



ISLAMIC ONLINE UNIVERSITY

INSIGHTS

CHANGING THE NATION THROUGH EDUCATION

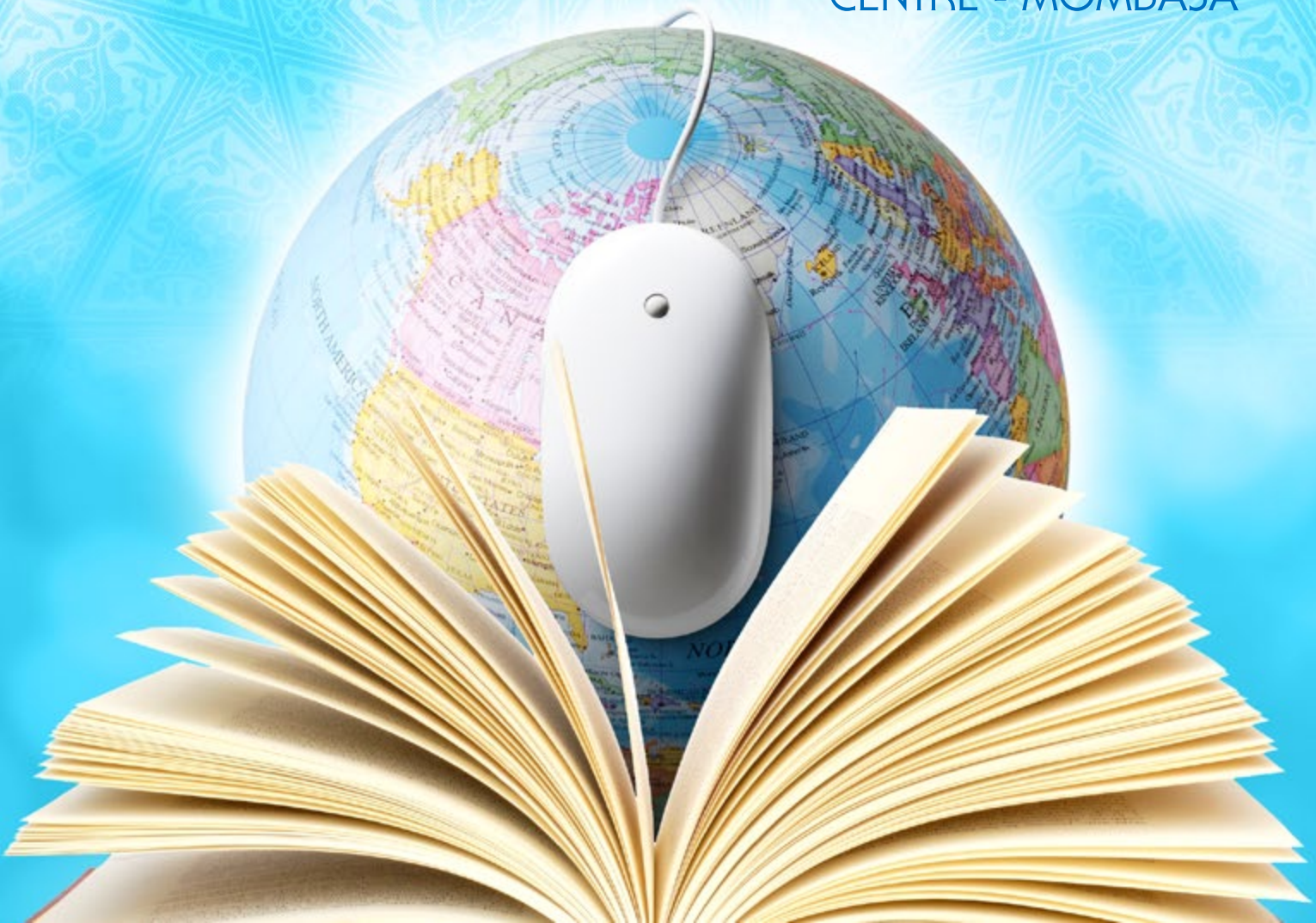
THE MUSLIM WORLD'S
CONTRIBUTION TO
KNOWLEDGE

SEEKING
KNOWLEDGE IS
WORSHIP

WHO'S WHO
IN IOU?

THE IOU
EXPERIENCE

ABU AMEENAH
CENTRE - MOMBASA





Welcome to the first issue of IOU Insights!

The name of the magazine says it all: it is affiliated with the Islamic Online University and its aim is to provide its readers with insights into the Islamic lifestyle.

The main theme of IOU Insights is 'ilm, or knowledge. Islam is often called "the path of knowledge" because no other religion or ideology puts so much emphasis on the importance of 'ilm.

In the Qur'an, the verses in which 'ilm or its associated words are used number over 700. There are also hundreds of Prophetic traditions that encourage Muslims to acquire all kinds of knowledge.

But IOU Insights is not only about acquiring knowledge; it is also about application. It helps no one if all we do is learn information. We must also learn how to apply that information to our daily and eternal lives. Articles on the wonder and majesty of Islam, lessons from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, tips and tools on how to learn, and advice for how to apply what we learn will be included in every issue.

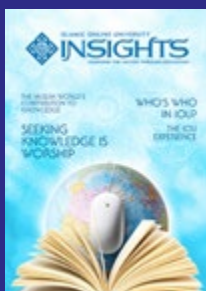
We will also be reporting on activities associated with the Islamic Online University, and Islamic education in general, including mission trips,

speaking engagements, course descriptions and reviews, the work of our faculty, staff and numerous volunteers, and information about other educational opportunities and institutions. We also plan to highlight at least one person in each issue so that you may get to know them better and learn from their experiences.

I invite you to explore the pages of IOU Insights and e-mail any comments, questions or suggestions to info@iou-insights.com (we will be including letters to the editor in future issues). Any submissions can be sent to the same address.

As the Chief Editor of IOU Insights, I want to say what an honor and a privilege it is for me to work with our amazing staff to make this magazine a reality. May Allah bless all that we do for His sake.

Ellen Keim
Editor in Chief



MEET THE TEAM

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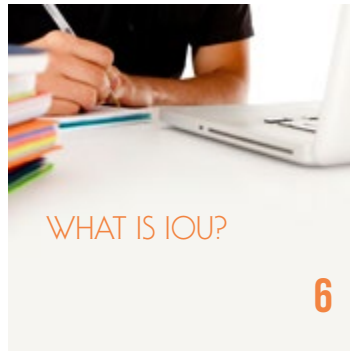
YOUR VIEWS

We would love to you 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



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THE FOUNDER &
CHANCELLOR
OF IOU

