

**Misconceptions about Islam**  
**Part [1] Br. Yahya Ibrahim**

**Lecture delivered at the University of Western  
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**Introduction**

Misconceptions about Islam are a very difficult discussion to have with you - it is such a very large collective topic with hundreds upon hundreds of different issues that we can discuss.

In this multicultural country that we value so greatly, where the basic premise is that you can have more than one culture, more than one faith, more than one religion, who blend together to strengthen each and everyone, it is strange to see that we find those that have been given positions of authority and positions of leadership who are calling to this concept of multiculturalism, saying things, and I quote "Australians will soon realize that multiculturalism was a failed attempt".

I bring this as an introduction to the concept of Misconceptions about Islam because the same person has also stated in a public release that "Australians are to be very careful when they allow Muslims into their country and into their land".

Obviously this is an alarmist mentality and it is important for us to analyze what the root causes are and to deal with it. That is the basis of this lecture: what are some of the misconceptions that are thrown at the public, whether it is through the media, whether it is through lack of experience with a Muslim, whether male or female, that puts someone into a state of just being distant and not being able to separate between a faith or a personality of an individual.

The points we will discuss with you today are:

1. We are here and we are here to stay. Its nothing personal, but we as a people - those who believe in the faith of Islam, are part of your society. We are here, and we won't leave and it's a fact of life. And we do not push upon you our faith, our reasoning or our logic, but in the same mode it is something

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where we understand that we have a responsibility to the place where we live, both in morality and in ethics and in following the legal parameters that are set.

2. It is for various reasons that people have migrated to this great country of Australia which we will come back to when we clarify some of those misconceptions.

So it is important for us to set that as a basic premise, we are here and we are a part of your society who are functioning, working, living, 99.9996% of the time you will not see a major difference between ourselves and you in the matters of legislation, laws and the way we deal with one another. There are the odd occasions where you will see that discrepancy in how we interact with one another.

## Misconception number one

### 1. How the Muslim woman is viewed

This is something that has been stressed in the past and is continually being stressed both in the media framework and in other avenues.

It is mainly perceived that a Muslim women is down trodden, abused, neglected, has no say, has no rights, she dresses because she is ordered to dress in that way, she is forbidden words like “do not” or always spoken to her “your not allowed” “it is not proper for you” catch phrases that conjure up these images.

I always give the example where you will see a television broadcast of a documentary about “Muslim Women” or “The Women of Afghanistan” or the women in Iran or the women in Egypt or “Behind the Veil”. It will always begin with a type shot, sun setting, blood red sky, the piercing call of the Adhan “Alahuakbar” loud and it zooms or pans out, you see women walking in the far distances, dust swirling all around her, she’s dressed in nothing but black, and then in big bold red letters diagonally “Muslim Women in Islam”, “Muslim Women living in the West”, “The Burqa”. All of these are things that conjure up an animosity and a bias and it is therefore important for me to give you, what it is that we as Muslims actually believe.

First, there is no distinction in the laws of God, in the laws of Allah, in the Quran that separates the actions of worship of a man as being separate from a woman. What a man must do are the exact same acts of faith that a Muslim woman must also do.

Secondly, in regards of rewards and punishment, both in the worldly scene and the hereafter. Reward and punishment are equal. And it is a system of completer equality that is spoken of in the words of the Quran, in terms of rewards and in terms of punishment that are given, by the divine and by the terms of the laws that are instituted in the Quran.

Third, it is also important to note that the Muslim women has free choice, meaning that it is rare to find that there is a framework where it is said to a

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husband or it is said to father or it is said to a son, or a brother, that you are to force your wife or you are to force your daughter to adopt the covering. Rather that it is given as a personal choice for each and every women based on her nearness to God. And based upon her level of faith in Allah. This does not mean that the dictates of God or Satin. God orders, Allah says, his Prophet says, but as for the compulsion, it is never found. It is something that is separate and it is something that would never be found in the religion and the faith of Islam.

The forth point in dealing with the Muslim women is that we see that the Muslim women in pre Islamic days had been given honor through Islam in a way and in a means and in a short period of time that had not been given to any other women under any other societal orders or system so we see that the first of faiths to adopt the concept of inheritance was Islam. The first faith to adopt the concept that a woman is free, to buy and sell without need of a signature of a guarantor who is a male was found in Islam.

You will see that the first system of faith, in the monotheistic faith as well as the others that gave the Muslim woman the right to choose who she wills to marry was only instituted in Islam. Previous to that you see that women where inherited from Father to son, that they where not permitted to buy and to sell and to trade, that they where not permitted to own property, that they where not permitted to inherit from a spouse or from their own father or mother. You will find it shocking to know that up until recently there has been always a dialogue, on going does the woman have a soul? This was never a concept that was ever sacred in the realm of Islam. So we see that the Muslim women in Islam has been given specific things in a short period of time not given to anyone else. But the question begs to be asked “but it is now 2003, where is the advance?” Granted 1400 some odd years ago you gave women things that no other system of belief gave them, but where is this reformist advance that is claimed in Islam?

