



ISLAMIC ONLINE UNIVERSITY

# INSIGHTS

MAGAZINE

The Right  
**Beginning**

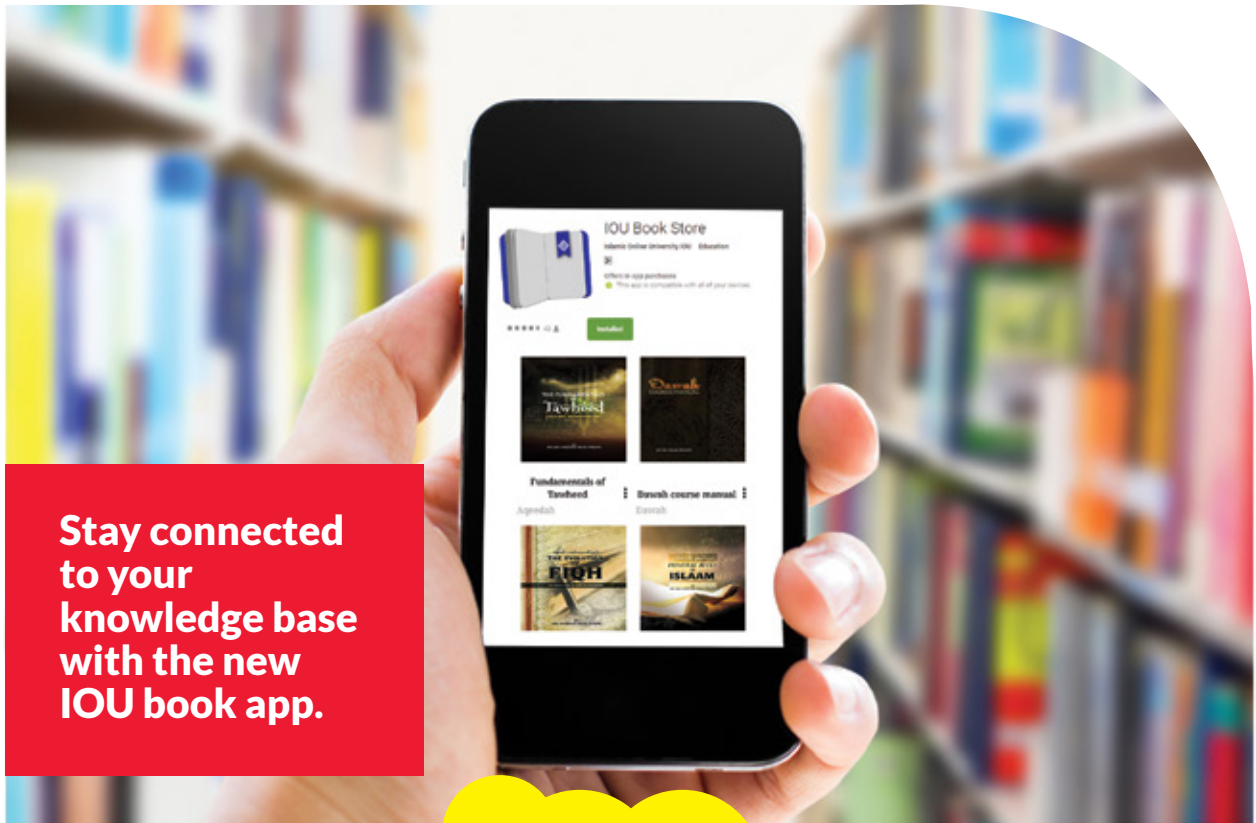
Attitude of  
**Gratitude**

**Halal  
Fun**  
Activities  
for Muslim  
Families

'My husband  
and I  
**compete**  
over grades  
and  
modules'



# IOU Book App: **READ ON THE GO**



*Why do I need this app?*



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- ✓ **Portable** - Download and refer to your Islamic library anytime, anywhere
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# The family is the basic building block of a society

Everything in this world will perish. However, some things last longer than others. A strong base will keep a building standing for hundreds of years. But, a small earthquake can bring down a very tall building with a weak base. A character is the base of a person. A marriage is the base of a family. The family is the base of a society. If the base is righteous and strong, so will be the rest.

The secret to a strong family, hence society, is to follow commands and advices of our Lord. No tradition should ever replace what is commanded by Allah. His Wisdom should be our guide. A strong connection with Him will help us walk the right path. This will bring out the best of us inside and outside of our homes.

A family is the first place where we learn how to interact with others around us. It is impossible to live together, agree on everything and never

have a conflict. Our Prophet (ﷺ) advised his Ummah:

“A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another.” (Sahih Muslim)

This hadith can be applied to all spheres of a Muslim's life. Whenever a person finds something bad, he should look at the good and keep that in mind. This will allow him to search for the good in everything and everyone, and overlook faults and mistakes of others.

Righteous individuals will create righteous families who in turn will create righteous societies.

— **Veronika Matulova**



## MEET THE TEAM

<b>Publisher</b>	: Islamic Online University
<b>Editor-in-Chief</b>	: Dr. Bilal Philips
<b>Managing Editor</b>	: Veronika Matulova
<b>Marketing Director</b>	: Hira Adnan
<b>Designs &amp; Layout</b>	: Fatimah Bint Aboobacker
<b>Cover Design</b>	: Fatimah Bint Aboobacker
<b>Editors</b>	: Aishah Ahmed Farzana Hussain Sadiah Chunawala

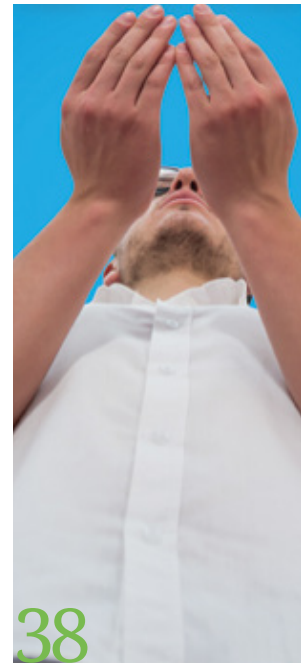
## YOUR VIEWS

We would love to hear from you. Please let us know what you liked or would like to see in the magazine. If you have a particular piece or feel you can make a valuable contribution to IOU Insights please email: [info@iou-insights.com](mailto:info@iou-insights.com)

# Contents

<b>06</b>	<b>IOU BRIGHTENS THE FUTURE OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION</b> In April and June 2016, Dr. Bilal Philips was...	<b>20</b>	<b>‘MY HUSBAND AND I COMPETE OVER GRADES AND MODULES’</b> My name is Roshan Razvi. I have been...
<b>08</b>	<b>IOU’S STUDENTS EAGER TO SPREAD KNOWLEDGE IN CANADA</b> In May 2016, Dr. Bilal Philips arrived in ...	<b>22</b>	<b>CAN BABIES GO TO HELL?</b> The birth of a child is usually considered as something wonderful and...
<b>10</b>	<b>WINNING THE HEARTS OF GHANAIS: DR. BILAL’S MUCH AWAITED VISIT</b> Upon Dr. Bilal’s arrival in Ghana on ...	<b>24</b>	<b>IOU REPRESENTATIVES AROUND THE WORLD</b> The representatives and volunteers ...
<b>13</b>	<b>HALAL FUN ACTIVITIES FOR MUSLIM FAMILIES</b> Upon Dr. Bilal’s arrival in Ghana on ...	<b>28</b>	<b>PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH</b> Parenthood is a journey where you play the role of a teacher and your...
<b>15</b>	<b>SMILE FOR THE CAMERA: THE IOU PHOTOSHOOT CONTEST</b> Islamic Online University’s Promotions Department ...	<b>30</b>	<b>IOU EXAM CENTERS</b> The Islamic Online University exam centers and proctors play an integral role in fulfilling our...
<b>18</b>	<b>PLANTING THE SEEDS OF LOVE: MAKING OUR EDUCATION TECHNIQUES AGE APPROPRIATE</b> “Didn’t I tell you to...?” I heard my 5-year old...	<b>32</b>	<b>DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE: COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS</b> All praise is due to Allah Alone. May His ...
		<b>38</b>	<b>ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE (PART 1)</b> She opens her wardrobe. Two dozen dresses of red, yellow, orange, pink, and you-name-it...
		<b>41</b>	<b>THE RIGHT BEGINNING</b> The Prophet ﷺ was reported by Abu Hurayrah to have...
		<b>42</b>	<b>HAFSA BINT SIRIN: A PROMINENT SCHOLAR</b> Hafsa bint Sirin was a distinguished faqiha...
		<b>44</b>	<b>AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CLIENT-CENTERED THERAPY</b> Client-centered therapy (CCT) is a type of ...
		<b>48</b>	<b>‘ACCEPTING ISLAM EARNED ME A SLAP FROM MY FATHER AND TORTURE’</b> Modern Christianity is money-oriented...





# IOU brightens the future of Nigerian Education

In April and June 2016, Dr. Bilal Philips was invited by two Islamic organizations in Nigeria—Light of the Ummah and 1-Ummah. He held talks and visited six states therein: Kano, Kaduna, Abuja, Sokoto, Lagos, and Rivers.

During Dr. Bilal's stay, he paid a courtesy visit to the Emir of Kano and Sultan of Sokoto, and had meetings with the Council of Ulama in the country, as well as IOU students in each state.

In Sokoto State, the event was a very memorable one, as over 5000 people attended his lecture at the Usman Dan Fodio University Stadium. His tour in the country was an inspiration to the Muslims who learned about their religion and it helped promote IOU in the country to a large extent.

In Lagos State, while speaking at the I-EXPO (Workshop for Muslim Entrepreneurs), Dr. Bilal promoted the business administration course offered by IOU.

In the following days, during the blessed month of Ramadan, hundreds of people attended his public lecture in Abuja, organized

by 1-Ummah. Prominent imams of Abuja mosques, clerics, and government officials were amongst the audience. In addition to the public lecture, Dr. Bilal Philips visited the management of Al Jaaiz Bank, the first Islamic bank in Nigeria. The meeting gave Dr. Bilal the chance to promote IOU's Islamic Banking and Finance course to the authorities of the financial house.

After his lectures in Abuja, IOU's Nigeria team and Dr. Bilal Philips visited the NUC (National Universities Commission of Nigeria) to seek accreditation for IOU; so that the IOU certificates would be recognized by the government. Thus, allowing IOU's graduates to study further in any of the country's universities.

Likewise, IOU Nigeria team and Dr. Bilal visited the National Assembly of Nigeria and met with the Chairman House Committee on Education, Honourable Sulaiman Aminu in their efforts to get IOU recognized by the country's government. *Alhamdulillah*, Hon. Sulaiman promised the team that he would use his position in the assembly to fulfill his commitment.

This encourages IOU's students in Nigeria to continue their studies and *in sha Allah*, they will be able to use their certificates in the country.

In Rivers State, Port Harcourt, Dr. Bilal Philips delivered a public lecture at the Al Usra Islamic Organization Mosque. After his main lecture, he featured on a live program on a popular radio station known as Info FM and discussed Ramadan, religious tolerance, and global terrorism.

Workshops with Dr. Bilal on Islamization of knowledge were organized in Abuja and Kaduna for private Islamic schools in the two states.

