

“If any one kills a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he kill the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.” [Al-Qur’an 5:32].

Discover Islam Lecture Series started on February 5th, continued for 10 weeks ending on April 9th. Around 30 guests attended each lecture. 7 were video lectures out of 10 and the rest three were live lectures presented by two distinguished academicians and a theologian. Lectures followed a breakfast of Turkish pastry and appetizers, which created an environment to talk and thus made lectures friendlier.

We watched the video “Muhammad: The Legacy of a Prophet” the first two weeks. The video was not only informative about the life of the Prophet but also it gave the audience some positive idea thus removing many prejudices and misunderstandings from their minds about Islam and its Prophet.



Similarly, video lectures in the 5th-7th weeks deepened our knowledge about Islam. Throughout three weeks, we watched the video “Empire of Islam”. So, we had chance to learn about the history of Islam: how it spread, what civilizations Muslims founded, how they contributed to the civil and scientific development of our world, etc. Two instances out of these video lectures were very noteworthy: The very first week our guests pointed the importance of knowing each other. They said that if we did not know each other, we could not eliminate our prejudices and misunderstandings. At this point Mr. Tuna told an anecdote from his life. “I knew of America only from the Gulf War, its conflict with Iran, and so on before coming here. I should say that most of my ideas about America were negative at that time. Yet I came to the US two days after the earthquake in Turkey in 1999. I went to my university for registration. An elderly man asked me where I was from. When I said “Turkey,” tears appeared in his eyes. He worriedly asked about the earthquake, my family, and my friends. Then he took my address. He contacted me again two months later. This really touched my heart, and I could never think of America as something bad from then on. That is, as we get to know each other, it becomes easier to develop

friendships and establish strong relations.” Dr. Fatih Oncul told one of his memories in the 3rd lecture. He said, “Some people blamed me after the bombing. They called me to share to grief after 9/11, however”.

Third and ninth weeks’ videos were also educational and attention-grabbing in the sense that they highlighted Muslims’ life in the USA.

As for live lectures, Dr. Fatih Oncul, Fairleigh Dickinson University, explained the relationship between Islam and science. He gave examples of how the Quran reported centuries before the scientific innovations and developments, how Muslim scientists contributed to renaissance and more importantly, he explained how Islam is inspiring its members to learn, to study, to research and how these efforts will be rewarded in the hereafter.

Most interesting lectures were in the 4th and 10th weeks. Mustafa O. Tuna, Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton University explained “Misunderstanding the Concept of Jihad”, Ahmet Kurucan, MA, Distinguished Theologian and Writer, presented “Terrorism from an Islamic Perspective”.

Explained the term is misunderstood/misinterpreted, Mustafa O. Tuna said, “Jihad is not holy war. In fact, it is even not about war in its main/more important sense. While returning from a serious battle, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said to his companions: “Now the lesser jihad is over. We are going to the greater one.” The companions asked: “What is the greater jihad.” He explained: “It is struggling with your self.” Yes, Jihad is about struggling. It is about striving for the attainment of a personal quality that will please God. It is about striving to abstain from evil and to do good, striving to live a righteous life, and striving to give life – not death”. Mustafa O. Tuna also explained that Islam forbids all sorts of transgression, and fighting or using violence against people who do not or cannot fight you is a transgression according to Islam. Even the enemy’s children and women as well as their sick and old are not to be harmed. Islam in fact praises those who face death bravely in the cause of God, but not those who commit suicide. Committing suicide, in fact, is a grave sin according to Islam, and many Muslim scholars think that it is a sign of the loss of one’s faith in God. Therefore, one of the most frequent forms of terrorist activity – suicide bombing is not acceptable in Islam either.

Written by Administrator

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