RECLAIM YOUR PURE SPIRITUAL SELF

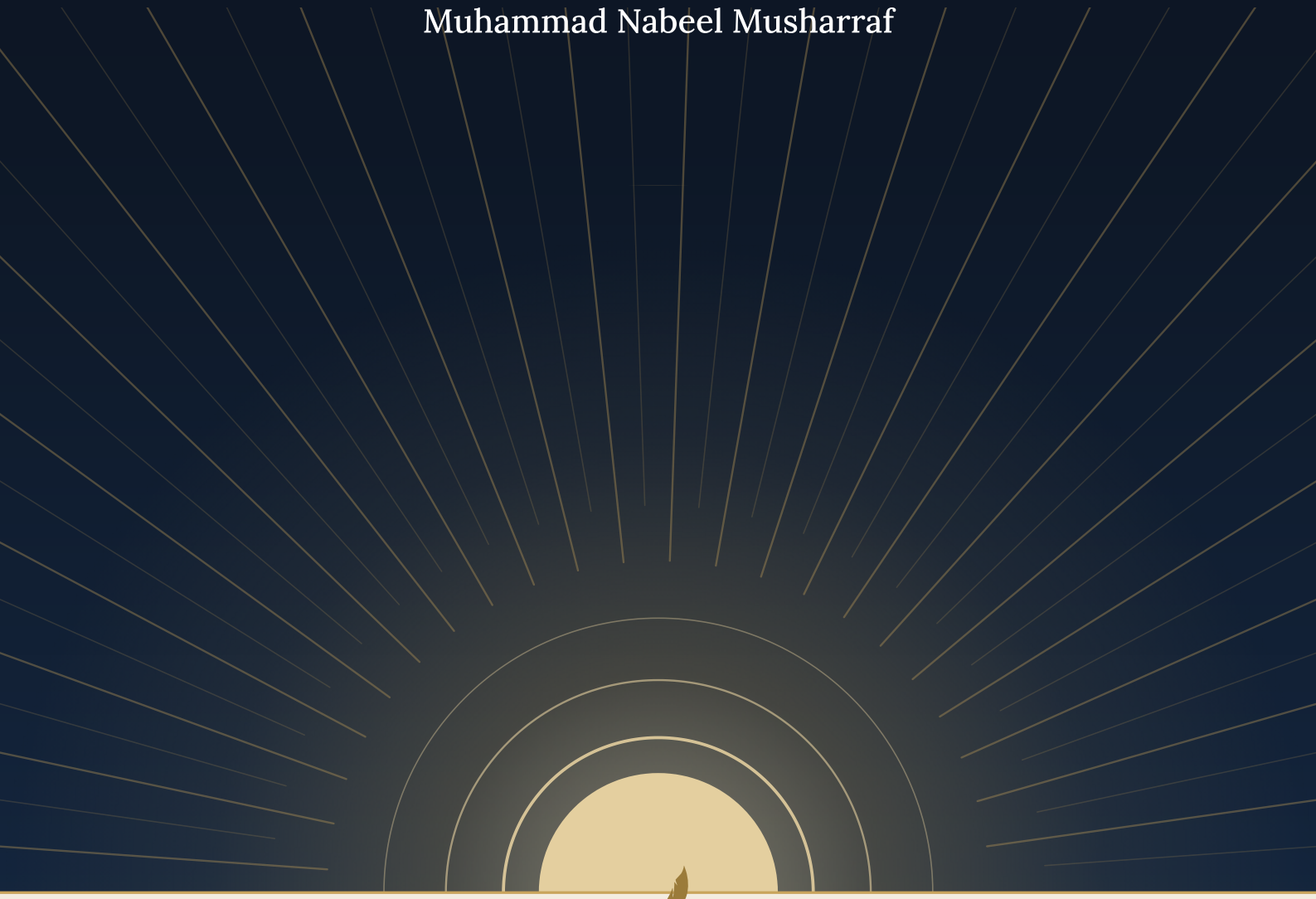
34 ESSENTIAL LESSONS FROM THE QUR'AN & SUNNAH

Reviving *the Hearts*

Based on lectures by some of the most prolific scholars of our time

Compiled, transcribed and edited by

Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf



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Compiled, transcribed and edited by Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf

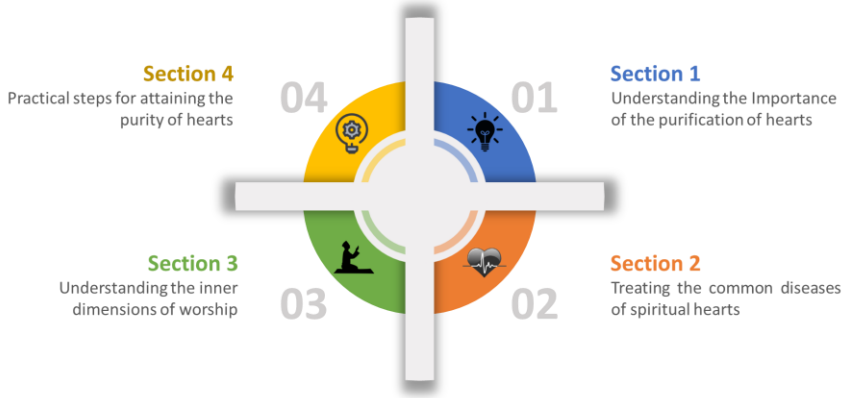
الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين ، نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

How did this book come into being

First of all, we congratulate you for deciding to read this book. This book, if you make it your companion, will insha'Allah prove to be one of the great companions. It is based on an online course which the WA chapter of Islamic Circle of Australia and New Zealand ran between December 2018 and January 2019 with the title 'Reviving the Hearts'. In order to cover the topics included in this book, we thoroughly researched and selected 34 most inspiring lessons related to the topic by various prominent scholars. These lectures were then edited and transcribed for utilization during the course. After the completion of the course, by the grace of Allah SWT, we are now presenting them in the form of this book.

The main objective of this book

Allah SWT tells us that the success in the hereafter is for those who attain purity of the hearts. What are the ways through which we can achieve that? How can we understand and avoid the causes that lead to hardness of hearts? What can we do to soften our hearts so that we can feel the real sweetness of our beautiful faith – Islam? This book will Insha'Allah help us find answers to these questions. Based on the above, this book has been designed to provide essential guidance from the Quran and Sunnah on the following four important topics:



The source of content in this book

The lessons in this book are extracted from lectures delivered by some of the most renowned and prolific Muslims scholars from around the globe, including:

- Dr. Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui
- Dr. Shaykh Yasir Qadhi,
- Dr. Shaykh Tawfique Chaudhary,
- Dr. Mufti Ismail Menk,
- Dr. Shaykh Karim Abu Zaid
- Shaykh Noman Ali Khan,
- Shaykh Yahya Ibrahim,
- Shaykh Omar Suleiman
- Shaykh Kamal El-Mekki
- Shaykh Abdur Raheem Green
- Shaykh John Starling
- Shaykh Muhammad Faqih
- Shaykh Moutasim Hameedi
- Shaykh Mustafa Al-Majzoub
- Shaykh Navaid Aziz
- Ustadh Abu Ibrahim Husnayn

While reading this book, Insha'Allah, you will be under the soothing shade of these blessed scholars. May Allah SWT enable us to take maximum benefit from this opportunity.

Note:

It is to be noted that the lessons in this book are not the 100% word-to-word transcript of the lectures that they are driven from. The content has been added, reworded, re-organized or summarized as considered appropriate for the purpose of this book.

Connect with the real purpose of this book

We would also like to make a humble request. The main purpose of this course is not to further our knowledge about the diseases of hearts and their cures. Rather our aim is to bring a positive change in lives – ourselves first of all and then all the humanity. One of the ways that can really help us with this aim is a daily quality time for contemplation. At the end of each lesson, we have suggested a topic for contemplation. You can find a suitable quiet spot and ponder over the daily contemplation task. May Allah SWT bless us with barakah in our efforts.

How to make the most benefit from this book

In order to make the maximum benefit from this book, we would recommend the following:

- In addition to reading the book, listen to the audio lectures for the course too. The lectures are available from https://www.australianislamiclibrary.org/matters-of-heart-course.html
- While reading the book, make a note of important points that you can start to implement
- Read with the intention of teaching to others and then do teach. Share this content and your learnings with others

- Do not miss the daily contemplation task; chose a quiet spot and use this for your daily contemplation
- If you read one lesson a day (excluding Sundays), you will be able to finish this book in only six weeks with approximately 30 minutes of reading time per day. We request to you identify an opportunity to free up these 30 minutes per day to either read the lesson or listen to the accompanying audio lecture. However, if you could do both, we consider it to be a much more beneficial approach.

Lastly, we would also request you to keep sharing this book with your friends and family members and gather invaluable sadaqa jariyyah for the day when we would be in utmost need for that.

Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf
Perth, January 2019

ربي يسر ولا تعسر ربي تمم بالخير

SECTION 1

KEY CONCEPTS RELATED TO REVIVAL OF HEARTS

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SECTION

After the completion of this week, you should be able to:

- ✓ Understand the importance of having a sound heart
- ✓ Understand what observable characteristics and actions can help us assess the condition of the heart

KEY POINTS – LESSON 1

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Muhammad Faqih[1]

IMPORTANCE OF REVIVING AND PURIFYING THE HEARTS

We are all composed of three essential components. This distinguishes us from other creations:

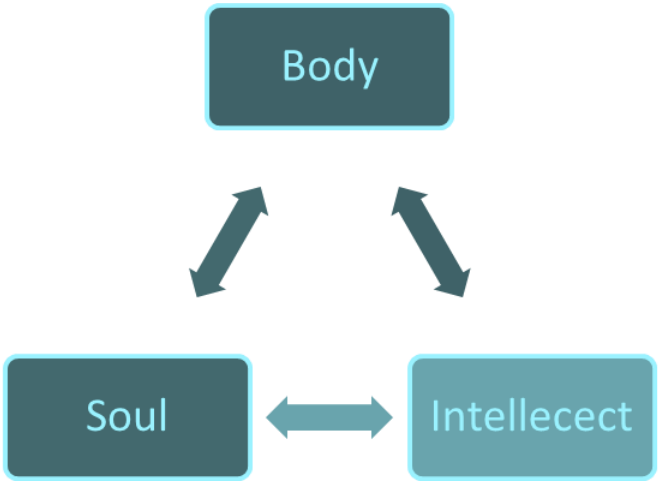


Figure: 3 Ingredients of human beings

[1] Shaykh Mohammed Faqih is the doctor of etiquettes and mannerisms. His knowledge is impeccable. His chain in the Qur'ān only 28 shy of the Prophet, on whom be peace. His demeanour utterly disarming. His style in fashion and stride in walk makes you say, "That man is fit to be president."

Shaykh Mohammed is completely different class. He melts the hearts with lessons in tazkiyah, akhlāq, self-discovery and psychology, and above all great humility which befits a true scholar.

Shaykh Mohammed traces his roots back to the ancient city of Harar in the Horn of Africa. Originally from Yemen, his forefathers immigrated to East Africa and played a central role in the Islamic history of the region.

He completed a B.A. in Islamic Studies from the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America in Fairfax, VA, and graduated in Qur'an Memorization and Recitation from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He was the Imam at the Islamic Community Center of Laurel in Laurel, MD and at the Islamic Center of San Diego in San Diego, CA.

He currently serves as Imam at the Islamic Institute of Orange County, otherwise known as Masjid Omar AlFarouk.

The soul or nafs is the most important of them. It was there even before the body was created. Aql, the third component, is something that develops after the nafs and body combine and the human being comes to this world.

Just how we are concerned with the needs of the body, we have to be concerned about the health and well-being of our soul. Each of them has their own specific requirements. If those requirements are met, they are healthy and strong. On contrary, if these requirements are neglected, we get afflicted with diseases.

Allah SWT sends us guidance through his messengers regarding how to take care of all these three aspects. When we engage in worship, it benefits the body as well as the soul. Allah SWT also tells us about the things that we have to refrain from; that is for the body. Similarly, the things that take away our intellect, such as Alcohol, is considered as Haram in our religion as one of the objectives of the Shariah of Islam is to protect the intellect.

Figure: Five objectives of Shariah (also known as Maqasid Ash-Shariah)

Taking care of the soul and purifying it is called tazkiyyah. It has the same root as zakah, which stands for purifying and growing. So it necessitates purifying the soul and then growing it in terms of status and closeness with Allah SWT. It is extremely important for us as it deals with our real capital as the human being – our soul.

Our beloved Prophet told us:

كُلُّ النَّاسِ يَغْدُو فَبَايِعٌ نَفْسَهُ فَمُعْتِقُهَا أَوْ مُوبِقُهَا

صحيح مسلم كتاب الطهارة باب فضل الوضوء233

"All people go out early in the morning and sell themselves, either setting themselves free or destroying themselves."

So this is the capital that we trade with every day. When we choose to do something or not do something, our spiritual wellbeing is on the line. The type of places we go to will determine if we are successful in our trade or not. The type of company we keep, the type of behavior we exhibit, the type of manners we demonstrate and the type of character we nurture – all of this will impact the results of our daily trade. We have to ensure that our trading is good and we go back home profitable and successful. Our life in this world is a journey back to our original destination – Jannah. If remain profitable in our daily trade with regards to our nafs and if every day we cleanse it further and purify it further, it will lead to our success in the hereafter with the permission of our Lord, Insha'Allah.

We have to keep in mind that this is not an ordinary matter. We have to be really concerned about our hearts. It is a critical matter and requires due consideration. Just like there are diseases of the physical body, there are diseases of hearts too. We have to look out for them and ensure that we treat them accordingly. In this book, we have explained some of the common spiritual diseases of hearts. We need to be familiar with them and be determined to cure them.

Allah SWT's oath

In the Quran, when Allah SWT takes an oath or swears by something, it means that what is coming after that is something really important. In Surah Ash-Shams, Allah SWT took an oath by 11 things to explain the importance of tazkiyyah: "Indeed the successful is that who purified [his nafs]".

By the sun and its brightness;
By the moon, as she follows him;
By the day, which shows its splendor;
By the night, which draws a veil over it;
By the heaven and Him Who made it;
By the earth and Him Who spread it;
By the soul and Him Who perfected it
and inspired it with knowledge of what is wrong for it
and what is right for it:
Indeed successful will be the one who keeps it pure,
And indeed failure will be the one who corrupts it!

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا
وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَاهَا
وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا
وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا
وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا
وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا
فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا
وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

If it is something that important that Allah SWT tool 11 oaths for it, shouldn't we give it importance too? Should we be concerned about understanding what the world of hearts really is and how can we attain its purification? According to many scholars, including Imam Al-Ghazali, cleansing of souls is a mandatory process as Allah SWT declared it as one of the objectives of the prophethood ﷺ. This opinion is backed by a number of ahadith of the Prophet ﷺ. In one of the ahadith, he mentioned the three qualities of believers who taste the sweetness of Iman. These three qualities are as follows:

- Who worships none other than Allah [and he is content with that, and does not devote his or her heart and soul to anyone other than Allah SWT]
- Who pays zakat from his wealth every year while being happy with that
- Who purifies his soul.

Upon hearing the third point, one of the companions asked about what the tazkiyyah means. To this, the Prophet ﷺ explained:

يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَهُ حَيْثُ كَانَ

i.e. to know that Allah SWT is with him wherever he is. [Shub ul Iman, 3025]

This is what signifies the importance of tazkiyyah and its essential constituents.

Essential steps in the process of purification

In order to start this process, you have to

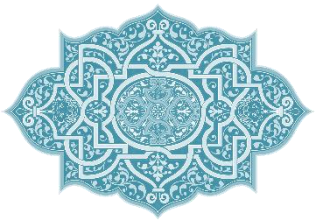
1. Get rid of those elements that destroy it, and
2. Decorate our soul with the characteristics that give it strength

This is what we have focussed in the rest of this book. There are various diseases of hearts that we have to get rid of; there are some beautiful traits that we need to instill in ourselves for the attainment of purity. These noble characteristics enhance and nurture ourselves. In order to implement that, we have to have the courage to do the self-accountability and implement the process of tazkiyyah. You will see them being discussed in the lessons to come by the grace of Allah SWT. In order to achieve this, we have to hold ourselves accountable regarding what we engage in and what we refrain from.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 1:

Why is it important to contemplate?
How can it benefit you?
How can this bring you closer to your Creator, Allah SWT?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 2



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Muhammad Faqih

CAUSES OF HARDNESS OF HEARTS

In the previous lesson, we discussed about the importance of purification of hearts and two essential requirements associated with the process of purification. In this section we will further that discussion and ponder over how various diseases of hearts restrict us from becoming the true believers and what is it that cause these spiritual diseases.

Definition of true believers

Allah SWT has told us in the Quran:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

The true believers are those whose hearts tremble with fear, when the name of Allah is mentioned, and whose faith grows stronger as they listen to His revelations and they put their trust in their Rabb.

Who establish Salah and spend in charity out of the sustenance which We have given them.

They are the ones who are the true believers; they will have exalted ranks with their Rabb, forgiveness for their sins, and an honourable sustenance.

(Quran 8:2-4)

Connect to the Principles and objectives

The ayah above explains to us how the companions of the Prophet ﷺ used to react to the revelation and what were some of their traits. These were the traits that made them the true believers and those who also seek to become the true believers have to live these traits. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ are our role models and we have to understand their manners and try to imitate them.

But it is very unfortunate that we have become the people of slogans. We celebrate and remember the great people and great times, but learn very little from their struggles and the objectives they gave up their lives for. When we listen to the stories of the best of the believers, the companions of the prophets, many of us engage in praising them but do not go beyond that. We need to understand the principles that stood for and have to stand for those principles. It is the principle that matters.

When the companion of the Prophet Anas Ibn Nazar saw some of the other companions who had thrown their weapons in the battle of Uhud and were weeping, he asked them about why they were doing that. They told him, 'don't you know that the Prophet ﷺ has been killed?'. To this, he gave a historical reply. He said: Get up and fight for the cause that he fought for and die for the cause he died for. These companions lived for Allah and died for Allah.

Connect with the inner dimensions

How many times do we utter the word Allah in our day? What sort of reaction we internally get? How much of the Quran do we get to hear during our day? What impact does it make on us? What about the prayers? How much engaged do you get in your this conversation with Allah SWT? We have to open our eyes to reality. We don't have any focus in salah. We don't feel the taste and sweetness of the Quran because of the poor condition of our hearts. We accordingly need to ponder on the verses above. If our hearts are not trembling when the name of Allah SWT is mentioned and if our faith and commitment are not increased when we listen to the Quran, we are in urgent need to treat our hearts. If we are not connected in Salah and our hearts are not at peace when giving from our wealth, it means that we still have to do a lot in order to become the true believers. If we do not have full reliance on Allah SWT, we need to worry about purifying our hearts. We have to question ourselves and look at the condition of our hearts.

What prevents us from becoming the true believers

If we do not have the above traits, we are not yet the true believers and we are required to work on ourselves. Unfortunately, our hearts are exposed to a lot of wealth and we accordingly need to clean them so that we understand and connect to the inner dimensions of worship and feel the joy of the love of Allah SWT. We have to assess ourselves and if we miss these traits, we have to work on our hearts as our salvation in the hereafter depends on how pure a heart we take with us back to Allah SWT. Some of the main destroyers of hearts are:

a) Turning away from the remembrance of Allah SWT, [Allah SWT tells us that those who turn away from the remembrance of Allah SWT, they will have a hard life. Irrespective of who much wealth they have, they will live in a state of internal stress and discomfort. So we all have to watch out and assess ourselves]
b) Excessive love for Duniya (worldly things) ruins the heart and get between you and Allah SWT

c) The company of ignorant and heedless people [Ibn Al-Qayyim R.A. said that people who surround themselves in the wicked people who turn them away from the remembrance of Allah SWT, their hearts die. On the day of judgment, a person would regret the company of those who ruined their relationship with Allah. Before that time of regret comes, we have to rid ourselves of such people while we are alive. The solution to this is to surround ourselves with the people who soften our hearts]
d) Sinning and not repenting for them [as it blackens and hardens the hearts]
e) Various other factors.

These are the days of the year when people engage in planning the year to come. It is about time we should engage in our self-evaluation and self-accountability too.

We will be asked to judge ourselves on the day of judgment. It is better to judge ourselves now rather than then. The time is now!

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 2:

Your contemplation task for the day is to ponder upon these causes of spiritual disease. Assess the condition of your heart. Are you exposed to any of these causes? If it so, what can you do to protect your heart?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 3

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Muhammad Faqih

CURES FOR THE HARDNESS OF HEARTS

So far, our discussion has remained focussed on the importance of purification of hearts and causes for various diseases of hearts. In this lesson, we will review some of the broader cures for the spiritual diseases. These aspects will be further elaborated in the coming lessons.

Be concerned about the condition of your heart

When the remembrance of Allah SWT is done, the hearts of the true believers tremble. These are the people whose tears fall very often. The companions and our pious predecessors used to cry a lot when they used to listen to the Quran. But nowadays, we complain about the hardness of our hearts as we don't feel that condition. This is a sign of damaged hearts. This is something we cannot afford on the day of judgment, as our success there depends on the purity of our hearts.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ
إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

The Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit. Only those who come before Allah with a pure heart [will be saved]. (Quran 26:88-89)

Even in this world, as the Prophet ﷺ explained, Allah SWT does not look at our bodies and our appearance; He rather looks at our hearts and deeds. Our deeds are a reflection of what is in our heart.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُوَرِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather he looks at your hearts and actions."

Source: Sahih Muslim 2564

Avoid following the Sunnah of the hypocrites and the non-believers

Hypocrites and truly non-believers are those in front of whom when the words of Allah SWT are recited, they are irritated. When other things and people are talked about, they are straight in the conversation and enjoy that. We find more interest in discussions about the celebrities and people that have no concern for us, we get excited. But when reminded about Allah SWT, we get irritated and label the people who engage in such conversations. This is a sign of a diseased heart. We have to assess ourselves as we may have a disease in our heart too.