Here comes the second important point regarding our misconceptions.

As Muslims we value our faith and we value the dictates that God has ordered and we value what it is that has been stated and therefore when it is a final judgment or a final command we always see that the orders of God are universal regarding the basic human nature, so therefore we take one example. The Muslim woman has been ordered by God to cover, and there are varying levels and varying degrees that will be practiced in this regard. There are some that will cover most parts of their body including their hands, some including their face, although the standard that has been set is that Muslim women should cover all parts of her body excluding their hands and their face. It is something that she does as a personal act.

So therefore what is the reason that the Hijab now has not been revealed or removed? In the year 2003 we say to ourselves we live in a free society she doesn't want to dress, she doesn't have to, if she wants to go out in public in a specific attire it's her choice. We say no, it is Gods choice knowing what is best for humanity based on the characteristics of man.

The human male at the time of Muhammad (s) had the same drive for the physical female body and it will continue in our time and it will continue until the end of time. So the basic premise and the reason for hijab has not changed, the times have changed and there seems to be more liberalism where the women will say, "well I can interact with someone and I don't have to be covered, and so what if they look? I know that I'm not doing anything wrong, I will not allow him to do anything wrong, so what? It's my choice."

We see as a consequence of this there has been a societal change that has brought corruption and that has brought many diseases into society, diseases of the heart. Where you find 76%, and this is an Australian statistic, 76% of all married men in Australia have admitted, and this is a study, that they have had an extra marital affair. Of those 76% who have stated this, they say that their causes are being in constant proximity with work mates. 58% of those 76% of men state that 58% of those extra marital affairs where with close co-workers, those who work around them on a day-to-day basis.

This is a known fact just by interacting in the work places that we are in and in the times that we live in. We found that in the societies that we live in, whether in Western or outside Western countries, this is a regular problem and that it increases with the times and that there is a direct correlation whether one begs to admit it or not between the attire that is worn and the flirtation behavior that continues thereafter.

We find also, statistics that will say to us that as psychologists have shown that a male's drive is brought out in one of two ways - either sight or touch. More than 12% of all videotape releases around the world are pornographic in nature. 86% of web users at any given time are looking at pornographic material. A male can be given a simple piece of paper, a photograph and it arouses him and that is something that is a fact proven scientifically and proven in society on a day-to-day basis.

So there is a correlation, and it is something that is undeniable therefore the basic essence and the basic premise for asking the Muslim women to cover is clear and hasn't changed throughout the times.

But then you will come back and you will say "Well why cannot curve this right in the male?"

And it is a question that cannot be answered by myself and others because it is something that is an impossibility; it is from that very primate evolutionary nature in man to seek to spread his living with as many women as possible.

## **2. Muslim men can have more than one wife. Muslim women must only have one.**

That's inequality. We return to that same statistic of 76 out of 100, 76% of all married men in this country where we live have admitted to extra marital affairs. What happens afterwards? Where is the responsibility? Where is the responsibility that tails in that action? That is what Islam calls to.

It will surprise you to find out that a fraction of Muslim men around the world have more than one wife. Rather it is an oddity in the Muslim community that we live in.

In Perth it is rare to hear that someone has more than one partner, it is rare, it is something of an odd nature, yet it is not odd in Western culture that a man may have a mistress or that a man may have someone who is on the side.

Why is it that when a man wants to take responsibility, wants to support and wants to be there for a person whom he loves, and who is accepted by his other partner because it is something that is legislated in law and under the sight of God, do we find it as something that is a horror, but when we see the same thing that is being performed without responsibility, without respect and without dignity in the form of cheating and in the form of a type of revenge, we turn our heads away from it. And therefore there is that double standard. So it is important for us to recognize that we should not take things at face value.

So it is not as simple as saying Muslim men can take up to four wives at one time. Is that what happens? The answer is no. Is that the norm? The answer is no. Is there a safe guard for that? Yes. Is there a safe guard for when in a community there is a need, where you have for every male 40 or 50 females, is there a need that more than one spouse is to taken and to be cared for? The answer is yes. And I will read you a contemporary example.

In the city of Bosnia, after the war and after the lack of humanity that was shown by the Western world to the Muslim nation of Europe, we found that for every male there where more than 20 females who would survive. Due to the concentration camps, due to the forced labor camps, due to the genocide that underwent in that country. Therefore it became a duty, and it was never something out of sexual drive, nothing of that nature that brought together large families and that brought together foster children into the situation and that brought together adoption and a sense of social responsibility.

