

## The Usuli

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A few weeks ago I was invited to do a Q&A session with young children on sensitive issues. It was at a masjid within an enclosed community of subsidized housing, filled with immigrant Muslim families. The kids all go to public school.

The session was an eye-opener. A Grade 3 student told me about how his teacher in Grade 1 taught him about LGBTQ+ stuff. Some kids shared that their peers had questioned or challenged them on their faith. A Grade 9 student desperate for answers expressed his frustration and desperation to learn about atheism, criticism of Islam issues with authenticity and expertise. I had difficulty referring him to basic foundational content that didn't come prepackaged with the infantile antics of Muslim social media. My own high school course on those subjects is about 40-60 hours long. I couldn't do the topics any justice in 1 hour.

I spoke to a few parents, and in the typical fashion of most immigrant parents had a very poor grasp of how to effectively parent in these difficult times. One parent who was buying his Grade 9 kid a smartphone had no idea that his kid would inevitably use it irresponsibly or that it was possible for him to monitor its usage with special software.

Today, I went to the same masjid to pray Jumuah. I've never been before, but this coming month my personal circumstances will force me to.

Here's the kicker though. The topic of the khutbah was about... Muslims' need to establish the caliphate.

I was furious. I wanted to punch something. I had no time to speak the khatib after (which was probably a good thing) and walking out of the masjid made me even more angry as I saw that most of the attendees were teens or young adults. I have been told that this person has given these types of khutbahs before.

Dear khatibs: The minbar is NOT your soapbox for your ideological point of view. I don't care whether you are Sufi, Salafi, Deobandi, Barelwi, Hizbul-Tahrir, Ikhwani etc etc. Be whatever you want in your more intimate religious gatherings. But the khutbah is NOT to fulfill your ideological or sectarian mission. You are there to be of service to the community. In these times of sheer ignorance and confusion, you should be teaching them the basics of their faith!

There is knowledge that is obligatory to learn, from theology, spirituality and fiqh. There are doubts that are obligatory to address. There is beautiful tafsir and sirah that our kids don't know. Also, there are urgent practical, social and ethical issues of immediate relevance to your local community! There is so much to do before you even touch the edges of siyāsah or heresiology!

Why is this community that I visited not getting khutbahs about kids' smartphone habits, how to parent, foundational Islamic theology, peer pressure in school, challenges faced by women, girls, LGBTQ rhetoric etc?! How stupid, arrogant and narcissistic do you have to be to look past all these issues and make the minbar about your personal or sectarian ideology?

If you don't know how to address these issues, and you don't have enough basic knowledge of Islam to address these issues authentically and accurately, then why on earth are you giving khutbahs in the first place?! Get off the minbar, go study and then come back. Until then, crush your ego, get over yourself and find someone else more qualified than you to give the khutbah instead. If you can't get over your own narcissism, remove yourself permanently from community work. This is not the place for it!