Cures for the diseased heart – a broad summary

There are ten key things that we need to engage in to rectify and repair our hearts:

- **Remembrance of Allah as often as possible and dhikr as much as possible:** (remembering with heart and not just tongue); Two essential aspects with regards to the remembrance of Allah SWT:
    - Seeking knowledge; Al-Hasan al-Basri said that the gatherings of knowledge not only revive the knowledge but also bring humility in the hearts
    - Learn about Allah and develop a deep understanding of His attributes

- **Establish a connection with the Quran**: Not just read it but also engage in the deep pondering over its meaning. That is what the meaning of Tilawah is (i.e. reading with an intention to follow)

- **Maintaining the faraidh** (obligatory duties in Islam) as Allah SWT is pleased with those who are diligent about the obligatory matters. If obligatory matters are missing and we are seeking other ways to attain Allah's pleasure, it does not work that way. Allah SWT does not need our prayers. It is an opportunity for us to plug out of the environment that destroys our soul and purify it.

- **The fourth aspect is increasing the voluntary prayers and acts of worship**. If we do more than what is obligated upon us, it will Insha'Allah result in Allah's love for us.

- **Remembrance of death**; when we go to graveyards, we can find many people who would be our own age. The person who dies at an old age goes to the same place where the one-week-old children are buried too. This is an inevitable reality which can come anytime and we should always prepare for it. Remembering death will destroy the love for the worldly pleasures.

- **Seeking forgiveness from Allah SWT**; When we sin, a black dot appears on our heart. If we keep sinning, it completely covers the heart. To counter that, we have to engage in seeking forgiveness.

- **Surrounding one's self in the company of righteous people** as opposed to those people who are heedless; on the day of judgment, people will regret the friends who took them away from the remembrance of Allah SWT. We have to make an effort to be in the company of authentic scholars.

- **To refrain from excessive worldly pleasures** and remember that it is only a short stay and not the final destination.

- **Visiting and helping sick**, those on the death bed and the less fortunate people

- **To beg Allah SWT and engage in dua** to Allah SWT to soften the heart

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 3:

Your task for today is to think about a plan for yourself regarding implementing these 10 important cures. How would you slot them in your daily, weekly and monthly schedules?

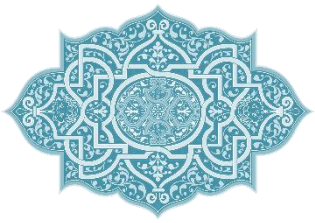
PLANNING TOOL FOR THE DAILY PURIFICATION ROUTINE

Think about some of the ways in which you can achieve the important cures mentioned above. Feel free to seek further guidance and advice from the scholars and the learned from your community.

Task	What can you do to achieve this? How? (mention all relevant details)	Daily / Weekly / Monthly (with time)
Seeking sacred knowledge		
Learning about the Attributes of Allah SWT		
Dhikr and Dua		
Reading and pondering over the Quran		
Obligatory salah (to be offered in Masjid by brothers wherever possible)		
Voluntary acts of worship (such as voluntary salah and sadaqa / charity and so on)		

Task	What can you do to achieve this? How? (mention all relevant details)	Daily / Weekly / Monthly (with time)
Remembrance of death		
Seeking forgiveness from Allah SWT		
Surrounding ourselves in the company of the righteous		
Don't be a victim of excessive desires		
Visiting the needy and the sick		
Any other additional approach:		

KEY POINTS – LESSON 4



Derived from a lecture by: Dr. Yasir Qadhi[2]

SICK HEART: SYMPTOMS, CAUSES, AND CURES

This lesson summarizes the previous three lectures and beautifully put the whole discussion in perspective. It is a much-needed re-enforcement for this very important topic before we go into further discussion and elaboration.

Importance of purifying the hearts

- The spiritual heart is the most important part of our soul (just like the physical heart is the most important organ of the physical body). When this spiritual heart is pure, the soul is pure and vice versa.
- The root of all the diseases of hearts is the hardness of heart: Qaswatul Qalb
- The hardness of heart does not always come because people do not know Allah SWT or do not have the ilm (knowledge). Quran mentions the story of Bani Israel in which their hearts became hard even after seeing the miracles from Allah SWT. Accordingly, in its treatment, the solution would involve more than just the acquisition of knowledge.

[2] Shaykh Yasir Qadhi was born 1975 in Houston, Texas. He comes from a Pakistani lineage and was brought up in Houston of Texas. Shaykh Yasir Qadhi, PhD, is the Dean of Academic Affairs at AlMaghrib Institute. He is one of the few people who has combined a traditional Eastern Islamic seminary education with a Western academic training of the study of Islam.

Shaykh Yasir graduated with a B.Sc. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Houston, after which he decided to pursue religious education 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 then completed a M.A. in Islamic Theology from the College of Dawah. He then returned to America, and completed a PhD in Religious Studies from Yale University.

He has authored several books, published an array of academic articles, and appeared on numerous satellite and TV stations around the globe. His online videos are of the most popular and highly-watched Islamic videos in English.

Shaykh Yasir Qadhi is a resident Scholar of the Memphis Islamic Center. He is also a professor at Rhodes College, in the Department of Religious Studies.

Symptoms of hard hearts:

- Not caring about the relationship with Allah SWT
- To not enjoy the actions of worship; worship becomes a routine without any enjoyment
- No benefit from advice and no inclination towards religious gatherings or listening to advice
- Habitual committing of sin and no guilt after sinning

Causes of the hardness of hearts:

- Avoiding or minimizing or ignoring the remembrance and dhikr of Allah SWT
- Not caring about the laws of Islam and not following them; it is a never-ending cycle – when we sin our heart become hard; when our hard becomes hard, we don't find a problem with sinning and keep sinning. The cycle has to be broken with the cures that are mentioned here.
- Following all the bodily desires – there is a tension between the body and the soul. If we overfeed the body, the soul is neglected. That is why Allah SWT has given us the opportunity to fast to cut down our desires and strengthen the soul.
- Too much entertainment

Cures for the hardness of hearts:

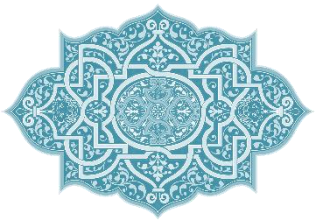
- Monitor yourself and do self-evaluation and monitor the status of your heart; look at your own religious life. Look at how much of your life is for Allah SWT. What is your relationship with him? How often do you turn to him?
- Extra good deeds after the fulfillment of the faraidh (mandatory or obligatory deeds)
- The dikhr and remembrance of Allah SWT. It is the food for the soul and necessary for its peaceful existence. This is what removes the rust from hearts.
- Be in the religious gatherings and surround yourself among the righteous people.
- Dua to Allah SWT and constant engagement in that
- Think of death and the next life
- Reciting the book of Allah SWT; it is best of the dhikhrs and accordingly best of the foods for our soul. Do it even if it is five minutes a day
- Feed the poor and wipe your hand over the orphans.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 4:

Our contemplation task for today is to answer these two calls from Allah SWT:

1. يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ(Quran 82:6) - O man! What has lured you away from your gracious Rabb?
2. أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (Quran 57:16) - Has the time not yet come for believers' hearts to be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 5



Derived from a lecture by: Ustadh Noman Ali Khan[3]

LIGHT UPON LIGHT

This lecture is based on the beautiful description of our spiritual heart that Allah SWT provides in Surah Nur, verse 24. We have classified the discussion in various headings and sub-heading to facilitate easier navigation and review through the lecture contents.

This lesson is a very important precursor to understanding and applying the process of purification. It builds the foundation of spirituality by explaining the importance and connection of the light within and outside us.

Limited nature of human understanding:

The first point that we need to clarify is that our mind cannot grasp the complete understanding of God. If our intellect can completely grasp a thing, it means it is limited and it cannot be God. In fact, our intellect is so limited that it has failed to understand the human being too. Even those who have done PhDs on personality sciences and psychology do not have a definitive answer for what personality is. Things proven in one study are easily challenged in the studies that come shortly after them.

[3] Ustad Nouman Ali Khan is the founder and CEO of Bayyinah, as well as the lead instructor for a number of Bayyinah courses including the 'Fundamentals of Classical Arabic' and 'Divine Speech'. His first exposure to Arabic study was in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia where he completed his elementary education. He continued Arabic grammar study in Pakistan, where he received a scholarship for ranking among the top 10 scores in the national Arabic studies board examinations in 1993. But his serious training in Arabic began in the United States in 1999 under Dr. Abdus-Samie, founder and formal principal of Quran College, Faisalabad, Pakistan who happened to be touring the US for intensive lectures in Tafsir and Arabic studies. Under Dr. Abdus-Samie, Nouman developed a keen methodical understanding of Arabic grammar and tafseer sciences. He further benefited from Dr. Abdus-Samie by internalizing his unique teaching methods and later translating his work into English for the benefit of his own students. Ustad Nouman served as professor of Arabic at Nassau Community College until '06 and has taught Modern Standard and Classical Arabic at various venues for many years with his students spread around the globe. His recent achievement is the Bayyinah dream programs around the globe which has resulted in preparation of many new teachers of Arabic language who are now benefitting their local communities in a much more effective way. In a short span of time, he has truly changed thousands of lives.

Let us consider an example of a wall. If we ask some blind men to go and check out about this wall, what would be there response? They would be able to touch the wall and tell us that it exists. But how exactly it is, they would not know. They would need to ask those who can see it. Even those who can see it with their eyes may not be able to see the finer details of it that are only visible with special instruments. And those finer particles in the wall contain even finer particles. Our abilities stop at a certain point.

Accordingly, we need to begin this discussion with a point in mind that our intellects are limited and we are just shown a glimpse of the reality of things in this passage. Many of the finer details of the points that we will discuss are beyond our limited vision and only Allah SWT knows them in full. The closer to Allah SWT we get, the more knowledge of these matters He would uncover for us.

Passage and translation (Surah Nur, Ayah 24):

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche, in which there is a lamp, the lamp is enclosed in crystal, the crystal is of a starlike brilliance, it is lit with the olive oil from a blessed olive tree which is neither eastern nor western, its very oil would almost be luminous though no fire touched it - as though all the means of increasing Light upon Light are provided - Allah guides to His Light whom He pleases. Allah cites such parables to make His message clear to the people, and Allah has knowledge of everything.	اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونِةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُّورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Types of light in this passage:

Allah SWT talks here about two types of light (Noor ala Noor)

- External Light
- Internal Light

External Light:

Allah SWT is the light of heavens and the earth. Everything we see around is because of His light.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

What happens if there is no light:

- We cannot see even if we have eyes
- We are not able to see the reality of things around us and can't appreciate their beauty

There is an interesting phenomenon about light and its sources. Our visibility in a room with a little bit of light is much less than our visibility in a room with a lot of light. So, as the light increases, our vision increases.

However, it only happens to a certain extent and then the limitation of our eyes come in our way. If a light, is too bright, we cannot look at that. We can feel that it exists, but we cannot look at that. That is why Allah SWT has kept himself and his secrets hidden from our physical and spiritual eyes. As the capability of our eyes and vision enhances, Allah SWT uncovers more and more details about His divine system.

This external light of Allah SWT benefits everyone irrespective of if one is a believer or not.

Internal light:

The second type of light is internal. This is the light that we need to journey through this life that has been given to us. If this light is lit, we can see the reality of things. If it is not, we would take some things as what they are not.

First, let's understand the parable.

Let's visualize this for a minute. Allah SWT is giving us a parable of a lamp which is inside a niche (a structure in the wall where lamps used to be placed).

مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ

Now, what is the purpose of a niche? If something is placed in a niche, it spreads the light to a much wider area because of the way it is made. If the lamp is placed in any other part of the house, it cannot give the same level of brightness as when it is placed in the niche.

Ubay bin Ka'b R.A. and Ibn Abbas R.A. explain that this is about the heart of the believer and how Allah SWT has lit it. The light being talked about is the light of iman.

Allah SWT then explains:

فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ

In this [niche] is the lamp!

This is the light of guidance that Allah SWT has sowed in the hearts of believers through iman. Now Allah SWT explains some finer details about this:

الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ

الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ

That lamp is in a glass.

What is the purpose of glass?

The purpose of glass is to protect the lamp from extinguishing and also to further illuminate its light. The glass in which this light is placed in the most refined of the glasses and has its own illumination too.

Heart of the believer:

It is the heart of the believer. Naturally, it is shining brightly as we are told that each child is born on the fitrah.

However, this glass can get dirty.

Allah SWT tells us that our hearts get rusted and dirty because of what we do.

كَلَّا ۖ بَلْ ۜ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

When it is dirty, it doesn't let enough light to pass through. We accordingly, end up in darkness. Even if the lamp is burning, we cannot see its light.

An example of that is the rusted hearts or the hearts of the ignorant or the hypocrites. They do not have access to the fuel that brightens the lamp and the glasses on their hearts have been darkened, so no light comes out. The covers of their hearts are also blackened so they cannot see its light.

When we are in darkness, we cannot understand the reality of things. We would not know what is beneficial and what is harmful. We might consider something good but in reality, it may be bad for us. And we may consider something bad which in reality may be good for us!

How to clean the glass around the lamp:

We need to make an effort to clean it from the rubbish.

- Sometimes, you need to wash this glass with the water of your tears.
- Sometimes, when something hits these deposits in a certain way, these deposits of dirt crack apart and the pure heart comes out. This hit can come in the form of inspiring words, the influence of those who are nearer to Allah SWT, certain events in life or other things that happen to us by the will of Allah SWT.

We also need to understand that in order to keep this glass clean, we will need to do two things:

- Stop the sources of dust, dirt, and contamination that make the lamp dirty. Stop sinning!
- Keep cleaning the lamp regularly. Sit in the company of scholars, be with the righteous, make efforts to soften your hearts.

Fuel for the lamp:

Allah SWT explains:

يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونِةٍ

i.e. the lamp is lit with a blessed [Mubarak] olive tree.

Meaning of Mubarak:

Mubarak here means that it contains numerous benefits. Benefits of olive are many.

Just like Zaitoon which gives the brightest of light and has many benefits, the light of wahi – the divine guidance – also benefits us from a number of spheres and becomes a light for us in this world as well as the hereafter.

This tree is neither eastern nor western.

لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ

It is the tree that gets illuminated by the sun when it is rising and also when it is setting down. So, it has been given the best of nourishment so that its users benefit from it the most. Similarly, this tree is not within any other bunch of trees but at its own. So it is well nourished by the minerals from the soil too. Accordingly, it is the best of the oils that can be used to lit the lamps.

The Quran is also not for either east or west – it is for everybody for the all the times. It is for the whole humanity.

The purity of this oil is such that is ready to catch fire even when the fire has not yet touched it. When the belief is strong in our heart, it is ready to get lit with the light of the Quran by merely going near it.

يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ

The oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not

i.e. the oil is so ready to catch fire that even when the fire is brought near it, it catches fire and starts spreading brightness.

نُّورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ

This is the concept of light. The two lights have combined.

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ

This guidance does not come to everyone. It only comes to those who Allah wishes.

Accordingly, the prophet PBUH used to make a lot of prayers for his heart to be firm on the guidance.

Allah SWT has given us this example to make things simple for us, as he mentions

وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ

The real and full knowledge of things rests with him.

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

What do we learn from this:

1. Be cautious about hearts

Success in the hereafter depends on the condition of heart we will take with us. The Day on which neither wealth will be of any use, nor children; Only those who come before Allah with a pure heart will be saved.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

(Quran 26:88-89)

2. If the heart is good, everything is good:

I heard Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as having said this (and Nu'man pointed towards his ears with his fingers): What is lawful is evident and what is unlawful is evident, and in between them are the things doubtful which many people do not know. So he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and honor blameless, and he who indulges in doubtful things indulges in fact in unlawful things, just as a shepherd who pastures his animals round a preserve will soon pasture them in it. Beware, every king has a preserve, and the things God has declared unlawful are His preserves. Beware, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt, and hearken it is the heart.

3. To remove the rust:

The Prophet of Allah said: Just like how the iron gets rusted with water, human hearts also get rusted. Companions asked about how to get rid of this rust. The prophet said: remembering death often, and doing the tilawah of the Quran (i.e. reading it with an intention to seek guidance and follow)

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 5:

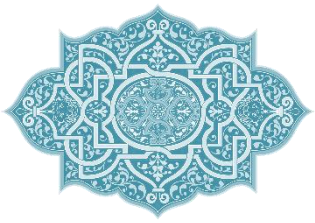
Your contemplation task for the day is to think about how we can fuel the lamp within our body, how to keep it well it, how to feed it with the pure oil that it deserves. How to clean the zujaja or glass around it so that its light illuminates our life.

Note:

In order to acquire a better understanding of this topic, refer to the following course:

1. Noor Ala Noor (light upon light) lecture by Ustadh Noman Ali Khan (including in this course)
2. Explanation of this passage by Dr. Israr Ahmed (included in the Muntakhab Nisab series which is available in English as well as Urdu)
3. Tafseer Maarif ul Quran by Mufti Muhammad Shafi

KEY POINTS – LESSON 6



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui[4]

LIFE OF THIS WORLD IS A JOURNEY BACK HOME

This lesson is a pre-cursor to the 3-step model for tazkiyyah (purification of hearts) that we are going to discuss in our next lesson. The lesson puts in perspective the reality of human life – Why we are here, where did we come from, and where are we heading towards?

Success in the hereafter:

The success in the hereafter would not be because of one's wealth or his progeny. It is dependent on the purity of hearts with which one gets there. Those who come with the Qalb (heart) that is Saleem, will be successful, as we explained in the previous lesson:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

What does 'Saleem' mean?

All the Arabic words that are on the same balance as 'Saleem', convey a sense of continuity. For example,

- 'Raheem' means always merciful

[4] Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui is one of the most respected scholars in North America. He is a regular teacher at national and regional conferences throughout the continent, but is best known for his enlightening spiritual retreats and seminars that empower Muslims in their quest for nearness to the Allah. He is also the founder of Al-Madina Institute, USA.

Shaykh Mokhtar is thoroughly versed in both the external and internal Islamic sciences, including fiqh (jurisprudence), uṣūl al-fiqh (legal theory), al-qawāʿid al-fiqhiyya (legal maxims), al-maqāṣid al-sharʿiyya (the higher objectives of the shari'ah), uṣūl al-ḥadīth (theory of hadith), 'ilm al-rijāl (narrator critique), sīra (the prophetic biography), and ʿaqīda (Islamic belief and creed), and tazkiya (Islamic spirituality).

In additional to being a qualified religious scholars, Dr. Mokhtar also holds a doctorate that joined between the fields of physics and engineering. This diversity in knowledge is one of the highly inspiring and distinguishing aspects of Dr. Mokhtar's lectures.

- ‘Kareem’ means always generous

Similarly, ‘Saleem’ means, always at peace (not intermittently or irregularly). So that is the status of the heart that would become a reason for our success in the hereafter.

Our life is a journey:

Our life in this world is a journey back home. We are currently in a transient place and on a journey back home. Home is from where we started – the Jannah. Allah SWT is benevolent on us that he allows us to go back home. This time we need to come back with a heart that is sound. The journey of our lives is, therefore, a struggle to acquire a heart that is Saleem. When we enter with such condition in Jannah, we will enter never to come out again – infinite happiness, infinite life, and infinite freedom.

Humanly representation of God’s attributes

Allah SWT has made us vicegerents (caliphs) on this earth. We accordingly have to try to run it in accordance with the divine commands. We have to run it in accordance with the divine attributes of Jamal, Jalal, and adl –the attributes of Rahmah, justice and benevolence.

The most perfect example of that is put in front of us in the form of Rasool Allah ﷺ who embodied these attributes in the best possible humanly way.

A beautiful dua of the Prophet ﷺ

The Prophet ﷺ said that when you see the people competing for Gold and silver, you should behold to these treasures:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الثَّبَاتَ فِي الْأَمْرِ، وَالْعَزِيمَةَ عَلَى الرُّشْدِ، وَأَسْأَلُكَ مُوجِبَاتِ رَحْمَتِكَ، وَعَزَائِمَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ، وَأَسْأَلُكَ شُكْرَ نِعْمَتِكَ، وَحُسْنَ عِبَادَتِكَ، وَأَسْأَلُكَ قَلْباً سَلِيماً، وَلِسَاناً صَادِقاً، وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ مَا تَعْلَمُ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا تَعْلَمُ، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا تَعْلَمُ، إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلاَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ[5]

The Prophet ﷺ teaches us to implore Allah SWT to decorate us with pure and Saleem hearts – this is the real treasure. This Salamah (protection) is the purification from any attributes that are not

[5] This dua is found in a number of books of hadith.

([1])أحمد، 28/ 338، برقم 17114، و28/ 356، برقم 17133، والترمذي، كتاب الدعوات، باب منه، برقم 3407، والنسائي، كتاب السهو، نوع آخر من الدعاء، برقم 1304، ومصنف ابن أبي شيبة، 10/ 271، برقم 29971، والطبراني في المعجم الكبير بلفظه، برقم 7135، وبرقم 7157، و7175، ورقم 7176، و7177، و7178، و7179، و7180، وأخرجه ابن حبان في صحيحه، 3/ 215، برقم 935، و5/ 310، برقم 1974، وحسنه شعيب الأرنؤوط في صحيح ابن حبان، 5/ 312، وحسنه بطرقه محققو المسند، 28/ 338، وذكره الألباني سلسلة الأحاديث الصحيحة في المجلد السابع، برقم 3228، وفي صحيح موارد الظمآن، برقم 2416، 2418، وقال: ((صحيح لغيره)).

divinely accepted. It means liberation from any attachment that is not for Him, through Him, or by Him; liberation from all darkness; and liberation from anything that we associate with Allah SWT.