In conclusion, Dr. Bilal's visit to Nigeria was a very successful trip and contributed to the promotion of IOU among Nigerians, especially among Muslims.

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## By Akindele Abdullah

Br. Akindele is the IOU national representative of Nigeria. He holds a B.A. in Linguistics from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He is currently pursuing an M.A. at the University of Malaya in Malaysia.





**Sokoto:** A keen audience at the Usman Dan Fodio University Stadium



**Sokoto:** Dr. Bilal speaking about the importance of the Quran



Dr. Bilal meeting with Hon. Sulaiman Aminu, Chairman House Committee on Education



Dr. Bilal and Ameer of 1-Ummah speaking to the Info FM studio audience

# IOU's Students Eager to Spread Knowledge in **Canada**



In May 2016, Dr. Bilal Philips arrived in Toronto, Canada. Although his visit was a fairly short one, it was filled with many events and engagements; including a Jumu'ah khutbah, a meet-and-greet program for IOU's students, lectures at the Gambian Conference and the ISNA Conference, and a program at the Quran and Hadith Center.

The visit presented an excellent opportunity to reach out to the Muslim community and remind them of their duty to Allah, their fellow Muslims, and the citizens of Canada. Of course, it was also a great chance to spread the word about IOU and the great opportunity to gain authentic Islamic knowledge.



## Jumu'ah Khutbah at Abu Hurairah Islamic Center

On May 20th, Dr. Bilal gave the khutbah at the Abu Huraira Islamic Center in North York, Canada, located just northeast of Toronto. This center has been very supportive of IOU and is not only an official exam center but also goes out of its way to meet the needs of IOU students by hosting many IOU programs and meetings.

The topic of the khutbah should be of interest to most of us who work to earn a living; as he addressed the life of a Muslim in the work environment and what our attitude should be toward work. An interesting point he mentioned was that humans generally spend most of their living hours in the pursuit of



earning a livelihood or similar work, so it can be a significant part of our lives and one that we are responsible for on the Day of Judgment.

Unfortunately, we find that there are Muslims who try to put as little effort into their work as possible. He cautioned the Muslims to fulfill their agreements and contracts and put forth an honest effort to our work, as indicated in the Quran and Sunnah.





Dr. Bilal explaining the history and the effort put into getting the University up and running at the “Meet-and-Greet with Dr. Bilal Philips” event organized by the IOU Student Committee in Toronto

## Meet-and-Greet IOU’s Students: Event in the Greater Toronto Area

The major event of interest during the visit was “The Meet-and-Greet with Dr. Bilal Philips” organized by the IOU Student Committee in Toronto, which took place on May 23 (a holiday in Canada). Current students and potential students from various parts of the Greater Toronto Area, as well as other parts of Ontario, attended. The purpose of the event was to present an opportunity for IOU and potential students to meet each other, Dr. Bilal, and the committee, and gain more insight about the University.

The program started with a PowerPoint presentation by Brother Rahil (a student and member of the student

committee) regarding studying at the IOU and being a part of the IOU local student committee, followed by a lecture by Dr. Bilal and a Q&A session.

Dr. Bilal spoke about “The Legacy of the IOU” and explained the history and the effort that was put into getting the University up and running, as well as many of the challenges faced in the process. The audience eagerly absorbed the information and followed up the lecture with intelligent and inquisitive questions.

On the whole, the program attracted about 50 brothers and 30-40 sisters. After the lecture and Q&A session, the attendees had an opportunity to chat with Dr. Bilal and the committee members.

One of the positive outcomes of the program was that a number of students inquired about ways

in which they can be involved in spreading the word to their communities. One attendee in particular attended the last monthly committee meeting and conveyed how he had taken huge steps to reach out to many Islamic centers and schools in the region with the goal of promoting IOU. He is presently working on an IOU training project involving Islamic schools and Canadian Muslim teachers.

We pray this event will be a means of guiding others toward the true teachings of Islam and keep those on this path steadfast until they meet their Lord.

### By M. Mubarak Ibrahim

Br. Mubarak is the President of the IOU Student Committee in Toronto, Canada. He holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Computer Engineering). He is presently pursuing the B.A.I.S. program at the Islamic Online University.

# WINNING THE HEARTS OF GHANAIANS





# Dr. Bilal's Much Awaited Visit



## Day 1: Arrival at Kotoka International Airport

Upon Dr. Bilal's arrival in Ghana on February 4, 2016, there was a press conference which focussed on his mission in Ghana and also the Islamic Online University. The entire leadership of the ASWAJ, led by the First Deputy National Imam, were at the airport to welcome Dr. Bilal Philips.



## Day 2: On the Airwaves

Dr. Bilal visited Marhaba FM and Metro TV where he delivered a few lectures and also spoke about IOU and its programs. The program was open to a live Q&A session and listeners were given the opportunity to call in and ask Dr. Bilal questions.

After giving the khutbah in al Hashim Mosque, Dr. Bilal Philips began his series of talks in Ghana with the topic, "Insurgency in God's Name - Revelation or Rebellion." There were more than 1500 attendees, and it served as a good platform to promote IOU.



## Day 3: Spreading the Message

Day 3 began with a talk with Muslim professionals, both from the public and private sectors, followed by a major program at Dogo Moro Park, Kumasi, based on the theme of spreading the message. Here too, we had a 1000 strong audience.



## Day 4: University Dawa

After meeting the Muslim professionals and duaats in Kumasi, we proceeded to Kwame



Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, where the fourth lecture took place. The program was attended by Professor Sulel, College of Engineering, Dr. Salifu, and other senior officers of the University. This was a good opportunity for us to promote IOU, and it was met with great enthusiasm by the students and staff alike.

From the University, we proceeded to meet Fatima Fareeda, Proprietor of a school, to discuss the possibilities of leasing out one of their old premises; to serve as the main IOU Ashanti Region Learning and Exam Center.



One of the major developments that took place is the lecture at Ambraiya Central Mosque. It had a massive turnout of over 5000 attendees. Dr. Bilal was heard by the people in Tamale on radio and throughout the country through affiliate radio stations.

### Broadcasting

Legion University students' benefited from their fourth program at Legion University and later on Dr. Bilal went live on the University Campus Radio, GH Islamic Online Radio, and Guidance TV.

### Prison Project

Dr. Bilal met with Sheikh Dr. Amin Bonsu, CEO of *Ameen* Scientific Herbal Medicine, at his residence, in order to discuss the arrangement of a study center and some support to revive the IOU Ghana Prison Project.

We also received an invitation from the management of Al Huda Society to meet with reverts and to visit the newly established Islamic TV station in Ghana (Guidance TV).

### Workshop on Islamization of the Islamic Curriculum

Dr. Bilal Philips took this opportunity to organize a workshop for International Islamic Schools that are willing to Islamize programs in their schools.

### Meeting IOU Students in the Ghana Office

Dr. Bilal's visit to Ghana was concluded with a special meeting with IOU's students at the IOU Ghana office, where students had the opportunity to discuss with their Chancellor their studies and challenges they face.



### By Samudeen Yusif

**Br. Samudeen** is the IOU Ghana Representative. He holds a Master of Business Administration (Marketing) from the Ghana Business School, B.Ed. (Management Option) from the University of Cape Coast and a Certificate in Project Management, Accra, Ghana.

# HALAL FUN

## ACTIVITIES FOR MUSLIM FAMILIES

*Having fun is a crucial aspect of the development of young people. As Muslim parents, it is our duty to create an environment in which our children can have halal, clean fun and grow happily. Halal fun helps young people relax, recharge, experience happiness, and deal with stress. Whatever age your children are, give them time and space to have halal fun.*

**Here are a few different types of halal activities that are fun and your children can enjoy:**



### 1. Beneficial videos

**T**hese could be Islamic videos, documentaries, or educational shows. It includes any videos which have a clean, moral content and promote beneficial knowledge. Build a home library of videos that you approve of and allow your children time to benefit from these videos. This is a far healthier alternative to television channels; as we cannot control the content on such channels.



### 2. Nasheeds

**N**asheeds without any musical instruments. Children, by their nature, are attracted to beautiful sounds, and as a result, may want to listen to music. As a Muslim parent, you need to provide an alternative. Research and find nasheeds that you are comfortable with and introduce those to your children so that they have a healthy alternative to music and do not fall into the traps of Shaytan.

### 3. Sports

Watching sports may be considered a waste of time by some, but playing sports is an excellent way to stay healthy and enjoy some halal fun. Muslim parents must set up halal sporting activities in their local areas; whether these are Muslim soccer clubs, martial arts studios, or gender-specific swimming pools. Sporting opportunities need to be provided for our children, so that they may enjoy halal fun and grow stronger in the process.

### 4. Encourage reading

Reading books is a crucial life skill that separates the successful from the weak. All Muslim parents must work toward creating a culture of reading in their homes. This can be done by investing in bookshelves and filling them with beneficial and fun, age-appropriate books.

Parents can even consider setting up a book club in which children gather, read a specific book, and then discuss what they learned from this book. Reading is a highly relaxing form of entertainment that stimulates the intellect and creates leaders in society.

### 5. Spend time with nature

We tend to get so caught up in city life that many Muslim children are cut off from nature. Take time out to visit places of natural beauty so that your family can relax, recharge, and learn to appreciate the beautiful creation of Allah. Time spent with nature, whether through camping or even just a walk in the park, can be highly memorable and a fun experience for the whole family.



### 6. Encourage beneficial hobbies

Most children develop their own hobbies. As parents, we should encourage our children to develop hobbies that benefit them, rather than hobbies that waste time and money. If a child becomes engaged in a beneficial hobby, they will experience hours of halal fun as well as learn a great deal through the process.

### Final Reminder

As Muslim parents, we sometimes become overzealous in forcing acts of worship upon our young children and forgetting to give them some time to relax. Balance is the key in raising righteous children. Teach them the religion, encourage them to worship Allah, but also give them space and resources to enjoy what is halal.

For children, play is often a form of learning. This is why we must encourage forms of entertainment in which they learn beneficial skills and knowledge while having fun. In the end, a balanced home full of love, deen, and halal fun produces happy families that work together to please Allah.



**By Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar**

Sheikh Ismail is the Faculty Manager of Islamic Online University, founder of Islamic Self Help.com, radio presenter on Radio Al-Ansaar, author of multiple publications, and a homeschooling father.