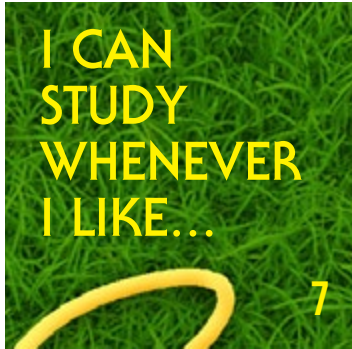
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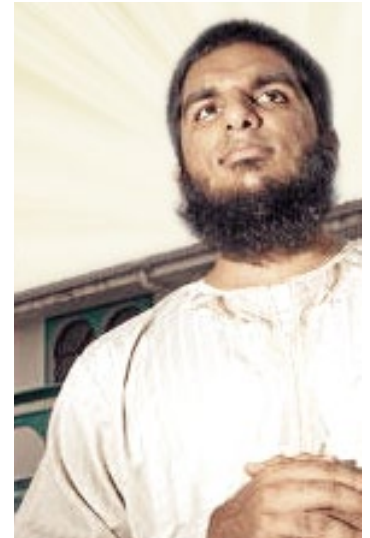
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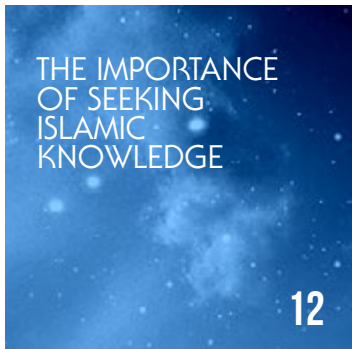
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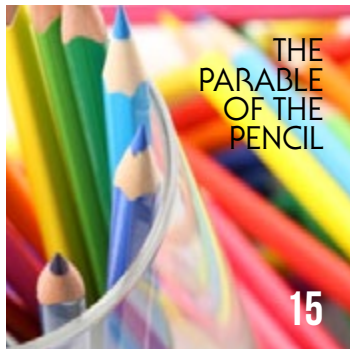
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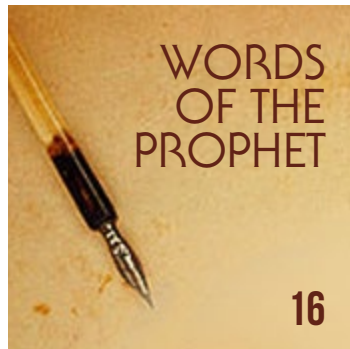
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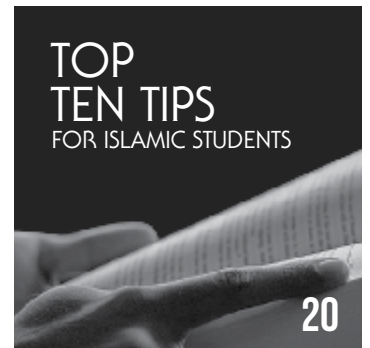
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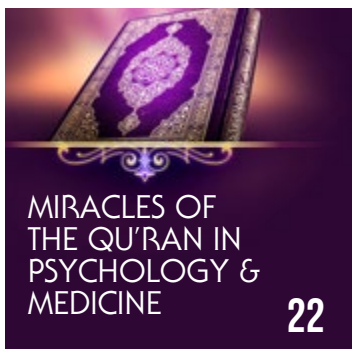
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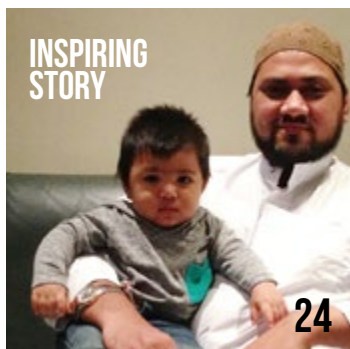
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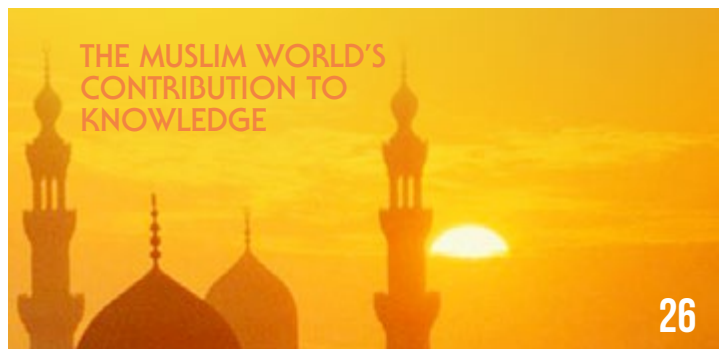
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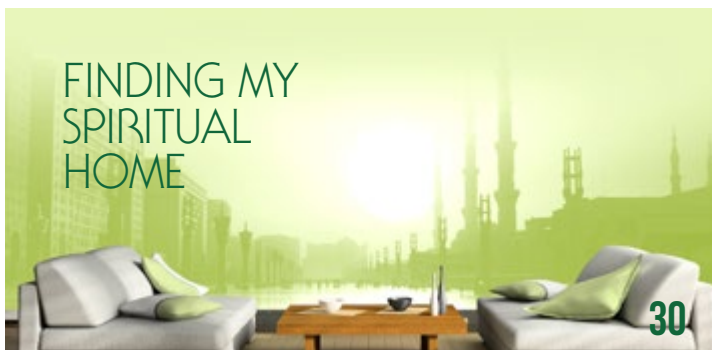
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A MAN
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MISSION

INTRODUCING
**THE FOUNDER &
CHANCELLOR OF IOU**

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips was born in Jamaica, but grew up in Canada, where he converted to Islam in 1972. His whole life has been exemplified by his goal of seeking an Islamic education and bringing the same educational opportunities to others.

In preparation for this goal, he received his B.A. from the College of Islamic Disciplines at the Islamic University of Medeena (1979), his M.A. in Aqeedah (Islamic Theology) from the King Saud University in Riyadh (1985), and his Ph.D. in Islamic Theology from the University of Wales (1994).

After graduation from the University of Medeena, Dr. Bilal spent ten years teaching Islamic studies in an Islamic high school in Riyadh, and another ten years lecturing in Arabic and Islamic studies in the American University in Dubai, UAE.

In 1994 he founded the Islamic Information Center in Dubai (now known as Discover Islam). He has served as the head of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Preston University-Ajman, UAE; lecturer and director of the Da'wah and Education at Qatar Guest Center, Doha, Qatar; and the founder and head of the English-medium Islamic studies department of Knowledge International University, the College of Da'wah and Islamic Culture (English Section) at Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan, and Preston International College in Chennai, India. He is currently the Chancellor of the Islamic Studies Academy in Doha.

But perhaps his greatest achievement, and the one for which he was listed in the Jordanian publication, *The 500 Most Influential Muslims* (rissc.jo/muslim500v-1L.pdf), is the founding of Islamic Online University. Unlike the other educational programs he has founded and overseen, IOU makes it possible for any person from any location in the world to receive an Islamic education absolutely free.

IOU has been in the making for over a decade. It originally opened in 2001, but had to shut down for technological restructuring. It reopened in 2007 with its free diploma program and introduced its fully accredited tuition-free Bachelor's program (BAIS) in 2010 (See "[What is IOU?](#)" for more information). Beginning in the Spring 2013 semester, in preparation for the opening of the Master's program (MAIS), the "Higher Diploma" opened which is the bridge between a BA/BSc in other than Islamic Studies to the MAIS.

Dr. Bilal has served as IOU's Chancellor from the beginning. He travels extensively to bring the message of Islam and offer the prospect of Islamic education to the world. So far this year he has traveled to and spoken to IOU Students and those interested in IOU in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and Mauritius (see elsewhere in this issue for photos and information about some of these events).

Dr. Bilal Philips has also written, translated and commented on over 50 published books on various Islamic topics. He has also edited and published the 56-book Eemaan Reading Series for children and presented Islamic programs for a number of years on Riyadh Channel 2TV, Sharjah TV, Peace TV, Huda TV, Islam Channel, UK, and the Deen Show, Chicago, USA.

His vision for the future is to spread the news about IOU all over the world. To accomplish this goal he relies heavily on volunteers and donations. Everywhere he goes he encourages people to search their hearts for ways that they can contribute to this worthy cause.

IOU needs representatives and liaisons in every corner of the world. It can use donations of computers and Internet access (some people are meeting in group classes around one computer!) and people who are willing to tutor prospective students in English (all the classes, except for advanced Arabic courses, are taught in English). And now that it has launched its online magazine, IOU Insights, it can also use people with computer, editing, and writing skills to make it a success.

But most of all Dr. Bilal needs others who share his vision to help spread the word about IOU. Anyone who has a blog, a Facebook or Twitter account, access to masjids and Islamic organizations, and writing and speaking skills can tell others about this unprecedented opportunity to learn about our Creator and the Islamic way of life.

May Allah be with Dr. Bilal, the faculty and the staff of IOU as well as everyone who contributes in any way to the growth of IOU's programs as they carry out this important work.

(Ellen Keim)

WHAT IS IOU?

The Islamic Online University (IOU) is the first accredited university in the world to offer tuition-free Bachelor's degrees in Islamic Studies (BAIS) completely online. In addition, it offers a diploma in Islamic Studies, which is also free.

The idea for IOU came from Dr. Bilal Philips, present chancellor of the university, who has been instrumental in establishing and heading many other Islamic Studies programs in the UAE, the Philippines, Sudan, India, and Qatar. Seeing a need for the world-wide spread of Islamic education and the possibilities inherent in the Internet, he fused the two and started IOU in 2001.

After technical difficulties and an interlude of five years, the diploma program was reinstated in 2007 with an enrollment of 1500 students. It now has 100,000 students from 217 countries on the planet. The BAIS program, which began in 2010, has 30,041 registered students from 190 countries.

The Free General Diploma Program

Most of the general diploma courses have downloadable audio and video lectures as well as a pdf text. The general diploma program consists of 24 out of 26 or more courses. The program provides an introduction to the basic Islamic sciences and insight into the way of the Prophet (pbuh) as embodied in the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah. All of the courses are of immediate and practical relevance.

This free course of study will also introduce students who wish to pursue an accredited BA or MA in Islamic Studies to the methodology of the BAIS program. Certificates are given for each of the free courses completed.

The BAIS Program

The BAIS program has recorded audio and video lectures and weekly live tutorial classes in a virtual classroom setting on the Internet. Its syllabus is based on the BA in Usool ud-Deen (Religious Foundations) curricula of Madeenah University, Saudi Arabia; Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan; Al-Azhar University in Egypt and other similar reputable Islamic institutions.

Six subjects are offered each semester. Each semester is five months, with an online mid-term exam after two and a half months and a supervised online final at the end of the fifth month. Students are free to access their classes whenever it is convenient for them; however, assignments have to be turned in and exams (mid-term and finals) have to be taken at fixed times.