## Misconception number two

The second misconception that we will deal with today is the concept that Muslim's have regarding other things. There is this misconception that it is a Muslims duty to change those who are living around him, if he's living in a country and it's a country where Christianity is secularism it is his duty to stamp it out and make everyone Muslim. The answer is no. How many Muslims have come to your door and knocked on it to introduce you to Islam? Has it ever happened? How many television commercials have you seen or radio announcements have you heard about Muslims asking you, come learn about God, come accept your savior, be one of us? It is only extended to those who show interest. There is no compulsion in faith. Allah says in the Quran: "There is no compulsion in the matter of faith." "Truth is always distinct from falsehood."

When someone wants to learn, he will find it and then he begins to accept the situation and then he begins to increase our practice and increase our call. But you will never find that a Muslim will come and force his faith on you. What you will find is that a Muslim may request at your work place to have 15 minutes of his own lunch break to pray and he will make a simple claim like one of the people in Sydney, "can I have a closet space, I don't want my own room, I just want a closet space during my lunch hour not on your company time, where I can pray for just 5 minutes. The matter had to go to court to accept whether he was justified in making such a claim.

So it is important for us to have that understanding, to have that worldly awareness, and that worldly understanding that we are a people who live together and we interact with one another. As a Muslim it is not my duty or my obligation to force you or to compel you or to come and hold your hand and say "sit down, let me tell you what I believe in". That was never the practice at the time of the Prophet (s) or in our time. Rather the call to Islam sadly to say in our time has been diminished by the evil and atrocious actions of some specific individuals who espouse Islam. And that has hindered the causes of Muslims.

### Misconception number three

#### Birds of the feather flock together.

If they are Muslim they are all the same. If he does it, they all do it. Bin Laden did it, everyone else did it. You paint them all with the same brush and the same colors. And that is the greatest injustice, not just in Islam but to humanity - that you judge a person by their color or their ethnicity or by their state of his faith, his race or his dictates or his actions. You are to judge a person by his measure that has been set to us by God throughout the times which is by the character of the individual, as a singular person.

You find the Reverend Martin Luther King in the 60's in America in the land that is stated to be the land of democracy and freedom, just 35 years ago, standing and saying "I have a dream" he doesn't even believe it will be a reality, he's dreaming, "I had a dream that one day that man will be measured by his character, not by the color of his skin".

We find ourselves in our time today saying these exact same words and calling for the exact same thing - that if someone commits an act that is immoral, improper, unsanctioned in that faith of Islam, you do not associate the faith by the action of the individual.

In the same way that we would never say that the IRA in Ireland represents Catholics and Protestants around the world, or the Hindu parties who burned Mosques while locking people inside them, that they represent all of the Hindus or all of the Sikhs. Rather they are the act of individuals who are criminally accountable for all of their deeds and will have their day in the sight of God to be questioned for their actions.

There is a famous premise in the legal system that says that if a judge errors in applying the law, you do not blame the law but you blame the judge that it's a simple mistake which is his fault as a person. You do not take the whole legal system and throw it out the window because one innocent man was convicted for a crime he did not commit. You do not say then the whole legal system is improper. In that same

respect that is what we as Muslims ask, that you make the distinction between the religion of Islam, faith and the practice of the 99.9% of Muslims throughout the world - that you do not take that fraction .01% and paint it upon all Muslims.

It is a great honour that I have the opportunity to say that I am currently employed in one of the largest Muslim schools in Australia, three campuses throughout the city of Perth, in Thornlie, Dianella and Kewdale which boasts 1800 Muslim students. But it is sad to see to this day that on our main walk way, leading up to our vast, large, acreous campus we find people who will spray paint under Australian Islamic College they will add "Australian Islamic College of Terrorism". Or they will enter into the school and seek to damage, break its windows or computer systems.

But it also gives us great happiness and joy to see people like Andy Chapman. A person driving by sees the graffiti, he takes down the address of the school and he writes us a letter, telling us "I just wish to renew your support in the Australian way and the Australian system and to tell you that it is far and clear of the actions of these individuals." It is important for you if you understand the gravity of the situation to lend a helping hand.

## Misconception number four

### **Muslims are all from over three and are all Arabs – that Islam is Arabic.**

In fact only 20% of all the Muslim population are Arabs, 80% of Muslims are non-Arabs. You have 50 million Muslims living in China, 20 million Muslims living in Russia, a whole country Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, in the heartland of Europe, are all Muslims.