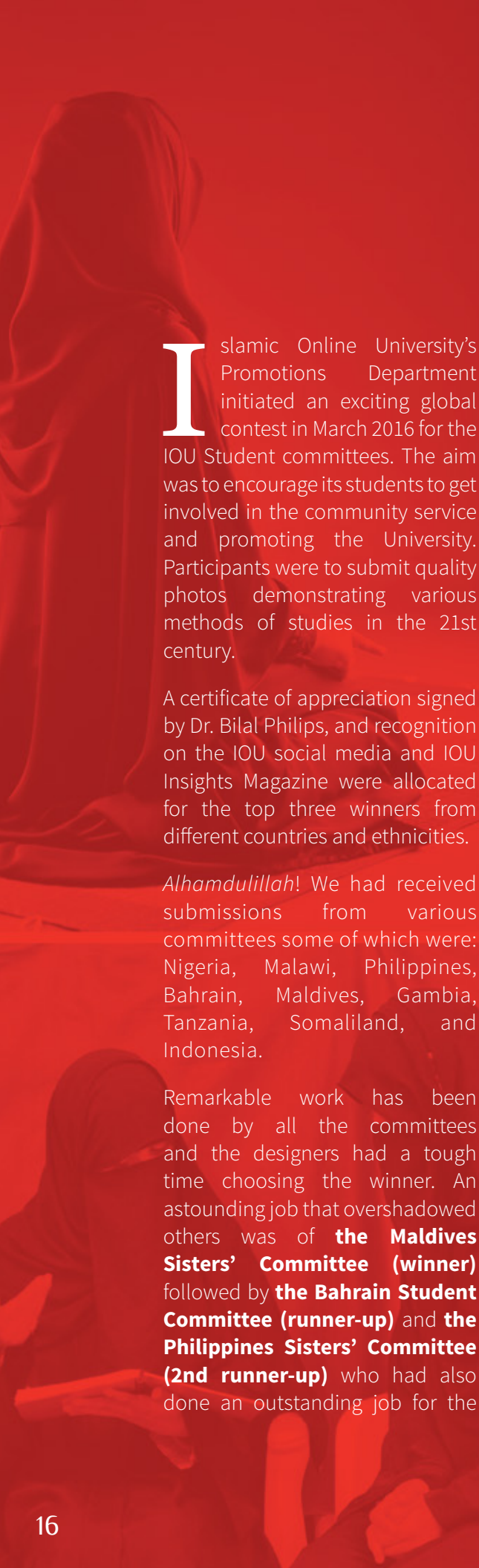




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# *Smile* FOR THE CAMERA

The IOU Photoshoot Contest



**I**slamic Online University's Promotions Department initiated an exciting global contest in March 2016 for the IOU Student committees. The aim was to encourage its students to get involved in the community service and promoting the University. Participants were to submit quality photos demonstrating various methods of studies in the 21st century.

A certificate of appreciation signed by Dr. Bilal Philips, and recognition on the IOU social media and IOU Insights Magazine were allocated for the top three winners from different countries and ethnicities.

*Alhamdulillah!* We had received submissions from various committees some of which were: Nigeria, Malawi, Philippines, Bahrain, Maldives, Gambia, Tanzania, Somaliland, and Indonesia.

Remarkable work has been done by all the committees and the designers had a tough time choosing the winner. An astounding job that overshadowed others was of **the Maldives Sisters' Committee (winner)** followed by **the Bahrain Student Committee (runner-up)** and **the Philippines Sisters' Committee (2nd runner-up)** who had also done an outstanding job for the



photoshoot contest.

There needs to be a special mention of the extremely talented photographer, who helped the Maldives sisters to achieve this award—Br. Adam Naif, co-owner of a photo studio named, “Portrait Album.” Despite being a very famous and busy photographer, he made time for this IOU task and lent his service free of charge. May Allah accept his intentions and reward him immensely for the work he has done.

These activities/contests help our students connect and make a more productive community. Hence, giving them the feel of studying in a physical university despite being an online one. This is one of the advantages of the IOU over other online universities where students feel allied to other fellow IOU students and the University itself.

IOU will keep working hard for its students and give them such opportunities to display their aptitude and talent where they graduate with much confidence and flare, *in sha Allah*.

---

### By Faiza Shaikh

Sr. Faiza is the Assistant Head of the IOU Student Committees.







# Planting the Seeds of Love

## *Making Our Education Techniques Age Appropriate*

“**D**idn’t I tell you to...?” I heard my 5-year old son being scolded by his Quran teacher, as he stumbled over a few words in his lesson.

After an hour of a “rigorous” Quran recitation lesson, the teacher came out and told me that in addition to the one-hour class he takes, I should sit down with my son every day—after Fajr—and revise the lesson multiple times again.

The result: even though my son’s recitation is almost flawless at age 5—with tajweed better

than most 40 year olds—he is extremely perturbed. Before he started lessons with this teacher, my son would pick up the Qaida himself and try to recite every now and then. Now, he feels discouraged and tries to avoid his lessons with all sorts of excuses.

I pointed out to the teacher that his methods were not quite age appropriate, only to be met with a look of disdain on his face as if I wasn’t serious enough about having my son learn the Quran.

However, for me, planting the

seeds of love for Allah and His religion into my children’s hearts is of utmost importance, so that they “want to” and not “have to” read the Quran.

Unfortunately, the root cause of this imbalance is the lack of proper understanding of the stages of development amongst parents as well as the educators. We do not even have to turn to Western research and theories (not that I am saying they aren’t helpful), to understand the kind of behavior we need to be exhibiting with our children. Sayyidina Ali advised us to play with our children until the age of seven, to discipline and teach them from the age of seven to fourteen and to befriend them at the age of fourteen. Now consider the oft-quoted hadith of our beloved Prophet ﷺ:

“Tell your children to pray when they are seven years old and smack them (lightly) if they do not pray when they are ten, and separate them in their beds.” (Abu Dawud)



These narrations clearly indicate the attitude toward children's upbringing exhibited by our early generations—lack of harshness and formal education during the child's formative years. If a prayer—the most important pillar of faith, after the declaration of faith—is to become a part of the child's daily routine at the age of seven, then what can we say about the imposition of rigorous learning techniques before that?!

The question which then arises is: How do we then inculcate Islam in our children's lives?

The answer to that is simple: Practice it and your children will follow. If you are in the habit of reciting the Quran every day, your children will pick up that love from you and do likewise.

“Play,” which is often cited as an important part of the child's development, is, in fact, informal learning carried out by the child himself in an environment conducive to his developmental needs. It involves role-playing or acting out of correct morals by the parent himself so that the child will informally pick up the right etiquettes of daily life.

If you really want to take a more formal approach to teaching Islam, then do not make your lessons more than 15 minutes long, especially for boys. In fact, I would recommend building concentration span exercises (like playing darts) before delving into

“  
***The Prophet ﷺ  
never  
challenged  
children beyond  
their natural  
capacities.***  
”

15-minute lessons. One of the 19th-century educators, Charlotte Mason, recommended very short lessons in order to ensure optimum absorption of the lesson.

While dealing with children, parents and educators must realize that in order to raise our children to be like the great sahabi Anas, we need to raise them as the Prophet ﷺ did. Let's have a look at the love and respect with which the Prophet ﷺ treated Anas: Anas said, “When Allah's Apostle ﷺ arrived at Madina, Abu Talha took hold of my hand and brought me to Allah's Apostle and said, “O Allah's Apostle! Anas is an intelligent boy, so let him serve you.” Anas added, “So I served the Prophet ﷺ at home and on journeys; by Allah, he never said to me for anything which I did: “Why have you done this like this?” or, for anything which I did not do: “Why have you not done this like this?” [Reported by Al-Bukhari]

What does this narration tell us? It tells us that the Prophet ﷺ never challenged children beyond their

natural capacities, since Allah has had the pen lifted from the child's book of deeds, because of his limited capability and to give him sufficient room to grow before he is held accountable for anything.

Unfortunately, we, in our quest to achieve “fast-food” results, have completely deserted the teachings of our religion, which has led to devastating results. At the end of the day, I would rather have a child who loves to pray and recite the Quran, as opposed to someone who grows up with perfect tajweed whilst believing the religion is harsh.

With the plethora of information out there, little effort is needed to navigate through the sunnah of our Prophet ﷺ, as well as the western child development philosophies, which speak out against unnatural, age inappropriate learning techniques.

May Allah guide the parents and educators of this Ummah to plant the seeds of love for this religion in our future generations!



**By Sara  
Tariq  
Sheikh**

Sr. Sara is the IOU Student Affairs Officer primarily responsible for communication with the students. She is currently undertaking training in Early Childhood Education and is working on her first book that will highlight habit training in Muslim children.



## ‘My husband and I compete over grades and modules’

**M**y name is Roshan Razvi. I have been studying the Bachelor in Islamic Studies (B.A.I.S.) program since the Fall of 2011 (Spring 2016 is my 9th semester; four more courses to go, *in sha Allah*). My husband, Abdul Quddhus, has been studying the B.M.A.I.S. (Higher Diploma) since Spring 2011; he has two courses left, *in sha Allah*. We are both from India but reside in Kuwait.

I chanced upon IOU when I was looking for online Arabic courses. I came across IOU’s Free Diploma in April 2011 and did a few modules in Foundations of Islamic Studies, which sparked my interest and I immediately applied for the B.A.I.S. in September 2011. I began



to learn a lot about Islam in this program and I suggested to my husband that he join as well; *alhamdulillah*, in spite of his busy schedule, he enrolled for the B.M.A.I.S. program.

We have three children, *alhamdulillah*; two sons (Tariq: ten years & Muadh: three years) and a daughter (Samrah: one year). They are all highly inquisitive and active, so studying with them has always been a challenge and an achievement, *alhamdulillah*.

Initially, we did not face any problems with our study schedule; however, as the family grew with the birth of my second and third child, things became quite difficult, more so, since we both work. However, we always share the household chores and the time spent with the children, *alhamdulillah*.

We constantly motivate each other to study and complete the coursework, module tests, midterm exams, assignments (searching for references) and final exams, within the defined submission period. Since the courses of B.M.A.I.S. are common to B.A.I.S. as well, my husband and I usually discuss the content, debate the fiqh rulings, and indulge in a healthy competition of who scores higher on the tests or who completes more modules. My eldest son, Tariq, supports his father saying, 'We boys need to get more marks!'

*Alhamdulillah!* Studying as a family has great benefits, as the whole family is involved in the

“  
**Studying as a family has great benefits, as the whole family is involved in the learning process and benefits immensely.**  
”

learning process and benefits immensely. It is amusing to see ten-year-old Tariq speak about the legal maxims. *Alhamdulillah*, our children are nurtured with the importance of learning authentic Islamic knowledge, its practical application and propagation as well.

However, our journey is not devoid of challenges, especially when both parents have dedicated themselves toward gaining Islamic knowledge. There are times when each or both of us have to spend a lot of time with the kids when they are sick. It is even more difficult when one of us is sick, and the entire load of the household chores and children is on just one person. At times, I have even considered quitting the program, but my husband's encouragement and support helped me to carry on, *alhamdulillah*. Though we usually plan ahead, panic is rife during the midterm and final exams. Many times, things do not work out as planned, but then Allah is the Best of Planners

and eventually we complete the semester.

“...But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners.” (Quran 8: 30)

Centuries ago, our predecessors struggled and traveled a lot to gain, study, and memorize Islamic knowledge. Our struggle is negligible, or perhaps cannot even be compared, as we study from the comforts of our home which is manageable, *alhamdulillah*. Yes, the Internet comes along with its own baggage, but IOU has pioneered in providing authentic, reliable, low-cost Islamic knowledge, *alhamdulillah*.

Time management plays a crucial role in online studies where everything has to be preplanned. Even if it does not work initially, one should not lose hope and carry on while making a lot of du'a. We both thank Allah for guiding us to the right medium at the right time, *alhamdulillah*.

May Allah help us all in acquiring Islamic knowledge that is beneficial in this world and in the hereafter. *Ameen*.



**By Roshan Razvi**

**Sr. Roshan Razvi** is an IOU Info/ Helpdesk officer in CIH department currently pursuing her B.A. in Islamic studies. She is passionate about Islamic sciences and Arabic language..