One day, the Prophet ﷺ was asked about who is most meritorious of the human beings. He said that one whose heart is makhmoom and his tongue is constantly truthful. The companions asked about what does being makhmoom from the heart mean?

The Prophet ﷺ told them that it is the one who is always God-conscious [i.e. always alert of his or her relationship with Allah swt and always aware of divine presence] and clean [of all impurities of hearts]. He also explained that such a heart is free from ithm [anything inappropriate and sinful]. There is no grudge inside such a heart. And there is no violent envy inside that heart.

Losing one's heart is losing everything:

We connect with the divine through our hearts. If that qalb is dry, dead or blinded, our relationship with the divine gets veiled and we are unable to experience the divine beauty. The impacts of this veil are seen in this world as well as the hereafter.

That is why the Prophet ﷺ told us that the hearts that hard are farthest from Allah SWT. When they listen to call from Allah SWT and his dhikr (remembrance), they are not moved.

That prophet ﷺ also told us that we have to beware of talking too much without the remembrance of Allah SWT as it would make our hearts hard and make us among those who are farthest from Allah SWT because of the hardness of our hearts.

Examples of hearts that are not in soundness or Salamah:

These are the hearts that are inconsistent with the divine beauty, the hearts that are arrogant, the hearts that are ostentatious, the heart that is angry and has no room for forgiveness, a heart that is deluded, a heart that is self-admiring or self-conceited, and so on.

The method of attaining a pure heart

The Quran, the Sunnah and the guidance of early predecessors give us a complete framework for the cleansing of hearts and souls. In tomorrow's lecture, we will Insha'Allah discover this approach and its three key elements.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 6:

Your contemplation task for the day is to ponder upon the fact that you are sent to this earth for a short time and you are on your journey back home. Are we treating this world as a temporary residence or do we have all our preparations and hopes for this world alone?

SECTION 2 (Week 2-3)

DISEASES OF HEARTS AND THEIR CURES

OBJECTIVES FOR THE WEEK

After the completion of this week, you should be able to:

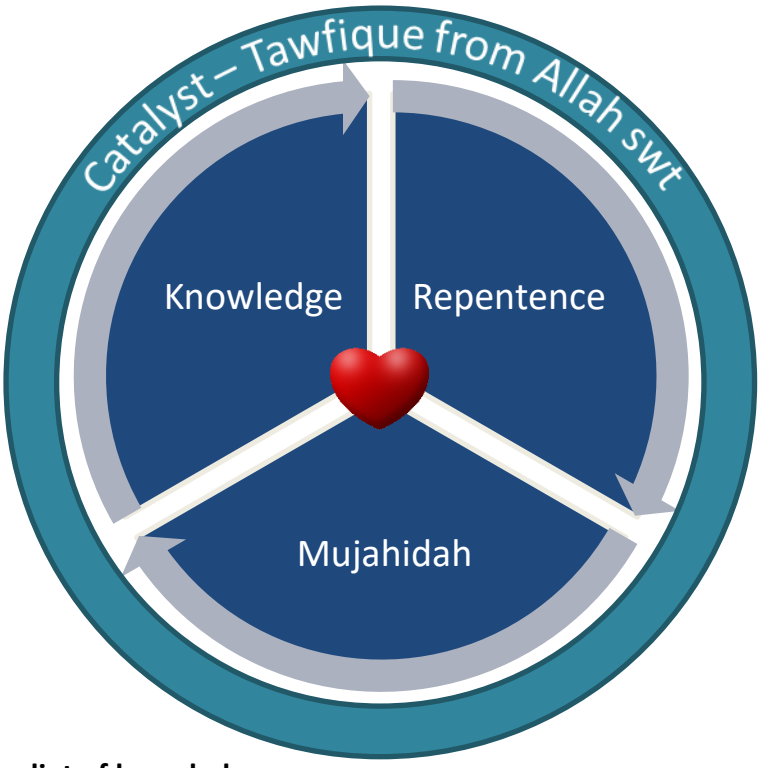
- ✓ Understand eleven of the most common diseases of hearts and the cures that help us rid ourselves of them
- ✓ Able to work out a plan for yourself to overcome these diseases

KEY POINTS – LESSON 7

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui

3-STEP MODEL FOR ATTAINING TAZKIYYAH

Our early predecessors have left us a spiritual legacy of attaining tazkiyyah based on their understanding of Quran and Sunnah. This can be explained as comprising of three main components.



Step 1 - Regular diet of knowledge

This diet should be regular. It should not be occasional. Like we can't survive if we don't have regular food, similarly, our soul requires regular food too. We cannot love God with ignorance. Ignorance is not bliss.

It should include:

- How do I help myself develop a qalb that is Saleem

- How do I adorn myself with beautiful internal characteristics
- The ilm that should remind me of my relationship with my Creator (also including those secular disciplines that take me nearer to Allah SWT – such as Arabic grammar)
- Knowledge about the attributes of Allah SWT
- Knowledge about the states and stages of nafs or one's heart and how they relate to the concept of happiness and freedom
- Knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, what is obedience and what is sin
- Knowledge of how to discipline and purify the nafs.
- Knowledge about the positive and good consequences of good deeds and the evil consequences of disobeying Allah SWT and His messenger in this world and the hereafter

The food that we give to our soul should not be the junk food. The diet of knowledge that we take should be a beneficial one and not something that is harmful to our soul.

Four types of self (nafs):

It aim is to search for pleasures, delight, and joys like animals.

1. **The cattle-like (or bahimi) self**

It finds satisfaction in fulfilling certain traits that are predatory such as violence, anger, vindictiveness, usurpation, thirst for power and so on.

2. **Predatory self**

This is what is inclined towards pride, delusion, sowing seeds of animosity, deception, thanklessness, arrogance and so on.

3. **The satanic self**

This type of self finds pleasure in love, compassion, the remembrance of Allah SWT and loves obeying His commands and falling in love with Him.

4. **Malaiki (or angelic) self**

Sins can be internal as well as external:

Anger, high-temperedness, arrogance, ostentatiousness, conceitedness, delusion.

Using my senses, my eyes, ears, tongues, sexual drives, and resources used in a manner that is against the divine commands.

There are ailments that link to heart that we have to be aware of and should know how to deal with them.

Step 2 - An internal energy that leads to repentance:

Knowledge empowers us with the momentum to commit or abstain from certain acts. For examples, knowing that smoking kills would help us acquire a momentum to avoid or quit it. If we don't know it's ill consequences, we may cause such harm to ourselves that even our enemy cannot.

When we commit an ill or evil act, internal energy arises in us if we have the knowledge that it is wrong and it is disliked by Allah SWT and His Messenger ﷺ. That internal energy of remorse, regret, and longing for a positive future leads to repentance when one realizes his or her mistake. When a person realizes what he or she has missed in his or her journey back home, this leads to the release of energy. When one realizes that there are people who are far ahead of me on our journey back home, one feels the remorse and internal positive energy to be better is produced.

Tauba or repentance does not need to be verbalized. It is that internal state that pushes one to return back, to come back on the path home. One has to stop going in the wrong direction and then turn back in the right direction. For that one has to realize that where one is going is wrong and then one should know the right direction where one should move with conviction. For this, knowledge is a requirement.

The catalyst for the internal energy:

For all this to happen, we also need the tawfique from Allah SWT i.e. acceptance from Him and His will. Even if we have knowledge about things, it may not materialize into tawbah. So, we need the tawfique and guidance from Allah SWT. Without this breeze which comes at the right moment, one may not be able to repent. The stronger the burst of this wind, the wider the doors would open for us for the next step – the mujahidah (the struggle).

STEP 3 – Mujahadah:

We all have come across situations where we know that certain thing is true and right but we are not able to act on that. It is because we do not strive to actualize that. Just knowing is not enough. If we do not strive against the resistance within ourselves, it will not lead to anything beneficial. This is where mujahadah comes in. For that, we need to have a burst of internal energy – the stronger it is, the stronger will be our struggle to achieve what we know is right.

The elements of this mujahadah include:

1. **Dua:** First of all is dua. We need to make a dua to Allah SWT to give us the tawfique and fix our affairs. If we have everything but the not the tawfique of Allah SWT, we will not achieve things. And if we have nothing but Allah SWT gives us the tawfique, all our affairs and matters will get fixed. Beg Allah SWT to help you overcome the weaknesses you may have. Know that the best that you can ask from Allah SWT is what Allah SWT asks you to become. Seek that. Seek to become the loved one of Allah SWT.
2. **Frequent Dhikr and remembrance of Allah SWT:** This dhikr should be with the tongue as well as the heart. There is no other method that is as effective as the dhikr for cleansing our hearts.
3. **Muhasabah:** One should spend some quality time to hold ourselves accountable every day, after every salah or for the blessed ones, every moment – about what I have said, what I have heard, what I have seen, what I have thought and so on. This is required for anyone seeking anything in any walk of life.
4. **Muraqabah;** Spending quality time alone in awareness of Allah SWT and listening to the moods inside of me – positive or negative. If they are negative, one should convert them to the energy of remorse. One can be in this state even when surrounded by people – our hearts can still be in the state of muraqabah and not allowing any external negative energies to enter my heart.
5. **Mu'atabah:** This means to reprimand and warn one's self if one allows negative energies to house within one's self. This can also be called an attempt for self-critique which can create or reinforce the internal burst of energy for repentance.
6. **Mu'aqabah:** One should also punish one's self in the manners and in the ways that are in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah. These means should be those which would result in one's spiritual elevation and an increase in the self-control.
7. **Struggle to do the opposite of what is negative:** If you love to speak, strive to keep quiet. If you love to eat, strive to stop your hand and fast. If you sleep a lot, sleep less. If you are angry, show more compassion.

This process is circular:

This three-step process can start from any step as it is a circular process. One cannot say that as I don't have the knowledge, I cannot repent; or that I haven't repented, so I can't do mujahadah. You can start anywhere in the process.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 7:

Your contemplation task for the day is to find a quite spot and think about how you can implement each of these steps – a daily doze of beneficial knowledge, repentance, and mujahadah or a continued struggle to purify your soul.

SECTION 2

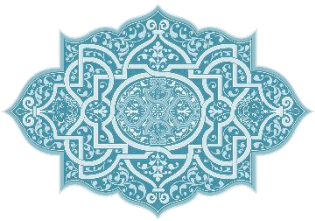
KEY CONCEPTS RELATED TO REVIVAL OF HEARTS

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SECTION

After the completion of this week, you should be able to:

- ✓ Understand the cause and treatment for some of the main diseases of hearts
- ✓ Be determined to treat these diseases in yourself

KEY POINTS – LESSON 8



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui

TREATMENT FOR KIBR (ARROGANCE)

From this lesson, we are now going to start our discussion on the common spiritual diseases of hearts. These diseases of hearts are explained to us through Quran and Sunnah. In order to attain the heart that is Saleem or at peace, we are required to rid ourselves of them.

Four types of self

We all have four types of nafs (as explained in the previous lecture). The type of nafs that will take over is the one that we feed more. Accordingly, we should make an effort to feed our angelic self.

Today, we will try to understand how to fight one of the characteristics of the satanic self – kibr or pride or arrogance using the three-step model that we discussed yesterday. We should know that if we should kibr, we are representing a satanic trait.

The Kibr of Satan

When Allah SWT dignified the human being by putting in its body the rooh or soul, He ordered the angels to prostrate to him. It tells us that our real honor comes with the soul or our spiritual dimension. At the time, the angels, who are made with noor or the light, prostrated; but Satan, who is made of fire (which is inferior to the light) disobeyed on account of his kibr thinking that he is better than the human who Allah made with the clay. His pride came from his thought that 'I am made from fire and fire burns the clay. How can I prostrate to an inferior being'. He was accordingly cursed and banned from returning home forever.

The mustard seed of arrogance

Accordingly to a hadith, even a mustard seed of arrogance becomes a hurdle in our journey back to our original home. Allah SWT has also warned us that an ugly abode has been prepared for those who the people of al-kibr or arrogance.

The attribute of the Kibr is only suitable to Allah SWT because he owns everything and to him, all the praise belong. It is not suitable for human beings as whatever we have is not our own. It is given to us from Allah SWT. The earth that we walk on is not ours. The air that we breath is not ours. The

food we eat comes from the earth that Allah gave. If we make something with our intellect, that intellect also came from Allah SWT. How can then we be arrogant if we are so very dependent? I have no reason to be arrogant for the things that are not my own.

Treatment

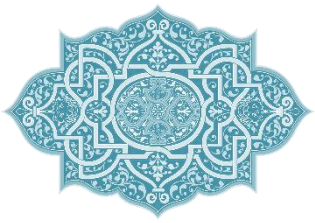
The first step is to sincerely repent. Accept your weakness and ask Allah SWT for forgiveness. Be sincere in your dua. After that, the following can be beneficial:

1. Turn to Dua, dhikr, worship, khalwah (time alone for thinking), murqabah (keep the mind clear of distractions) and so on – as we discussed in our previous lecture. We should try to acquire the dimensions of the ibadah rather than making them mechanical or physical exercises.
2. Do the muhasabah (self-accountability). Watch the moods inside you on regular basis and identify if you have any traits that you can improve.
3. I should do those things that I consider to be low in front of others. Do what your pride thinks is not of your level while remaining within the confines of shariah.
4. Mingle with those who I perceive less than me on account of my foolishness. Do that till I start to get delighted in their company.
5. Serve the ones who you think are below you in status. Consider them to be superior to yourself and engage in their Khidmah or service. Here we are speaking about natural circumstances and not those who we think of low because they are criminals and so on.
6. Ask forgivingness from those who you consider being below you despite the resistance inside you.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 8:

If you do, then find who are the people that you consider to be below you. Then identify the means in which you can serve them. How can you do the things that you consider to be low, of course, while remaining within the confines of shariah?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 9



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Moutsim Hameedi[6]

GHAFLAH (HEEDLESSNESS) – PART 1

The second disease of hearts is another very common disease. It is the disease of Ghaflah or heedlessness which most of us are victim to. Accordingly, it is very important to understand its causes and treat it accordingly.

Ghaflah is like a dream:

Ghaflah can be understood in terms of its similarity with the dreams. When we are dreaming, we think that everything is happening in the real world. We can feel the pain or happiness or joy or sadness of what we experience in the dreams. We think we are awake but actually, we are not. That is the most problematic thing about Ghaflah that we don't realize that we are in it, even if someone tells us about that. However, there are certain cures (some of which are in our hands and some are not) which can help us come out of this state. We will Insha'Allah discuss them in this and the next lesson.

One of the tabioon (i.e. the generation after the companions) said: When humans are in this life, they are actually asleep. When they die, they wake up [to the ultimate reality]. We can accordingly say that we are in a transient state. Accordingly, Ghaflah can entail heedlessness, forgetfulness, temporarily forgetting something.

When in Ghaflah, we don't feel like we have forgotten anything:

Consider an example: Sometimes our wife asks us to bring something on the way back from home from work. We totally forget about that. But during the time when we have forgotten that, we never realize that we did not remember it. However, when we reach home and we hear the voice of our

[6] Sheikh Moutasem Al-Hameedi has benefitted from a number of esteemed shuyukh including the prominent students of Sheikh Nasir-ud-Din al-Albaani, including Sheikh Mashhoor Hasan (Hadeeth and Usool al-Fiqh), Sheikh Hussain al-Awaaysha (Fiqh and Manners), Shekih Abu Suhaib (Imaam at Wise Islamic Centre in the UK), Sheikh Ayman as-Saadiq (Arabic grammar and morphology) and Dr. Malik Sha'ban (Aqeedah, Tafseer).

He is a very active teacher and public scholar. He has served as an Imaam and lecturer at Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque (London, UK), as an Imaam and lecturer at CIIC (Luton, UK), and has lecture at various British universities and schools on Islam. He has also hosted various educational and dawah programs on TV.

wife, we immediately realize what we were missing. That is the example of a state of Ghaflah. We don't remember what we ought to remember and when an event occurs, it reminds us of the reality.

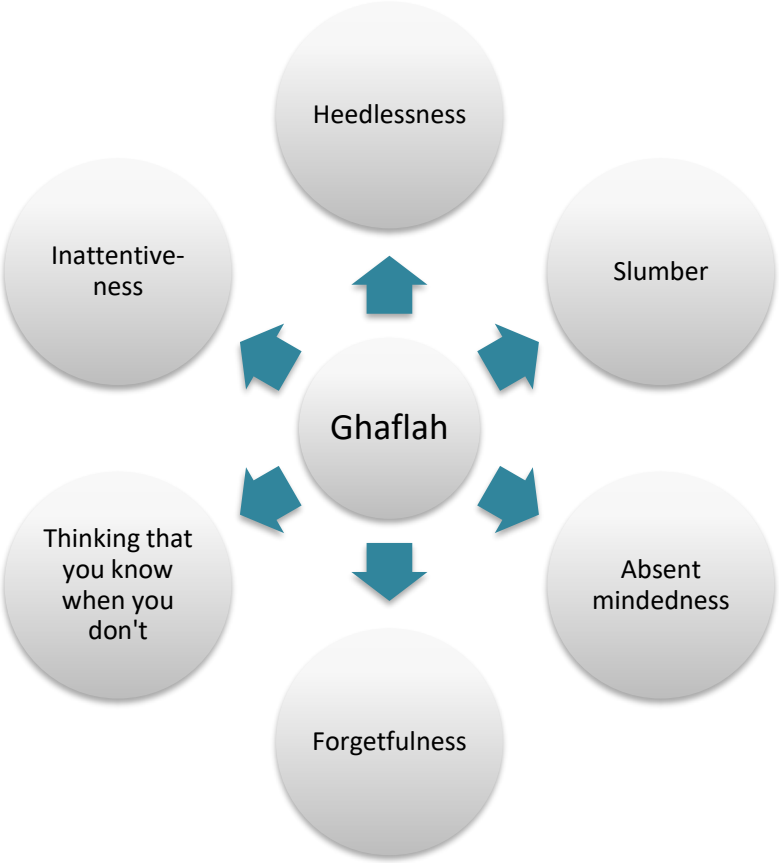


Figure: Some of the meanings of the word Ghaflah

Ghaflah is forgetting Allah SWT:

Ghaflah really means to forget Allah SWT. We have all these signs surrounding us and reminding us of Allah SWT, they all shout in our face. Yet we are heedless.

Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim says that Allah SWT is very wise in His creation. He has created things according to our needs. The thing that we need the most to survive and need all the time is air. He created it and gave it to mankind. Then we need water. He made mechanisms for the provision of water and created significant amounts of it on the globe. We then need food. Accordingly, He created the earth from where mankind could grow food. Then comes the clothing. However, more than all of these things, what we really need for our hearts to keep them alive and be successful in the hereafter is the connection with Allah SWT. So, this is what every creation of Allah SWT points out towards. However, we in our state of heedlessness and Ghaflah ignore them. If we look at these things around us, we will get some insight about Allah SWT. We, unfortunately, see the things but don't see the message.

Our promise with Allah SWT

Humans have phases of existence and various levels of consciousness. We have various memories from childhood that look likes dreams. There are some things which we remember very well. Whereas there are other things which we completely forget and have no clue of them even when people tell us about them. It is about our lifetime.

Before coming to this world, we had an experience too. We all made a declaration and testimony that we will believe in Allah SWT. Every human being made this promise. We all had this experience. Our hearts know it. This is called fitrah. Those of us who are away from Allah SWT spend their lives thinking that they are not forgetting anything. But actually, they are. This is called Ghaflah i.e. being unaware of our real state.

Ghaflah is in the soul

We usually think that the Ghaflah is in the mind. However, it is actually in spirit. From spirit, the mind is controlled. If we have to fix it, we accordingly need to fix our soul.

State of awakening

All of us experience that sometimes if we come across certain conditions, vivid memories of the past come back to our consciousness. Sometimes it is a smell, sometimes weather, sometimes seeing a certain thing and so on. These things bring us into a state this is opposite of Ghaflah – called the state of awareness. There are various levels of this awareness. At one end of the spectrum, we have Ghaflah, and at the other end, we have this state of awakening called, Yaqazah (يقظة).

The mission of the Prophet ﷺ

There are ways and means to wake up before the death comes and awakens us. The Prophet ﷺ was sent to wake us up. Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Jumuah (Ayah 2):

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“It is He Who has raised among the unlettered people a Rasool of their own, who recites to them His revelations, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and Wisdom, for indeed they had previously been clearly astray”.

As we see from this, the two main tasks of the Prophet ﷺ were tazkiyyah and Ilm (knowledge). The translation of the word tazkiyyah as ‘purification’ or ‘cleansing’ is close but its even better translation is ‘awakening’. He was sent to restore the fitrah in our hearts i.e. to connect with the knowledge of Allah SWT that present within our soul and to be motivated to love Allah SWT.

Learning and the state of awakening:

When people are in this state of awakening, they are ready to learn and exert an extra effort. If people are not in the state of awakening, they are either unable to learn, or they only learn with their minds and not their hearts. When the knowledge and learning are not in the heart, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to apply them. The person who knows that smoking kills would keep smoking unless he learns this fact in his heart due to an awakening. Similarly, we see people exceeding the speed limits despite knowing the speed limits. This happens because they have not awakened to this learning; it is in their heads but not their hearts. On the same note, we do see some people who on one hand appear to be the people of knowledge and scholars of the religion, but we still find them being harsh and unjust. This is because their learning has stayed in their heads and has not traveled down to their hearts. This is the state of Ghaflah and heedlessness.

It is also important to note about the ayah above, that Allah SWT mentioned tazkiyyah or awakening before the ilm. So, when we are in the state of awakening, we can learn in a much better way. Unless people are awakened, they would become robots as a result of teaching who would be able to read and memorize without any of it reaching their hearts.

