments of his life where he is more vulnerable. They can be moments of illness or problems; and these moments are most suitable for talking about religion! After the drunkard neighbour was arrested, Abu-Hanifa went to the police station, begged them to release him and promised he will not do that again. Abu-Hanifa kept silent all the way home. Abu-Hanifa kept silent so that the young man would reflect on all what was happening to him. Once they arrived home, he asked him, “Have I caused your loss.” The young man answered, “I swear you have not, and from now on I will not drink wine anymore.” Look at the angle from which he came.

 “So I have said, Ask forgiveness of your Lord; surely He has been (The) Superb Forgiver;”(71:10) After he talked about the sweetness of expiation (asking forgiveness) and the reward we get from it,

“He will send down on you (rain) from the heaven showering plentifully, And He will supply you with riches and sons, (Or: seeds) and will set up (Literally: make) for you gardens, and will set up for you rivers.”(71:11-12).