# Can Babies Goto Hell?



**T**he birth of a child is usually considered as something wonderful and amazing. Even before the child is born, parents imagine and plan their child's future. However, sometimes, all the joy and happiness is cut short when Allah decides to take back what has been given to them to enjoy for a while.

In order to console those devastated parents, people may tell them that their child is waiting for them in Paradise. However, is this true? Can someone get a free pass to Paradise just because the angel of death visits him or her at a very young age? Would that be just?

One day, a child of one of the Ansar died. When they brought the child to the Prophet ﷺ to pray for him, his wife, 'Aishah, said: "How fortunate he is, one of the little birds of Paradise. He never did any evil or reached the age of puberty." He ﷺ answered her: "It is better not to say anything, O 'Aishah. Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, created Paradise and created people for it—He created them in the loins of their fathers. And He created Hell and created people for it, and He created them in the loins of their fathers." (Sunan an-Nasa'i)

This narration indicates that it is not as straightforward as a person dying young and being guaranteed Paradise. Allah in His ultimate justice caused them to die young, yet at the same time, He will test them on the Day of Resurrection, which will determine their final abode.



## Bearing Witness

A young child who has died is at the same level as a person who died, while he or she had no means to hear about the true and correct form of His message due to either health issues, time, or location. They both have no knowledge; they are not held accountable.

They all will be resurrected with all of their faculties. Hence, they will be able to comprehend the message. According to an authentic hadith, a messenger will come to them from a wall of fire. He will inform them about the oneness of Allah and give them further information about Allah. Thus, they all will receive the message and bear witness.

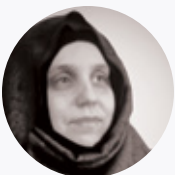
## A Test of Obedience

"O you who have believed, obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn from him while you hear [his order]." (Quran 8: 20)

Thereafter, they will be commanded to enter the wall of fire. Whoever obeys him and enters it, it will be cool and safe for him, and whoever disobeys him and does not enter it will be dragged to it. (Sahih al Jami')

Thus, the group will be divided into those whose final abode based on their obedience is eternal bliss and those, whose disobedience brought them to eternal punishment.

*Based on the lecture of Dr. Bilal Philips, 'Can babies go to Hell?'*



### By Veronika Matulova

**Sr. Veronika** is the IOU Insights Managing Editor. She holds a B.A. in Islamic Studies from the IOU and is currently on the path of perfecting her Quranic recitation with Tajweed Made Easy Academy Global (TMEAG).



# IOU REPRESENTATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

## Their Role

The representatives and volunteers form an important and integral part of the Islamic Online University. Their dedicated services to the university represent the foundation on which the realization of the IOU motto, "Changing the Nation through Education" is being achieved! The official IOU representatives deal with local student issues, communication with local Islamic organizations and institutions, and governmental bodies, as well as networking with regional IOU student committees, learning centers and affiliated institutions.

## They can be contacted for queries or matters related to:

- IOU Courses
- Enrollment
- IOU Promotions
- Establishment of learning and exam centers
- Acceptance of course fee payments (or fee transfers)
- Donations to IOU
- Formation of student committees
- Appointment of local tutors for tajweed
- Queries related to the University

## Meet the Representatives:

### GLOBAL REPRESENTATIVE / INDIA



#### Mohammed Shajiuddin

+91 9000777950

global.rep@iou.edu.gm

india@iou.edu.gm

www.iouindia.com

He is the IOU Global Representative who never shies away from challenges and is always ready to help.

### USA



#### Mutahhir Sabree

director.usa@iou.edu.gm

+1 803-201-7961

He is a well-known daee, residing in South Carolina, who delivers lectures and khutbas all over the USA.



#### Yasmeen Rolland

national.usa@iou.edu.gm

She is a great speaker and lives in Texas. She has been invited by many organizations to give lectures on various Islamic topics.

### GHANA



#### Samudeen Yusif

+233249540148

ghana@iou.edu.gm

Since his joining IOU, he has been actively promoting IOU in the country and has many great plans to take IOU to further heights.



## TANZANIA



### Lusaka Hamidu Amani

+255 686 121386  
tanzania@iou.edu.gm

**He** is a young and energetic brother, who works hard to make IOU known to every Tanzanian.

## KENYA



### Abdullatif Sheikh

+254 722 785 964  
+254 733 592 999  
kenya@iou.edu.gm

**He** is a well-known scholar and the national representative for Kenya, residing in Nairobi. He lectures throughout Kenya and abroad.



### Twahir Hussein Kassim

+254 722 259223  
+254 734 259223  
coordinator.eastafrica@iou.edu.gm

**He** is a resident of Mombasa-Kenya with an IT background, who left his field to serve IOU. He is a coordinator for the East African countries.

## CANADA



### Sr. Bibi

+1 647 236 9980  
canada@iou.edu.gm

**She** has been a great asset to IOU. She is one of the IOU BAIS graduates, a living example of IOU.

## NIGERIA



### Abdullahi Akindele

+2348133327543  
IOU.Nigeria@islamiconlineuniversity.com

**He** is the country representative for Nigeria; leading the most potential country for IOU with dedication and hard work.



### Adetoro Opeyemi Muritala

+2348164374646  
nigeria@iou.edu.gm

**He** is the representative for southern region of Nigeria.



### Nura Hashim

+234 703 618 8864  
minna.ng@iou.edu.gm

**Dynamic** and dedicated northern Nigerian representative, who has proved to be very beneficial to IOU.

## RUSSIA



### Arslan Karaev

russia@iou.edu.gm

**He** is basically taking care of all translation work of IOU Russia. The whole project is resting on his shoulders.

## PHILIPPINES



### **Marlon Abdullah M. Masanque**

+63 9491888499  
philippines@iou.edu.gm

Newly joined representative, who desires to take IOU to a new level in the Philippines.

## PAKISTAN



### **Malik Salman**

pak.national.sc@iou.edu.gm

With extreme talents and great leadership skills, he is now all set to take IOU to a new direction in Pakistan. There are a few great initiatives happening in Pakistan under his supervision.

## GAMBIA



### **Ousainou Allen**

+2209666612 / +2207515541  
gambia@iou.edu.gm  
Islamic Online University  
Global Headquarters  
21 Kanifing Mosque Road,  
P.O. Box 2340, Kanifing South, KMC, The Gambia.

Since IOU established its headquarters in The Gambia, he has been handling all IOU operations with great enthusiasm and has done a tremendous job making IOU run smoothly.

## SIERRA LEONE



### **Sheikh Alie Y. Kallay**

Phone: +232 76847100 / +232 88027334  
WhatsApp: +232 79516072  
sierraleone2@iou.edu.gm

A Madina University graduate, who is working hard for the TEC accreditation in Sierra Leone.

## INDONESIA



### **Adi Wira**

+6281573135369  
indonesia@iou.edu.gm  
www.iouindonesia.com

He is not just an Islamic studies graduate, but a good translator, administrator, and promoter of IOU. With the launch of IOU in the Indonesian language, IOU will see a huge rise in enrollments.

## EAST AFRICA



### **Saed Abdillahi Saed**

eastafrica@iou.edu.gm  
+252 63 4428498

He demonstrates outstanding efforts in the Somali region and other neighboring countries. He established the IEC firm in his region and is ready to replicate it in other East African countries.

## UGANDA



### **Gainamungu Aminah**

+256 703864237  
uganda@iou.edu.gm

She has only recently joined the IOU representatives team, but is passionate about promoting the IOU in Uganda.

## MALAWI



### **Abdullah Kachala**

+265 888 88 39 56  
malawi@iou.edu.gm

BAIS student representing IOU with his heart.

## By Mohammed Shajiuddin & Veronika Matulova



**Br. Shaji** is the IOU Global Representative as well as the IOU India representative. He is a graduate from Osmania University, Hyderabad.



**Sr. Veronika** is the IOU Insights Managing Editor. She holds a B.A. from the Islamic Online University and is currently on the path of perfecting her Quranic recitation with Tajweed Made Easy Academy Global (TMEAG).





“

*“If we are not teaching our children Islam at home, we should not expect miracles from the Islamic schools. A good education begins at home.”*



# Practice What You Preach

**P**arenthood is a journey where you play the role of a teacher and your children are your students. As a parent, you are constantly worrying about the best education you can give to your children—be it in school or at home. You teach them how to walk and talk, what to say and what not to say, and what to do and what not to do. However, somewhere during those lessons, parents at times

forget that children learn by watching. Somehow, when you are frustrated and yelling at them at the top of your lungs asking them to behave, you forget that you are not behaving yourself. When you cry out in exasperation that your child has lied to you for the umpteenth time, you forget that he or she has been watching you lie to your neighbors or your friends about why you could not go to that particular dinner. Or,

when you repeatedly ask them to be polite while you are excessively rude with the people working under you and you wonder what has gone wrong!

You may not be aware of it, but you give your children much more than verbal education. Some of the qualities they see in you might become ingrained in them and manifest in different ways when they grow up. They

1. Translation: Sahih international, Quran.com

see how you treat your spouse, friends, and neighbors—they see and they learn. They watch you when you give that extra dollar to the poor man begging at the side of the road, they watch you when you show respect to your parents, and they watch you when you keep your word. All these happen while you are unaware and do not mean to teach them; but they learn these anyway.

Many parents understand that what they are doing is wrong and do not want their children to follow in their footsteps. Thus, they tend to impose on their children certain things that they themselves do not do. However, this may result in your children having a dual personality; where they pretend to be how you want them to be in your presence, while forgetting about it in your absence. It may sound harsh, but this is the reality.

Allah says in the Quran,

“O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do?

Great is hatred in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do.” (Quran 61: 2-3)

Respected parents, you may mean well, but while you teach your children the dos and don'ts of life, do not teach them that it is okay to say one thing and act differently. For indeed, this is a hateful thing to Allah, The Most High.

If you want your children to have good manners, you have to show them ‘how’ by exhibiting it yourself. If you want them to be truthful, do not let them catch you lying. If you want them to keep their word, the next time you promise them a day out or a chocolate bar—fulfill it. If you do not want them to sit in front of the television for hours, then do not keep the television on for hours in your room. This way they will learn the importance of cohesion between words and actions.

Practice what you preach. Let your children learn from your actions, not only from instructions. Let

“

***If you want your children to have good manners, you have to show them ‘how’ by exhibiting it yourself.***

”

them walk in your footsteps—the footsteps that have been placed for them out of Allah's fear—the footsteps of taqwa (consciousness of Allah). Your actions and interactions toward others will teach them, by Allah's will, the lessons that you have been trying to instill in them for so long. It is you, who is responsible for their upbringing, for developing their morale and character. You have to lay the foundation on which they will be built. Therefore, you have to be the person you want your children to be. The first step toward this is to practice what you preach, and this step you have to take today, *now*.

**By Ferdousy Akhter Tani**

**Sr. Ferdousy** holds a B.A. in Pharmacy and an M.A. in Pharmaceutical Technology. She is currently pursuing a B.A. in Islamic studies (completed 7th semester). She is an educator in the Lakehead Grammar School, Bangladesh.







Islamic Online University Global Headquarters, Kanifing, The Gambia.



