**Silk Roads: Exploring Faith: Four perspectives on Islam**

**Video transcription**

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Video running time: 6 minutes 45 seconds.

Ali, Zakir, Saeed and Omair attend the Abu Bakr Mosque in Middlesbrough. In this video they share their different backgrounds and perspectives on faith.

**Why is faith important to you?**

**Ali:** My name is Ali I was born in Middlesbrough. My origins are, my parents are from the Yemen. I am 52 years young. I have two grandchildren, both bornlast year and that makes me a bit older than I feel. My profession I am a human capital consultant, so I do lots of working helping people develop their careers or develop leadership skills and succession planning for organisations.

Interesting question. What does faith mean to me? Quite simply, knowing that there’s a purpose in life. You know, you have a mobile phone and it has to have a purpose. When you’re at work, we ask people ‘what is your greater goal and your greater purpose at work?’. But then when it comes to life, we sort of, indirectly, don’t have an answer for that. Faith gives me purpose in life. It gives me direction. It gives me a compass and a grounding.

**Omair:** Hi, my name is Omair. I’m from Newcastle, the best city in the world. I have my own business, a teaching and design business.

My faith means practically my life. I like how it governs every aspect that I can think of, whether it’s family, whether it’s business, whether it’s my parents or, you know with neighbours, or teachers and students and things like that. So that’s what is means to me, it’s the fact that it’s… I feel complete with it.

**Zakir**: My name is Zakir, or Zak. I am a Middlesbrough-born Muslim.

My whole life, my moral, my ethics, everything I do centres around my faith. Whether that’s what I do as a job, knowing that everything that I do has to be within the guidelines of Islam. It has to be morally and ethically correct. But also, any extra-curricular activities I choose to do, so for example, I am very passionate about charity work I’m very passionate about sharing the true message of Islam to the people. The first one because, we are taught within our faith that every human being is a brother or a sister of one another and that if you’ve been given blessings by God, then you should help those who have been given less than you.

And secondly, there’s a massive issue with people misunderstanding Islam. Whether that’s what’s happening around the world, whether that’s the way that the media portrays our religion. So I think a massive part for me is to be an ambassador for Islam and to spread the true message of Islam to as many people as I can and allow them to understand how beautiful and peaceful this religion is.

**Why is coming to the Mosque important to you?**

**Saeed:** My name is Saeed Iqbal. I actually live in Stockton-on-Tees, born and raised there. Coming to the Mosque is important to me. It gives me an escape from the daily rituals, time to reflect, meet others, socialise, and importantly a time to contemplate and reflect.

**Ali:** As a Muslim we are required to pray five times a day, but as a male you are required to come to the Mosque, because you congregate with…it’s God’s house. God is saying, this is my house, it’s open to you. There’s tranquillity in the Mosque. The reward is also higher for one that prays in the Mosque the rewards are higher than one who prays at home. The whole idea as a Muslim is you generate as much reward as possible. It’s time for you to break away from the hustle and bustle of day to day life. And if you were to pray at home, then you would connect to everything else that’s around the home, the chores or the children, or your work, but once you are inside the Mosque, you try to break away from that.

 **Is there a part of the Qur’an that is particularly important to you?**

**Omair:** So one part of the Qur’an, towards the end of it, there’s a few verses where it goes:

[Omair recites in Arabic]

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ

ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي

وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

So these four verses or so, rough meaning of that is “Oh, reassured soul, come back to your Lord, or return back to your Lord pleased, and with Him pleased with you. And enter into My garden, meaning, Paradise or heaven, if you want to call it that, satisfied. That’s a rough translation. So these are the four verses that really hit me in my life, like I know that it gives me a sense of purpose that I know I am only here for a few years, 60, 70, 80, 90 years on average and that eternity is where I am going to end up.

**Saeed:** For me the most important passage, or what I could call a verse, from the Qur’an is from Chapter 21, which is actually called the… the Chapter is called The Prophet’s – Al-Anbya. And its verse 107 which is:

[Saeed recites in Arabic]

 وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

God sent you as a mercy for all of mankind. And what that basically carries forward in terms of what you as a Muslim need to be.

**What’s the most important time of your for you?**

**Omair:** So the most important time for me in terms of Islamic year is the month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast for a period of 30 days. And this is a time when we get re-energised, we become re-focused and we kind of reconnect with our religion and try and take to the next level if that makes sense. So for me, that’s the best time of the year.

**Ali**: The most enjoyable times of the week and the year and the months I suppose is we have every Friday we come together and there’s a congregation prayer, and that’s really important. Because it’s the time of the week when you’re going to get some sort of reminder from the Imam of the Mosque. And it could be about anything, it could be about your prayers, about looking after your family, about looking after society, so that’s important.

And then there’s further on in the year we have the Eid al-Adha, which is to do with the remembrance of Abraham [Ibrahim] when he was to slaughter his son Ishmael and then it was changed to a lamb, he slaughtered a lamb, so we remember that in the same period as the Hajj. And these celebrations, all the community comes together and it’s a time of celebration, and so…people do enjoy it and they are the keys parts of the year that I enjoy, Ramadan, Friday prayers, the Eid festivals. Especially when you see everyone having fun and enjoying themselves.

**Thank you to Ali, Omair, Zakir, Saeed and the Abu Bakr Mosque community for their help in creating this video.**