Islam is not the faith of Arabs. It is a universal faith. And this is going to be demonstrated in the next few days when Muslims perform the Hajj. 2.5-2.8 million people are in the city of Mecca and they will converge in a few days in the plains of Arafat in all of their numbers remaining one day dressed in two garments, two white unstitched unattached pieces of cotton. There is no doctor, there is no white person, colored person, there is no oriental, there is no “I’m Turkish”, “I’m Somalian”, “I’m Egyptian”, “I’m Australian”. There is no I was born Muslim or I converted/reverted to Islam all are one people.

Malcolm X said it best. In a contemporary American style where he wrote back a letter to his wife, after performing the Hajj he says, “I have changed my ways”. He originally was a racist he felt that Black people should be completely segregated from Caucasians. He says “I have changed, I now recognize, after eating from the same plate and drinking from the same cup with a white person with the bluest of blue eyes and the blondest of blonde hair that nothing can bring equality in these terms other than the submission to God.”

Hajj is the only thing that could unite 2.8 million people with not a single argument, not a single fight because it cancels out and it breaks the pilgrimage. No one intends to enter into these lands in that time to do harm to others.

It is important to look at that local context of what Islam is, specifically living in Australia which is now a country which calls to racial harmony, that calls to multiculturalism.

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It is stated in the papers, the legislation and by our leaders. But it must also be enforced and practiced by the constituents, you and I

We must prove that these legal frameworks and these legislation are a reality. And we are to reject the claims by some of our leaders who seem to distance and to separate and segregate people instead of allowing them to come in contact with one another. So learn about each other and the faith that each and every person has, knowing that we are to respect the laws and respect the ethics of the land that we live in.

## Misconception number five

### The word Jihad

It is a word that I even find strange how it has been misused to such an extent. The word Jihad comes from root word to mean “exerting ones self” to strive, to struggle, to bring about a good cause, to bring about a good action.

There are two types of Jihad. Jihad where a person struggles against himself to do what is right, and to stay away from ones evil, that is the greatest Jihad. And that is the beginning of the second Jihad.

There is also the word Jihad which has the meaning of a military struggle, where a person defends his land, defends his people, defends his property and his home.

The Prophet Muhammad (s), said that five people, if they are martyred in Jihad will gain paradise including:

1. The one who is in a battle defending his land or his property or his hunting and women folk.
2. A man is sitting in his own home and without any cause someone enters upon him and he dies in defense his home and his property.
3. Martyrs who are amongst women, a women who gives birth and in that process she returns to God she is considered a martyr in Islam.

It is a larger scope than what has been named through the view of the media and through the lenses that have been shown to us.

It is important for us to have that global perspective where we do not just look at what we are made to see.

Today there are Muslims that are under strike in hundreds of cities around the world and I'll give you one vivid example. In Chechnya, in Russia you find Muslims who are living in a state that is considered criminal to subject anyone to it. In every one hundred citizens in the city of Chechnya, for every

100 people only 5 are men and out of those 5, only two of them are between the ages of 18 to 60. Everyone else is either below 18 years old or above the age of 60. Two out of every 100 people of the Chechnyan people are able-bodied men due to the defamation that they have experienced in their lands. But there is no lens that gives us that picture; there is nothing that puts our focus to that area or that time or that land. What we see are the shots that what it is that media sees to have instilled in our hearts and in our minds and it is important for us to recognize that there is more out there than just what we see.

## Conclusion

I conclude by admonition to myself and to you, that we as Muslims have a great duty in explaining to you and in bringing to you what it is that we believe in, and to show you that we are peace loving people. That we have the same characteristics and same modality that you have. We are partners living in the same country and living in the same land with you.

But it is also important for you to extend your hand as we extend ours. And it is important for you to give us strength as you wish us to strengthen you. And it is important for you to listen to our opinions and to listen to our concerns and to act when there is a need to that and not just to remain distant or to take that isolation concept, to see that we a continent far from the problems of the world

We recently saw the criminal actions that brought this home to us. That there are things that people seek to harm our way of life and our actions. And it is important for us to stamp out the problems before they begin. So it is important for you and I to come together to recognize where the truth lies and where we disagree with one another, that the disagreement can be done in proper decorum and proper respect and with proper manners.

Where a person still feels that he has dignity and that he has honor not that he feels that others stare at him just because of the way he dresses, or the accent he carries on his tongue, although the Canadian accent is somewhat accepted in this country!

It is important to let people feel comfortable and to lend a helping hand when they are in need. Generally speaking Muslims are nice people. We don't bite, we don't scratch or scream, or kick, in general. You will find that there are people who are immoral or unjust or improper who bring oppression to others. And by chance they may be Muslim. And one of the many reasons you find Muslims flocking to this country of Australia is because we live under those regimes, where there are leaders who are Muslim, countries and nations where there is oppression. And they seek to free themselves from these bonds. So they come to a country like yours,

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like mine where we live together in peace and harmony in relative terms. And they seek admittance to it promising to earn a living, to work hard and they only ask for a chance.