My name is Ridwan Mahmood and I am 13 years old. I was asked to share my story because it shows that a person is never too young to seek the knowledge of Allah. I was searching on Google for online Islamic courses and the first hit was Islamic Online University.

I CAN STUDY WHENEVER I LIKE...

I was surprised to find an accredited institute offering bachelor degrees and diplomas in Islam, and, alhamdulillah, it was free, too! I find the courses very easy to work through. I can study whenever I like which means I can fit it around my school life. Each course is structured into numerous modules and each module is accompanied by a text, video/ audio, a Q&A section as well as a final exam. The text and video/audio flow really well together, and the speaker Sheikh Bilal Phillips is very engaging and knowledgeable about the topics.

Any questions I had were answered 99.99% of the time in the Q&A section, and when my question was not answered, I was able to contact the course facilitator, or interact with and ask other students on the discussion forums. This is a great asset to what is already a great experience. There is a final test at the end of each course, but there are also individual tests at the end of each module. This is a great way to assess and track your progress throughout the course and also allows you to pinpoint the areas that you are struggling with so that you can concentrate on improvement.

As I said before, you can study the diploma whenever you like, which is ideal for those who have work or other secular studies. I have personally set myself a 'mission' to finish the diploma in two years, inshaAllah, so I try to listen to the audio of the courses on my journey to school, and then study the text at home along with the audio, followed by listening to the Q&A. It usually takes me around one hour to two hours to work through a long module and forty-five minutes to an hour and a half on shorter modules.

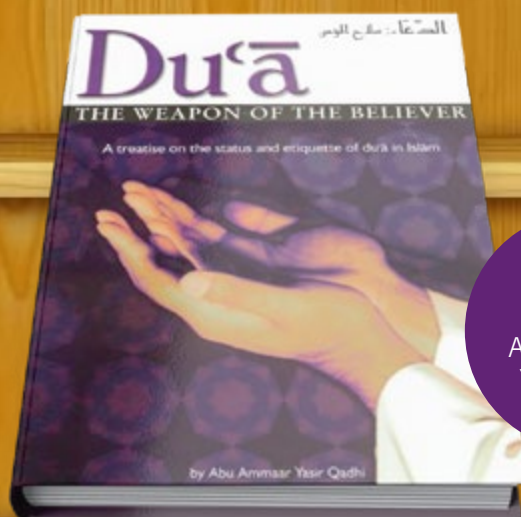
I recommend this course to everyone because the Islamic knowledge gained from this diploma is rich, deep and scholarly. Each course also delves into background information allowing for a broader understanding on the topics. You can study it whenever and wherever you like, which is a huge bonus to all who have family and work commitments to attend to.

You can sign up at
www.iou-diploma.com

May Allah make the path of knowledge easy for you.

Ridwan Mahmood
IOU Student





Author:
Sheikh
Abu Ammaar
Yasir Qadhi

DU'A: THE WEAPON OF THE BELIEVER

By: Sister Faatimah Dulull

D*u'a: The Weapon of the Believer* by Sheikh Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi* is a comprehensive treatise on the concept and manners of du'a (invocation). Sheikh Yasir Qadhi is a well-known proponent of Qur'an and Sunnah as understood by the pious predecessors. The book's reliability lies in the fact that the author has confined himself to quoting verses of the Qur'an and hadith related to du'a, and the statements of scholars with brief explanations. (The scholar most often quoted in this book is Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.)

Using a simple and concise language, Sheikh Yasir Qadhi thoroughly explains the basics related to du'a: its types, its excellence and benefits, pre-conditions, etiquettes, recommended times, factors that aid a person's du'a

being answered, the wisdom behind a delayed response, permissible acts of du'a, tawassul (drawing near to Allah), du'a and its relationship with destiny, and innovations in du'a. He also discusses and warns readers against some weak hadith regarding du'a.

Since du'a is closely related to a Muslim's creed and monotheism and it is the essence of the noblest form of worship, it is crucial for Muslims to know its status and basics. With the hustle and bustle that Muslims face in their daily life, this book is a powerful tool that can help to enhance one's productivity through spiritual means.

This book review originally appeared on the "Productive Muslim" website on March 3, 2011. [<http://www.productivemuslim.com/>]

* Yasir Qadhi was born in Houston, Texas and completed his primary and secondary education in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He graduated with a B.Sc. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Houston, after which he was accepted as a student at the Islamic University of Madinah. After completing a diploma in Arabic, he graduated with a B.A. from the College of Hadith and Islamic Sciences and an MA in Islamic theology from the College of Dawah. Thereafter, Yasir Qadhi (has) received his doctorate degree in Religious Studies at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. His published works include: *Riya'a: The Hidden Shirk*, *Du'a: The Weapon of the Believer*, and *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*.



Understanding Islam Conference 2012

DR. BILAL PHILIPS SPEAKS IN HONG KONG

In early January of this year, two scholars traveled to Hong Kong to speak at the Understanding Islam Conference 2012 organized by the Serving Islam Team. One of the scholars was IOU's founder and chancellor, Dr. Bilal Philips; the other was Shaykh Hussain Yee.

In his talk, entitled "First Things First," Dr. Philips discussed the importance of planning our priorities so that we can achieve the most important goals in life and be successful in this world and in the Hereafter.

Dr. Bilal's other presentation was in a public dialogue with an American professor of Christian theology on the topic "The Concept of Salvation in Islam and Christianity". The American professor candidly admitted that the Christian concept of salvation through the blood of Jesus did not have solid textual evidence, and that there were differing opinions concerning it. On the other hand, Dr Bilal, elucidated Islam's clear and logical concept which teaches that salvation may be gained through sincere repentance by those who commit sins.

[Click to view a sister who embraced Islam at the end of the dialogue.](#)

[Click to view the Q&A session.](#)

ABU MUAWIYAH ISMAIL KAMDAR

Abu Muawiyah Ismail Kamdar is the Head Tutorial Assistant of the Islamic Online University, the author of the book "Having Fun the Halal Way: Entertainment in Islam" and the host of a weekly Tafseer program on Radio Al-Ansaar.

Ismail began his study of Islam at the age of thirteen with a seven year Alim course at a local Darul Uloom (school of Islamic sciences, <http://alhaadi.org.za/>). He then studied under a variety of scholars (shuyook) and institutes from around the world in his quest for authentic knowledge. His most notable teacher is Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, the founder of IOU.

In 2008 he served as an Arabic and Islamic Studies Educator at Ihsaan Boys College in Durban, South Africa, and in 2009 as an English and Social Studies Educator at the Al-Fajr International School in Chennai, India. He has lectured at various workshops, conferences and youth camps around South Africa and other countries, and is currently in his final year of his BA studies at IOU. He is married with four children and currently resides in Durban, South Africa.

Brother Ismail is a very honest, well-spoken and thoughtful scholar with a talent for communication. Let us get to know some more about him.

How long have you been a TA and how did you come to be one?

I've been a TA with IOU from the time they launched the BAIS program, almost four years ago. At that time, I had just returned from Chennai, India, where I was working in Al-Fajr International School, which was started by Dr. Bilal, and I returned home to South Africa to be with my family. I still wanted to work for Dr. Bilal but wanted to stay in South Africa as all my family are here. So when IOU launched the BAIS program, I immediately applied for the TA post and became their first full-time TA. First I was the TA for 3 courses, Aqeedah 101, Arabic 100 and Fiqh 101, then Arabic 101 was added. I am now the Head Tutorial Assisant as well as the TA for five courses: Tafseer 101, Fiqh 101, Arabic 100, Arabic 101 and Tafseer 202.

What has being a TA done for you?

There are two major developments which occurred due to being a TA, for which I am thankful. The first was developing a high level of time-management. During the first semester, I felt overwhelmed with three courses but now I manage five courses with plenty of time for my studies and Head TA duties. Over the past few years, this position and the amount of work and self-discipline it entails (because of working at home) forced me to become more efficient and find creative ways to reduce my work time. Alhamdulillah, now I am able to complete what used to take me six hours in 2-3 hours and have time for other projects and have even begun sharing time management tips with others.

The other major development was learning how to deal with people from different cultures. I grew up in a South African Indian community so being a TA



was my first experience dealing with American, Arab, Canadian, British, Bangladeshi, Pakistani Muslims and those from many other countries and cultures, too. Initially, I made a few communication errors because I didn't understand how people in different countries perceived and reacted to things. This position has helped me refine my people skills and has helped me to become more tolerant, open-minded, understanding and willing to give others the benefit of the doubt.

What experiences have you had as a TA?