Azhariya center, Kumasi Ashanti Region, Ghana, Ghana Office, Madina, Greater Accra Region, Ghana

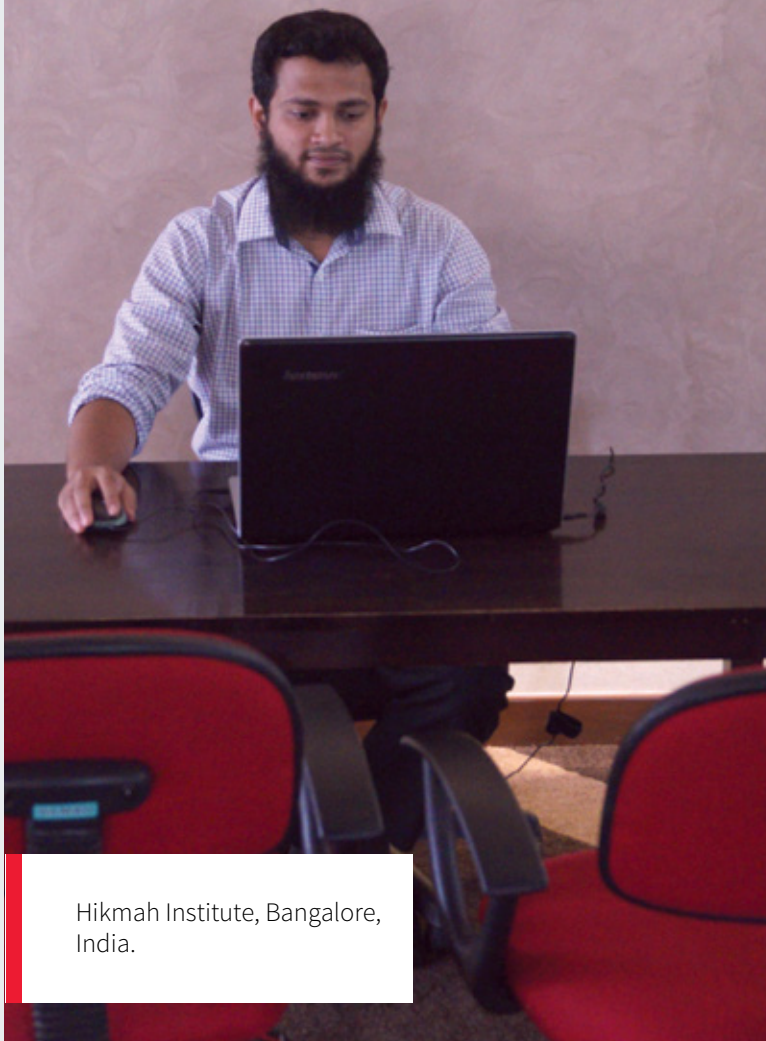


Islamic Child Development Center, Ampang, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

# IOU Exam Centers

The Islamic Online University exam centers and proctors play an integral role in fulfilling our mission of making high quality authentic Islamic and Islamized knowledge readily accessible to the world through the medium of the Internet. As offline institutions, exam centers add the additional dimension of reliability and credibility to our graduate and undergraduate certification. For the administrative and examination purposes, the exam centers verify and confirm that those taking the IOU exams are in fact those who enrolled in the courses.

Students are required to attempt only the final exam at the center. Other exams are conducted online from the comfort of the student's home. Existing IOU exam centers are spread across the globe and any student can establish a new IOU exam center located closer to his home as long as it fulfills the requirements. In 2013, IOU had 710 approved exam centers around the world and only two years later, in 2015, the number of centers increased to 1083, *ma sha Allah*. Hence, students are adding new exam centers with each semester.



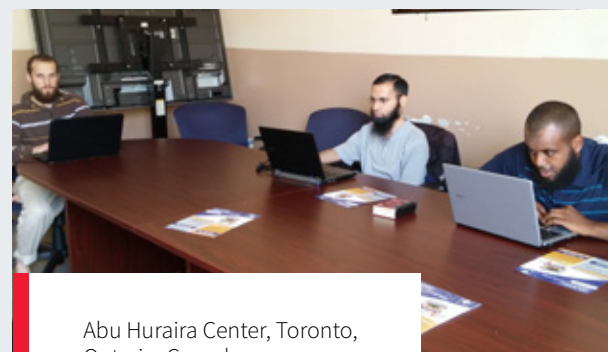
Hikmah Institute, Bangalore, India.



Victoria Garden city Central Mosque, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria, Maa Shaa Allah Group of Schools, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria



Salahudin Islamic Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Abu Huraire Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## IOU Exam Center Requirements:

The registered center should be either a mosque, Islamic community center, Islamic school/university, or professional Islamic institution. In rare cases, an office of a reputable Muslim business would also be considered if none of the mentioned are available.

Exam centers should be able to provide an Islamically reliable proctor with a working knowledge of the internet. He/she should be present in the room throughout the exam time (75 mins maximum per exam) and ensure that students do not cheat. Apart from supervising, a proctor also verifies the student ID's and enters passwords provided by the IOU.

Though preferable, it is not necessary for a center to provide a PC, laptop, or internet for the students. This can be brought in by the student him/herself.



### By Veronika Matulova

**Sr. Veronika** is the IOU Insights Managing Editor. She holds a B.A. in Islamic Studies from the IOU and is currently on the path of perfecting her Quranic recitation with Tajweed Made Easy Academy Global (TMEAG).





## Dissolution of

# MARRIAGE

## Common Misunderstandings

**A**ll praise is due to Allah Alone. May His Peace and Blessings be upon His Messenger and slave, Prophet Muhammad, as well as his family and companions. Allah said (interpretation of the meaning):

*“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.”* (Quran 30: 21)

The above-mentioned verse of the Quran implicates the framework for the basis and some of the objectives of marriage in Islam in general.

However, today we are only going to discuss some of the most common reasons why dissolution of marriage occurs.

After pondering on all the ingredients, also

reading secrets written and shared of a successful marriage, and above all the beautiful verses of the Quran and guidelines set by the Prophet ﷺ for a prosperous lifetime relationship, I embarked on writing about what makes it fail.

For an outsider to any marital dispute, it can be very confusing. **There are so many thoughts and questions in your mind, such as:**

- They just got married last year!
- I remember at the time when they were getting married, they seemed to be so happy!
- They had such a big marriage banquet (*waleemah*) and everybody was saying that this was a marriage made in heaven!
- I can't believe what has happened!
- And it carries on...

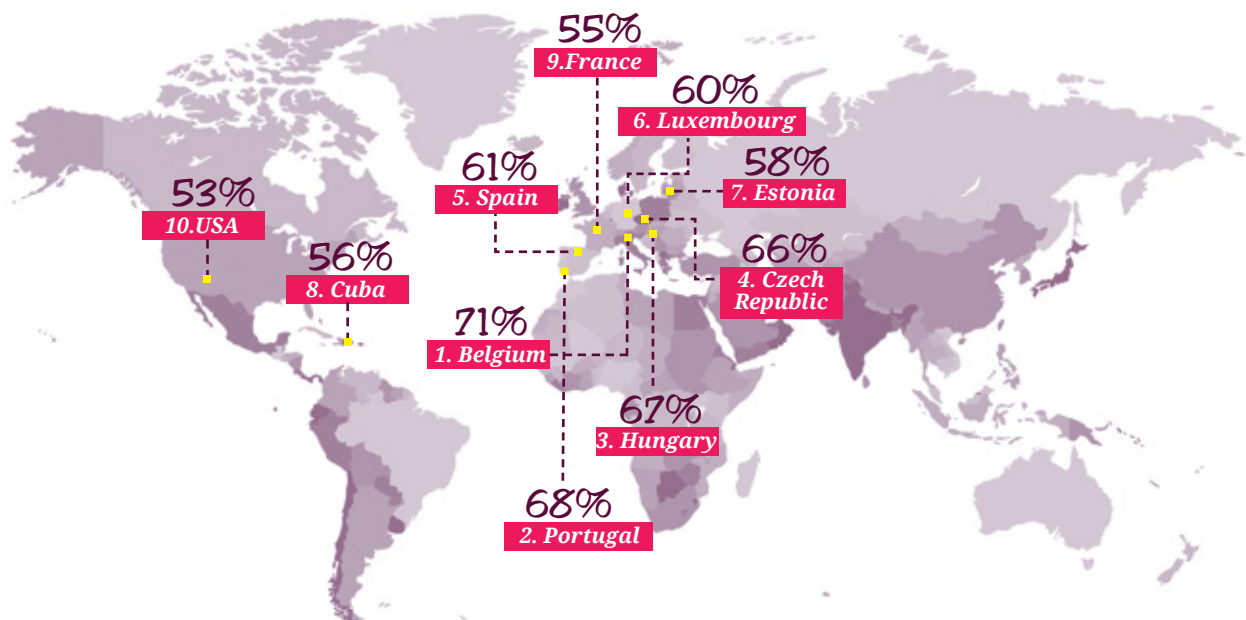


Before going any further I would like to share a hadith, which illustrates the importance of marriage and the grave danger of breaking it. Jabir has reported that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: 'Iblis places his throne upon water; he then sends detachments (for creating dissension); the nearer to him in rank are those who are most notorious in creating dissension.

One of them comes and says: "I did so and so." And he says: "You have done nothing." Then one amongst them comes and says: "I did not spare so and so until I sowed the seed of discord between a husband and a wife." The Satan goes near him and says: "You have done well." A'mash said: "He then embraces him." (Saheeh Muslim: 6756)

**After going through the statistics of various countries and cultures regarding the number of marriages and divorces and the courses of divorces, I feel it is only appropriate to share some of the information here.**

## The World's 10 Most Divorced Nations are as follows:



**1** In Saudi Arabia, 8 divorces occur every hour, in spite of the general public enjoying a fairly good financial status. To get married easily for the first time and again after divorce, if one is able to financially, may be a reason for this increase in divorce. Also, physical and mental abuse and extreme jealousy have played a major role in divorces.

**2** In Egypt, the economic factor has played a major role in family feuds where up to 20 divorces an hour take place. Huda Jadul Haqq, a researcher in women's affairs and one of the activists for them, says that the law of Khul' (Islamic term which means: the separation of the wife in return for a payment; the husband takes the payment and lets his wife go, whether this payment

is the mahr (dowry paid by husband to wife) which he gave to her, or more or less than that) has made it easier for women to get their divorce. A woman in Egypt would pursue a divorce or settle for Khul' for many reasons; though the most important one is the financial condition, apart from a husband failing to meet the marriage obligations. The growing number of women who share the financial responsibilities has become a reason also as men tend to depend on this trend. Most of the dissolutions happen in the first year of marriage.

**3** Surprisingly, in Tunisia where 1000 divorces take place on a monthly basis, with a population of around 12 million, 40% of the reason has been associated with sexual issues. Unemployment and harsh economic conditions play a vital role in almost all the divorces.