It is important not to be close-minded and to say "Everyone from that place is not to come, keep the Afghans out, keep the Iraqis out, even if it is not a stated policy." It is something that we see in the treatment of those who are incarcerated at the refugee centers and the refugee camps. So it is important for us to recognize that we do have a societal duty toward ourselves and to others, and that it is something that we are rewarded for in the harmony of where we live. And we recognize those who seek to do harm will do harm regardless of our actions and therefore it is important for us to seek to stamp them out to seek to bring what it is the truth that they are calling to.

We always conclude by reminding ourselves that you and us are a people of great similarity in faiths and beliefs. As Muslims we believe in many of the same things of morality and ethics that you hold to be virtuous and are proud of. And as a Muslim I remind myself by saying: "Say to the people of the book let us come together on something that we can agree upon, that we worship the one true God."

This is the thing that we call each other to without compulsion, without hostility, with proper decorum. This is just a glimpse of some of the Misconceptions and some of the frustrations that I have vented out on you. Hopefully there will be many questions that you will have.

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**Misconceptions about Islam**  
**Part [2], Br. Yahya Ibrahim**

**Lecture delivered at the University of Western  
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**Jihad**

Jihad is a trigger word that is known more now it is more catchy and more recognized by non Muslims in certain Western countries than many Muslims.

The word Jihad when used in Egypt or Saudi Arabia or any of these countries, is a word that goes said without anyone paying any significant attention to it. But if the word Jihad is used on a bus in Western Australia loud enough for the neighbor sitting next to you to hear, everyone heartens and their ears prick up. It is a word that has become famous, usually written in blood red letters covering up most of the TV screen. At times the blood red letters will actually be dripping drops of blood symbolizing the tyranny that Muslims are causing in different rounds of the Earth.

Let us look at what this word means and hopefully this will be both educational for the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims in our audience.

The word Jihad derives from the root word: to exert ones self, to struggle to attain something. This word is only used in reference to things that are seen as difficult or undesirable.

A person only performs Jihad when the objective that one is doing is something that instinctively in human nature is undesirable and as such it became synonymous with the word "war". But in fact the word Jihad is far greater in meaning.

It's important to point out something regarding the Arabic language which many analysts and many media moguls fail to see. The Arabic language in what is termed as Balagha or proper etiquette of elegance, uses certain rules and guidelines in that a single word in the Arabic language can have hundreds of meanings, not just one.

In the English language for example, the word lion only refers to a lion. But in the Arabic language there are more than 50 different words that refer to a lion and therefore this word Jihad also has numerous, numerous, numerous meanings.

So the first linguistic understanding is that the word Jihad is synonymous with doing something difficult or hard or that people do not want to do it. And therefore the Prophet (peace be upon him) said "The true person who performs Jihad, the true form of Jihad in one of it's types is that a person who performs Jihad against himself, struggles against himself to be distinct from that which God has said are sins."

That is the essential element of Jihad. To keep oneself away and pure and secure from sinful matters from things that are being impure and unholy. That is the essence of the word Jihad.

Another meaning of the word Jihad refers to military and armed struggle. And one of the great benefits of the Islamic faith is that in our legal system and in our law and in fact in our Quran and in the sunnah, there is a legal framework that discusses all the different issues of marshal law. When to engage an enemy, when not to engage an enemy, what enemy is allowed to be engaged, who is not an enemy, how to deal with captives, how not to deal with captives, ransoming. All of these different issues that come into play regarding warfare are discussed in the Quran. But they are not discussed in singular verses and this once again is where many have fallen into error. They extract a simple phrase in the Quran. They take part of a verse that says: "And kill all the infidels"

They have taken a whole system of belief of 6.5 billion people a fifth of humanity and they extract four words and represent it for the rest of their faith. Of all those 6.5 billion people, this is what they believe this is what it says in their book on page such and such, chapter such and such, verses such and such it says "kill the infidels". Without seeing context, without seeing the precursor without seeing how the verse ends, who it refers to, when the verse was revealed and under what circumstances and was it regarding a specific case or a general.

That is where the first misconception lies. That trigger terms like Jihad, infidel, war, the laws of Jihad, are absorbed and seen and analyzed from obscure perspectives seeking to find fault and therefore it becomes my responsibility and the responsibility of all the Muslims in our audience today to show you what our faith really is.