There are a number of internal and external factors that can result in awakening. One of the major factors is remembering death. Examples of awakening because of it are abundant. There was a brother who was indulged in all sorts of worldly pleasures till the age of 21 when one of his close relatives passed away. When he saw the grave, it changed his perspective. He realized that one day, he would be under a similar grave too. At the age of 21, he picked the Quran for the first time. In just 3 months, he memorized the whole Quran. How did that happen? It depends on the state on one's awakening. If someone is really awakened, he or she is willing to go exert that level of effort which others can't; and the learning in this situation is much more profound.

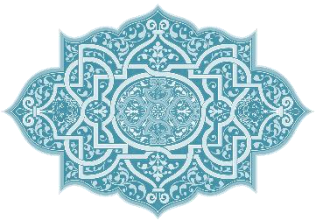
Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim, in his masterpiece 'Manazil as-Salikeen',[7] has mentioned various stages or stations of one's journey towards Allah SWT. The first of them is waking up – Yaqazah.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 9:

Often times we think that we have understood the reality of thinks unless something comes and shows us a completely opposite reality. Ponder over your condition. Could you be in that state too with regards to your responsibility as the slave of Allah SWT? Are you in the state of awakening? If not, what steps can you take to get there?

[7] InshaAllah, in our final lesson, we will provide more information about this book and the relevant learning resources.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 10



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Moutsim Hameedi, Ustadh Mohamed Baajour[8]

GHAFLAH (HEEDLESSNESS) – PART 2

With awakening comes the opportunity to learn the divine knowledge

In the longest ayah of the Quran, the verse of debt in Surah Al-Baqarah (Quran 2:282), Allah SWT says;

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ

Have taqwa of Allah; it is Allah that teaches you.

Taqwa does not just mean fear or mindfulness. It is another higher state of awareness. If we get to this state. Then Allah SWT will provide means for us to learn. The reason why we are not learning at the moment is not that there are no signs or knowledge around us. It is because we are not in that state of awareness which opens the doors for the knowledge from the divine.

We all have seen situations when we seem to know certain ayahs of the Quran or certain ahadith since our childhood. But someday something happens and it gives us a completely different perspective about that ayah or verse. This is what happens with awareness.

Three-pillars of awakening

Yaqazah has three main pillars i.e. when one is truly awakened, one would display these three behaviors.

[8] Ustadh Mohamad Baajour is the Director of Tarbiyyah (Education) and Community Development at East Plano Islamic Centre, USA. His key interest areas include Islamic Learning, Spiritual Growth, Youth Activities, and Outreach. Ustadh Baajour has studied under numerous scholars including Shaykh Omar Abdulkafi, Shaykh Muhammad Hassan, and Shaykh Muhammad Issam Al-Qudat. He has also served as the Director of Religious Affairs at Masjid Dar-ul-Quran in Bayshore, Long Island, NY for 15 years. As a Religious Director, Ustadh was not only responsible for the Tarbiyyah (Education) of his community, but also motivated the youth to become leaders. Ustadh Baajour has extensive experience in Community and Youth development. He is known for building bridges with people of all faiths through outreach and has helped establish Masjid Eissa-Ibn-Maryam as one of the most vibrant Masjid's in the NY area. Ustadh Baajour is currently an instructor with the Foundation for Knowledge and Development, a religious institute in NY, where he teaches along with Sh. Shakiel Humayun with Sh. Yaser Birjas and Sh. Omar Suleiman as guest speakers.

a. The heart starts to pay attention to the blessings of Allah SWT. The biggest blessing of Allah is the guidance that He has given to who He had given it too. One realizes this blessing and thanks for it always when one is in the state of awakening. When we realize the blessings, it becomes pertinent to be grateful to the One who gave them and loves Him.

b. The second pillar of Yaqazah is to ponder about the offense of heedlessness that one committed by not being grateful to the blessings that he or she was surrounded in. This produces the internal energy that we need for improving ourselves. At this stage, one should free him or herself from the shackles of heedlessness and indulgence.

c. The third pillar of Yaqazah is to realize and notice the days that one has wasted and the days that one is left with. At this stage, one should roll up his sleeves up and strive to gain back what he or she has missed over the months and years when one was heedless. The time is melting away day by day and one should be very concerned about this. This involves a sincere tawbah, seeking forgiveness, and sincere striving to gain more and more good deeds.

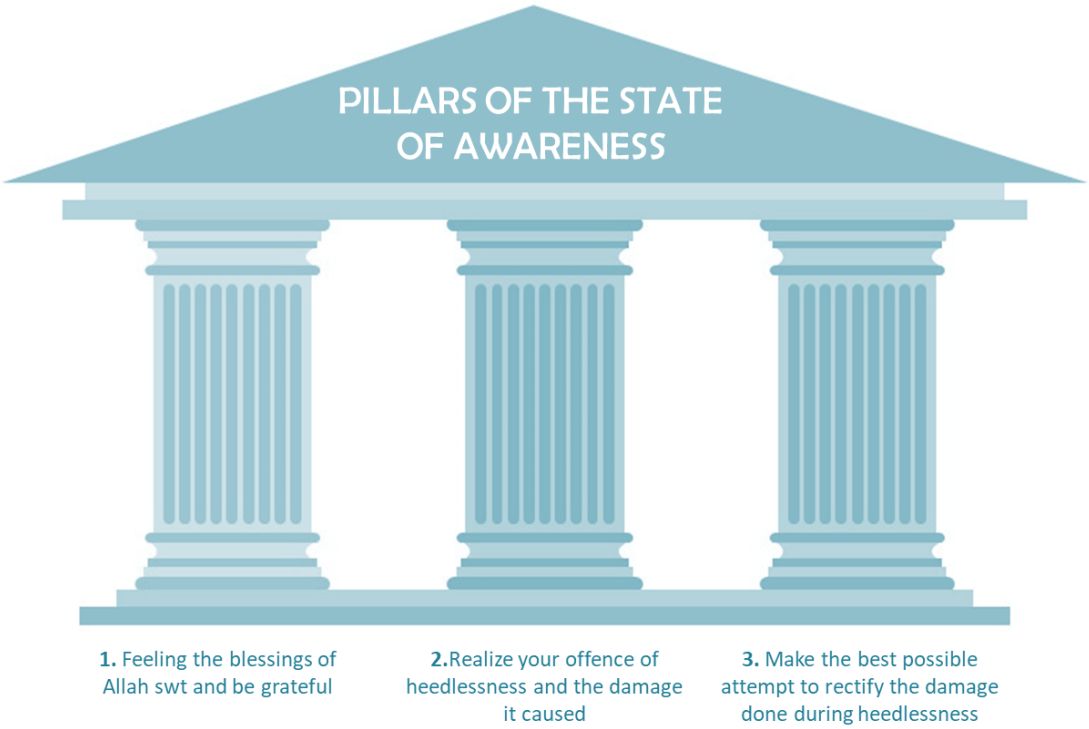


Figure: Three pillars of Yaqazah

A very important point to remember: It is not necessary to first awaken and then follow these steps. Following these steps can result in awakening too.

Gratitude and positivity:

Allah SWT says that (Quran 14:2):

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ ۖ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

"If you are grateful, I will bestow abundance upon you, but if you are ungrateful (then you should know that) My punishment will be terrible indeed".
However, in the absence of awakening, we don't realize the presence of these blessings even though we are surrounded by them. However, when we become grateful, the veil that prevents us from seeing the blessings of Allah around us is lifted up. For thanking Allah SWT, we have to think. When we think about this, it trains our mind to be positive and look for the good in things.

We fluctuate between various levels of awareness:

Let us understand this with a hadith. Once Hanzala R.A. met Abu Bakr R.A. and complained about himself that he had fallen into hypocrisy. Abu Bakr R.A. asked him of why he thinks about himself like that. Hanzala R.A. responded by saying that my state of Iman when I am with Rasoolullah ﷺ is different to my state when I get busy with the chores of life. To this Abu Bakr R.A. showed his worry too and said that he experiences the same. Both of them went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to clarify about this. The Prophet ﷺ explained to them that if their state of Iman always remain the same as when they are in his blessed company then the angels would come down and shake hands with them i.e. their spiritual state would become so high that would freely interact with the angels. This tells us that our hearts fluctuate between the various stages of awareness – between the state of Ghaflah and the state of Yaqazah.

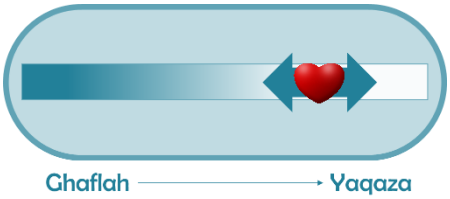


Figure: Hearts fluctuate on a contour between the state of Ghaflah and Yaqazah

However, our aim should be to remain in the higher stages as much as possible and we should check ourselves, as the companions of the Prophet ﷺ did whenever we find that we are drifting down. That requires pondering and reflection.

Ways to come out of Gahflah

The ways to come out of Ghaflah can be those which are within our control as well as those which are not in our control and come from Allah SWT.

We can be exposed to situations, events, environments, and people that can result in the opening of our hearts by the will of Allah SWT. This may include:

- An external event such as someone's death
- A physical state such as an illness
- Look or company of a pious person
- Someone's word and so on.

These are just the means; it is Allah SWT who changes the hearts. In addition to the above, there are a number of things that we can proactively do in an attempt to come out of Ghaflah.

a. **Accept your weakness and make sincere dua with repentance**: Accept your weakness in front of Allah SWT that I am unable to help myself; it is not about my intellect or my abilities; I am helpless and I give my affairs in your hand. The hearts are between your fingers. Please turn my heart towards yourself and give it the state of Yaqazah. Please guide me and save me from the evils – those that are inside me as well as those which are outside. We should not just do it once; do it again and again.
b. **Read the Quran with an intention to follow**: Make a habit to connect to the book of Allah for it changes the world of hearts. Read it with an intention to follow. You may come across an ayah that would strike your heart and completely transform you.
c. **Remembering death.** The Prophet ﷺ advised us to remember death abundantly. If we have this thing in our mind, we will make use of every moment. Death can approach us at any moment. Whatever time we are left with, we have to make sure that it contributes to our success in the hereafter.
d. **Praying at night:** We should try to wake up at night to pray, even if it is 2 rakahs with 10 ayahs.
e. **Be in the company of righteous people:** We should strive to be in the company of those who encourage us to good and leave the company of those whose companionship result in deviation and sinning. A person is on the deen or the way of his friends. We should accordingly be very concerned about who our friends are.
f. **Engage yourself in the remembrance of Allah SWT:** We should make a habit of remembering Allah SWT secretly and openly in public as well as when alone. While doing so, we should strive to achieve a higher level of consciousness. This is a tool that would remind us of our connection with Allah SWT

4 building blocks in the spiritual journey:

Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim in his famous book Madarij us Salikeen explains four key building blocks for a successful spiritual journey, shown in the figure below. If these building blocks are not in their place, the journey cannot be successful. The first of these blocks is Yaqazah – the awakening. If one does not wake up, one doesn't advance on the path.

We then transcend from one level of existence to another level of existence and everything comes to us in a new light. When we wake up, we will be able to decode the message each and everything in this universe conveys to us about Allah SWT. But for that, we will need to rise up to that level of awakening.

One of the problems that happens with many of us is that we do not follow the right order of things. We skip stages and accordingly end up in the problem. For example, we cannot have Azeemah (firm will) without Baseerah (insight), tafakur (deep thinking) and Yaqazah (awakening). Same is the case with other stages. What is very important to note is that the journey cannot even start without

being in the state of Yaqazah. We will need to come out of Ghaflah to embark upon this journey. This is not only applicable to us as individuals but also as organizations and communities. If we are encouraging people to make an effort, the first step is to bring them out of Ghaflah (i.e. in the state of awakening). Then, they need to engage in deep thinking and acquiring the breakthrough insights. Once these steps are taken care of, only then they can move to the state of Azeemah where they would be able to make sacrifices and strive hard for the cause. There are no shortcuts to this.

When we see people who possess a lot of knowledge but still don't act on it and still have no motivation to strive in the cause of Allah with a firm will, it indicates that they did not come out of Ghaflah and did not enter the realm of awakening. Knowledge itself is not power. It would become power only if it is exposed to a source of energy such as a spark. The state of Yaqazah is that spark that we need to ignite the process. Knowledge, in the same manner, does not benefit the people who are in the state of Ghaflah.

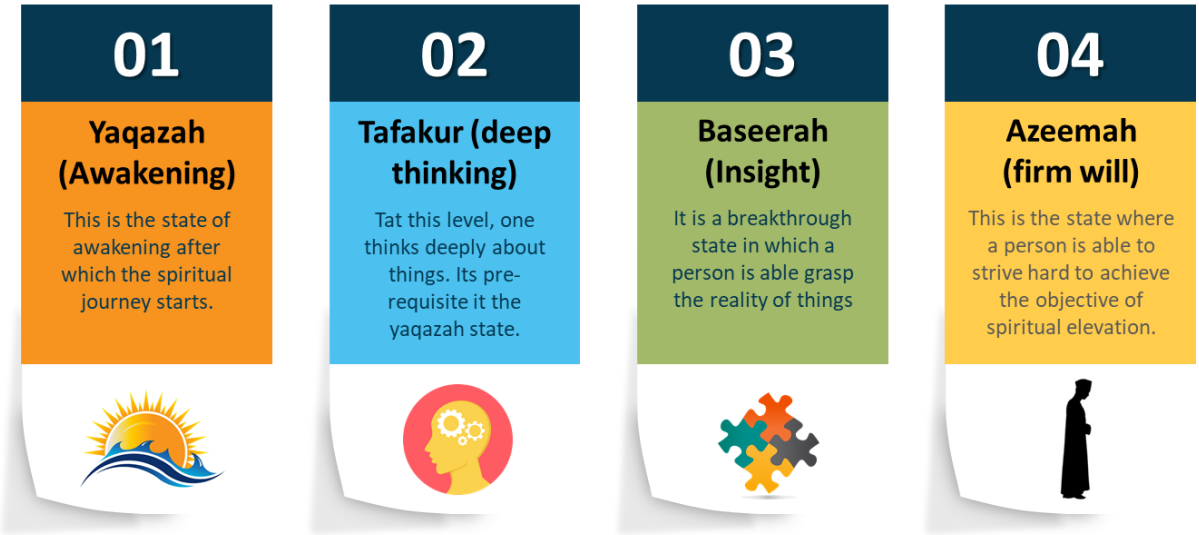
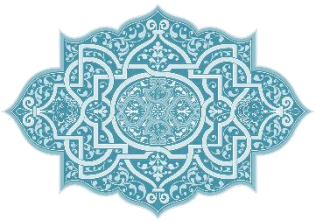


Figure: 4 key building blocks of our spiritual journey

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 10:

Where do you see yourself in the four-stage process of spiritual journey? What can you do to enhance or sustain it?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 11



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh John Starling[9]

EXCESSIVE LOVE FOR THE WORLD

One of the diseases of hearts that is at the root of many other diseases is the excessive and unbalanced love of this world. Let us understand this disease and its cures in the light of very heart-melting prophetic tradition.

What if your job requires you to travel out of hometown?

The journeys and travels are not all fun. One has to leave early from home to reach the airport, usually in a taxi or with someone's assistance. After going through the check-ins and stuff, one is able to enter the terminal, sometimes through a shuttle service in which the seats are pretty limited. The food on the airports is usually over-priced. You either bear an extra burden on your valet or don't eat much during the waiting time. You keep waiting without doing much to do. Then you board the aircraft and the seats therein are quite a tight fit. You pay for any extra luggage and you don't

[9] Sheikh Abu Ibrahim John Starling is an American convert who was born and raised in North Carolina. After graduating from NCSU's College of Management with a B.S. in Business Management, the Sheikh went on to further his education at the Islamic University of Al-Madinah. At this world renowned University he received 2 degrees; one from the University's Institute of the Arabic Language and the other from the University's College of Islamic Doctrine and Mission. During his 7.5 year stay in Al-Madinah, John attended numerous study circles with major scholars. He found great benefit from both the traditional and formal education he received from his teachers and professors in the sciences or Arabic, Hadith, Theology, Fiqh, Tafsir, and Islamic. The Sheikh then furthered his Islamic education in US and acquired Master of Islamic Studies degree.

As a seasoned public speaker and teacher, the Sheikh has a knack for explaining complex issues of faith in a very practical everyday manner to a wide array of listeners. He considers it his objective is to eliminate as much static in the lines of communication as possible when delivering the message that Islam has to offer.

In his diverse career, Sheikh John Starling has worn many hats and continue to wear more than one at a time. He has served as a teacher, preacher, fundraiser, CEO, community leader, executive director, program manager, arbitrator, counselor, adviser, curriculum developer, author and translator. He is currently serving as the Executive Director at GCLEA, US. In addition, he is also the founder of Hikmah Institute. He has also held the position of CEO and Shariah Advisor for Hope Holding Company, Tanzania. His other job roles include Executive Director at Amal Holdings, Head Arabic Teacher at Islamic Academy of Burlington Country, Curriculum Developer for Foundation of Knowledge and Development, US and Chief Editor for the outreach department of Authentic Statements company in the Greator Philadelphia area in US. From this, you can under the diversity of knowledge and experience he offers.

know who is sitting next to you. In the toilets, there is no water for the taharah (cleaning). But, alhamdulillah, we are able to utilize these means, with Allah's permission, to move from point A to point B. Once we reach our destination, it is not always guaranteed that we will get a four-star or five-star hotels. If it is available, alhamdulillah; if it is not, still alhamdulillah as you are here for work and the 3 or 4 or 5-star things is not that high in terms of importance for the success of your trip. There may be far away towns where what is available is bare-minimum. You still go there if you are required to for your business or your job. In summary, there are many things that one has to compromise on, including the comforts of home and being with the family. But you still embark on these journeys for your work, make sacrifices and exert effort. Why? Because there is a pay off at the end!

Our objective in such trips, therefore, is to embark upon the journey, do the job well, get paid, and return back to HOME.

What do we do to make our trips successful?

Leaving the comforts:

During such journeys, we have to leave the comforts of our home for a short time. But we do make these sacrifices for the payoff. Once our job is done, we will be able to come back to the comforts of our houses. From the payoff from our journey, we may be financially better off and be able to afford even more comforts. However, if one doesn't do that when his or her job requires such travel, that person may face the consequences of this – for not leaving the comforts for a short duration. A person who prefers such short-term gains while ignoring the longer-term comforts will not be considered as sane.

Luggage:

In terms of our luggage, we take with us what is considered a reasonable requirement; we are not fussed about excessively increasing the size of our luggage during the travel as it becomes a burden and adds to the pain of traveling. Carrying it with us and putting it on the weighing scales or the conveyors can be discomforting. If we are asked to open it for checking, it becomes even more problematic. Those people who are able to walk out with just their backpack hanging on their shoulders are much better off in such situations.

The condition of the hotel:

As discussed above, if our hotel or resthouse during such visits is not top-of-the-class, it doesn't matter much. Even if we go to a place that is discomforting, we are not overly grieved about it because we know that this condition is temporary. What matters to us really is the comfort of our own house as it is our permanent residence. If someone is fussed about decorating the resthouse, putting a new tv at the place where one is on a temporary stay, replace its furniture and so on while forgetting his or her real home, such person will not be considered sane. Especially, when one will

leave all these things in the hotel or the resthouse for others to use. What will be of benefit to him would only be what beneficial things he can take along him to his home.

Amusements

During this, if there comes a thing of amusement, there is no harm in enjoying it in reasonable manners. However, if you get excessively obsessed with such things, your trip with become a failure and you will not be able to achieve the purpose you set out for. For example, if someone loves surfing and upon reaching the place of stay, one finds a near-by beach. If he gets such overwhelmed and engulfed in it that he goes there straight away forgetting the work that brought him out on the journey, then such a person would not be considered as sane.

Accessories for the job

When traveling for work, one has to carry the things, that would help him or her do the job that is required to be done. If someone, for example, is required to present something on the computer, one has to take a computer with him. If in place of this, a person takes a gaming console with him, it wouldn't let him complete the job. Such a person would not be considered as sane who, during the journey, leaves what is required and instead carries that which is of no use for completing the task, irrespective of how funny or how entertaining that thing may look like.

Preparation for the work or business activity

On such work-trips, if you are looking forward to presenting something to others or have meetings and so on, you also do your homework before that; the purpose is to get the job done in an acceptable way. Those who strive for excellence would go an extra mile and be extra-cautious about their performance. They would be much more planned and organized in their effort. A person who has traveled all the way for a meeting or job and goes for that unprepared will not be considered as sane.

Travelling is like the journey of our lives

The journey of our lives is the same as our journey for work. We are on an assignment and we will soon be returning home. The assignment that we are on, whether we keep it on top of our mind or not, is that we have to live a faith-filled life – a life dedicated to Allah SWT, His messenger and the religion of Islam. Our Prophet ﷺ was instructed in the Quran that:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say, "Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah—Lord of all worlds (Quran 6:162)

This is our job and our assignment. Many of us are yet to understand this assignment. Our real home is the hereafter where we have to return. To Him we belong and to Him we return.

Live in this world like a traveler or wayfarer:

This parable that we just discussed was taught to us by the Prophet ﷺ who said:

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ أَبُو الْمُنْذِرِ الطُّفَاوِيُّ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ الأَعْمَشِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي مُجَاهِدٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ . رضى الله عنهما . قَالَ أَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِمَنْكِبِي فَقَالَ "كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ، أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ ". وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ يَقُولُ إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلاَ تَنْتَظِرِ الصَّبَاحَ، وَإِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلاَ تَنْتَظِرِ الْمَسَاءَ، وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ لِمَرَضِكَ، وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ لِمَوْتِكَ.

Narrated Mujahid:

`Abdullah bin `Umar said, "Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) took hold of my shoulder and said, 'Be in this world as if you were a stranger [i.e. the one who is not at his permanent place and is not looking forward to settling down] or a traveler." The sub-narrator added: Ibn `Umar used to say, "If you survive till the evening, do not expect to be alive in the morning, and if you survive till the morning, do not expect to be alive in the evening, and take from your health for your sickness, and (take) from your life for your death."