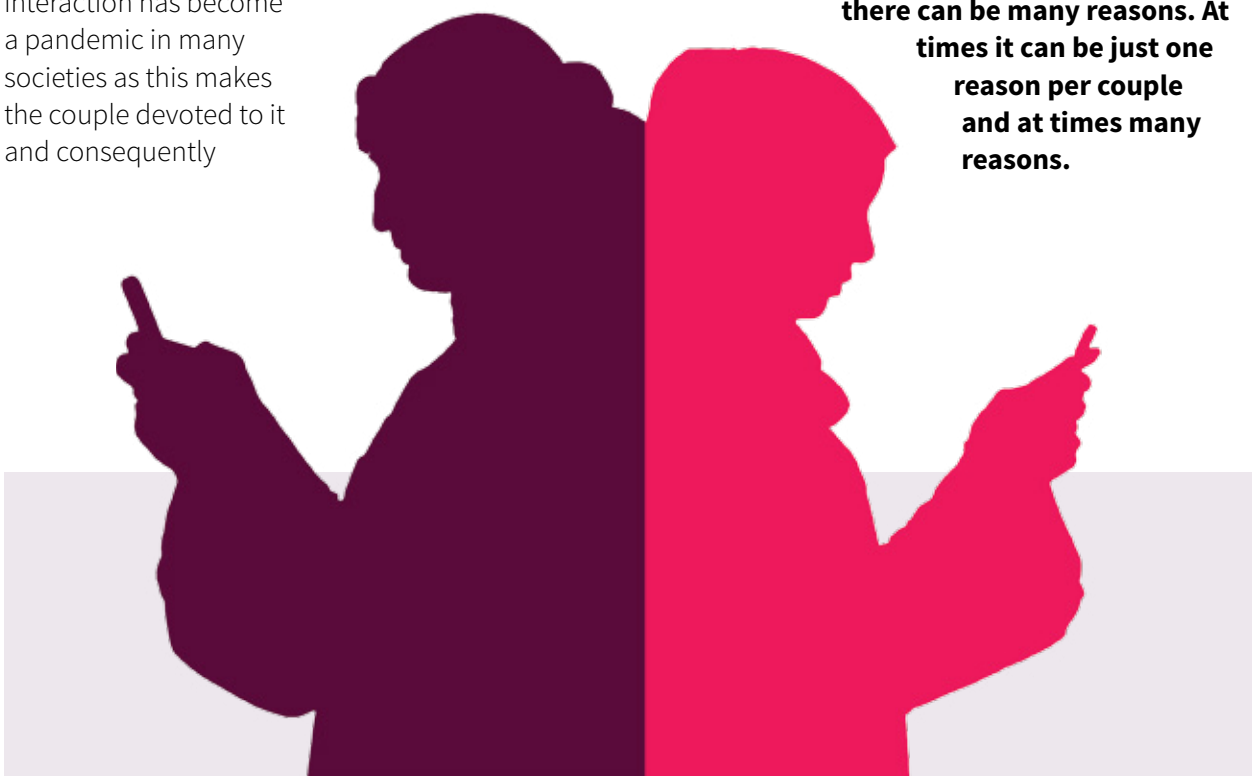
**4** When it comes to UAE, social media comes as the first culprit for the divorces which in the beginning of 2016 was at 4 divorces per day.

Continuous social media interaction has become a pandemic in many societies as this makes the couple devoted to it and consequently

ignore each other. Smartphones have just added more supremacy to the already boiled dilemma. Being independent financially and able to live prosperously after divorce just adds up. The practice of polygyny is also a known factor to all of the above.

**5** In the war-torn country, Iraq, divorces in the last 10 years have increased by 70% which is now at sixty thousand cases per year. It looks like there is a new culprit (at least seemingly) in the neighborhood. Turkish TV series, which portrays a rosy glamorous picture of couples and consequently leads to discontent in a matrimonial life of Iraqis under extreme duress which they are facing since the American invasion. Local research confirms that Facebook, internet, and smartphones are among the major reasons for divorces. Specifically that they end up interacting with others through these communications, therefore creating jealousy and suspicions and then marital disputes.

**From the above mentioned it is clear that there can be many reasons. At times it can be just one reason per couple and at times many reasons.**





**A** point to remember is that divorce doesn't happen by accident. It builds up slowly when people overlook the things that matter most. It isn't a bubble that's ready to burst. Though most people assume that a divorce is a shocker, something that comes right out of the blue when it is least expected. It may be true to family and friends, but to the couple involved, it's something they would have seen all along or should have seen. We shouldn't take our marriage as granted to last forever with no effort to make it possible.

The fact is that many people have put off marriage due to the increase in the number of divorces and complicated marital issues. Problems constantly build up over time, and at some point, the inevitable happens. Or one more accusation or error pushes the ball downhill and then, everything else comes crashing through the foundation of the marriage.

*Apart from what has been already mentioned previously as a case study from certain countries, I am going to mention in general some of the most important factors in our modern day as being the reasons for dissolution of marriages.*

- **Not making the correct choice** and it is mostly due to ignoring the advice of our beloved Prophet ﷺ when he said, as narrated by al-Bukhari (4802) and Muslim (1466) from Abu Hurayrah from the Prophet ﷺ who said: "A woman may be married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religious commitment. Seek the one who is religiously-committed, may your hands be rubbed with dust (i.e., may you prosper)."
- **Non-compliance** from the couple or one of them on the rights which Allah has mandated towards each other. For example, a husband may be negligent of his wife by not spending on her, or his children, or by extensive traveling and being out of the house, and topping it up by not showing any interest in her while being with her. All of these may lead to mental depression and thus would lead towards the ultimate unwanted result.
- On the other hand, the woman may be one of those who always goes out of the house; dividing her time between visiting others, meetings, social gatherings, and functions. Or



maybe she works outside which consumes a lot of her time and it would naturally affect her ability in the upbringing of her family and shortfalls in her relationship with her husband. Worst cases have been recorded where due to her nature of work if she works in a mixed environment, she may shake hands with men and talk to them in a soft tone and in time one thing leads to another. As a result, she would start to hate her husband as she would compare him to those strangers she has been mixing with.



- **Indulging in sins.**
- **Taking the word of divorce (talaq) as a joke** and using it as they please.
- **Drug or alcohol addictions.** To know and understand the critical role this plays in many misunderstandings and divorces, and it is growing by the day, we need to know that the drug industry turnover is estimated at around \$400 billion per annum, global alcoholic drinks industry over 1 trillion dollars, and cigarettes about USD 1.31 billion. Only the Islamic law can take care of this perfectly. There are so many cases which I have personally handled that were related to the above and mostly the females suffer immensely as a result.



- **Physical and/or mental abuse.**
- **Cheating and infidelity.**
- **Family members, especially mother in law.** In many cases, if the spouses were left to their own, things would never have escalated to a divorce.
- **Repeated comparison of one's partner with another man or woman.**
- **The head of the house not contributing towards the family income.**
- **Constant humiliation before others.**
- **One spouse thinks that he/she is too good for the other.** One feeling like he/she is too good for his/her partner, or thinking that he/she deserves a better spouse.
- **Lack of communication.** Communication isn't just about talking to each other. Communication is about understanding each other clearly and learning more about each other.
- **Unrealistic expectations from each other.**
- **A difference in cultural backgrounds** if not handled wisely leads to the undesirable.
- **Not understanding the needs or wants of the spouse.**
- **A sudden change in lifestyle** for better or worse.
- **Trust.** We should learn to trust each other, and we should avoid what may cause suspicion.
- **Jealousy** if it gets out of its acceptable proportion.
- **Insecurity.**
- **Incompatible personalities.**
- **Abusive or over controlling relationships.**
- **Changes in priorities.**
- **A difference in sexual interests.**
- **Loosing interest in one's spouse.** A person is no longer attracted to his/her spouse.
- **Independence.**
- **Arrogance.**
- **Not willing to accept the guilt.**
- **Families and friends.**
- **The so-called advisors.**
- **Cheating.**



## Tongue.

I have handled too many cases where not knowing how to utilize the tongue has been the main factor in any misunderstanding. I have found this to be one of the most important factors which many may not consider something important. My brothers and sisters, remember that it is with a tongue that the husband said, "Yes, I accept her as my wife" or that, "I want to get married to her," and in the end, one may do the total opposite by saying, "I divorce her" as the ultimate unwelcome result. This is where I want to remind myself and everyone with a few of the quotes from the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or else keep silent..."

Allah says in the interpretation of the meaning: "Not a word does he (or she) utter but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it)." (Quran 50: 18)

The Prophet ﷺ commanded us to control our tongues in more than one hadeeth, such as that narrated by al-Tirmidhi from 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir who said: "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is salvation?' He said, "Control your tongue, keep to your house, and weep over your sin." (Classed as sahih (authentic) by al-Albani)

Once we learn the art of speaking, many issues, Allah willing, can be solved before they get out of control. I pray that Allah gives us ease in maintaining our relationship with our spouses and enables us to be the best for our families. *Ameen.*



### By Professor Mohammad Anwar Sahib

**Sheikh Anwar** is the Head of the Department of Islamic Studies at IOU. He is also a founder, member and Chairman of At-Taqlwa Trust, Auckland, New Zealand, Secretary for the Ulama Board of New Zealand, and advisor for halal issues to the NZ government.



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# Attitude of Gratitude

Part I





**S**he opens her wardrobe. Two dozen dresses of red, yellow, orange, pink, and you-name-it colors are hanging in there. After a cursory glance, she bangs the door shut. *“Mom, I have ‘nothing’ to wear for the party. I have been begging you to take me shopping for ages. You never listen to me. What do I do now?”*

He is rummaging through the fridge for the fourth time. Pizza, chocolate, ice cream, fruits, and juices are stuffed inside. He leaves the kitchen despondently. *“There’s really nothing much to eat in here. Let’s go to the café and have some decent food today.”*

She wakes up with the same feelings of depression and dread. Thoughts of suicide are again floating in her mind. She is married to a handsome man, with two lovely kids, a home, and a car—everything most women would ask for. Apparently, life is perfect but there is “something” missing. It is just because she is not married to the man of her dreams.

He thinks that his life ‘sucks.’ He is seventeen years old. He has an iPhone, Core i7 Dell, 1000 bucks monthly pocket money but according to him, his life is a disaster. He cannot focus on his textbook. He slams it shut and starts pacing in the room as he thinks out aloud. *“If my friend can own a Jaguar, why can’t I? Everything sucks.”*

***Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?***

## Gratitude and Productivity

As we grow, we tend to be unthankful and overlook the blessings in our life. We focus all our energy and attention toward finding out what is lacking in our lives. This is really ironic because the more we focus on scarcity, the more we tend to attract it. Being unthankful to Allah adversely affects our productivity as the mind, which is in a negative state can hardly contemplate the productivity in life.

## Western Research vs. 1400-year Old Message

Research has proven that through our thoughts and emotions, we emit powerful signals, which have the ability to attract signals of the same frequency. In other words, our positive signals will attract all the positive signals and the same is true for negative signals. Whenever we are being ungrateful, we are actually in the negative state of mind and allowing the self-defeating thoughts to emit all sorts of negative energy from us. (“I never seem to have enough money.” Or “I can never be healthy.” Or “I can never find a practicing husband.”) This will lead us to attract more negative energy. Ultimately, we will end up becoming a black hole of despair. All the worries, arguments, and frustration lead to more of the same.

Considering all this, if we want to attract more signals of what we desire to experience, for example, peace, joy, harmony, ease, prosperity, then why not choose our thoughts consciously and carefully?

Today, non-Muslim researchers have discovered these secrets in the name of natural laws; while these “open secrets” were given to us in the Quran 1400 years ago. Psychologists and philosophers have painstakingly conducted researches and have come up with new theories and ideas. All these “newly discovered” secrets were presented to us in the Quran in no uncertain terms. Allah promises that He will give you more if you are grateful (Quran 14:7).