There have been both good and bad experiences and a lot of tests, too. The biggest test is the international exposure as I now have thousands of students from around the world. While this is great for earning the reward of impacting so many people, it is also a fitna (a situation which tests one's faith) in terms of keeping my intentions purely for Allah's sake and avoiding the pitfalls and temptations of being known internationally.

Overall though, being a TA has been a very positive experience for me. I made a few mistakes, learned great lessons from them and am able to positively influence the lives of thousands of potential future scholars of Islam without even leaving my home. Alhamdulillah.



SCHOLARS CONTINUE TO LEARN & GROW

In conclusion, Ustath Ismail shares with us about how his beliefs have grown and evolved, as a scholar is ever on the path of seeking knowledge.

"I was very much grounded in my way of thinking, believing whatever I was taught was correct and we shouldn't question our teachers and they had to be right," he said. This changed during a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia in 2004.

"I was exposed to different Muslims and their practices, as well as books by scholars who differed vastly with what I had been taught. My initial reaction was shock and horror that the majority of Muslims in the world were so deviant. However, the more I thought about it, the more I realised that perhaps it was I who was wrong and the rest of the world could be right.

"This led me to explore outside the ideology I was raised on and thus began my long journey towards what I regard as a more open-minded yet orthodox understanding of Islam. I have many friends, including scholars (ulama), who hold many different understandings of Islam. A few intolerant individuals usually are in the spotlight and they cast a negative reflection on everybody else."

THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING ISLAMIC KNOW

By: Umm Adil, IOU BAIS Student

"All praise and thanks are Allah's, Who has guided us to this, and never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allah has guided us!" (7:43)

"Acquiring knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim" is an authentic hadith, quoted by almost every educated Muslim. People are willing to spend thousands of dollars so their children may obtain a certificate from a so-called prestigious university or to spend so many years of their lives adding to their list of degrees. It is good to see the Ummah progressing, but is this what the hadeeth really means?

We have millions of brothers and sisters who have obtained professional degrees, but cannot name the pillars of Islam, or distinguish between compulsory and recommended acts in Salah or even understand that the purpose of fasting is not to starve yourself.

How many commerce graduates have learnt the principles of halal banking? When a non-Muslim colleague at an office party asks us why we don't eat anything but "halal" meat, can we boldly explain the wisdom of Islam or just give the impression that Islam is strict and outdated? How many of us can confidently say that the un-Islamic theories taught in secular education will not lead our children away from Islam later in life?

Our secular knowledge prevents us from admitting our basic religious ignorance. There are so many grave issues the Muslim world faces today: Widespread bid'ah (innovation), persecution of Muslims by non-Muslims, blind following, political turmoil in the Middle East, children turning away from Islam, families breaking up and so many more. If we examine the root of every problem, we will see that it is the lack of proper Islamic knowledge.

The example of of early scholars

We have heard of how much the early scholars had to go through to gain knowledge. Maybe it was this effort that made them value knowledge so much. Today we have it sitting on our hard drives, bookshelves and CD's, yet we are too preoccupied with the pleasures of the this life to give it the time it deserves.



LEDGE



Imam Nawawi, the well-known scholar and author of the 40 hadeeth and Riyad us Saaliheen and the greatest commentary on Saheeh Muslim, said that if one dedicates himself completely to knowledge, he may gain a small portion of it. The life of this scholar is exemplary. A scholar from the 12th century, he never met Prophet Mohammed ﷺ or the Companions but his life is a testament to the Sunnah.

It is reported that he ate and drank only once a day, so as not to waste time. He attended 12 lectures daily, besides performing all the obligatory and voluntary

acts. He lived in a room so small and full of books that a visitor had to pile the books on top of one another to make room to sit. He even said that for a period of two years he never slept on his bed, and fell asleep, huddled over his books, only when overcome by sleep. He would resume studying or writing as soon as he awoke.

In his short life of 45 years, he had written a large number of outstanding books which continue to benefit the scholars and Ummah even to this day. There are, of course, many more scholars like him who inspire us by their sincerity and dedication. We need to read about their lives whenever we complain of our problems. Reflecting on their struggles gives the motivation that most students of knowledge today lack.

Utilizing our blessings

Now, with the internet, Alhamdulillah, a door of unimaginable proportions has been opened. If only we could see the potential and utilize it. Just two decades ago this would have been a dream, but it's truly a blessing to be able to study from the comfort of our homes, at times convenient to us without having to forsake our families and jobs, unlike the salaf who travelled thousands of miles on camels, across the hot desert sand, in scorching heat just to verify one hadith so it could reach us correctly.

We take for granted most of Allah's blessings, whether it's technology, family, food, good health, free time or even structured Islamic education through a university like IOU. Let us stop procrastinating and begin studying our Deen, no matter how little the time we can spare. Death may arrive before the "perfect time" to study.

And for those of us who are already studying, let us constantly renew our intentions, for Shaitan finds it ever so easy to deceive us into riyah¹ - a minor shirk in itself. All our efforts and deeds could be in vain and push us into the abyss of hell, only because our intention was not purely for seeking the Countenance of Allah.

We ask Allah to grant us beneficial knowledge, sincere deeds, steadfastness on the straight path, to practice what we learn and to teach it to others so we can save ourselves, our families and the Ummah from the fire.

¹ Showing off, hypocrisy.



Dr. Bilal Philips Visits KSA

THE NEED FOR ISLAM

In February 2013, Dr. Bilal Philips visited KSA, starting his time there with a trip to Makkah for 'umrah and then delivered a lecture in Jeddah sponsored by the IEF (Islamic Education Foundation). Also, Shaykh Hamadi Al-Aslani of the JDC (Jeddah Dawah Center), an IOU Testing Center in Jeddah delivered a lecture entitled, "The Need for Islam".

Dr. Bilal Philips was able to meet with students of IOU and others who were present for the lecture. He spoke about IOU, its continuing contribution to education and gave a brief history of the growth of IOU until the present. The lecture began after Maghrib prayer and lasted well beyond 'Isha prayer, until 11 PM, Ma sha Allah. IOU set up a stand to distribute literature and talk to those interested in IOU.

After his stay in Jeddah, Dr. Bilal then visited Madeenah and met with junior Islamic university students from the West and gave a talk to them

on seeking knowledge. Later he met with senior Madeenah University students from the West and discussed the IOU and the future of promoting Islam in the West. Also, in Madeenah, he met with Dr. F. Abdur Rahim, author of the Madeenah Books for teaching Arabic. Dr. Bilal was one of Dr. Abdur Rahim's students from 1974-76 when he studied Arabic at the Arabic Institute of Madeenah University, before doing his BA in the College of Usool ud-Deen, there.

On his return to Jeddah, Dr Bilal also met and discussed extensively with Shaikh Tahir Wyatt (MA Madeenah University) who has been recently appointed as the first Shaikh to deliver Islamic Lectures in English in the Prophet's Mosque in Madeenah. The discussions were focused on IOU and establishing a Da'wah Institution. Before leaving Jeddah, Dr Bilal gave another lecture at the Old Airport Da'wah Center organized by brother Abdus Salam from France. **[Asma Miller]**

The Parable of the Pencil

The Pencil Maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box. "There are 5 things you need to know," he told the pencil, "before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and you will become the best pencil you can be."

1 You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in someone's hand.

2 You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you'll need it to become a better pencil.

3 You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

4 The most important part of you will always be what's inside.

5 On every surface you are used, you must leave your mark. No matter what the condition, you must continue to write.

The pencil understood and promised to remember, and went into the box with purpose in its heart. Now replace the pencil with you: always remember these five lessons and you will become the best person you can be.

1 You will be able to do many great things, but only if you place your trust in Allah.

2 You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, by going through various problems, but you'll need it to become a stronger person.

3 You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

4 The most important part of you will always be what's on the inside.

5 No matter where you go or what you go through, you must leave your mark.

By understanding and remembering, let us proceed with our life on this earth having a meaningful purpose in our heart.



About the Status of Knowledge

"من سلك طريقا يلتمس فيه علما ، سهل الله له به طريقا إلى الجنة ،
وإن الملائكة لتضع أجنحتها لطالب العلم رضا بما يصنع ، وإن العالم
ليستغفر له من في السماوات ومن في الأرض حتى الحيتان في الماء
، وفضل العالم على العابد كفضل القمر على سائر الكواكب ، وإن
العلماء ورثة الأنبياء لم يورثوا دينارا ، ولا درهما إنما ورثوا العلم ، فمن
أخذه أخذ بحظ وافر ."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

"If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will ease the way to paradise for him. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge. The inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and (even) the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the knowledgeable man over the worshiper in Islam is like the superiority of the full moon over the rest of the planets. And the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets, but the Prophets did not leave behind wealth but they left behind knowledge. And whoever takes this knowledge takes a great fortune."

(Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi)

IOU HOLDS MONTHLY WEBINARS

IOU has started a monthly webinar broadcast. Each month, one of IOU's TA's gives an hour-long lesson on some aspect of IOU's course offerings. Designed to summarize a particular course, the attendees will get a glimpse into the various courses that IOU offers.

On 20th May 2013, IOU offered the first webinar in this series, entitled *Glimpses of the Prophet's, Peace be upon him, Life* and was presented by IOU's TA for Seerah, Ustath Mukhtar Rabban. Ma sha Allah, an instructor of impeccable manners and dignified delivery, he teaches his students not only content of the lessons, but also conduct as a Muslim "student of knowledge".

This was evident in the webinar, where even those who are not IOU students could get a glimpse at the mannerisms of an Islamic learning environment. Of course, educators in Islam are held in the highest esteem, for even the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Allah and his Angels, the occupants of the earth and the heavens, even the ant in her house and the whales,

are praising the teacher of good knowledge." (Narrated by al-Albany, Sahih At-Tirmidhi, 2161)

So a Muslim teacher instructs not only by his or her information in the lesson, but also by the delivery of that lesson. This makes Muslim educators among the most qualified to call themselves "mu'allimoon".

The content of the webinar was focused on the courses of Seerah 101 and 102. We got glimpses of the Prophet's life from childhood until he passed away. Those who attended felt they were appropriately introduced to this outstanding character among humans (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and it left us yearning for more detailed information.

[Asma Miller]

Abu Ameenah Centre Mombasa

A CENTRE OF THE STUDENTS, BY THE STUDENTS, FOR THE STUDENTS!

By: Brother Tawhir *

Our journey towards the learning centre began in 2012 when we realized that there was a digital divide between the number of increasing registered students and the decreasing number of active learners. The root of the disparity was the high dropout rate that caused considerable concern. Towards the end of the fall 2012 semester, the cry to set up a learning centre was echoed by all.

“Chairman! We need a centre!” quipped Umm Muhammad.

“Without it all the promotions we are doing are being wasted” added Umm Awwab.

“True,” joined in Umm Yislam, “If we had a centre then we would be able to help more students.”

Umm Yislam was the one who found a place for the center. I joined the trio of sisters to visit the location and noticed it to be quite run-down and outside of the town centre. With those considerations, many reservations were raised; however, we mutually agreed to make a start.

Utilizing WizIQ as our main method of meeting when there were issues to be discussed, we sent out an invitation that day. Unfortunately, a majority of the members were unable to attend and therefore the meeting did not take place. With every delay there is good, and Allah is the source of all good! A week later Umm Yislam informed us that the landlady had proposed another flat in the town centre as opposed to the original one. We went to visit the place and it was love at first sight!

At the time of agreement, we only had about 37,000 shillings (approx. \$450). A budget was thus set up dividing the expenses between one-time requirements and recurrent costs. In the beginning, we were shocked at the amount that was needed. Based upon what we had in hand and adding what we collected as monthly contributions (which was hardly 10,000 shillings or approx. \$120), we estimated our one-time cost requirements totalled almost 200,000 shillings (approx. \$2350) on a conservative note. Our recurrent expenditure indicated a figure of 70,000 shillings (approx. \$825).





Utilizing the blessings of instant global communications, emails were sent out but the responses were very slow. Iblis too went to work with his whisperings presenting the impossibility of the task ahead. Several meetings were called but none took place. Every day we edged towards disappointed and it increasingly seemed that this egg would not mature to hatch. That is when the Mercy of ALLAH ﷻ towards us manifested in its majesty. We were given the idea to start an IOU WhatsApp Group using the WhatsApp messaging system. We created the group and inserted the contacts of all IOU students' cell phone numbers that we had. Masha-a-ALLAH from the trickling of email responses we now had a FLOOD of instant messages going forth. Beginning on Saturday 8th June 2013, when we only had 37,000 shillings in our possession, figures were re-communicated on the messaging system and funds, pledges, and other necessary items started flowing in.

With the buzz-word of "buying the hereafter with provisions from ALLAH ﷻ!" an auction was held with items ranging from avocados to IOU branded T-shirts. Masha-a-ALLAH donations ranging from furniture to water purifiers came in while some pledges were made to pay rent, power and water bills.

Members took turns in supervising repair works, buying material needed for the renovations. We were witnessing the saying *yaduLLAHi ma'a'l jama'a* (The hand of Allah is with the community) in action! This truly is from the blessings of AR-RAZAQ!

Due to financial constraints, we are operating with the help of dedicated volunteers to assist the administrator, who is our only paid staff. We have set a roster for student volunteers to be on site to assist in daily chores. Currently, volunteers are downloading IS Diploma modules in readiness for students who might not qualify to start studying the BAIS.

The centre is equipped with:

- 10 computers plus a laptop for an instructor
- Whiteboards
- Internet on Wi-Fi
- A networked multi-function printer
- A photo copier

This is surely an instance of Allah ﷻ touching our lives and a reminder of the magnificent ayat: "...and whoever fears Allah—He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he does not expect..." (Surat At-Talaq, Verses 2-3). The help of Allah comes at such a speed and in such a way, that the believer knows it is only from Allah ﷻ.

Working hours for the centre during Ramadan have been set for 8 AM to 4 PM to allow ample time for our administrator to get home for iftar.

We are planning to start basic computer training courses for students, such as, classes on how to prepare computers for Arabic typing which I shall be conducting inshAllah. This will be a cross platform training going through Windows from XP through Windows 8 plus Linux.

We pray that ALLAH ﷻ grants us success!

يد الله مع الجماعة!

(The hand of ALLAH is with the community)

*) **Brother Twahir** is an ICT Manager in a well established firm that operates across the East and Central African region. He is also the assistant country representative for Kenya and Chairman of the student body in Mombasa. He is a 4th semester IOU student in the BAIS campus. The main challenge he has set for himself is to ensure that all IOU students are equipped to embark on IOU Studies both in knowledge and in equipment.

TOP TEN TIPS FOR ISLAMIC STUDENTS

In order to help my fellow Muslims prepare themselves psychologically and not repeat the mistakes I made as a young student, I present to you ten things I feel every student of knowledge must know.

1 A few years of study does not make one a scholar.

Too often, young Muslims study for a few years and then develop a "scholar" complex. They begin to force their opinions on others as if they can't be wrong. They become intolerant to other views, and they write off anyone who disagrees with them as deviant. We need to realize that the variety of opinions in fiqh are multiple, and the chances of always being right are slim. I advise all of my fellow young Muslims to keep egos in check, approach differences with the possibility of being wrong, and never forget to say "Allah knows best".

2 Manners come first.

Anybody who is studying or teaching Islam must learn the proper manners for dealing with people. They must show mercy and tolerance, not be non-judgmental, and must possess a personality that attracts people; otherwise, they might do more harm than good.

3 Studying Islam does not make one immune to sin.

Some people have the misconception that if they study Islam, they will reach a level of piety from which they can't slip. The reality is that Shaytan tries even harder to lead people of knowledge astray as it has a more detrimental effect on the community as a whole.

4 People will judge you.

Many people are intimidated by practicing Muslims. When they see a practicing Muslim, they see their own flaws and deficiencies and so they search for fault in that individual. We should not be surprised if people judge our clothing, mannerisms or weaknesses; it is their way to console themselves or justify their sins. We need to always keep this in mind and be able to respond appropriately.

5 You represent your Faith.

When a person chooses to study Islam, especially once they earn a title, they automatically become a representative of the deen. When people see an Imam or a Shaykh, they expect to see a living example of Islam. If people see such a person sinning, they will either lose respect for him and become disillusioned about Islam, or they will take it as proof that what he's doing can't be that big a sin. Either way, for an Islamic teacher, our lives represent our deen, so we should always be careful not to give a wrong impression of Islam.

6 You will be tested.

Life is a test and every human is being tested all the time in different ways. However, one should not think that because one is studying Islam and teaching it, Allah will grant a life of ease and comfort. Rather, history proves that those closest to Allah are the most severely tested. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "The most severely tested people are the prophets, then those closest to them in piety, then those closest to them."

7 Studying should not be an end; rather it should be a step to a higher goal.

Any person who studies Islam should be introspective and find a good motivation to study. Perhaps you would like to become a da'ee and a means of guidance for non-Muslims. Perhaps you would like to establish an Islamic centre in an area that needs one. Perhaps you would like become a mujtahid in a field that is lacking many quality scholars. Whatever you decide to do after finishing your studies, it should be something noble that you wish to do for the sake of Allah. In short, studying should not be a goal but a means to help accomplish higher goals.