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari 6416

Ibn Al-Battal, a famous hadith scholar who is famous for his commentary of Sahih Al-Bukhari said: The traveler is someone who does not expend any more than what is more than required. You don't spend any more money, energy or resource except what is required to complete the journey. Any access baggage would become a burden.

When we go for a day or two long trip, we go with a couple of outfits and minimum toiletries – may be a computer too; sometimes, you can plan for unforeseen things and put an extra pair of clothes too. But you do not go excessively; you don't take your tv, fridge and so on – the bare minimum is enough for that trip. Same should be the case with the worldly possessions. Do not spend all your energies for the extra baggage. Rather work on what you can take back home with you. Do not accumulate the worthless things that are of no benefit in there hereafter.

Sometimes, we take our journey for work as a vacation. We will come across a lot of mesmerizing places and captivating scenes. We, however, should not be lost in their galore and beauty to an extent that we forget our real job. Enjoying the pleasures of this world within the limits defined by the Shariah is not prohibited. However, what is prohibited is that one gets so engrossed in these matters that he or she forgets the real purpose of existence and the assignment he or she is given.

If we engage in these beauties, it may give us instant gratification. However, it would put us off-track from our mission if this engagement crosses the limit. We cannot be fixated on the rest-stops.

Cures for this disease:

Muhasabah:

We all have to question ourselves regarding why we are doing what we are doing. Why do you go to work? Why do start a family? Why do you spend time with family and friends? Check your motivations. Is it for instant gratification? Is it for self-serving intentions? Is it for living in the moment? It is because of unhealthy and out of balance love for the Dunya, it would make us do strange things where we can hurt ourselves and others around us, even those who we love. This damage can exceed beyond the confines of this world and cause havoc in the hereafter too.

Understand the real value of this world:

We have to realize the true worth of this Dunya and how insignificant it is in the light of Allah SWT.

It was narrated that Sahl bin Sa'd said:

"We were with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in Dhul-Hulaifah when we saw a [deformed] dead sheep lifting its leg (because of bloating of the dead body). He said: 'Don't you think this is worthless to its owner? By the One in Whose hand is my soul, this world is more worthless to Allah than this (dead sheep) is to its owner. If this world was worth the wing of a mosquito to Allah, the disbeliever would not have a drop to drink from it.'"

حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامُ بْنُ عَمَّارٍ، وَإِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ الْمُنْذِرِ الْحِزَامِيُّ، وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الصَّبَّاحِ، قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو يَحْيَى، زَكَرِيَّا بْنُ مَنْظُورٍ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو حَازِمٍ، عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، قَالَ كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ـ صلى الله عليه وسلم ـ بِذِي الْحُلَيْفَةِ فَإِذَا هُوَ بِشَاةٍ مَيِّتَةٍ شَائِلَةٍ بِرِجْلِهَا فَقَالَ " أَتُرَوْنَ هَذِهِ هَيِّنَةً عَلَى صَاحِبِهَا فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَلدُّنْيَا أَهْوَنُ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ عَلَى صَاحِبِهَا وَلَوْ كَانَتِ الدُّنْيَا تَزِنُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ جَنَاحَ بَعُوضَةٍ مَا سَقَى كَافِرًا مِنْهَا قَطْرَةً أَبَدًا " .

We have to realize the world for what it is. Let's not get fixated on the rotting piece of flesh. If we are unable to understand this reality, worldly gains or loses would not bother us much.

Other cures:

- Dhikr of Allah SWT
- Being with those who are below us in terms of worldly possessions and serving them
- Be in the company of those whose words and personality remind us of the reality of the worldly life
- Self-punishment within the confines of shariah if the love of Dunya exceeds its limits

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 11:

Analyze your heart and check how much love it has for the Dunya. Is it excessive? Based on our discussion in today's lesson, think of how you can fix this misplaced love.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 12

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Noman Ali Khan

INGRATITUDE

Ungratefulness nurtures a number of other diseases too

Ingratitude is a disease of the heart that becomes a harbinger of many other diseases. When in the state of ungratefulness, one thinks that he or she is entitled to things. People, government, organization and even Allah SWT owe him things. This is a delusion. If we honestly ask ourself this question that 'does Allah owe us anything?', the clear answer would be 'no'. It is the favors of Allah SWT that we are surrounded which He keeps blessing us with despite our disobedience.

When an ungratefulness person, who thinks that he is entitled to things, doesn't receive a blessing that he thinks he is deserving of, he severs his relationship with Allah SWT and develops a hatred or envy against those who have that blessing. Such a condition may also result in anger which is another spiritual disease. These are the sufficient reasons for one to work on treating the diseases of ingratitude.

Explanation of gratitude in the light of Surah Ar-Rahman

Let us understand this concept further through an explanation of some of the highly profound ayahs from Surah Ar-Rahman.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ

وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

All that exists on the earth will perish,
But the Face of your Rabb will remain full of Majesty and Glory.
Then, which of your Rabb's favors will you deny?

All who dwell in the heavens and the earth, implore Him for their needs, [and] every day He manifests Himself in yet another [wondrous] way.
Then, which of your Rabb's favors will you deny?
(Quran 55:26-30)

Then, which of your Rabb's favors will you deny?

In Surah Ar-Rahman, there is one ayah that Allah SWT has repeated a number of times. "Then, which of your Rabb's favors will you deny"? If we don't understand the meaning of this ayah, then we miss the whole point. Allah SWT is asking us in a very emphatic way that which of the wonders that Rabb (Lord and Sustainer) has done for you, which of the blessings that He is given you, which of the His favors that you enjoying at this very moment too will you deny and be ungrateful for? Allah keeps asking about how much more we will be in the mode of denial? How many blessings of Allah will we keep ignoring? How much more you think Allah SWT should do while you are busy thinking that it is not Him who created all this? How blind can you be? And He keeps asking the question.

Why has Allah SWT repeated this question over and over again?

Scholars have pondered over why Allah SWT has asked this question again and again. It is also baffling in the sense that first Allah SWT explains His creation and asks this question; then He explains the hereafter including the hellfire and asks this question again. Then comes Jannah and the same question is asked. There are five different topics which are placed in between this repeated ayah. This makes one curious of what is the wisdom behind this.

Arabic of the Quran is a very clear and natural language. It is simple to understand. Same is the case with this repeated verse too. If we are upset and angry with someone, we keep repeating the things we have to say. Consider the example of a teacher who is angry over his class which has performed very badly in an exam. You would be able to listen to him or her repeating these questions such as 'did we not cover this in class?', 'did I not teach you this content?', 'did I not make it really clear for you and gave a number of examples?', 'You are all going to be in the same grade next year too! Did you really not make any benefit of all the hours that I spent explaining this subject to you?'. 'I told you that I am available to assist even after the normal class times and yet you guys have given such a performance and missed the obvious?. This shows how upset and angry the teacher is over his students.

Can you see a parallel between this and the repeated ayah that we discussed above? This expression from Allah SWT is asking us that He has done His part; why are we not doing our part?

The use of Allah's name Ar-Rahman in this ayah

The use of Allah SWT's this name in the ayah فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ is highly profound. This name shows the intensity in the mercy. Had this not been the mercy of Allah SWT, we would have doomed by now on account of our disobedience. But our merciful Lord has still not stopped the blessings around

us despite our ingratitude. Most of the people and humanity has invited Allah's anger. But we are still protected on account of Him being Ar-Rahman.

The first people that these ayahs addressed

The first people that these ayahs address were the people of Quresh. Almost a decade has already come down before this surah was revealed and they were still in denial.

The Prophet ﷺ was sent to the whole mankind a blessing. But the special favor was done to the umiyeen (the unlettered people who were not given a book previously) that the last and most beloved messenger of Allah SWT was sent to them. They were not great in the worldly sense. They were not the most civilized of the people. They were neither great in the spiritual sense. At other places in the world, such as India and China and so on, the place for shirk and temple were built. But they did something far more worst and converted the house built by Ibrahim A.S. into the place of shirk and filled it with idols. So these were the people who were behind everyone in the worldly as well as the spiritual sense. Even the great empires of the day did not want to conquer them not seeing any benefit in conquering a desert place and fighting the Bedouins. Yet Allah SWT blessed them with the presence of His final messenger ﷺ. Not only that, but He also gave them the most exalted of the books. Not even that, He also decided to give to them in 23 years rather than one go. That too in their language and from the mouth of a person that they considered to be truthful and trustworthy.

This could not have been in a better way than this. The teacher was the best teacher in the whole of mankind. All the teachers of true divine knowledge that would come after him would take him as a role model. There could not be any curriculum better than the book of Allah. The learning was also linked to the occasions and situations so that the learning could stick. It couldn't be designed to meet your needs more because the curriculum was set by the one who designed them too.

But they demonstrated a really thankless behavior. They mocked the teacher and even tortured him and those who listened to him. They ignored the message and the book. Allah could punish them. This was big enough an offense. Even though the people asked for punishment themselves while mocking the punishment on previous generations, Allah did not punish them and destroy them. In response to all that, Allah still mentions that Allah SWT is Ar-Rahman. When the previous generations displayed such behavior, they were destroyed. But for these people, Allah showed His intense mercy. This final word and final messenger ﷺ are mercy to mankind which it had never seen before.

So these are the people who this surah initially addressed to.

Does this Surah address anyone else too?

This surah not only addresses those people of Quresh but also those who come after them and display a thankless and ungrateful attitude. It can include me and you too. It can also include those people who get away from Allah and slip away. It also includes those people who think that 'at least I

come for Jumuah'. It may also include those people who believe that we will be good Muslims otherwise but don't ask us about the new year eve. This Surah contains profound and loving wake up calls for all of such people and all of us.

The wakeup call

The first ayah of the passage selected for discussion today is كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ. Everyone on this earth shall cease to exist. It is not just death. The word 'faan' means that people would even forget that you even existed one day. We don't know the people that existed a 1000 years ago or a couple of thousand years ago.

So, Allah SWT tells us that one reality that has to settle in our mind is that we are not here permanently. We get so caught up in the thick of thin that we forget this ultimate reality? We are so bothered about what to do on the weekend, what to watch on tv, where to spend the holidays and so on that this inevitable reality goes out of sight. We make our years and years-long calendars. Some really well-planned people think 25 or 30 years plan for our life. We became oblivious to what can come any moment. Even if we pretend it is not there, it would come and hit us. Whether we pray or not, whether we live our lives in the obedience of Allah or not, we are all going to perish. It accordingly has to be a conscious thing on our mind and we should make arrangements for that.

Only Allah's glory will remain

All the worldly things would perish; however, the face (which Quran uses as an expression of glory, dignity, and majesty) of your Lord will remain. Even when no one would be left, Allah would still be there in all His glory. Allah does not need to be glorified. He already possesses it. When no-one would be there, He would still be there. Allah is not in the need of creation to praise Him.

Whoever obeys does it for his own benefit

This answers the question of those who have been deceived by Satan to think that why does Allah want us to praise and thank Him all the time? Why are we bound to do that? The answer is right here. Allah does not need it. Who needs it is YOU! Allah SWT tells us:

إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا

If you persevere in doing good, you will but be doing good to yourselves; and if you do evil, it will be [done] to yourselves (Quran 17:7)

Also, he tells us:

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

And whoever strives ⌜in Allah's cause⌝, only does so for their own good. Surely Allah is not in need of ⌜any of⌝ His creation. (Quran 29:6)

Whatever we do, it is an investment in our own selves. We are not dragged into obedience and what we don't want to do. Whoever wants to believe, they are welcome. Whoever wants to walk away, they are open to disobey. But whoever chooses to obey, they are benefitting their own selves and not adding anything to Allah's treasures. And whoever disobeys is depriving his own soul and not decreasing anything from the treasures of Allah SWT. Allah SWT says that his dignity will remain around. وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ. If you come towards Allah, you will be the only beneficiary.

Allah's doesn't owe us anything

He then asks the question. Which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? He doesn't even need you but still keeps you around. He doesn't even need you but feeds you, provide for you and look after you. and yet provides you with His blessings. He feeds you and shelters you, give you beauty in your life. He didn't just give you a prison cell to live in; he gave you houses. He didn't just give you skin on your body, he also provided you with clothes to cover it. He gave you all these things that you have even though he doesn't need anything from you. How much in denial will you remain? How much more oblivious will you remain? We can never do so much Allah SWT. He can never thank him enough. It is such ignorance that we still find people around us who make statements such as 'I made so much dua but Allah didn't accept it' as if Allah SWT owe them something on account of what they do. How can one even make such a statement when our lives are filled with the disobedience of Allah SWT and his messenger ﷺ? When other things in our life get priority over what pleases Allah SWT and His messenger ﷺ? How can we even utter such statements? Dua towards Allah SWT is not like placing an order on Amazon, eBay or olx.com; there is no point of you being arguing that a certain number of days are passed and your dua is not accepted. Who are you and I to place demands on Allah SWT? Our attitude towards Allah SWT has become that of a customer as if He owes us something! Even our dua has become arrogant. Do we realize that? Allah reminds us that how much more deluded could we be?

The word 'Aala' in Arabic

It is also pertinent to note that the word آلَاءِ used in the ayah فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ is not just used for favors. It has a lot of deeper meanings. It also means something that takes our attention. Allah has done us so many favors, He has put in our way so many signs, He has bestowed us with so many blessings – yet we remain ignorant and unthankful, yet we don't open our eyes and see. We remain oblivious.

Everyone in the skies and the earth is asking Him?

يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ

There are two types of meaning for the word '*Su'aal*' (this is from what the first word in the above ayah is derived) in Arabic. One is consciously asking for something. The other meaning is needing something. All of what is in the heavens and earth are doing su'aal from Allah SWT – either by consciously asking Him for His favors or by needing him. Even a disbeliever cannot live without

enjoying Allah's favor, without being on earth that Allah created, without breathing the air that Allah spread around, without using the resources that Allah provided. Everything is dependant on Him. The one who prays five times a day and is in the mosque all the time, as well as those who don't see masajid very often are all benefited by Allah through His favors and they all need Him. Allah keeps filling their lungs with air. Allah keeps their hearts beating even when their hearts are filled with the disobedience of Allah SWT. Allah doesn't strike us with lighting on such disobedience. He doesn't drag us to the masajid. He could do this if He wanted to. He did set straight the nations before us but he doesn't do it to you and me. Allah gave us the ability to choose our way. When the hand steals, Allah does paralyzes that. When someone does Zina, he or she doesn't immediately get a heart attack. When we fill our stomachs with haram, we don't straight away get stomach cancer. Allah allows us to keep living. We have to ponder upon this and do good to ourselves.

Every day he is doing something amazing:

كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ

In order to understand this ayah, let us discuss a couple of examples. A teacher cannot cope up with the requests of students if they all want something from him. If they all just need five extra minutes with the teacher after every class, a teacher cannot do that for 30 minutes. Even if does that sacrificing his own life, that would let the students dejected that five minutes were not enough and for their five minutes, they had to wait for so long. A human being cannot cope with the demands of such small groups. Also, consider the example of a store manager. After Christmas sales in the Western world and after Eid sales in the Muslim countries, a store manager doesn't want to talk to anyone. They are so tired that they need to cut off and have time off. A human being can't cope with such attention to so many people. Similarly, the head of the household can also give up on demand after demand that come our way.

Now consider what Allah SWT is doing. Every single creation is asking him and is in need of him. Even those people who say the most vile things from their tongues are in need of Allah SWT and ask him. Despite the open disobedience that they do, angels still guard them as they walk to the pub or the club on the weekend night and he keeps doing that till their appointed time comes. Their heart still seeks permission from Allah SWT to beat and He allows it. And He will keep doing that till the appointed time comes. Allah is fulfilling the needs of all the creation and it is only Him who can do it for you and everything.

If you understand this reality, you would never ask that silly question that where was Allah when I needed him. Allah says that he is always there, whether you realize it or not. Allah is even taking care of our tongue when it says such a statement. He even gives us the air and allows our voicebox to use it for uttering such a neglectful statement.

Allah then asks us again, "Which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?"

A war inside ourselves and outside

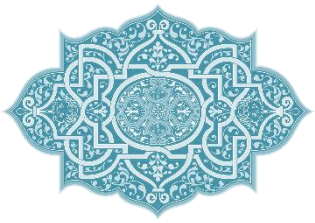
When we disobey Allah SWT, we are tempted by the Satans from the Jinns as well as the humans. Allah knows those who we see as well as those that we don't see. In this beautiful repeated verse in Surah Ar-Rahman, Allah SWT uses a dual pronoun كما which address mankind as well as the jinnkind. If they cause deviation for human beings, which Iblis, the satan, took as his mission, then they are harming their own selves.

There is a war happening between the forces of good and the evil – inside us as well as outside. He has to consciously side with the good and be a thankful servant of Allah SWT. May Allah make us truly grateful servants of Allah SWT. There would be temptations in life. This is where you will need to choose which force you are siding with.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 12:

Find a quiet spot and ask yourself a question: How many favors of Lord will you keep denying? When would be the time that you would become a truly grateful slave of your most Merciful Lord?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 13



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Kamal El-Mekki[10]

DEALING WITH THE DISEASE OF ADDICTIONS AND TEMPTATION – PART 1

How we get 'hooked'

Let's start with a scenario. Suppose there is a brother who is suffering from addictions and temptations. He comes to know that there is a scholar who is giving a speech on how to control temptations. He goes there to attend the lecture. The scholar says that the addiction can be treated through the love of Allah SWT and through salah. This brother is now in awe that how could that even be possible. He might also think that the scholar has no idea of how human mind works. He doesn't understand the psychology of addictions and is a simple-minded person who does not understand the therapies involved in dealing with addiction. Let's park this discussion here and we will come back to this later on.

A lot of what we know about addictions today come from lab experiments on rats that were done in early 20th century. For example, in one of the experiments, a rat was put in a cage and served with two containers of water – one was simple water and the other contained diamorphine (which is also known as Heroin). The rat kept going to the container that contained the drug until it becomes obsessed with it and drinking so much that killed it. The experiment yielded the same results over and over again. They defined this phenomenon as 'chemical hooks' which cause craving in your brain. Once you are exposed to an addictive thing for 21 days, you are 'hooked'.

[10] Shaykh Kamal El Mekki has been dubbed the Black Belt of Da'wah. With decades of experience in the Da'wah scene, Shaykh Kamal combines his ground-breaking teaching style with his own dash of humor, certain to leave students feel at ease & entertained, but above all skilled and empowered.

Shaykh Kamal has served as the Imam of George Mason University and has also served as a radio talk show host for a large Islamic radio station in America. He is known best for his workshop "How to Give Shahadah in 10 Minutes", a 6-hour workshop designed to empower MSAs and Dawah organizations in the art of Da'wah. His lectures and online videos (targeting contemporary challenges) have also gained popular fame and positive impact among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Educated at the hands of numerous prominent Islamic scholars from across the world, Shaykh Kamal also has dynamic experience in the secular world.

Being in a group helped mice avoid getting addicted

In 1971, this experiment was questioned by other psychologists. It was pointed out that the experiment above was done with a lone and bored rat who was in the cage by itself. They thought about what would be the effect if they do the experiment with a group. They came up with the idea of a rat park where a fancy cage was built where the rats could play with each, had both genders to satisfy their needs, had tunnels and other places where they could visit and enjoy. Now in that rat park, they again placed those two containers of water. This time they noticed that no rat became obsessed or addicted to it. All of them, for the most time, drank the normal water. Being is a group that was not addicted, prevented the mice from addiction. None of them killed themselves with overdose.

This theory now shifted the previous understanding. However, the scientists thought that it could possibly be something that is related to mice alone and may not be applicable to human beings. They then studied the soldiers who were deputed in Vietnam during the war. 20% of them were found to be addicted to drugs and were heavy heroin users. People got worried that when these guys come back home, it would fill the country with junkies. However, interestingly, 95% of them left the drug use when they came back.

Our heart needs something or someone to love

The above experiments then brought another shift in the understanding about addictions. It was now understood that being involved in social settings and having someone to love is one of the great cures and prevention mechanism for addiction. The absence of social network works as a catalyst for addiction. But once back in the normal social settings, most of the people become normal again and chemical hooks are no longer able to keep them hooked – no rehab required for most people.

We can accordingly conclude that our hearts need someone or something to bond with. If we don't have that someone, we can bond with chemicals, we can bond with gambling, we can bond with pornography and so on. We need something to fill our hearts with. This is a new shift in thinking that was found after a number of experimentations. We know this since 1400 years. We are told that:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort. (Quran 13:28)

Coming back to that "simple-minded" Shaykh

The contentment is not in drugs or pornography and other addictions. It is in attaching our heart with Allah as we come to know from above.

Now let us come back to that simple-minded Shaykh. Was he correct in saying that treatment to addiction is filling one's heart with Allah's love and connecting with him through the salah. Though

we called him a simpleton, he is 100% right – why would he be when his opinion is grounded in the Quran.

The heart is a vessel – always filled with something:

Our heart is like a vessel or a bottle of water. When water goes out of it, the bottle doesn't remain empty. It is immediately filled with air. When we put the water back again, the air goes out and is replaced with water. If you fill the bottle to the very top, no air would be left in that, and vice versa. There is never a moment when there is a vacuum in the bottle. It is filled with something and there is never a vacuum. Had there been a vacuum, the bottle would crumble and get destroyed. Our hearts, therefore, need something to be filled in them. If it is not the love of Allah, it would be the love of something else that would take His place in our hearts – this could be real estate, cars, politics, and other things from this mortal Dunya.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ

Have you seen those who have taken their own desires as their god? (Quran 45:23)

If we fill our hearts with the love of Allah SWT, it would start to replace the other loves that we have. When His love fills our heart completely, love of no mortal and temporary things would remain in our hearts.