Robert A. Emmons from the University of California, and Davis and Michael E. McCullough from the University of Miami conducted a long-term research project designed

to study the effects of gratitude. **Here are some of their findings:**

1. In an experimental comparison, those who kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week compared to those who recorded hassles or neutral life events.
2. Participants who kept gratitude lists were more likely to have made progress toward important personal goals over a two-month period compared to subjects in the other experimental conditions.
3. Grateful people report higher levels of positive emotions, life satisfaction, vitality, optimism and lower levels of depression and stress.

This is a ready-made formula for attracting more of what you want in life.

Why is gratitude such a key ingredient in a successful life? Does it make sense now? Gratitude basically helps us make the shift. Consequently, we are able to attract more good, love, joy, money, health, and blissful relationships in our life. Gratitude is one of the easiest and most frequently used methods to alter the signals one is emitting. What we need to master is the attitude of gratitude—the attitude of appreciating everything in life.



## Surah al-Fatiha: *A Pillar's Pillar*

It is well-known that prayer—the important pillar of Islam—is incomplete without surah al-Fatihah, which begins with expressing our gratitude to our Lord for the countless blessings He has showered upon us. Have you ever noticed that a lot of du'as taught by the Prophet ﷺ also start with the same expression of gratitude—*Alhamdulillah*? The day starts with the supplication, *“All praise and thanks be to the One Who gave us life.”*

What is the significance of this? Allah wants you to start your day in a supercharged state, attracting ample happiness and abundance in life.

The meal ends with the supplication, *“All praise and thanks be to the One Who gave us food and drink.”* Why? Because He always wants you to have better food every time you eat. All praise and thanks belong to Allah.

***End of part I***



**By Bela Khan**

**Sr. Bela** is an author and speaker. She is serving as an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the IOU. She helps women come out of their misery and become better versions of themselves. She can be reached at [www.belakhan.com](http://www.belakhan.com)



# THE RIGHT Beginning

The Prophet ﷺ was reported by Abu Hurayrah to have promised Paradise for the child raised as a righteous Muslim, saying:

“Seven will be shaded by Allah in His shade on a day when there will be no shade besides His shade; a just ruler and a youth who grows up worshipping Allah...”<sup>1</sup>

Parents should desire for themselves and their children Paradise, as Allah said:

“And for those who believe and whose offspring follow them in faith, I will join their offspring with them, and I will not decrease their rewards in any way.”<sup>2</sup>

But when should the Islamic upbringing begin? Education starts before the child is born and continues from the time of birth. Parents desiring to raise righteous children should themselves be righteous. They must work on themselves, their relationship with Allah, their knowledge, and their character. It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their

own aqeedah is correct and put this aqeedah into practice. For example, Muslims know that Allah is Ar-Razzaaq, the Provider; therefore, they should seek their provisions through halal sources and leave the outcome to Allah. The way to ensure a child's future in both this world and the next is to have taqwa.

A very common misconception is that parents can get away with telling children to do things that they themselves do not do. If a mother is gentle, the children will be gentle. If children see the mother exert herself to worship Allah, they will want to emulate her. If parents are not affectionate, kind, compassionate, merciful, the children also follow suit. Parents should try to make their characters as upright as possible because the child will learn from their example. Parents should want their children to know the real Islam and want to be the strongest influence in their children's lives. This is amongst the strongest methods Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used in raising the generation of the sahabah.

Hence, working in the light of the religion and ahadith, parents can ensure a befitting, fulfilling, and successful childhood, rich with values and understanding of the deen and dunya.

## The rights of children:

- a.** Breastfeeding, physical contact, love, mercy
- b.** Strong character formation and future personality
- c.** Love and guide as much as possible (physical affection)
- d.** Quality time and personal attention: playing with them, talking to them and much more
- e.** Gentleness — Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Gentleness is not found in anything except that it beautifies it, nor is it removed from anything except that it...”<sup>3</sup>

**By Aishah Ahmed**

**Sr. Aishah** is a postgraduate chemist pursuing her B.A. in Islamic Studies at IOU where she serves as an IOU CIH Officer. Sr. Aishah is actively involved in various volunteer projects at IOU.

1. Sahih al Bukhari. 2. Surah at-Toor, 52: 21. 3. Sunan Abi Dawud



## Her Beginning

Hafsa bint Sirin was a distinguished faqiha (Islamic jurist), qaar'iah (reciter of the Quran) and muhaddithah (narrator of Hadith). Her outstanding achievements in all three fields render her as a notable scholar of her time. She was the daughter of Sirin, the freed slave of Anas ibn Malik and the sister of the renowned scholar, Muhammad ibn Sirin. Her mother, Safiyyah, was also the freed slave of Abu Bakr. Due to the fact that her parents were in the vicinity of great Sahaba, the upbringing of Hafsa and her siblings was firmly rooted in Islamic knowledge. Hafsa and her sister were known to have memorized the Quran at a young age, Kareemah at the age of nine and Hafsa at twelve. This was the beginning to a milestone of achievements.

## Her Religious Devotion

Hafsa was known to be a devout worshipper and an avid seeker of knowledge.

Mahdi ibn Maymoon said, *"Hafsa bint Sirin stayed thirty years without leaving her prayer place, unless for sleep or to answer the call of nature."* (Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa')

She spent her time in the remembrance of Allah, reciting half of the Quran daily and regularly fasting.

Abdul Kareem ibn Muawiyah said: *"It was mentioned to me regarding Hafsa that she would read half of the Quran every night and would fast during the day and break her fast (i.e. wouldn't fast) the two Eids and*

# Hafsa Bint Sirin



*the days of Tashreeq (the three days after the day of sacrifice, i.e. following the 10th of Dhul Hijjah)."* (Sifah As-Safwah, Dhikr Al Mustafiyaat min A'abidaat al Basrah, Vol 2, Page 709)

## Hafsa Surpasses Male Scholars

The superiority of Hafsa's knowledge and her proficiency in the various recitations of the Quran is greatly highlighted in the books of history, where even her brother, Ibn Sirin, would refer to her when facing challenges with a particular qira'ah.

Hisham narrates that when her brother would find something difficult and ambiguous regarding the qira'ah (recitation), he would say, *"Go and ask Hafsa how to recite."* (Sifah As-Safwah, Dhikr Al Mustafiyaat min 'Aabidaat al Basrah.)

Hafsa narrated many hadiths from Anas ibn Malik

and her name can be found in all six books of hadiths. Furthermore, her knowledge and wisdom were considered unparalleled by some great male scholars.

Iyaas ibn Mu'awiyah said: *"I did not meet anyone whom I can prefer over Hafsa."* He was asked: *"What about Hasan al Basri and Muhammad ibn Sirin (her brother)?"* He said: *"As for me, I do not prefer anyone over her. She learnt the Quran by heart when she was twelve years old."* (Al Mizzi, Tahdheeb al-Kamaal, xxxv. 152.)

Hisham ibn Hassan said: *"I saw Al-Hasan (Hasan al Basri), and (Muhammad) ibn Sirin, and I did not see anyone whom I thought was clever than Hafsa."* (Sifah As-Safwah, Dhikr Al Mustafiyaat min A'abidaat al Basrah, Vol 2, Page 709.)

## Her Advice to the Youth

Hafsa (may Allah be pleased with her) devoted herself to the seeking of knowledge and attaining the pleasure of her Creator from a young age, knowing that the rewards to be reaped from such an investment are incomparable.

*She said, "O youth (Ya Ma'shar ash-Shabaab)! Take from yourselves while you are young, for certainly I do not see (real) action except in youth."*

(Sifah As-Safwah, Dhikr Al Mustafiyaat min 'Aabidaat al Basrah)

Hafsa bint Sirin died in 101 AH at the age of ninety. Her commendable character is one that is truly inspirational. It is her aptitude, dedication and devotion to her Creator that distinguishes her as an eminent personality in our rich Islamic history. Her scholarly achievements portray the potential of women and their excellence in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and the matters pertaining to it. May Allah be pleased with her and may He grant us the opportunity to follow in her footsteps, *Ameen*.

## By Ibtihal Al Khalifin

**Sr. Ibtihal** is currently majoring in Islamic economics at IOU with the intention of spreading awareness about Islamic Shariah law in this field, *in sha Allah*. She is a passionate writer of Islamic articles.

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# An Introduction to **CLIENT- CENTERED** T h e r a p y

Client-centered therapy (CCT) is a type of counseling that was developed in the West by Carl Rogers in the 1940's. CCT is centered around the concept of creating a space where clients can express their feelings in an environment nurtured by three main core conditions exhibited by the counselor, aiming toward a goal of self-actualization.



## The three main core conditions are:

### 1 Empathy.

A counselor goes beyond having sympathy for a client by evaluating the situation and feeling it from the client's point of view. This requires sensitivity and emotional understanding of the client's feelings.

### 2 Unconditional positive regard.

Clients are encouraged and allowed to express their full range of emotions without fear of judgment. A counselor is willing to listen to a client without interrupting or judging.

### 3 Congruence.

Clients enter therapy in a state of incongruence where the difference between who they actually are and who they want to be are far apart. According to CCT, this is the cause of psychological distress. In CCT, the aim is to work to reduce the difference between the actual and ideal self, promoting a congruence between behavior and feelings, and thereby reducing psychological difficulties and distress. A counselor does this by expressing openness to hear all that a client wants to share and expressing the genuineness of their desire to assist the client.

## The goal of CCT is self-actualisation.

A successful therapy will result in a self-actualised individual, with increased confidence in his or her own sense of self-meaning and growth in feelings of self-worth. Furthermore, a client will be inspired to achieve to the best of their potential, and motivated to trust their own thoughts and feelings.

In CCT, the focus is on the therapeutic relationship and process as the client learns how to manage and solve their own problems within the space they are given in therapy. Rather than directing the client as to how to respond to their situation as some therapeutic approaches do, CCT takes a non-directive approach and puts the client in control. This empowers the clients to change for themselves through the promotion of self-awareness and self-esteem in a caring environment. CCT is client-led, where the client can be comfortable and confident to choose the direction of therapy facilitated by the counselor, as they adhere to the core conditions to provide the environment that allows this to comfortably take place. CCT has been used to successfully treat a large number of mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, anger management, social problems, addictions, and psychosis to

name a few. As we see the stigma around mental health problems in the Ummah reduce, we have seen an increase in interest in the field, both in terms of training to become qualified counselors and in coming forward to seek counseling for psychological difficulties.



Today, we see CCT being developed to be used with wider populations—groups, families, and couples too. The main concepts of CCT are also being integrated into other styles of counseling such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). Regardless of a specific counseling style, most counselors borrow from the concept of CCT in focusing on the importance of the client-therapist relationship in order to increase therapeutic progress and success. Furthermore, we also see institutions like health care and education borrowing from the concepts of CCT in the delivery of patient-centered care and student-centered learning. In such cases, the student, patient, or client are the ones directing the services facilitated by, rather

than directed by, the professional; therefore empowering the service-user and increasing the chances of adherence and consequent success.