We are not apologetic. There are things in our faith that you may look at and say “this goes completely against what I believe as a Westerner, secularist, Christian, whatever it may be.” As a person of faith it is something I do not apologize for the things that I may not understand or the things that I lack the ability to explain to you. But to explain the main concept of Jihad is simple. It is to do anything that one is able to please God, things that are difficult for one to do, and therefore they require struggle.

From the things that the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (Sala Allahu ‘alihi was-Salaam) referred to by using the word Jihad include:

1. Hajj, the pilgrimage, which just ended a few weeks ago. 2.8 million people gathered into the plains of Mecca, into the valley of Mecca. The Prophet (Sala Allahu ‘alihi was-Salaam) said “The largest Jihad, (the greatest Jihad, the most complete Jihad) is Hajj.” That’s Jihad. Because it’s a difficult journey. You leave of work, you leave of some of you family members, you spend an exurbanite amount of money, you go and you are dressed in two garments that are cloth, unstitched together, you are walking on foot for many kilometers each and every day, little food, little drink, little sleep, you are with hundreds of different nationalities that do not speak your language, do not understand your words, but all of them have one common thing, they are all performing Jihad along with you, meaning Hajj.

2. Prayer. To wake up before dawn, before the sun rises. We as Muslims, each and every one of us inshallah, we will speak to the Muslims at a latter date about the importance of prayer! But each of us rises before the sun rises to offer prayer and then we go back to sleep, and then we rise and carry on with our days work. And when high noon comes, the sun is at its full zenith we stop whatever we are doing and we pray. And then we get back to work,

get on with our lives. And then when the sun is half noon in the afternoon, we pray, leave everything we are doing. And then we get on with our lives, we have our dinner and so forth. And then when the sun sets, as you saw some of our brothers right outside the theater, they recognized that the next prayer was going to come in before I ended my lecture so they prayed right outside here. I and other brothers and sisters prayed in the designated prayer hall in one of the buildings on campus here at the University of Western Australia.

We leave everything, the lecture is late, fine we will delay it. Prayer is more important. And we pray and then when the sky is completely dark, we pray. That is a form of Jihad. That is a form of struggle.

3. Taking care of ones elderly parents. A man came to the Prophet seeking to set out on a military expedition accompanying Rasoolallah. The Prophet turned to him and said “Do you have any parents?” the man said “Yes” The Prophet told him “Are they old in age?” he said “Yes.” The Prophet told him “Go to your parents and make your Jihad in (taking care of) them”. Jihad, struggle, taking care of ones elderly folks is a form of Jihad.

Therefore the word Jihad has been taken and stolen and misappropriated by those who seek to paint to the general masses and the general public a picture that is distorted from the truth and therefore it is a great misconception that the word Jihad in Islam refers to military struggle.

I correct myself, there is an instance where the word Jihad refers to military struggle, but it is one of the numerous examples. When does the word Jihad refer to military struggle?

In one of two cases;

1. Defense. When you are sitting in your home or sitting in your country and someone boots in the door or crosses your borders and begins to pillage your land, take your property, unjustly and there is nothing else for you to do except to repel that force with an equal measure of force, it’s called self defense. That is referred to in Islamic law as Jihad.

2. When a Muslim is secured and they turn to spread the word of truth. Or when his neighboring country or his neighboring home is in disarray and is being torn up, is being robbed and pillaged. It becomes an obligation on that Muslim who is in that home to protect his nearest neighbor. And that is the offensive Jihad. That is how the word Jihad is used in Islamic law. And that is the context of that verse: "And wage war against the infidels".

The next sentence says: "If they attack you repel their attack"

But that is rarely seen in the blood red letters that are dripping. Rather what you will also not hear is the next statement where Allah says: "And if they submit to a peace treaty, then sign it and be with them"

That is also not mentioned. So therefore Jihad has been misappropriated and it is a term that has been used in an improper, illogical, historically unsound manner. We move onto the next topic.

Islam equals violence, poverty and backwardness.

Many of us, Muslims included, will look and turn on the CNN or BBC or Sky News and you will see that whenever there is reference to turmoil, political unrest, poverty you all immediately say to yourselves, "Man, that's a country where Muslims live", "It's gotta be one of those Muslim countries, It's gotta be either an Arab country, Pakistan, India, something like that, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya.

This causes people to equate Islam or the locality where Muslims live as being a place of poverty or backwardness. They need medicine, ship to us food. Droughts, Somalia, Ethiopia all countries where Muslims are in a majority.

Is that because Islam is found in these lands? Well, let us take once again an objective look at the place and the problem.

When we look into the Islamic political environment where these problems are found, you will see that these nations have in them three main characteristics.

The first, they do not have Islamic law. They are following either secular law, Napoleonic law, Democracy or Communism, or a mixture of them. So they are a country where Muslims live but they are not a Muslim country, and that is important to be pointed out. The laws of the land, the laws in the books are not Islamic law. The people living in the land are Muslim.