A common parenting mistake

If you understand this, you will avoid many common mistakes that many parents make. When they want their children to quit a bad habit, they keep telling them how bad that thing is that they love. We think that they will break that bad habit this way. It doesn't work. You cannot create a vacuum in the water bottle. You have to fill it with the love of Allah SWT. Provide them with such opportunities that would increase the love of Allah SWT in their hearts. It would naturally push out the harmful things that occupy their hearts.

'Love of Allah' vs. 'Fear of Allah'

The scholars of Islam say that love of Allah SWT is more effective and better than the fear of Allah SWT. The effect of fear of Allah is that one would stay away from haram. However, the effect of loving Allah SWT is that one goes above and beyond what is required as a minimum. He would devote him or herself to extra good deeds in love of Allah. They would find it easier to give up bad deeds.

Love makes it easy to quite a bad habit

Let's us consider the example of smokers. Many of them find it hard to quit smoking. They make a promise to quit it and then 3 minutes later you find them smoking again. They blame it to stress and other things and this cycle continues. However, you sometimes find people who suddenly quit

smoking. When you ask what happened, they give reasons such 'my fiancée told me that if I wish to marry her, I have to give up smoking'. Do you see a parallel? If you are in love, it is easy to quit a bad habit. Does this remind you of that simpleton Shaykh. Our salvation and safety are in loving Allah SWT. If this person would have loved Allah SWT, he would have quitted years ago!

Love of Allah SWT is the most powerful motivator

Ibn Sina was once traveling with a servant in a distant part of Khurasan with his servant Abdullah who always loved him and wanted to do things for him. Now in this very cold night, Ibn Sina was in need of something, he called his servant Abdullah who was under a blanket. Now at moment, that otherwise dutiful servant decided to ignore him and pretended as if he was asleep so that he doesn't have to leave his blanket. He called him a few times but he ignored. Ibn Sina knew that the servant preferred his own comfort over him. He was thinking like this and a little while later, he heard the person calling the adhan. The wind was so cold that it was piercing through the body. He was amazed to see this man standing up at the minaret in such a cold night to fulfill his duty towards his Master. At that moment, he realized that true love is one of the most powerful motivators and it results in obedience despite whatever the situation may be. The love this man had with Allah SWT helped him overcome his comfort.

The story of a man who went with Tablighi Jama'at

Shaykh Kamal El-Mekki explains that when he was studying in Pakistan, one of his friends was convinced by the Tablighi brothers to go with them on Sehroza (3 days in tabligh / preaching). As it happens, they were required to leave for their destination after the tashkeel (allocation of place for preaching). He didn't know what place would that be. It came out to be a very very cold place up the mountains and all he had was a thin blanket. In the morning, he saw the Tablighi brothers making wudhu with the cold water and washing themselves up as if cold water was not a problem at all. He never wanted to come out of bed but the brothers presented him a bowl of water to make the wudhu with. The water had a frozen layer on top which he had to punch down to be able to use the water.

What would make one do the wudhu with cold water in such cold windy morning? Love! It would enable you happy overcome the difficulties in life and you would be able to do things which you can never do with love. Love someone who is always there and who glory will always remain. Love the one who created you from nothing. Love the one who is filling your lungs with air since your birth. Love the one who despite your disobedience keeps providing you. Love the one who is truly worthy of utmost love – Allah SWT. This love would push out the temptations and addictions from our hearts.

A panicked traveler

One of the great scholars was asked about why do people hate death. He gave a very profound reply. He said that if you spend all of your life establishing yourself and rooting yourself in a place

and then all of a sudden you are asked to leave and go to a place for which you never prepared, it is natural that you would hate it. People spend their whole life building for their stay on earth and they do little for the hereafter. How can you expect them to be looking forward to going there? When the angel of death comes, it is very natural that the unprepared traveler would panic.

We all know that one day we have to embark that journey and there is no escape from that. Wouldn't it be better if we plan for that? Wouldn't it be better if we leave the instant gratification and work for the place which is our ultimate abode – either Jannah or the hellfire? Isn't it better to build a house in paradise by 12 extra rakahs of salah every day? Isn't it better to build palaces in Jannah by giving up arguing even when we are right? Isn't it better than to surround those mansions by beautiful trees through our dhikr? Isn't it better to look for the best of neighbors in Jannah – our beloved Prophet ﷺ by caring for and supporting the orphans within our communities? It is all in our hands and the time is now!

Are we ready to meet Allah SWT

Suppose, if the angel of death come to you right now, how looking forward would be to him? Are you prepared? Will you be worried to die on account of your deeds? Would you hate to die? It can be heart-breaking to know that if we hate to meet Allah SWT, He hates to meet us. And if we look forward to seeing him, He would love to meet us too.

مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ وَمَنْ كَرِهَ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ

Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him, and whoever hates to meet Allah, Allah hates to meet him. (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 37, Hadith 4405, Grade: Saheeh)

You can prepare for that. You can repent from this very moment. He, the most forgiving, will forgive all your sins and replace them with good deeds. Make a fresh start. With Allah, it is never too late to come back.

Our pious predecessors' preparedness for death

When we look at the life of our pious predecessors, they were always prepared for death. When Bilal R.A. was on his deathbed, his wife was saying sad things. He stopped her and said the 'tomorrow I will meet our beloved and his companions' – that's what he was looking forward to.

When another of the great early Muslims was about to die, he was crying. His family members thought that he is crying because he was about to die. He said, no. He was crying because he would be in his grave for thousands of years and would not have an opportunity to stand up in prayer at night and weep in front of his Lord. That was what made him cry. Can you imagine what he was worried about and what he was going to miss?

Another early Muslim was on his deathbed and he heard the Adhan. He asked his sons to lift him to the masjid. His sons told him that he was exempt from going to Masjid on account of his illness. He

told them that I am preparing and praying for this moment for years. I always wanted to die in prayer and now when I am about to die, you want me to pray home. His sons carried him to the mosque where he died in prostration.

These were the people who were planning to meet Allah SWT. That is how they wanted to meet Allah SWT. That is how they used to love worship of Allah SWT.

Worshiping with love

Sufyan Ath-Thauri is known to remain in prostration between Maghrib and Isha. What made them do such long sujood? Why wasn't it boring for them? What kept him awake at night?

Let us understand this with an example. Does anyone hate sleeping? Does anyone think that sleeping is a burden and it is bad for you? No one. Because it relaxes you and makes you feel better. How can you dislike something that soothes you and gives you comfort?

The same applied to the early Muslims with regards to worship. This gave them comfort. This gave contentment to their heart. If we develop that love too, we will feel the same.

Is this even possible?

Satan loves to hinder our way to goodness. It may come to us and say that how could it even be possible. Let us understand this through a real-life example that we can all relate too.

Suppose there is a student who is trying to memorize the Quran and he is stuck on Surah Al-Bayyinnah for months. He is not even able to memorize those 11 ayahs. If someone comes an tells him that there is a guy who has memorized the whole book. What would be the reaction of this student? He would certainly ask 'How could this even be possible?'.

On the other hand, there is a student who has already memorized 27 juzz and he is left with just three. If someone comes to him and tells him that another student is memorized the whole book, what would be his reaction? He would say that it is certainly very possible and I can get there too.

So we can all work towards achieving excellence in our worship. We can continue to move in that direction and continue to make an effort. Insha'Allah, the barakah, and acceptance would come in these efforts.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 13:

Look into your heart and find out whose love does it contain the most? Is it the love of the world or the worldly things? How much do you love Allah SWT? How much you should love Allah SWT? What can you do to fill your heart with His love?

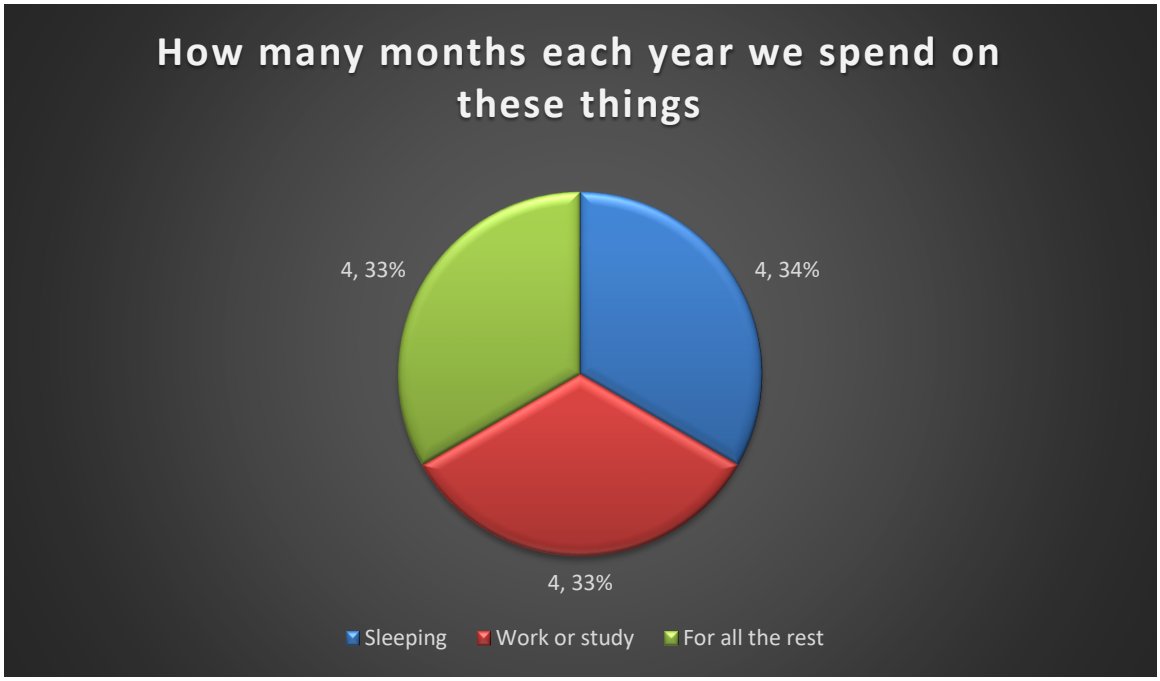
KEY POINTS – LESSON 14

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Kamal El-Mekki

DEALING WITH THE DISEASE OF ADDICTIONS AND TEMPTATION – PART 2

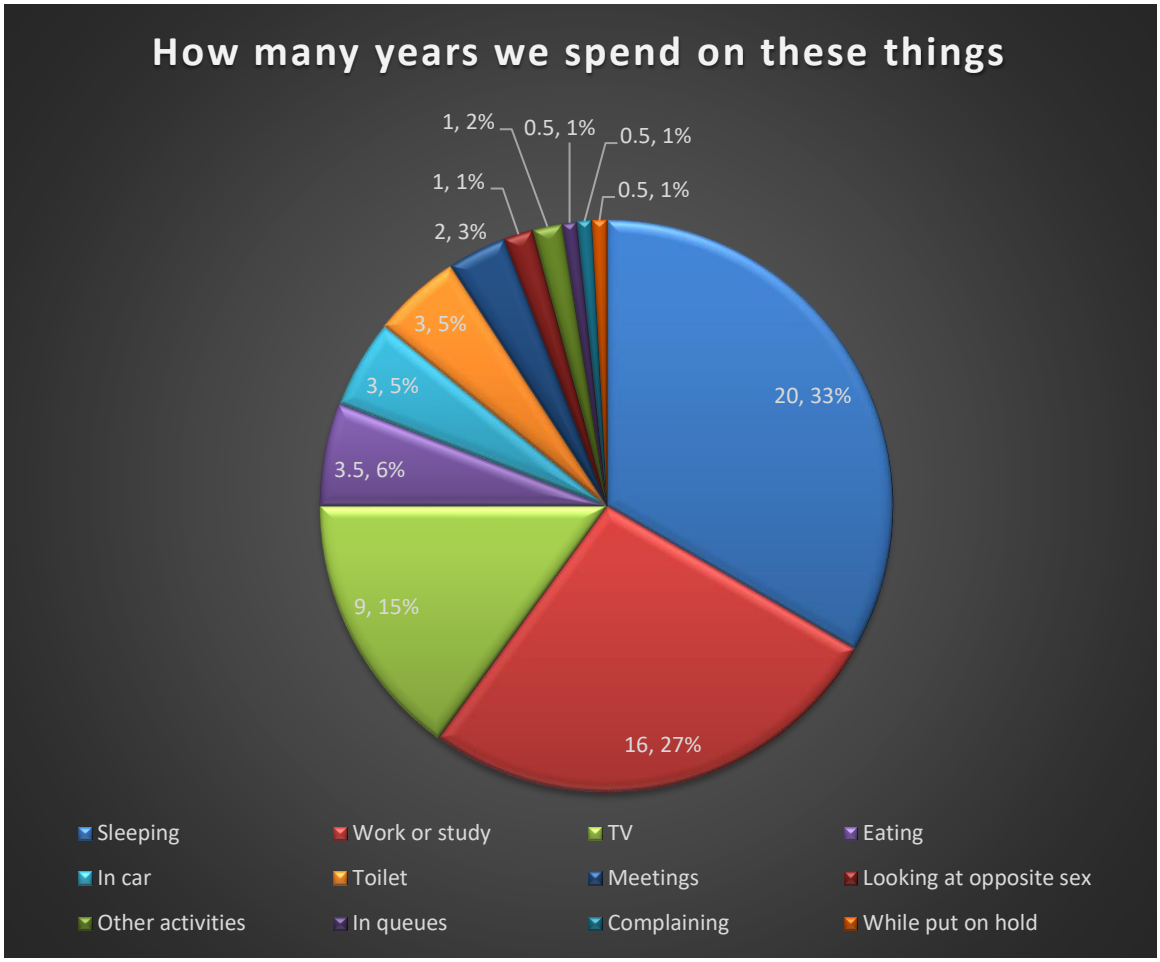
Let us see how to do we spent our days

For those who work or study for 8 hours and sleep and for 7 or 8 hours, the equation goes as follows:



The research also shows that an average person spends this many years of his or her life on the things below:

1/3 of our life is spent sleeping. 11 years of our life is at work, 3 years in car, 3.5 years eating, 6 months waiting in lines, 5 months of our life is spent complaining, 20 weeks while being on hold on computer, 3 years in the toilet, a year looking at the opposite sex, 2 years in meetings at work, 9 to 11 years in front of television, remaining time with family and doing other activities.



How to make the maximum benefit from our time?

Here are a few questions to ponder about:

- As Muslims, how much of this time do we spend on daily prayers? Less than a year. Wouldn't it be a shame when our records are presented on the day of judgment, it would be announced that we spent three years in toilets and only 1 year in prayer! We spent less time in prayer than the time we spent on gazing at what we were not supposed to look at!

- From where can we get more time from productive things? Can we cut down on TV? Can we better manage our sleep? If possible for us, can we choose that job which we not only love to do, but it would also give us some benefit in the akhirah?

- Can we listen to beneficial lectures, Tafseer, Seerah, and iCAN's WhatsApp-based course during our 3 years in the car? There is a brother in Washington who memorized the entire Quran in his car. While going to work or while coming back, he used to stick a page from the Quran in his car and would recite it whenever the car stopped. If there is a traffic jam, he would recite it. If there is a red sign, he would recite it. If there is an accident, he would

recite it. This way, he memorized the whole Quran in his car. We have done similar things through our WhatsApp based courses too. We have finished the Tafseer of entire Quran and the description of Seerah on wheels too. The current course on Reviving the Hearts is a step in the same direction too.

- Can we discuss beneficial things with our family or other people while eating? Or if eating alone, can we spend this time on reflecting and pondering rather than busying ourselves with gossip or wandering thoughts?

- We will be answerable to Allah SWT for that one year that we spend on looking at opposite sex (not including our wives and family members)! What can we do to avoid that so that we don't have to be embarrassed about this on the day of judgment?

- Can we spend the time we are on hold or in queues etc in dhikr? Can we make a promise to ourselves that whenever we are on-hold and in queues, we will say Subhanallahi wa bi hamdihi, Subhanallahil Adheem? These are the words which are beloved with Allah SWT and are heaving on the scale as our beloved messenger ﷺ told us. We can engage ourselves with the salawat and durood on our messenger which would bring us so many beautiful barakah in our life. If we do this dhikr while on hold, we would have said these beautiful words more than 1 million and 60 thousand times. Wouldn't it be a very useful thing to accompany us when we would needing it the most?

Imagine how many years of seeking knowledge, dhikr, and worship we can add to our records on the day of judgment by these simple tips. When falling to temptations, we can remember about this short time that is available for us and what better alternatives we have. Example of our life is like ice which is melting. Once it melts completely, we will depart this world. We accordingly need to hurry up with good deeds and take benefit from whatever opportunity we come across.

The early Muslims were much mindful of this. It is mentioned about a scholar that he used to break his bread first and then eat it. When asked about why he does that, he responded by telling that it takes lesser time for him to finish his meal with the broken bread then when he breaks it as he eats. He accordingly spends the time that he frees up in the dhikr of Allah SWT. The irony is that we will be raised on the day of judgment with these very people. How would we feel? Shouldn't we try to bridge the gap between us and them as much as possible so that we are also among the ranks of the righteous?

If we also try to bridge this gap, it would fill our hearts with the love of Allah SWT and remove the filth from them. This is what Allah SWT told us. This is how the hearts find contentment.

How to have khushoo in Salah in order to fill our hearts with love of Allah SWT

In Surah Mominoon, Allah SWT says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُون

Indeed the believers are successful. (Quran 23:1)

He then explains how and why is that.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

those who humble themselves in their prayer (Quran 23:2)

So, this is the first and the foremost thing.

Success comes from focus in prayer. Let's discuss how to achieve that with a simple example.

Suppose you are going to go to a king in order to ask for something. How would the king judge and evaluate you as a person? He doesn't know you. He will judge you based on how you dress, how you speak, how you will present yourself, and how are you that moment in front of him. He will make a decision on how he finds you at that moment. It is for sure that his judgment will not be based on what is in your heart for he has no access to what is in there. He is not going to base his judgment for your actions last week about which he has no knowledge of, even your action a few hours ago before you dressed up and came are not going to be considered. The difference between when you stand in front of Allah SWT and this king is that when you stand in front of Allah SWT, He knows everything you did – the things you did moments ago, the things you did days ago, the things you did weeks ago and so on. Your success will depend on how you are all the time and not just that moment alone. It means that in order for us to get the maximum benefit from our salah, we have to mend what is outside salah. It that is pure, we will also develop our khushoo in salah and find its sweetness. When you worship Allah SWT in the confines of your house, it is a secret between you and Allah. When you are fasting, it is a secret between you and Allah. That relationship will help you get closer to him. He even knows the slightest movements of our eyes and the slightest of the inclinations of our hearts towards something. Let's us build a beautiful relation with our Creator and fill our hearts with His love.

Another interesting technique to fight temptations – 2 Rakah solution

There was a Shaykh who was known to solve all problems through 2 rakahs. There was a brother who came to this Shaykh and said that I look at women too much, please help me. The Shaykh said that the solution is very simple but you have to commit to it. Every time you make an improper or lustful look, make a fresh wudhu and offer two rakahs. The rationale of this solution can be understood from understanding how satan works. He hates you praying two rakahs to Allah SWT more than he loves that you look at what is prohibited for you. If he knows that every time you look at something unlawful for you, you will pray, he would stop tempting you for that. The guy said that the first day, he prayed, 10 rakahs and then it gradually decreased. He then found a moment when he would hear a voice inside him saying, 'Don't look!". There was another person who came to this Shaykh and complained about his habit of smoking. The Shaykh recommended him the same

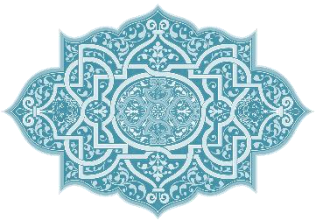
solution and that worked too. The Shaykh then wrote his solution in a book. A young man read that. He used to miss his morning prayer. He used this solution and committed to offering 100 extra rakahs of prayer every day if he misses salah. Once he put that in use, he started to wake up even before Fajr. He started being the first one to go to the masjid. The people of the masjid realized that and even gave him the keys. So, he is now the first one to open the mosque for Fajr in the morning.

However, keep in mind that this solution will only work if you truly commit to it and follow. Otherwise, Satan knows that you are the one who is not going to implement it anyways. Let us find out the temptation that disturbs us. Let us try this solution and fight our temptations. You make your best effort and Allah SWT would appreciate our efforts. Never give up. Allah SWT would multiply our deeds many many times because he appreciates and love us so much. Let's fight our temptation by loving Allah SWT.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 14:

What is your biggest temptation or behavioral issue? Is it anger? Is it lust? Is it pornography? Find that and think how you can cure it with the 2-rakah solution. Increase the intensity of dose according to the intensity of the issue.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 15



Derived from a lecture by: Mufti Ismail Menk

FILL YOUR HEARTS WITH THE LOVE OF ALLAH SWT AND HIS MESSENGER ﷺ

In the previous two lectures, we discussed that one of the best cures to fight addictions and temptations is to attach one's heart to Allah swt. In this lesson, we will explain this important aspect further and understand what does loving Allah swt really mean.

'I love you'

Many a time people utter this statement, but it is just a statement to fool people and try to get into their heart. However, we have also got people who don't utter this with their tongues; rather, they prove it with their conduct, care, and affection. When these people say 'I love you' it reaffirms what our hearts already know. We should therefore not be fooled by anyone who makes this claim unless we feel it in our heart. We should not let our heart fell a victim to such an empty statement. On the flip side, if we truly love someone, it has to be reflected in our behavior and conduct. If that is not the case and we keep going what hurts our loved one and keep doing the things that he or she dislikes, one day they would get fed up with and tell us that we have hypocrite whose words do not carry any weight.

It is also to be understood that **true love** is not dependent on the external appearances. We love our mothers and fathers and other people that are close to our hearts irrespective of their appearances. The love that is related only to the external appearances can never be the true love. As we grow old, those spouses who love each other, do not just love because of the beauty and handsomeness; these factors fade away. Their love is based on the feeling of each other's company and the bond they have between them.