This all sounds quite familiar, right? Let us take things back to our own Islamic history. This method of counseling and the aspects involved in the core conditions are all methods that were used by our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in dealing with his Ummah. The concept of CCT actually goes back even further in Islamic history than the 1940's when it was discovered in the West. Therapeutic techniques used in CCT are not new to Muslims. Our Prophet ﷺ used these very counseling skills over 1400 years ago in developing warm and friendly relationships with his followers. Join us next time to discuss the lessons in counseling from our Prophet to see how concepts of CCT were already being used in Islam before it was formally recognized as a therapeutic modality in the West.

## *End of part I*

The Islamic Online University offers online counseling compatible with Islamic principles led by the standards of CCT. [islamiconlineuniversity.com/counseling/counsel.php](http://islamiconlineuniversity.com/counseling/counsel.php)

## By Hannah Morris

**Sr. Hannah** is a teacher and instructor of IOU's B.Sc. Psychology course. She also works as a counselor for IOU's Islamic Counseling Services: [islamiconlineuniversity.com/counseling/counsel.php](http://islamiconlineuniversity.com/counseling/counsel.php).



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*“Imam Abu Hanifa was not a Hanafi. Imam al-Shafi’i was not a Shafi’i. Imam Malik was not a Maliki. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was not a Hanbali. They all followed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.”*

**—Dr. Bilal Philips**





## ‘Accepting **Islam** earned me a **slap** from my father and **torture**’

### **Christianity is not a religion, but a business.**

Modern Christianity is money-oriented. In the church today, we have blessings, holy oil, holy water, holy salt, holy handkerchief, and holy bath for sale. Pastors and church leaders generate thousands of dollars from the sale of these items plus the offerings and the tax. As a pastor, I was living a luxurious life, while regular members of my church were living a subsistence life. I was

moved by their low standard of living, and I realized that I was actually living a luxurious life through the money I gained from them—this also added to the reasons why I knew that making a change by embracing Islam was the right move.

On February 26, 2016, I finally decided to accept Islam. I drove to a mosque not too far away from my home and said the shahadah. I was elated and the whole atmosphere was joyous. When I returned home that Friday afternoon, my father asked me to

preach the Friday service. I was faced with a dilemma because I had just accepted Islam and to preach that Jesus is God or the son of God did not seem right. Nevertheless, I succumbed and performed the sermon.

Usually, my father’s church organized many activities on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Being a pastor, I was confused on what to do! *“Should I inform my parents or should I hide my Islam and continue preaching Christianity.”* My dilemma persisted...

I consulted the Imam, who helped me take my shahadah. He told me that I could not be in both religions; therefore, I needed to stop the church activities. I explained that doing so would lead to my expulsion from the house. Upon hearing that, the Imam told me to continue with the church services without believing in Christianity while he looked for a solution. Due to my father's status, Muslims being a minority in that area, and my fear of religious violence, there was none to host or support me.

I managed for a week; attending church services and attending salah (prayer) whenever I was able to escape. It was difficult to reveal my reversion to Islam because I was living with my parents and the entire family including me was dependent on the money generated from the church services. As a result, I had to attend the church activities. I hardly had the opportunity to pray at the mosque, so I mostly prayed in my room. Being new to Islam, the only type of prayer I knew were the two rakah of prayer I did on Friday (Jumu'ah) the day I had accepted Islam.

There is a radio station in Monrovia, Liberia, that would play the prayer at each prayer time, so I would follow it based on the one I did on Friday, the day of my conversion. As a result, I would finish before they finish. However, as destined, some of my father's church members saw me visiting the mosque and informed my father.

On March 5, 2016, my father sparked the discussion during a family dinner, *"These days your behavior has changed toward Christianity—you are not active during church services like before."* I was silent for some time; then he posed a question, *"Is it true that you have some link with Islam now?"*

I replied, *"Yes."*

He asked, *"What is that link?"* Again, I was quiet. He then asked me, *"Are you in a relationship with a Muslim female or do you have a Muslim friend?"*

I replied, *"No."*

He asked me, *"Then what is the problem?"*

I broke down and told him that I was now a Muslim and that I had accepted Islam a week ago. I immediately received a slap from him. Before this, I cannot remember the last time he hit me.

The whole family was upset with me. They all left leaving me alone. I began to question myself, wondering if this was the right decision. I wondered if it was the path that will take me to Paradise. I contemplated until finally, I fell asleep. After midnight, my mother and sister woke me up and wanted to know the reason for making such a decision. I told them that I saw the truth in Islam and that it was the way to Paradise. I tried to convince them that Christianity had no solution to the problems of the world. They asked me, why? I said, *"High rate of divorce, high rate of alcohol consumption, non-marital relationships—*

*fornication is prevalent amongst many Christians; about 95% of Christians were born out of wedlock and the vilest acts (drug usage, homosexuality, abortions) today were more prominent in nations where Christians are the majority."* I further went on to say that Christianity was heavily based on collecting money from people fraudulently. My father, within a short period has become one of the richest pastors in our country whilst the majority of the congregation were living a substandard life.

My mother told me, *"Son, I expect you to know better; we sent you to Bible Seminary to know the scriptures. Do you not know that we are living under a grace and not law?"*

I remained quiet until they left.

The following day, the church leader and some pastors called me. They tried to convince me about Christianity and dissuade me about Islam. I told them if they wanted to help me, they should talk to my father and convince him to give me freedom to practice Islam. Within two days, I received calls from Australia, America, and some parts of Europe encouraging me to change my decision. They even promised to take me with them if I changed my decision. I told them that those places were not Paradise.

When all attempts to convince me to leave Islam were rendered futile, my father resorted to violence. He seized my car key, mobile phone, and laptop; he also told the guards not to allow

me out of the compound or else they would lose their jobs. My maternal uncle, the Chief of staff for the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), came for me around midnight and I was taken to a military base outside of the capital. I spent four days at the base. During these days, I was tortured to reveal the identity of the Imam who conducted my shahadah ceremony and the Muslims that I have connections with. Amongst the officers who were torturing me was a Muslim; he was not happy but he could not help. After he knew the reason why I was being tortured, he would visit secretly and bring me food. He advised me to deny Islam outwardly while accepting it in my heart in order for me to be released so that I could escape and practice Islam. He told me that in my case, there was none who could help me out except God because my father had a high status; he had the Vice President of Liberia and some members of the House of Parliament as members of his church, and to top that my uncle was the Chief of staff of the AFL.

I was allowed to make a phone call; I called the Imam I knew and informed him about my condition and the advice of the brother. The Imam embraced the advice and told me to go ahead. The plan worked and the officers called my father and told him that I changed my decision and was now a Christian again. He was very happy about it and he came immediately and took me home. He then returned all that he seized from me and gave me the liberty I once had. However,

he retained my passport and some documents; perhaps he was not completely convinced. He asked me to conduct the church service the coming Sunday, which I did vibrantly—I do not think that I have ever conducted a church service with that amount of energy.

The following Monday, I secretly visited my Imam to discuss my plan to leave Liberia—where to go and how to learn about Islam. He recommended The Gambia

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***As a pastor, I was living a luxurious life, while regular members of my church were living a subsistence life.***

”

and to look for the Munazzamat Organization when I got there. After our discussion, the Imam and I went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to get a new passport. Two days later, I left Liberia, moved across to Guinea Conakry and then headed for The Gambia by road. I arrived at night and spent the night in one mosque. After the Fajr prayer, I enquired about the Munazzamat and was fortunate to meet the director. After explaining my story, he called their education director and asked him to search for a Quranic memorization school for me. We left in search

of a school and found one at Sukuta with a yearly tuition. Unfortunately, the Munazzamat could not afford it so they gave me some pocket money instead.

I later contacted my cousin who was residing in The Gambia (a Christian) to help me. She wanted to know why I was in the Gambia and I explained my story. She took me to her neighbor who was a Muslim and a teacher to learn about Islam. He was happy and accepted me. After a week, I moved to his compound. Later I found out that my cousin called my father and reported me. Within that week, my father called a Christian organization in The Gambia, Winners Chapel, to return me back. The pastor, with some officials of his church and my cousin, went to meet my cousin's neighbor. During their discussion, my father called and spoke to him and encouraged him to help in returning me home. Unfortunately, he succumbed to my father and counseled me to leave.

I was left in a state of confusion. There was none to help me.

I went to a friend of mine and explained my situation to him. He condemned the idea of returning to Liberia. He took me to his teacher at Madinara, Br. Ahmed. He hosted me and gave me a room in his compound. I joined his class and began to study the “huroof.” One month later, Br. Ahmed took me to The Gambia Supreme Islamic Council and I was introduced to the Secretary who made copies of all my documents and



recommended the Islamic Online University (IOU). Before accepting the recommendation, I made it clear that I was a foreigner and did not have any money. He said that I should start anyway; he will contact my teacher and give him money for my transportation every month. Thus, I began my journey with IOU.

However, the situation was not as easy and I had to return to my previous teacher, my cousin's neighbor, who was very happy to see me return. Initially, I thought that everything was fine; however, I soon realized that my father was still pressurizing them to return me to Liberia.

After about a week, I was invited by the librarian at IOU for Jumu'ah prayer. Thereafter, I met the Imam and other Muslim brothers and explained my state of affairs. The Imam told me that there was a Liberian brother (also a teacher) who prayed at the mosque. I was told to come the following day to meet him.

On Saturday, I met the Liberian brother at his home, which was only about a five-minute walk from the IOU Campus at Kanifing. After telling him my story, he told me, "My brother, it is Allah who called you to Islam, Allah will test you and after your test, Allah will help you." He added that his compound

was also mine and that I should stop by for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day.

When I returned to Sukuta, I received calls from two of my aunts, persuading me to return to Liberia and Christianity, luring me with a promise to take me to America and Australia. The words of my Liberian brother echoed in my mind, "Allah will test you." I was confused and did not know what to do.

The following day, I recounted the events to the brother. He

mosque helped me by providing me with clothes, money, and a laptop for my studies at IOU.

On July 1, 2016, I was informed that my father was in The Gambia and that he was searching for me. I had a discussion with my teacher, imam, and some brothers present; we decided that we would meet my father and enquire the reason behind forcing me back to Liberia. My father promised to meet us on July 4. The meeting was set. Nevertheless, Allah had other plans. I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Bilal Philips, the Founder and Chancellor of IOU. He advised me not to meet my father because meeting him would be futile at this point. He also told me that it could affect my studies and more importantly, my Islam itself. Therefore, I agreed not to meet my father. Later I found out that my father returned to Liberia on Wednesday, July 6—two days after our proposed meeting.

Until this day, I am still in a difficult situation with my family. My father only spoke to me once since he left The Gambia; he is still very angry with me and threatens me. My mother and sister call me quite often. They are not angry with me but they still feel that I should leave Islam and go back to Christianity. May Allah guide them to seek the straight path.

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*The words of my  
Liberian brother  
echoed in my  
mind, “Allah will  
test you.”*

”

advised me to come over and stay with him, which I accepted. However, when I returned for my clothes, my cousin and his neighbor restricted me from going. Eventually, I managed to escape and reached the Liberian brother's home empty handed. He told me that Allah will provide. Some brothers at the



### By Sethon B. Kerbay

Br. Sethon holds a B.Sc. in Theology. He served as a pastor in Liberia until his conversion to Islam in 2016. He is currently studying Islam at IOU while learning the Quran.



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