8 You can't change everyone.

Remember that not everybody you meet will agree with you, listen to you or accept your message. Rather, there will always be people who will disagree with you or flat-out reject you. This is reality and we have to be prepared for this by realizing guidance is only in Allah's Hands, and we are only responsible for conveying the message.

9 You will make mistakes.

Some people become depressed and give up Islamic work when they realize that even though they are now knowledgeable they still occasionally fall into sin. The truth is that the Shaytan wants us to quit and by doing so we are just playing into his hands. But Allah is Most Forgiving to those who repent. Every time you fall down and make a mistake, pick yourself back up, turn to Allah in repentance and try again to be a good Muslim. Never ever allow your sins or mistakes to stop you from doing Islamic work.

10 The reward for studying and teaching Islam is worth it.

We know that the path of knowledge leads to Paradise but we need to remind ourselves that we will also get the rewards for the good deeds of those we teach or inspire to do good. In this sense, it is one of the only good deeds we can do where the reward keeps multiplying. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "When a person dies, all their deeds end except three: charity, which continues to benefit, knowledge he left behind which people benefit from, and righteous children who pray for him."

So, my beloved brothers and sisters, let us study Islam and seek its rewards yet never forget the responsibilities and trials that go with it. May Allah keep us all steadfast on His deen. Ameen.

Ismail Kamdar
IOU Tutorial Assistant

MIRACLES OF THE QU'RAN IN PSYCHOLOGY & MEDICINE

By: Dr. Aisha Utz, IOU Psychology Lecturer

The miraculous nature of the Qur'an never ceases to astonish us. In essence, a miracle of the Qur'an is played out right before our very eyes. The Introduction to Psychology course at the Islamic Online University presents the Islamic perspective of psychology while critically analyzing various scientific theories, principles, and concepts. Here is a glimpse into one of the lessons:



The miraculous nature of the Qur'an never ceases to astonish us. Modern discoveries in various disciplines echo the wisdom of the ancient Qur'an. "How could this have been known so many centuries ago?" questions the inquisitive mind. "It is only recently that science has 'unearthed' this amazing truth. This must, undoubtedly, be a Holy Book; in what other way could this be explained?"

One of these astounding breakthroughs occurred in recent years in the fields of psychology and medicine: Scientific research has revealed that people who are more religious and spiritual generally live longer.

In one 9-year research study of 21,000 American adults, it was found that attending religious services more than once a week led to an average increase in life span of seven years for whites and 14 years for African-Americans. People who never attended religious services had a 50% greater risk of dying during the 9-year follow-up than those who attended most frequently. (The study took into account social, economic, health, and lifestyle factors).^[1] In a meta-analysis of 42 studies with a total of 126,000 participants, it was found that religious involvement increased the likelihood of living longer by 29%.^[2]

[1] Hummer, Rogers, Nam, & Ellision, 1999; Larson & Larson, 2003, p. 38

[2] McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, & Thoresen, 2000; Larson, & Larson, 2003, p. 38

While these results have primarily been found with non-Muslim populations, the same is most likely true for Muslims as well (and maybe even to a greater extent). Scientists have speculated that the mechanisms at work may include the following: 1) regulation of individual lifestyles and health behavior, 2) provision of social resources (e.g., social ties, formal and informal support), 3) promotion of positive self-perceptions (e.g., self-esteem, personal mastery), 4) provision of specific coping resources (i.e., cognitive or behavioral responses to stress), 5) generation of other positive emotions (e.g., love, forgiveness, hope), and 6) promotion of healthy beliefs.^[3]

People may not be surprised to learn of this newly acquired knowledge, but will most certainly be stunned by the realization that this very fact was revealed to a humble and unpretentious man in Arabia over 1400 years ago. That man was none other than the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (pbuh) to whom Allah revealed the story of Nuh (pbuh) and his invitation to his people.

Prophet Nuh (pbuh) called his people to follow Allah's guidance by proclaiming, "O my people, indeed I am to you a clear warner', [saying], 'Worship Allah, fear Him and obey me. He [i.e., Allah] will forgive you of your sins and delay you for a specified term. Indeed, the time [set by] Allah, when it comes, will not be delayed, if you only knew.'" (Nuh (71):2-4).

The relevant phrase here is "...and delay you for a specified term." In his explanation of this verse, the 14th Century Qur'anic scholar, Ibn Kathir, stated that it means, "He will extend your life span and protect you from the torment that He would have made befall you if you did not stay away from His prohibitions." He further said that, "This ayah [verse] is used as proof by those who say that obedience (to Allah), righteousness and maintaining the family ties truly increase the life span of a person."^[4]

This fact is supported by further evidence in the Prophet's saying, "Nothing increases one's life-span except good deeds, and nothing repels Divine Decree except supplication. And verily, a person may be deprived for sustenance due to a sin that he does!"^[5]

Precisely what scientists had spent years and millions of dollars attempting to substantiate: the more religious one is, the more good deeds one performs and the longer one can expect to live in this life.

In essence, a miracle of the Qur'an is played out right before our very eyes. Science in the 20th century corroborates what Allah had revealed to human beings more than 1400 years ago. Nothing could be more incredible.

As this example shows, courses at IOU point out the mind-boggling similarities between Qur'anic revelation and the modern world, found even in disciplines that are dominated by secular thought (psychology and science). For anyone interested in learning more about these discoveries, the Islamic Online University is the right place to go.

About the writer:

Dr. Aisha Utz has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and a B.A. in Islamic Studies. She is a lecturer for Islamic Psychology and Psychology of Personality, Motivation, and Emotion in the Islamic Online University, also currently is Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology in the College of Medicine at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

She has written articles on various topics for Al Jumuah Magazine (an international Islamic magazine), has two published books: *Nurturing Eeman in Children and Psychology from the Islamic Perspective* by International Islamic Publishing House. She is Associate Editor of the Faith-Based Practice section of the *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*.

Her current efforts involve the development of a research program to study the relationship between religiosity and mental health in Muslim populations. She has been Muslim for 25 years.

[3] Ellison and Levin, 1998

[4] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Volume 10, p. 179

[5] Ibn Maajah #90 and confirmed authentic by Shaykh al-Albaanee in *as-Sahihah* #154

Where There's A Will, There's a Way!

A story of inspiration about IOU student, Danish Bukhari

By: Maira Mukhtar

I am an Indian born Muslim living in Australia with my wife and 16 month old son, Hamza. I came to this country seven years ago and am currently working for the Hotel industry in Kakadu National Park located in the small mining town of Jabiru. With a population of 1,200 people, Jabiru has significant historical importance to attract many tourists. However, the town is so remotely situated that it takes 350 Kilometers to travel to the nearest mosque in Darwin which is also the nearest city.

Although born as a Muslim, my belief was tainted with enough doubts to make me restless. While my heart burned with questions, my soul refused to accept the answers that seemed firmly perched on differences of opinions. Hence, after many sleepless nights I decided that the key to my qualms was in my own hands. I was going to educate myself so that I could finally understand my religion and be closer to my creator.

My search led me to a series of discussions with the Imam of the ISOD (Islamic Society of Darwin) who initially advised me to travel overseas to seek religious knowledge. In Pursuit of my ambition I applied for thirty eight various jobs in different locations, determined to enroll in a college even if it meant working only part time.

In spite of my efforts, I didn't get any offer and remained in the seclusion of my little town. It wasn't until my subsequent talk with the Imam that the name Islamic Online University came up.



With lovely son, Hamza.

This information could not have come to me at a better time. I remember telling my wife that this was surely from Allah Who alone knew exactly what was in my heart. I made the intention to fulfill my obligation to Allah; I took that crucial first step and in return Allah took away all my worries

and guided me to the beginning of my journey. SubhanAllah, this is how I became a student of IOU.

Alhamdulillah, this is just the beginning of my dream to become an Imam and teach this beautiful deen to others. The University has provided me with abundant opportunities to study the teachings of Islam. The fee is nominal, the faculty is proficient and the best part is that I can study anytime I want and wherever I want. I have a regular internet connection and use the online course material (PDF files) to study. The only difficulty I encountered was when I had to take a week off from work to travel to Darwin with my family to sit the final exams. However, I am hoping to register a local exam center for my current semester, inshAllah.

I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips and his team for their time, hard work and dedication in opening and running IOU; a blessing for all those who have the desire to learn but are hindered by the trivialities of life. May Allah reward them immensely, Ameen.



University of al-Karaouine Morocco

Situated in Fez, Morocco, the University of al-Karaouine appears as a cluster of green bricks prominent amidst a sea of mud colored roofs. Constructed in 859 AD, the university holds the Guinness World Record for being the oldest existing educational institution which makes it more than 200 years older than its European counterparts, University of Oxford and University of Bologna.