The truest love that one can have is Allah SWT. It is far above the love of any created being. When we claim we love Him, it should not be mere words; rather we should prove it with our actions and by letting this love guide our life. Part of loving Allah SWT is loving the ones that He loves and loving the ones that He has asked us to love, understanding their rights upon us and fulfilling them with wholeheartedness.

How is loving Allah SWT different from loving anyone else

When we give our heart to a worldly being, they have got the power to destroy it and break it to the last piece. If it is wealth, it can depart. If it is the beauty, it can fade away. If it is power, it can be taken away. If it is a person, he can leave us too. However, if we love Allah SWT, it would only nurture our hearts further and we would be able to feel an everlasting joy – a joy that would never fade or diminish.

Love of Allah includes the love of the Messenger ﷺ

Loving the Prophet ﷺ is a part of loving Allah SWT and vice versa. You cannot have without the other. You cannot truly love Allah SWT unless you love the Messenger ﷺ, and you cannot truly love the Messenger ﷺ unless you love Allah SWT.

How should we express our love for Allah SWT and His messenger ﷺ

As human beings, when we love someone, we do it in the following ways:

- We never wish to make them unhappy
- We would do for them whatever we can
- We wish to sacrifice ourselves for them
- We are always thinking about them
- They are the first ones in our minds and whenever we talk, our words get back to them
- We would spend on them whatever we can and then feel good about it; if we can't afford something, we work extra hard to earn and give them something that like even if they haven't asked for it.
- You want them to love you too
- When they make mention of you somewhere in good words, it gives you that immense happiness
- When we truly love someone, we start to love those people too that he or she loves

If we love Allah SWT, why wouldn't we love to spend time with Him? Why wouldn't we love to spend in His path? Why would we not busy ourselves with His remembrance? Why wouldn't we strive to get close to Him and His messenger ﷺ?

We are guilty

Suppose if the person you loves gives you a book and says that it is my book and I want you to read it. If you are truly in love, you would read it the same day or night and proudly tell that person that you have finished it. How about the Quran? How attached are you to it? How much agitated we get when the Imam takes a few more minutes than usual to finish the salah? How do we feel if the Taraweeh gets a little longer? How many of us don't listen to beneficial lectures thinking they are too long? On the other hand, when it comes to illicit relationships, we are willing to spend the whole night. We are willing to spend the whole night on Facebook and WhatsApp. When it comes to Allah

SWT, we are not willing to spend even a portion of the night with Him! When it comes to the love of Allah SWT that we are guilty – we may say with our tongue that we love Allah SWT and His messenger ﷺ but we have not even applied the ways in which we express love to a human being! Allah is unimaginably greater than everything, and so should be our love for Him. The current state of our affairs is not how the lovers are supposed to express their love. This is the reason why we are crushed to pieces. We have to mend our relationship with Allah SWT. He has control over the hearts of those who we love. He has more control over our hearts then what we have over them. He would mend our hearts if we fall in love with Him.

Our Prophet ﷺ taught us a beautiful dua asking Allah SWT for reviving our hearts and firming them on the beautiful religion of Islam:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

O turner of the hearts, make our hearts firm on your deen [of Islam] – (Musnad Ahmed, 12107)

How Allah SWT has asked us to show love towards Him

Allah SWT said to His messenger ﷺ:

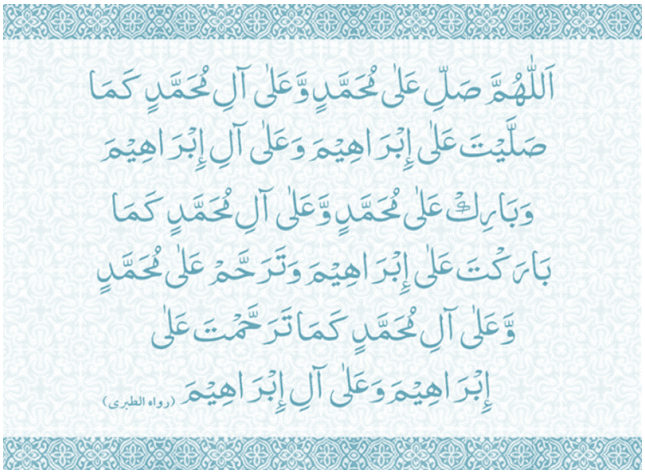
قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Tell the people [O Muhammad]: "If you truly love Allah, then follow me; Allah will also love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (Quran 3:31)

This is what Allah wants from us if we claim to love Him: Loving the Prophet ﷺ and following him. Allah made him to most beloved one to him; he made him the final prophet; he made him visit the seven heavens; he gave him the final guidance to the mankind and preserved it along with the Sunnah of his final messenger for all the times to come; on top of Allah that, Allah chose you and me to be in his blessed Ummah. If people of this ummah claim to love Allah SWT, they can express it by lovingly following the messenger of Allah ﷺ. We have to adopt and follow what he says. If we do so, Allah will love us in return and forgive all our sins.

It is very natural that we love what our loved one loves. Our loved one would want his or her loved ones to be loved by us too. If we marry someone and start hating his or her mother or father, or his or her children from a previous marriage, and yet claim to love that person, it would be a hollow statement in the eyes of that person. We have to love what they love if we truly love them.

In the same way, Allah SWT is telling us that if you love Me, love what He loves – first and foremost of them, our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. When his blessed name is mentioned, we should say the salawat.



When we say this, the value of the reward that is given to us is ten times more the reward of this statement. This is how much Allah SWT loves His messenger.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيَّ وَاحِدَةً صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَشْرًا

408صحيح مسلم كتاب الصلاة باب الصلاة على النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بعد التشهد

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever sends blessings upon me once will have Allah send blessings upon him ten times.”

Source: Sahih Muslim 408

Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Muslim

So, sending the blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ is, in essence, sending blessings upon our own selves too. We should do it as often as possible. Whoever exceeds in sending blessings and salawat upon the Prophet ﷺ would receive his intercession on the day of judgment.

Allah give us opportunity after opportunity

If we hurt a human being, they may give us a few chances, but not for long. If we keep hurting them, they would not love us anymore and our statement ‘I love you’ would be a meaningless phrase for them. But it doesn’t work this way with Allah SWT. He allows us to come back again and again and again. He tells us that if you have committed a mistake, come back to me, irrespective of how many times you have done that. He would provide you opportunity after opportunity to come back. He would give us seasons like Ramadan when the deeds are multiplied. He would bless us with the beautiful nights such as Laylatul Qadr when we can accumulate heaps of rewards and be among the blessed ones. Every week He gives us a day which I superior to all other days in the week. That is the day which is meant to soften our hearts. He would give us opportunities to attain His love by loving His creations, by loving and caring for our parents, by being best to one’s family, by being good to the orphans and widows and so on. Opportunities are all around us. We should rush to avail of such opportunities that come over the way.

Loving Allah is about being content with His commands

When Allah SWT created mercy, he spread 1 portion of that among the creations and 99 parts of it He has reserved for the day of judgment – a day when we will only get either His mercy and rahmah or His justice. Allah SWT loves all of us. We have to have trust in His mercy. We have to be content with His commands as they the Sahabah were. Allah SWT says:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

As for the first pioneers who accepted Islam from the Muhajir (immigrants) and Ansar (supporters in Madinah) and those who follow them in good deeds, Allah is well pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall live for ever: that is the mighty achievement. (Quran 9:100)

A common mistake

Many people who start to tread the path of Islam start looking down upon the others who are in sin. This is one of the biggest mistakes. Even though they are in sin, they are still our brothers and sisters. Rather than hating them, we should feel the pain for them and try our best. Enhance our own efforts. We should dislike the sin and still be loving the those who are in sin and the manifestation of that love would be our utmost effort to be able to guide them in beautiful manners taught to us by our beloved Messenger ﷺ. If we love the creation of Allah and guide them through the way of the Prophet ﷺ, Allah SWT would love us.

We should love people for the sake of Allah. There is absolutely no point in cutting our relations with others based on where they place their hands during Salah or if they adhere to this Shaykh or the other. We have to pray for them and serve them. A part of serving them is also calling them towards Allah SWT in the most beautiful of manners.

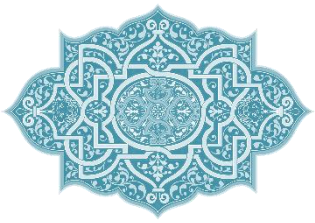
Final Advice:

There are many people who have destroyed their lives and marriages by running after the love that is not true. If we wish to save our hearts, we have to truly love Allah SWT and protect our selves with unreal and artificial love which is only a delusion. We have to love for Allah's sake. Our actions should become a testimony of this love for Allah and love for those who we love for Allah's sake. We have to follow the beautiful ways and methods of our beloved Prophet ﷺ for this is what would help us acquire Allah's love and mercy in this world and the hereafter.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 15:

Ponder upon how we can purify our love for Allah SWT and how can we live our lives accordingly to the Sunnah way in order to truly express this love.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 16



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Noman Ali Khan

THE DISEASE OF HYPOCRISY OR NIFAQ[11]

How do we deal with dangerous diseases

Whenever, there is a fear of a dangerous disease, governments and the responsible bodies spread as much information about that as possible. People are always concerned about it and thoroughly keep an eye on any symptoms in us or our loved ones. Even if we don't see the full symptom but signs of it, we become concerned and check with the experts in the field. We also keep reminding our loved ones that such and such disease is out and we have to be very careful about it.

Hypocrisy is one of such serious diseases of hearts that we have to be highly concerned about, understand its signs and symptoms, try to protect ourselves and keep checking if we have any symptoms or signs of this disease or not; if we do, we need to treat it as soon as possible otherwise it would ruin our Dunya as well as the aakhirah.

Consequences of hypocrisy

We will first discuss two main consequences of this disease at this moment and will come back to the third one at the end of today's lesson:

1. Allah SWT says in the Quran:

   إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرْكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا

   Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of hellfire, and you will not find any helper for them. (Quran 4:145)

   It is those types of munafiqeen whose disease has spread so much that it is beyond cure. In the early stages, this disease can be cured; but if one wishes for it to grow, Allah SWT lets it grow till the point that their destiny becomes the deepest pit of the Hell-fire. At that moment no one can be of any help to them. It is the same as any other worldly diseases. If it is treated in early stages, one can completely recover from it. However, if I the final stages, even the best of the doctors and most advanced of the equipment cannot help.

[11] The Arabic word 'Nifaq' means hypocrisy and the one who has this trait is called 'Munafiq'. The plurals of 'Munafiq' are 'munafiqeen' or 'munafiqoon'.

2. For the munafiqeen, the prayers of maghfirah or forgiveness are not accepted even if they are made by the Prophet ﷺ who is the most beloved to Allah SWT. He is the same prophet ﷺ whose raised his eyes towards the sky thinking in his mind for the change of Qiblah and Allah SWT accepted his prayer. He is the same Prophet ﷺ who Allah SWT gave the highest status that any creation could have by calling him in such closeness to Him that not even Jibril enjoyed. However, when it came to making the dua for the forgiveness of hypocrites, Allah SWT said:

   اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

   Whether you ask for their forgiveness or not (their sin is unforgivable): if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness Allah will not forgive them: because they have rejected Allah and His apostle; and Allah does not guide those who are perversely rebellious. (Quran 9:80)
   So, what a pitiful situation the munafiqeen are in that even the dua of the Prophet ﷺ is not accepted in the favor. What can be a bigger punishment than this?

Symptoms of the disease of nifaq

We all have to be afraid of these signs and symptoms

Before we go into the discussion on the symptoms, it is very important to note that we should look for these symptoms in our own selves rather labeling other people as munafiqs. Only those persons should not try to check the condition of their heart for these symptoms who can give a 100% guarantee that they cannot be exposed to this disease. If someone says so, this itself is a symptom of this disease as one of our great predecessors, Hasan Al-Basri told us:

من لم يخف النفاق فهو منافق

Whoever does not fear the nifaq is the munafiq.[12]

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[12] أخرجه الفريابي في صفة المنافق (87).

Similar wordings have been narrated from Hassan Al-Basri through other chains too. Another narration from him states:

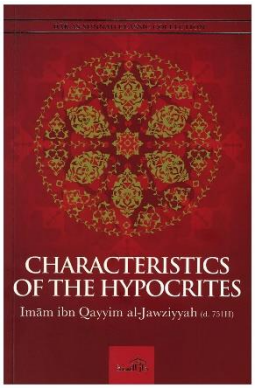
ما خافه . أي: النفاق . إلا مؤمن ولا أمنه إلا منافق

No one is afraid of it – i.e. Nifaq – except a believer and no one feels safe from it except a munafiq.

Imam Al-Bukhari has also mentioned a similar narration from Hassan Al-Basri at the beginning of Kitab ul Imaan:

عَنِ الْحَسَنِ مَا خَافَهُ إِلاَّ مُؤْمِنٌ، وَلاَ أَمِنَهُ إِلاَّ مُنَافِقٌ

Accordingly, we should do our self-accountability regarding these symptoms of hypocrisy, otherwise, we will fall into a major problem. Also, note that the above saying is talking about one's own self and not about how concerned we are about trying to find nifaq in others.



Symptoms mentioned in Quran and Sunnah

Signs and symptoms of munafiqoon mention in Quran and ahadith are many. A number of scholars have attempted to compile them and taught them. Scholars have explained up to 70 signs of the hypocrites. This number varies from scholar to scholar depending on how they categorize and group the signs together. For those interesting in reading about these signs in detail, they can refer to a very beneficial book by Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim which has been translated in English with the title "Characteristics of the Hypocrites". However, considering the limited time we have to cover this topic, we will restrict our discussion to six key signs of hypocrites – 4 of these come from a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ and 2 come from the Quran.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless and until he gives it up.

1. Whenever he is entrusted, he betrays.
2. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.
3. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous.
4. Whenever he is in an argument, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil and insulting manner."

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " أَرْبَعٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ كَانَ مُنَافِقًا خَالِصًا، وَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنَ النِّفَاقِ حَتَّى يَدَعَهَا إِذَا اؤْتُمِنَ خَانَ وَإِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ وَإِذَا عَاهَدَ غَدَرَ، وَإِذَا خَاصَمَ فَجَرَ ".

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari 34

Whenever he is trusted, the hypocrite violates

This is the first sign mentioned in the above hadith. Whenever a hypocrite is trusted, it breaks the trust. This trust can come in many forms. This trust can be what our employer entrusts us with when giving a job. If we don't fulfill our obligation there, it will be considered as a violation of trust. When we marry someone, it is a relationship based on trust. If we are not kind to our spouse, it is a violation of trust. A teacher is entrusted to exert and effort for the growth of the student. Community members are entrusted with responsibilities that they have to fulfill. And most importantly, all the possessions that we have – including our wealth, our possessions, our ears, our

eyes, our tongue, our arms, our legs, our hearts and so on – are all Amanah (trust) of Allah SWT with us.

If we are suffering from this condition, we should be mindful of this trust whether we are in a company or we are alone. The one whose Amanah we are using is watching us all the time. There is nothing that would be hidden from him. All of our acts are recorded. We should remember,

- There are angels on our shoulders are recording all our deeds. This record will be presented to us in full.
- The air in which we are doing the actions is recording it too. These actions can be decoded and presented too. Even the science has proven this now (we will discuss more on this in a lecture in week 6 of this course – stay tuned).
- Our body parts which we use in disobeying the commands of Allah SWT will give testimony against us. What a shameful day that would be if we don't repent. Whenever we think of sinning with our hands, our tongue or our eyes, we should be mindful that these very things will speak against us.
- We should think that even at the time when we are disobeying the commands of Allah SWT, we do so while enjoying His blessings which He allows us to use even at the time.
- On top of that, He Himself is seeing all this. We break His command while he sees us and knows what is in our hearts.

This thinking and contemplation are extremely important if we wish to overcome this disease.

Whenever he speaks, the hypocrite lies

The hypocrites are those who lie so much that it becomes there second nature. They don't even feel about it. They may appear to be religious, but when it comes to business or selling or when a gain is involved, their inner self takes control and they resort to lying.

People generally lie for the following reasons:

- To avoid an obligation
- To impress someone
- To gain a benefit
- To avoid a consequence
- To come out of a situation
- To hurt someone if our heart is crooked

The cure can this be found through Muhasabah (self-accountability) and Muraqabah (deep contemplation to rid our heart of the evil characteristics). We should think that none of these short-term gains are worthy-enough to risk our aakhirah for them. All of these are temporary; whereas, what is to come is forever.

When he makes a promise, the hypocrite goes against it

It can be in two forms.

- One, a hypocrite makes a statement but does not fulfill it in that manner. He makes a promise to be there at 3 PM and reaches there at 4.30. He promises that he made a sincere and best possible effort for something, but ends up with a half-hearted task.
- Two, the hypocrite completely ignores his promise. He acts and behaves as if he never made that promise or commitment.

As a believer, we can work on developing a habit of not promising something that we intend to do. It only nurtures hate and discontentment in hearts. On the hand, we should develop a habit of fulfilling our promises. This is something for which a number of cures exist. There is a whole science behind the art of making and breaking habits. We can certainly benefit from this knowledge.

Whenever in an argument or discussion, the hypocrite becomes angry

This is one of the key traits of munfiqeen. Whenever, they are in a situation where an argument is raised, the explode and are excessively angry. Their purpose is to make people avoid expressing a difference of agreement with them. Hypocrites at the time of the Prophet especially used to display this characteristic when they were called towards goodness and used to explode out of anger alleging the companions for judging them or not respecting them enough or belittling them. This continues to happen today. May Allah not make us from those who display such attitude towards good advice.

Insha'Allah, one of our upcoming lectures will focus on anger and the means to control it. With regards to good advice, we should never get offended by it. Rather we should develop a mindset that there are weaknesses in us which "we want" to be highlighted to us so that we can fix them. Whenever this happens, we should be thankful to the person who helps us achieve our objective. Similarly, we should develop the attitude that all good suggestions and advice are our lost property, we should acquire from wherever we find them. If this attitude develops, we will not be angry at people who give us good advice and feedback.

Hypocrites are slack in their prayers:

Allah SWT says:

وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَىٰ

When they stand up for prayer, they do it half-heartedly (Quran 4:142)

The hypocrites do not find the pleasure and sweetness in salah. They are in the masjid as if a fish is thrown out of the water. If they are in a company of people who are keen for prayers and they have to pray with them too because of being with them, they find it to be a nuisance. This is not the attitude of the believers. For the hypocrites, other things and entertainment take priority over salah.

Whereas for the believers, everything is structured around salah. Salah is a pillar of the religion. Whatever goes inside the house goes around the pillars. Pillars can't be moved to accommodate things; rather we move or remove things depending on the situation.

We can overcome this factor by trying to develop khushoo in salah. Insha'Allah we will cover this in detail in week 5.

The hypocrites do not spend but with a heavy heart

Allah SWT says about the Munafiqoon that they:

وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَىٰ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ

They never come to prayer except half-heartedly, and they never donate except resentfully (Quran 9:54)

Whenever the time for giving comes, they hold back. They even make fun of those who give in the way of Allah. They made the fun of Abu Bakr and Umar when they brought all their possessions for Allah's sake. At the same time, they also made fun of the poor companion who worked hard only to earn a handful of dates which he brought to Allah's messenger as a donation in the way of Allah. It was a disease in their hearts which caused them to do this. If we find ourselves in a such a situation too, if our hands are getting tied to our backs when the time for giving comes, if we also become starting counting the alternatives where we could spend this money, we are also fulfilling the Sunnah of the hypocrites. May Allah SWT prevent us from having their traits.

It is the job of Satan that he makes us fear the poverty. It is because of this that we become hesitant to spend in the way of Allah. On the other hand, when it comes to decorating your worldly house and spending on the things that have nothing to do with the hereafter, we don't have much worry about the burden on our pockets. It is the work of Satan.

We have to be confident that what our beloved Prophet ﷺ has told is absolutely correct. The charity will never decrease wealth. Anybody can sincerely spend in the way of Allah and see this for himself.

Nifaq has levels:

While reading the signs and symptoms above, many of us would think that we have fallen into hypocrisy. The companions sometimes used to think like that too. But the Prophet ﷺ clarified it for them and us.

Hanzala Usayyidi, who was amongst the scribes of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ). reported:

I met Abu Bakr. He said: How are you? He (Hanzala) said: Hanzala has turned to be a hypocrite. He (Abu Bakr) said: Glory be to Allah, what are you saying? Thereupon he said: I say that when we are in the company of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) we ponder over Hell-Fire and Paradise as if we are seeing them with our very eyes and when we are away from Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) we attend to our wives,

our children, our business; most of these things (pertaining to After-life) slip out of our minds. Abu Bakr said: By Allah, I also experience the same. So I and Abu Bakr went to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said to him: Allah's Messenger, Hanzala has turned to be a hypocrite. [They both become worried and went to the Prophet ﷺ.] Thereupon Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: What has happened to you? I said: Allah's Messenger, when we are in your company, we are reminded of Hell-Fire and Paradise as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but whenever we go away from you and attend to our wives, children, and business, much of these things go out of our minds. Thereupon Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: By Him in Whose Hand is my life, if your state of mind remains the same as it is in my presence and you are always busy in remembrance (of Allah), the Angels will shake hands with you in your beds and in your paths [i.e. you would start to interact with them all the time] but, Hanzala, time should be devoted (to the worldly affairs) and time (should be devoted to prayer and meditation). He (the Holy Prophet) said this thrice.