For example, there are 65 million Muslims living in Communist China, that figure is rarely mentioned. There are 20 million Muslims living in what was previously referred to as the USSR or the Soviet Union, 20 million, and that, these two numbers, it's important for me to point out, are numbers that those communist regimes admit to, meaning that the numbers are probably double that number.

China officially says that yes we have 65 million Muslims. But we know from the Chinese track record that they rarely admit to the correct figures and the correct numbers,

Take in point the AIDS epidemic that is wrecking China in our day today living at the moment, there is a raging AIDS epidemic due to their lack of screenings of blood and transfusions. But that was not admitted to until it was blown open in an expose. 65 million Muslims in Communist China, 20 million in what used to be referred to as Russia, in these areas there is turmoil but is it because the people are practicing Islam, we just established that these countries do not follow Islam, they follow porn of seculars law in some countries or a form of Communist, Marxist, Maoist law.

The second important point is that all of these countries have been invaded by what are now today advanced Western countries. Somalia was invaded by the Italians who resided for a numerous period of time in Somalia. Before the Italians arrived the Somalian people used to write in the Arabic font when the Italians arrived they scrapped all of that, they said you no longer write in that font, you write in Latin script. Libya, was invaded by the Italians. Algeria, the French. Egypt, the French, the British. Palestine, was invaded by the British and remained until 1948 and decided in the Belford declaration this is our country and our land and although we

have a population of Palestinians who live here we now decide to give this land to a Zionist organization to build the land of Israel. Just decided by the British government with a stroke of a pen.

You could see the British influence in India and Pakistan and that once the British left, India and Pakistan split. Each and every country had an imperialist colonization where its lands were taken so that the ores within them could be extracted. If you look at Rostow's theory of economic development this becomes clear. Rostow says that every country begins as a subsistence, the people, the country is only concerned with feeding its people. And the second step of economic development is that another country comes and says "hey, let us build roads, airports, build stuff in your country we will invest in your country." This poor nation says "sure come on in, we need roads, we need hospitals, we need everything you are giving us". The third step of economic development is that these super power countries extract the minerals which they build the roads to transport to the port which they build to ship out the raw minerals and oil. Only after diversification of the economy can a third world country ever expect to stand on its feet.

This rarely happens and rarely in our time has it happened. Simply because too much is taken out in too quick a time to diversify the economy and therefore they remain a third world.

An example is Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. They have diversified their economy but without oil and the investment that they derived from it, their economy collapses. Look at Venezuela, one of the largest oil producing countries in the world, vivid example of this in our day today.

The third characteristic that you will find in these Muslim countries where there is civil strife is the oppression of the rulers who are there. You have a person who has been ruling a country for thirty years. He passes away and the rule goes to his son, who by the constitutional law, by their constitution, written by his father, he is too young to retain power, he is not yet forty years old, at the moment his father dies, chambers is called, they change the law "Oh no, no, no, forget about what you guys said,

lets make an amendment, lets make the law your age, 33 years old, you are know our president".

Take the examples of Jordan and Syria. The father passes, the son takes over, even those who were rightful to take over place, the father's brother, he was pushed to aside so that the son can take place. The rulers have a level of corruption that causes people beneath them to remain in the condition that they are in. So is it Islam, the answer is "no". It is the political factors, who their neighbors are, who they trade with, who they do not trade with, who they are excluded from being apart.

Point and fact, Turkey, a Muslim country by population not by law or governess, a Muslim women in Turkey is barred from attending post high school education if she wears her head scarf, she's not allowed to go to university. But it is a country where 99.9% of the population in their census will tick of "Muslim" as their faith. That is one of the countries excluded from the European trade union. Simply because they have a large population who are Muslim.. You see many of the situations and many of these places breathe in them hatred for Western cultures and Western values, and this brings us to our third point.

Islam, does it seek to separate from Western society?

Islam does not ever seek to separate from any society. Rather, the basis, the essential philosophical building of Islam, is that it is a fluent religion that is found everywhere.

In this country there is a vast population of Muslims. In Toronto Canada you will find that there are 300 000 Muslims living there where there are only 4.5 million people. From the Northern hemisphere to the Southern hemisphere. This is one of the furthest extremities south - you don't go much further and you hit the Antarctic.

It is from the grace of God, the grace of Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta'aala), that he has given us a faith, as Muslims we pride ourselves in a faith that is fluent, a faith that is practiced anywhere, that isn't attached to symbols.

I can be outside here as you saw the brothers standing on the lawn, and I pray, carpet, grass, makes no difference. What is important is that I turn myself towards God in grace and devotion.