Large selections of manuscripts have been compiled at the institution among which are volumes from the famous Al-Muwatta of Malik written on gazelle parchment, Sirat Ibn Ishaq and the original copy of Khaldun's book Al-'Ibar. Some prominent alumni include Ibn Rushayd al-Sabit, Ibn Khaldun, Abu Imran al-Fasi, Leo Africanus, and

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon.

Originally built as a mosque with an associated Madrasa, it was founded by Fatima al-Fihri, a well-educated Muslim woman who migrated with her family from Tunisia to Morocco in the early 9th century. Fatima laid the groundwork for the university that gradually developed into a leading spiritual and educational center where students and scholars from around the world gathered for instruction and scientific research.

This is a worthy reminder for everyone that women in Islam are not only progressive but have the religious freedom to exercise their potentials to the utmost. **[Maira Mukhtar]**

IOU at the Sound Heart Conference

On May 18-19, 2013, Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque presented its 14th annual Islamic conference under the title "The Sound Heart" in Ontario, Canada. Organized by youth in the area, they gathered many notable speakers to make presentations over the two days.

IOU students and volunteers had a booth where they passed out literature and informed attendees of IOU and encouraged them to join, donate and



become a part of those who are "Changing the Nation through Education".

A BIG THANKS to the event organizers for providing IOU the opportunity to be involved and also to the students and volunteers who worked those two days during the midterm exam time to spread the news of IOU. We ask Allah to reward your efforts heavily in your scales of good deeds. Ameen.



The Muslim World's Contribution to Knowledge

By: Dr. Khalid Hakeem

Molecular Ecology Lab

Department of Botany, Jamia Hamdard

It is ironic that although the Muslim world was once the torch bearer of knowledge and wisdom, today it contributes very little to science or technology. Instead it is in a state of gloom and anarchy where leaders inherit their thrones for life and care little for the educational needs of their people.

We need to rediscover our roots. Many people do not know that the Muslim world historically excelled in education and made huge contributions to science and technology. It was the Abbasids that first formalised education in the Muslim world, setting in motion what historians consider the Golden Age of Islam, where substantial development occurred in many spheres of knowledge.


The *Khulufaa'* attracted to their courts men of science, poets, physicians and philosophers whom they supported. Learning progressed and developed with differences of creed, colour, race and tribe being no barrier to education.

The mosque served as the fundamental educational institution of the *Khilafah* (the Caliphate). Education was taught in mosques in an informal manner. People seeking knowledge

tended to gather around certain knowledgeable Muslims called *shaykhs*; and these *shaykhs* began to hold regular religious education sessions, or *majalis*. However, as the demand for learning grew, the Madrasah (educational institution) began to appear.

With the creation of Madrasahs the Jamia (university) emerged. The Guinness Book of World Records recognises the University of Al-Karaouine (Jami'at al-Qarawiyyin) in Fez, Morocco, which was founded in 859, as the oldest university in the world.

Al-Azhar University, founded in Cairo, Egypt in the 10th century, offered a wide variety of academic degrees, including postgraduate degrees, and was the first fully-fledged university.



The Islamic form of education was eventually emulated by the Europeans. Many similarities stand till this day; for instance, the term “Chair” in a university reflects the Arabic Kursi, upon which the ‘alim (teacher) would sit and teach his students.

The modern doctorate in Latin is termed “a license to teach” and had already developed long before it was transmitted to Europe, being a direct translation of the Arabic “Ijazat At-Tadrees”. A permission to teach was granted by an ‘alim, who had studied with an ‘alim after he had resolved a problem by issuing a fatwa, then defending it in front of a panel of ‘alims.

Even the modern day graduation ceremony resembles the Islamic ceremony. The robes worn today, were called “Jubbat Ul-Faqeeh”, and were given when an ‘alim received his ijazah.

The Khilafah also created the first public hospital (which replaced healing temples and sleep temples) and the psychiatric hospital, the public library and lending library, the academic degree-granting university, and the astronomical observatory as a research institute (as opposed to a private observation post as was the case in ancient times).

The first universities that issued diplomas were the Bimaristan medical university-hospitals, where, from the 9th century on, medical diplomas

were issued to students who were qualified to be practicing doctors of medicine.

Sir John Bagot Glubb wrote, “By Mamun’s time medical schools were extremely active in Baghdad. The first free public hospital was opened in Baghdad during the Caliphate of Haroon-ar-Rashid. As the system developed, physicians and surgeons were appointed who gave lectures to medical students and issued diplomas to those who were considered qualified to practice. The first hospital in Egypt was opened in 872 AD and thereafter public hospitals sprang up all over the empire from Spain and the Maghrib to Persia.”

Madrasahs were also the first law schools, and many have suggested that the law schools known as “Inns of Court in England” may have been derived from the Madrasahs that taught Islamic law and jurisprudence.

The basis of the educational system in Islam is to acculturate people to Islam in order for them to have conviction in it and then carry it to the world. Muslims have the Islamic obligation not simply to profess the Shahadah, but to develop the reading and studying of Islam, and not only to study Islam, but also to explore how the Islamic system can influence the world. The Muslims of the past studied and acquired knowledge with full awareness and a clear vision. This knowledge broadened their horizons, developed their perception, and enriched their mental faculties, making them teachers of others.

In summary, Muslims excelled in the past by making Islam the central motivating factor for their development. This resulted in them becoming the superpower of their day, contributing hugely to the field of educational and scientific disciplines.

“The only way forward for the Muslim world is to learn from its history and understand what the early Muslims understood: that their success in this life and the next is only through Islam.”

IN SHA ALLAH, COMING SOON!



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Top 10 Students! for the Fall 2012 Semester

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO THE TOPPERS!

We pray that Allaah helps ALL our students to retain and implement the knowledge gained through their study throughout their lives and make easy for them a path to Paradise. (Ameen)

RANK	NAME	GENDER	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (NATIONALITY)	COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	COURSES	AGGREGATE PERCENTAGE
1	THASNEEM	Female	India	Qatar	6	94.53
2	MARIA ARIF	Female	Pakistan	Canada	6	93.67
3	INAYAT MITHWANI	Female	Kenya	Kenya	6	93.54
4	SUFIAH MUHAMAD IRFAN	Female	Malaysia	Malaysia	6	93.38
5	DENISA QUBBAJOVA	Female	Czech Republic	Saudi Arabia	6	93.21
6	KHAWAJA HASAN BILAL	Male	Pakistan	Pakistan	6	92.98
7	SABA NASIR MAJGAONKAR	Female	India	Qatar	6	92.86
8	HASANUZZAMAN ZAMAN	Male	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	6	92.71
9	SHAFI NASIR MAJGAONKAR	Female	India	Qatar	6	92.69
10	JANE (JAMEELAH) CAMPBELL	Female	United States	United States	8	92.57

Total No. of Students in Fall 2012: 2248

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Course	BA in Islamic Studies	Online and On-campus: BA of Islamic Sciences (Hons) in Da'wah & Usuluddin, BA of Islamic Sciences (Hons) in Al-Quran, BA of Islamic Sciences (Hons) in Al-Hadith, BA of Islamic Sciences (Hons) in Fiqh & Usul Fiqh	BA in Islamic Studies. Graduate programs (only offered in Arabic): MA & PhD in Shari'ah (Islamic Law) Fundamentals of Religion Islamic Economics	BA in Islamic Studies
Duration	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years
Application Fee	0	58	550	\$150 for BA
Registration Fee	\$40-\$120	0	0	0
Course Fee	Tuition Free	US\$ 56/Credit Hour	BA \$50 per credit MA \$75 per credit PhD \$100 per credit Thesis Preparation \$2,500	BA \$90 per credit
Total Cost	\$320-\$960	online ~\$6046 on-campus ~\$374	~\$6400	~\$1000
Study Method	Online: Recorded lectures & Live Tutorials	Online recorded sessions and face to face	Online live sessions	Online / distance (shipping or
Electives	Yes		Yes	No
Online Library	Over 250 books	Yes	-	
Pre Language Requirement	Basic understanding of English	5.0 TOEFL / 5.5 band IELTS / MEDIU's Arabic Proficiency Test for courses taught in Arabic	English test	BA degree

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FINDING MY SPIRITUAL HOME

By: Ellen Keim

I didn't even realize that I was looking for another religion when a Muslim friend asked me one day, "Do you think you could ever become a Muslim?" I answered emphatically, "God, no!"

"Why not?" he calmly replied.

I stammered something about cultural differences and changed the subject.

It was true that I'd been reading a lot about Islam, but I thought it was because I wanted to know more about a religion that I felt was misunderstood. Also, I worked with many Muslims, and I wanted to know where they were coming from.