I fast when the month of Ramadan comes, 30 days, throughout all of the daylight hours I turn to Allah in obedience, leaving of the mere essentials of life, water. And I only do it to show God here I leave of that which is normally valid for me to consume, water, it is not alcohol it is not an intoxicant I drink it each and every day, my life and existence is based on it as you told us in the Quran, without it I die, I leave it of to show you that when you tell me to leave of what is prohibited I will also follow in obedience. If I can leave off water, I can leave of anything. Proving my worth to God, proving myself to God.

When there is a need to give in charity, I give, whether to Muslim or non-Muslim, we give and we are charitable. I will give you an example, At the school where I am currently teaching at the Australian Islamic College, the student council is involved in a project of building a well. The girls at the school are baking goods, they come every Thursday and they sell to the students and we buy a piece of cake. It's highly over priced, I'm the first to admit it, but we give because that money is being used to build a well. So that people who are less fortunate we will give them \$600 to an organization, Human Relief International. They will take that money and they promise, build a well, take a picture and send it to us. We are charitable people.

When the month of Ramadan comes we fast, when the month of Hajj, the pilgrimage comes, the one who is able financially and time wise, he goes and gives himself to the way of God he says: "Here I come to you o God, answering your call"

Those are the five elements of Islam. First and most important is to bear witness, testify that there is no God or deity that is worthy of worship of the one true God, and to believe that Muhammad (Sala Allahu 'alihi was-Salaam) was given a message just like Jesus was given it and Moses was given it and Noah was given it and Abraham was given a message

that leads to the right path, to the way of righteousness to the way of truth.

Does Islam seek to separate from Western society or any society? The answer is no. Islam throughout its history has been found in Communism, has been found in secularism, has been found amongst the capitalist, Muslims are found throughout the world. Does that mean I will compromise my faith to integrate? No. Muslims believe in the concept which the Australian government has taken as a point to implement and to establish the concept of multiculturalism, where I can be an Egyptian Canadian, now an Australian and I have my own identity my own culture. The government will fund me to have a cultural center that will protect my language, protect my way, protect everything about my identity so that I can be a person that is secure about myself so that I can benefit society.

One of the Theories of urban development is that the first question people who want to migrate to a city ask is: "where is a person who is exactly like me?" where is the Egyptian Canadian living in Australia. You don't find it so you look for someone close, something that can fit that description, you want to find someone you can identify yourself with, and at the lack of that, you look for the closest thing, therefore you will have China town, little Italy, little Vietnam in some places, little Bombay. You will have these places where people of the same culture, same language come together.

As Muslims our place is the Mosque. We don't have one nationality, we have a mosque we have a place where we all come together regardless of nationality, race color creed or language. We come together as Muslims. And when that is taken away from us, it causes us to enter into a cycle where our work output is not what it should be. A person becomes depressed, unable to perform the task that was seemingly before easy to fulfill. Simply because he does not have a point of reference, someone to associate with.

The governments of Australia, Canada, the United States and many of the Western countries now recognize that multiculturalism is a valid policy. Let the people have their faith, let the people have their

culture, let the people have their sense of identity, do not let them cross the boundaries where they can infringe upon others.

We follow the law of the land. Occasionally I will speed, but that's a different issue, but in general we follow the laws of the country we live in. That is a part of my faith, a part of my Islamic identity. I do not put forward that which infringe upon the rights of others. So therefore Islam does not seek to separate itself from society or that we live in a community behind barriers and walls and screens where you are a distant person from us.

And therefore I call out to you in conclusion to try to befriend a Muslim. Say hi or howdy or as you here say G'day. Say something where the person can associate with you and see that you are person who will not infringe upon their rights, allow people to feel comfortable.

I normally do not dress in this Islamic garment or in this Arabic garment. Usually a pair of slacks and an Oxford shirt or something of that nature. 45 minutes ago I was asked by a person "If your living here, dress like us" and his friend said "when in Rome do as the Romans". But that in fact contradicts the essence of multiculturalism. That contradicts the law of the land. And that infringes upon my rights to dress in the way that I want as long as it is appropriate as long as it is within the laws of your country of the country I reside in and therefore we need to take off the blinkers to look what is around us.

Australians travel a great deal. In fact when you look at the statistics, most Australians travel more outside their country than in their country. You will have a person who was raised in Western Australia, has never gone anywhere in Western Australia or to the Eastern side but has gone to Bali, to Thailand to Vietnam he's backpacked Europe. And therefore Western Australians have this ability to see what the real world is like. So don't let what you see be something that you do not follow up in your deeds. Know that there is a great world out there with many cultures and many types of people that you can appreciate and come to respect and enjoy.

It is important for us to take of the blinkers, to think globally not just in the microcosm that we find our selves in today.

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