Besides the reading I was doing, I was also asking my Muslim friends a lot of questions. It must have seemed obvious that I was becoming seriously interested in Islam, but I didn't see it that way. I've always been the kind of person who loves to learn for learning's sake. I honestly thought that I was just "gathering data."

And yet, over the next few months, Mahmoud's questions haunted me. I distinctly remember the day I first asked myself, "Why couldn't I become a Muslim?"

There were a lot of reasons why it seemed impossible. There were my husband and children to consider. My parents are deceased, but I would have to tell my in-laws. And if I decided to wear the hijab, which I was pretty sure I would, everyone would know I was a Muslim. Was I ready for that?

And yet, what was I to do? I wasn't happy spiritually. I had been a Christian all my life. My grandfather had been a minister. My first husband and the father of my children was a minister. I had even thought about becoming a minister myself. But for some reason I felt unsettled in the Christian church.

I visited church after church and looked into almost every form of Christianity there is, but I never found one that clicked. I always felt like an outsider. I thought it was because I wasn't familiar with the people, or the worship services, or with some of the extraneous beliefs that distinguished one denomination from another (like infant versus adult baptism, or speaking in tongues).

But the more I learned about Islam, the more comfortable I began to feel. I liked the fact that Muslims don't believe in original sin, but emphasize personal responsibility. And the concept of the Oneness of God made perfect sense to me. It seemed more appropriate to pray to One True God instead of to a Triune God (three persons in one Godhead).

But old habits—and beliefs—die hard. I had been told all my life that if I didn't believe that Jesus was God, I would go to Hell. It was more a superstition than a belief. I was scared to even think that Jesus wasn't my Lord and Savior, that he was just an ordinary man.

But, again, as a result of my reading, I learned that not all Christians believed that Jesus was God. Even in the first few centuries after Jesus' death, there was a vigorous debate going on about the divinity of Jesus. Some factions didn't believe in it, some did. Finally, the latter group won and declared all other views of Jesus to be heresy (ilhad).

I began to imagine what my life would be like if I no longer believed that Jesus was God. And then I realized that I leaned toward not believing in his divinity. He was an amazing person and a true prophet of God, but he wasn't God. God is God.

Once I came to that conclusion, I could see Islam more objectively. I was surprised that both Christianity and Islam emphasized submission, peace and forgiveness. Both believe that God is merciful and benevolent. Both revere Jesus (although for different reasons).

Both believe in Heaven and Hell and eternal life. And most of all, both believe in the God of Abraham. But I was still struggling over whether or not I could convert to Islam. I knew it would be an irreversible decision, that I wouldn't be able to bounce back and forth between Christianity and Islam. I had to get off the fence.

One night (it just happened to be during Ramadan) I had a dream that I was at a bazaar, trying on Islamic clothing. I left the booth with the clothes

still on even though I hadn't paid for them. The most remarkable part of my dream was the peace I felt when I put on the clothes. I woke up convinced that the dream meant that I wanted to become a Muslim, but I didn't want to pay the price.

I decided it was time to have a discussion with my husband.

One day I sat him down and told him that I thought I wanted to convert. He didn't even bat an eye. All he said was that he would support whatever decision I made. "I could tell that you've been struggling spiritually for a while now," he said. "If this makes you happy, I'm all for it."

The last day of Ramadan I went with some Muslim friends to the masjid for the first time and said my Shahada. Since then, I've discovered that although it's easy to become a Muslim, it's not nearly as easy to live like one.

But that's a story for another day.

In future issues of IOU Insight, we'll be bringing you more conversion stories as well as articles that have to do with the life of the convert. If any of you have your own stories to contribute, please feel free to send them to info@iou-insights.com

We'd love to hear from you!



LEADERSHIP WEBINAR FOR SISTERS ONLY!

A Report on the Year-Long Course
'Be the Leader that You Were Born to Be'

Islamic Online University partnered with international speaker and life coach Sister Zohra Sarwari in presenting a 12-month course on leadership exclusively designed for sisters--the Mothers of the Ummah.

Beginning in April of 2012, the course ran for 12 months and focused on one skill per month and was followed by a Q & A session where the attendees got to interact and have the applications of the skills explained and their questions about past techniques discussed.

Why is this course important?

When we read the biographies of historic leaders, we are awestruck by their accomplishments! These successful people were definitely raised by mothers. The famous scholar Sufyan Ath-Thawri's mother gave her son some famous advice when he set out to gain knowledge that is remembered throughout the centuries, "Son, if you write a few lines of knowledge and it has not increased your faith (emaan), then check your intentions." These kinds of mothers had a vision which became the driving force for their children's achievements.

After gaining knowledge, most people want to step out of the house and change others, neglecting their own family duties. While teaching others in Islam is an honorable position, Allah will first ask us if we taught our families. Did we invite them to the path of righteousness or did we give up the challenge because we thought our families would never listen? Our first duty as Muslim mothers is to our children, to raise them to lead the future generations in

obedience to The Creator. How can we do this if we don't have appropriate leadership skills to direct our children to becoming successful Muslims?

As mothers or mothers-to-be, every woman is in charge of her house and her family. Women may not be able to go out and fight actively in battles, but they can certainly raise their children to be like some of the courageous and wisest sahaba and early Muslims.

A woman's first responsibility is to her family as "the mother's lap is the first classroom for the child". She can inculcate in children the right skills and knowledge required to become a leader. She raises her sons to go out and change the world for Islam and raises her daughters with those same principles of dedication to her family and leading them to raise leaders. This is only possible when a woman, herself, becomes concerned about improving her own skills and abilities. Just think about it: How can you lead your family when you lack leadership qualities?

This course is designed to give women the knowledge and skills to lead their families to excellence. IOU has successfully completed its first LIVE running of the course with Sister Zohra, and will be offering the course again via recordings of those sessions so even more sisters can benefit from these leadership skills. The next sessions will be offered in 6 months instead of 1 year with live sessions to replace the Q&A sessions for live interaction.

For more information on how to join the upcoming sessions of "Be the Leader that You Were Born to Be", click here: <http://www.islamiconlineuniversity.com/webinarseries.php> or contact: promotions@islamiconlineuniversity.com.



THE GOD & YOU TOUR

By: Ismail Kamdar

In July 2011 I traveled to three cities in India to be a guest speaker during the “God and You Tour.” The tour began in Bangalore with a weekend workshop called “Dawah 101” which was conducted by Brother Mansoor Danish (an IOU student) and myself. Over 80 people attended, many of whom were IOU students. The topics included how to explain the Islamic punishments, polygamy and hijab and how to present the message of Islam to non-Muslims. The Bangalore part of the tour was organized by DIET (Discover Islam Education Trust) which is doing phenomenal work for the deen there.

On Sunday night we had a conference in an open field filled with over 800 people. IOU’s marketing team was there as were many of our students. Brother Mansoor spoke about “Islam: Peace for Humanity” and I discussed the topic “God and You: What is Your Relationship?” An hour-long Q&A session followed in which some very interesting topics were discussed such as terrorism, God’s Mercy and Forgiveness and why Muslims stray from Islam.

The second leg of this tour was through Mangalore, a beautiful city bustling with Islamic activity. I visited many masjids, Islamic Centers and schools during my two days there, including IOU’s official exam centre, the IEC. The trip to Mangalore ended with a presentation of “God and You: What is Your Relationship?” at City Hall, which was filled to capacity. Again, IOU students were in attendance as well as IOU Tutorial Assistant Shaykh Tariq Appleby. The Mangalore segment of the tour was organized by the members of

the South Karnataka Salafi Movement who presented me with an award for service to the deen.

The final segment of this trip took place over the weekend in Kolkata, in which I again presented both the “Dawah 101” workshop and the lecture on “God and You: What is Your Relationship?” I was joined in both Mangalore and Kolkata by Umar Shariff, president of DIET, who also delivered some wonderful lectures on Islam. Many non-Muslims asked important questions about Islam and God in the very interesting Q&A sessions which followed.

In the lecture “God and You: What is Your Relationship?” that I delivered in all three cities I discussed the different relationships humans have with God: atheism, polytheism, distraction and submission (Islam). I also discussed the ideal relationship which humans should strive for (to become a friend of God) and explained the path that leads to it. Two versions of the lecture are currently available on YouTube.

The tour concluded with one last day in Bangalore at the DIET studio in which I recorded a series of lectures that are also available on YouTube.

One thing which was very evident during my journey was the worldwide influence of IOU. Every city I visited has many IOU students, volunteers and a hardworking marketing team. I was particularly impressed by two IOU students who made the five-hour drive from Chennai to Bangalore just to attend the lectures. My heart was warmed by both the high level of interest in IOU and in the caliber of students that IOU attracts.

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