عَنْ حَنْظَلَةَ الأُسَيِّدِيِّ، قَالَ – وَكَانَ مِنْ كُتَّابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ – لَقِيَنِي أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَقَالَ كَيْفَ أَنْتَ يَا حَنْظَلَةُ قَالَ قُلْتُ نَافَقَ حَنْظَلَةُ قَالَ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ مَا تَقُولُ قَالَ قُلْتُ نَكُونُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يُذَكِّرُنَا بِالنَّارِ وَالْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّا رَأْىَ عَيْنٍ فَإِذَا خَرَجْنَا مِنْ عِنْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَافَسْنَا الأَزْوَاجَ وَالأَوْلاَدَ وَالضَّيْعَاتِ فَنَسِينَا كَثِيرًا قَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَوَاللَّهِ إِنَّا لَنَلْقَى مِثْلَ هَذَا . فَانْطَلَقْتُ أَنَا وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ حَتَّى دَخَلْنَا عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قُلْتُ نَافَقَ حَنْظَلَةُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " وَمَا ذَاكَ " . قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ نَكُونُ عِنْدَكَ تُذَكِّرُنَا بِالنَّارِ وَالْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّا رَأْىَ عَيْنٍ فَإِذَا خَرَجْنَا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ عَافَسْنَا الأَزْوَاجَ وَالأَوْلاَدَ وَالضَّيْعَاتِ نَسِينَا كَثِيرًا . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنْ لَوْ تَدُومُونَ عَلَى مَا تَكُونُونَ عِنْدِي وَفِي الذِّكْرِ لَصَافَحَتْكُمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ عَلَى فُرُشِكُمْ وَفِي طُرُقِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَا حَنْظَلَةُ سَاعَةً وَسَاعَةً " . ثَلاَثَ مَرَّاتٍ .

The final advice

The final consequence of hypocrisy and excessive love of worldly things that we wish to discuss today is shown by the following ayah:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ

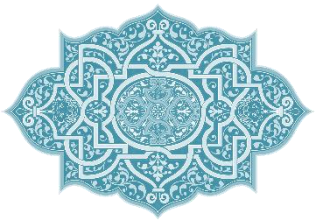
Let neither their wealth nor their children dazzle you: in reality, Allah intends to punish them with these things in this life and that their souls may depart while they are still unbelievers. (Quran 9:55)

These things for which the hypocrites and the disbelievers spent all their life itself become a punishment for them – in Dunya as well as aakhirah. When the children for whom they turn their hair grey by working day and night, they then realize that all those years have gone to waste. When their heart is void of contentment while their banks are filled with money, they then realized that the contentment of heart is not in what they were busy accumulating throughout their life. Before that time comes and before it gets too late, we have to take heed and turn the direction of our life towards Him whose mention brings peace and tranquillity to the hearts. May Allah make us from the true lovers of Him and His beloved Prophet ﷺ.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 16:

List down the signs of hypocrites from today's lecture on a piece of paper and take it with you to a quiet and peaceful spot. Check your heart. Do you have any of these signs too? Ponder about some of the cures that we have discussed today. May Allah protect us all from this harmful disease.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 17



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Mustafa Al-Majzoub R.A.[13]

THE DISEASE OF Al-GHAZAB OR ANGER

The advice of Prophet ﷺ to a companion

A companion came to the prophet and asked for simple and easy to remember advice to live by throughout life. The Prophet ﷺ gave him very profound advice: "Don't be angry". He asked it three times and every time the Prophet ﷺ replied with the same advice.

It is because of the fact that anger is the root cause of many of the problems. If we control this at the very roots, then many of the ill-effects it produces can be eliminated before they even come to existence.

Benefits of controlling anger

Protection from Satan and hell-fire

Hassan Al-Basri R.A. said:

أربع من كن فيه عصمه الله – عز وجل – من الشيطان، وحرمه على النار: من ملك نفسه عند الرغبة والرهبة والشهوة والغضب

[13] Sheikh Mustapha Al Majzoub was dual-nationality Syrian-Australian. He was born in Saudi Arabia from a family of several Sheikhs whom he benefited from their teachings & upbringing from a young age. He also travelled at a young age to learn Islam in different countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia & Syria, and had the blessing of meeting many Sheikhs and benefiting of their knowledge. He attained a BA in Islamic studies and then studied Masters in Fiqh from Medinah International University. In addition, he also acquired an Ijazah in the recitation of the Quran.

Sheikh Mustapha used to give regular lectures delivered the Juma'ah Khutbat in many different locations around Sydney. He also assisted in training potential Islamic speakers, as he was one of the teachers at the Islamic College of Australia (http://ica.aswj.com.au/) as well as at the GIYC Institute (www.giyc.com.au) and other Islamic institutions. He was the founding member & head supervisor of the "Islamic Awareness Association Inc." .

The sheikh received martyrdom when serving the war-affected population Syria after getting hit by a rocket fired by the Syrian government. The sheik was in his home-country to assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid amid ongoing violence between rebels and forces loyal to president Bashar al-Assad.

"There are four things; whoever is able to control them, Allah SWT will give him protection from Satan and the hell-fire". These four things are:

- **Al-Raghbah**, i.e. the excessive desire to attain something; that desire would prevent you from cheating and deceiving and so on),
- **Ar-Ruhbah** (control yourself at the time of fear; when in we do various things that are unpleasing to Allah),
- **Al-Shahwah** (unlawful desires for the opposite sex – we do so many wrongs when driven by this uncontrolled desire)
- **Al-Ghazab** (Anger – as it blinds our thinking and intellect)

Only a strong person will be able to control all these. These are the four doors of satan which we will need to keep shut.

A key factor to enable this: In order to be able to control ourselves from these, we will need to practice and develop utmost patience; we will come across situations and temptations that would truly test us. However, we will need to remain patient.

Allah SWT has told us this principle:

وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ

But none will attain this quality except those who patiently endure and none will attain this quality except those who are truly fortunate. (Quran 41:35)

He also tells us:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

They are those who donate in prosperity and adversity, control their anger, and pardon others. And Allah loves the good-doers. (Quran 3:134)

Two approaches toward controlling anger

There can two meanings of controlling anger as advised by the Prophet.

Do not allow yourself to get angry

The first method of apply Prophet's ﷺ advice is to not allow your self to get angry. We will shortly discuss some of the means that can help us achieve that.

When angry, control yourself

The second understanding of the advice of the Prophet ﷺ is that one should not fulfill one's anger and should not continue to stay angry. It is to be kept in mind that anger is something that all human beings experience. We are not perfect. Even the Prophet ﷺ also got angry sometimes; what is

important is how we react in this situation. Let's look at an example from the life of the Prophet ﷺ. Once prophet ﷺ distributed some wealth in the sake of Allah SWT and he gave it more to a few people than the others in order to mend their hearts. In this situation, some people made a very inappropriate statement and said that the Prophet ﷺ was unjust in his distribution. This is a statement of Kufr – May Allah protect us all. When the Prophet ﷺ came to know about this, he got angry. However, rather than fulfilling his anger, he said that Moses was hurt [by his people] more than this, but he remained patient.

He ﷺ, the best of the examples for the mankind, also told us that powerful person is not the one who wrestles down his opponents in the fight; rather the powerful person is the one who is able to control himself when enraged or angry.

Dealing with anger

It is to be understood that everyone can control anger if they do the mujahadah or the striving. Those who claim that they are unable to control anger are false in their claim. When the Prophet ﷺ advised to control the anger, it leaves no doubt that it is something that can be controlled; what is missing with many people, however, is the true desire to control it and then adopting the means that can help. Scholars have advised a number of ways to control anger, here are a few of them.

Give the benefit of the doubt

Deal with that by giving benefit of the doubt to the ones you feel angry at. Understand their human nature that they can get jealous or angry or upset or sad and that can motivate certain behaviors. Ask yourself this question, 'why would a sane person do that?'. Tell yourself that you could be wrong in judging them too; there may be things that you are not aware off and when you would come to know about them, your perception of that person would change.

Question yourself: Is the matter worthy enough that you should get angry about it?

When you come to a situation that makes you angry, question yourself if the matter is big enough that you should get angry about it. Many times, we get angry about really petty matters. It is against the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ who never asked 'why' to Zaid R.A. who he took care of from his childhood. That was the patience of the Prophet ﷺ.

Cool it down with water

الغضب جَمرة يلقيها الشيطانُ في قلب ابن آدم

Anger is burning coal from Satan which he throws at the heart of Satan (Jami Tirmidhi, 2191)

In another narration, it is explained, that the anger is from Satan who is made from fire. The solution to that is making the wudhu as it is mentioned in a narration:

فَإِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَتَوَضَّأْ

Whenever one of you gets angry, he should make wudhu (Sunan Abu Dawud, 4784).

We all observe this in our day to day life that when we are angry, we feel as if our blood is boiling and the temperature is rising. The reason is that it is from the fire. What does turn out the fire? Water. Accordingly, we are advised to make wudhu.

This fact is also proven scientifically, though we are in no need for any support from science to prove the correctness of the words of our beloved ﷺ. Science says that in order to control the anger, we have to disrupt the routine. When you leave the scene to make wudhu and then lower your temperature through water, you are disrupting your routine and giving yourself an opportunity to think.

It is also very important to note that when we make wudhu, we should try to make it while understanding the inner dimensions of it and while our heart is there. Do the wudhu not only with your body but also from your heart. You will find a change. It will definitely work.

Think of the consequence of anger to avoid fulfilling the commands of rage inside you

Anger is a pattern. Break that pattern before it is too late - before divorce already happens, before you utter the words that would become a source of regret forever, before breaking the hearts, before killing someone, before injuring someone, before the government agencies come and take away our children from us. We have to think about all these consequences and control our anger. Do not delay this! Interrupt this routine as soon as you get angry. When you ride the horse, that is the time to control it; later on, the horse may become uncontrollable.

Know that Allah SWT is watching you while you are showing anger to His creation

How do we feel if someone comes and yells at our loved ones – our mother, our father, wife, husband, son, daughter and so on. How about if someone hits them? How do we feel?

Allah SWT loves His creation more than these worldly relations of love. How would He feel when we yell and hit His creation unjustly. Isn't it inviting Allah's anger upon us? Isn't it something about which our beloved Master Muhammad ﷺ told us: مَن لا يَرْحمْ لاَ يُرْحَمْ (the one does show mercy will not receive mercy).

He is seeing you. Think that your creator, Who all powerful is above you and He is watching you get angry with His creation. The prophet saw a companion who was hitting his son. He said that Allah is more powerful than you are to your son. One cannot get away with hitting others.

Seek protection from Satan

As the anger is from Satan, one has to seek Allah's protection from him. Rasool Allah ﷺ told us to say: أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم as it will remove the anger.

When you say these words, your heart should be at peace with these words. You should understand what you are asking from Allah SWT and that He has power over everything. Also, realize that you

are suffering from something that Satan has thrown on to your heart and only Allah SWT can help you with that. This remembrance of Allah SWT will give you contentment that you will not be able to find it anywhere else. Other pleasures are short-term. When someone has Allah in his heart, it is an all-time pleasure – the pleasure that continues in this world as well as in the grave and the hereafter. Your heart should be at rest with these words.

Stick to the ground

When angry, we should try to be as close to the ground as possible. Do not let your body parts move freely. Satan wants you to rise in this situation like ocean waves but you should stick to the ground. If standing, sit; if sitting lay down. Scientifically, you are disrupting your routine.

Smile

Smile more often. Anger and smile don't get together. Try it. It has to be a natural smile and not the smile of the fox. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is our leader and has set the highest example in this matter, as is recorded in a number of ahadeeth. One of the most famous was reported by Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: "I was walking with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and he was wearing a Najraani cloak with a rough collar. A Bedouin came and seized him roughly by the edge of his cloak, and I saw the marks left on his neck by the collar. Then the Bedouin ordered him to give him some of the wealth of Allah that he had. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) turned to him and smiled, then ordered that he should be given something." (Agreed upon. Fath al-Baari, 10/375)

Connect to how our Prophet and the pious predecessors responded to anger:

Remember the Sunnah of the Prophet and other elders. Remember that example of the Prophet ﷺ when he restrained his anger by remembering how prophet Moses remained patient when the people of his ummah said words that hurt him.

Remember the reward of Allah for not reacting

All of us are given situations through which we get opportunities to gain rewards and exceed in our good deeds. Trials come in our lives and if we stay patient, it is a way to achieve honor and glory. It is an opportunity to gain the pleasure of Allah. Thank Allah SWT for that and say the words to glorify Him. Remember the rewards. You would then come out as a winner.

The reward for giving up arguing

Remember these words of our beloved ﷺ Master:

عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِي رَبَضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقًّا وَبِبَيْتٍ فِي وَسَطِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْكَذِبَ وَإِنْ كَانَ مَازِحًا وَبِبَيْتٍ فِي أَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ حَسَّنَ خُلُقَهُ

سنن أبي داود كتاب الأدب باب في حسن الخلق 4800

Abu Umamah reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, “I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for one who leaves arguments even if he is right, and a house in the middle of Paradise for one who abandons lies even when joking, and a house in the highest part of Paradise for one who makes his character excellent.”

We understand from this hadith that even if someone is right, it is not appropriate for a person to engage in argumentation as it is one of the sources of anger. We do not have a choice to say whatever we feel like. We have to govern our hearts and our tongues by the commands of Allah SWT and His Messenger ﷺ. Don’t allow your anger to blind you or control you. A person may be on truth but when angry, he may say other than that.

That is why we learn this dua from the beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

اللَّهُمَّ وَأَسْأَلُكَ خَشْيَتَكَ فِي الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ كَلِمَةَ الْحَقِّ فِي الرِّضَا وَالْغَضَبِ

O Allah, cause me to fear You in secret and in public. I ask You to make me true in a speech in times of pleasure and of anger (Sunan an-Nasa'i 1305)

Another hadith describes the great reward of restraining anger: "Whoever controls his anger at the time when he has the means to act upon it, Allah will fill his heart with contentment on the Day of Resurrection." (Reported by al-Tabaraani, 12/453, see also Saheeh al-Jaami’, 6518).

Another great reward is described in the Prophet’s words: "Whoever controls his anger at the time when he has the means to act upon it, Allah will call him before all of mankind on the Day of Resurrection, and will let him choose of the Hur al-’Iyn whoever he wants." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 4777, and others. It is classified as Hasan (sound) in Saheeh al-Jaami, 6518).

Remain silent and give yourself a pause

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If any of you becomes angry, let him keep silent." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, al-Musnad, 1/329; see also Saheeh al-Jaami’, 693, 4027).

This is because in most cases, the angry person loses self-control and could utter words of kufr/disbelief (from which we seek refuge with Allah), or curses, or the word of divorce (talaaq) which would destroy his home, or words of slander which would bring him the enmity and hatred of others. So, in short, keeping silent is the solution which helps one to avoid all that. And a person could say some words which one is not attentive to, it may cause him to go to hell for 70 years. You should control your anger. Don’t allow it to control you.

When you are angry, you would not be able to understand a thing. But when you calm down, then you would be able to understand. So give yourself a pause. Pausing is extremely important at this time. If we keep going on, you would not be able to think all those things that we have discussed above.

Make a habit of doing good to those who harm you or those who you feel angered at

Allah SWT says:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Good deeds are not equal to the evil ones. Repel that with what is good. You will see that he with whom you had enmity, will become your close friend. (Quran 41:34)

It is a higher level which not everyone can achieve. As Allah SWT says in the next ayah that only those who have utmost patience and those who are truly blessed would be able to demonstrate this. But as it is a command from Allah SWT for all of us, we should strive with our very best. If we think that someone has done something wrong and we have to become angry on that, we should tell our selves that we have to deal with this situation in the best of manners and the ultimate objective is to strengthen the ties and not to break them.

Dealing with an angry person:

When a person next to us is boiling and angry, we should not argue or make him angrier. Learn to be quiet. Do not look like a person who wants to take control. What you should control is not the situation or the other person but yourself. Winner at that time is the one who controls him or her self. Use hikmah (wisdom) and do not argue. Talking and arguing back would further worsen the situation and result in grave consequences such as injury, divorce and so on.

Remember this principle: Fire cannot be fought with fire. Fire can be fought with water. Fire with fire. If one person is high in emotions, the other should play the role of the brain. With these combining together, we can achieve great things in life.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 17:

Ponder about what makes you angry? How do you behave when angry? How can you put to practice the prophetic way of controlling anger that we have discussed today?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 18

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Noman Ali Khan

THE DISEASE OF ENVY

Today, we will Insha'Allah understand the disease of Envy in the light of the following two ayahs from Surah An-Nisa:

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا

If you avoid the major sins which you have been enjoined to shun, We shall efface your [minor] bad deeds, and shall cause you to enter an abode of glory.

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۚ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا ۖ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ۚ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Do not envy that Allah has given some of you more than the others. Men will be rewarded according to their deeds [i.e. what they earn] and women will be rewarded according to theirs [i.e. what they earn]. Ask Allah for His grace. Surely Allah has perfect knowledge of everything (Quran 4:31-32).

A compass for prioritization in our life

In the first ayah, Allah SWT has given us a sense of priority of the kinds of sins that we should stay away from. Often there is a lack of understanding of proportion in the life of a Muslim in terms of which actions are more important to do than the others and which actions are more important to avoid then the others. There are some priorities that are more important than others. Your obligatory duties, such as prayer, are more important than most other things. On the other hand, there are other aspects of our Islam that beautify our faith but they don't come nearly to the status of the prayer. So, there are some musts do's; if we will leave them, we put a big question mark on our faith. On the other hand, there are some other good recommended things but they cannot replace skipping the must-dos.

Similarly, when it comes to sins or shortcoming there are things that we should avoid. Of course, you should try to enter your home with your right foot and when you go to the restroom enter with your left foot and say certain azkar. These are things you should try to do and ignoring them is somewhat problematic. But then there are things that are major sins that we should definitely avoid. Their neglect cannot be compensated on account of other nice-to-do actions.

Often what happens when people have a confused or a distorted sense of proportion is that they take care of the small things and forget the big ones. They're very careful about the smaller details; I'm following this particular Sunnah, I'm making sure that I did this dhikr, I made sure that it's Friday today so I recited my Surah Kahf, and so on. So they take care of these things – which is good. But what is not good is that at the same time they ignore the gigantic major sins that are right there in their face and they're doing them without even thinking about them - that may have to do with maybe earning income in an impermissible way; that may have to do with a major sin like Zina; that may have to do with a major sin like Riba (usury) and so on. While there are many who indulged in these major sins, they make them feel better by doing other non-mandatory good deeds like feeding some people once in a while, distributing glasses of milk in certain seasons and so on. The Quran gives us a very clearer sense of proportion to deal with such situations and cases. What Allah says in the ayah above is that if you were to avoid and make great effort to avoid the major things that you have been forbidden from, we will bury away the remaining sins of yours – i.e. take care of the serious matters first – the money matters including how we make money and how we spend money; taking care of the rights of the people around us from within the family as well as the extended community including the orphans or the poor; being honest at work and so on. Those are pretty big heavy items.

If we take care of these major sins, Insha'Allah our minor sins would be forgiven. You can possibly fall short in some other things – may be your salah didn't have perfect khushoo; maybe your wudhu wasn't amazing or you missed a drop or two here and there; maybe when you were praying your mind was elsewhere for a short time and so on. Those things will be compensated for because you're taking care of the major obligations and staying away from major major sins. That's a sense of proportion that we have to keep in consideration.

What's remarkable to me about this ayah isn't just that Allah SWT will overlook those minor sins, but He will also enter to you *Mudhkhalan Kareema* (a graceful entry) where we would not be embarrassed for our sins, In other words, those small errors and shortcomings are not going to be highlighted; you are going to be dignified and honored. Those embarrassing mishaps from our lives are going to be almost erased from our records so that we are not humiliated when we come before Allah SWT.

When we look at the list of Al-Kabair (major sins) compiled from the Quran and Sunnah by great scholars such as Imam Dhahabi, we see a common theme – one has to avoid being unjust to fellow humans. One of the important aspects of fulfilling the right of our brothers and sisters in humanity is that we should not have any envy about what Allah has blessed them with.

What is Envy (Al-Hasad)

Hasad is the desire to see other people's blessings and bounties (be they tangible or non-tangible) removed from them due to feelings of spite of the envier. Hasad is a self-destructive cycle that devours moments of happiness and accomplishments for oneself and others often resulting in

feeling alone, and being left out due to other people sensing their hasad and lack of brotherly love for others surrounding them. Simply put, envy is one of the major spoilers of brotherhood.

According to Hassan Al-Basri R.A., the worst victim of envy is the person who does that. It is considered to be a scratch on the heart. Once there, one feels like scratching it and it further deepens the wound. Accordingly, it is very important to treat it well and treat it in time.

Imam Al-Ghazali, may Allah have mercy on him, said in his book (Al-Ihya'), "Be aware that envy is one of the most dangerous diseases of the hearts, and there is no medicine for the diseases of the heart except with knowledge and deeds."

Desiring for what others have – a root cause for many sins

Another remarkable aspect about the first ayah is what comes before and after it. The ayah right before this spoke about some major sins such as cheating in business and murder and other serious offenses. And the ayah next to the first one is what is our key discussion point for today. It is actually about one of the major root causes of some very serious sins in life. Allah SWT commands us to not wish for the kinds of favor and the kinds of preference Allah has given some people over other people.

So what happens to you and I as we see somebody that has more money than we do, or they have a better appearance than we do, or they have a nicer car than we do, or they have a better married life than we do, we become envious. Jealousy can take many forms. You could just envy somebody for what they have and become obsessed with why you don't have it and it consumes you completely, and this is not just restricted to bigger things.

Allah SWT has made you unique

We should keep in mind that no two individuals in this world are exactly the same. Allah has given different abilities to different people. People exceed each other in certain things. There are people better-looking than you and I; there are people smarter than us; there are people that are more knowledgeable; there are people that make more money; there are people in your family that get more appreciation than you do. It's just a fact.

What is important for us to understand is that in some of these things, Allah SWT has opened the door of rizk and sustenance for them. That doors he didn't open for you; on the other hand, He opened other doors for you that He didn't open for them. He has given you some unique abilities and talents. You need to explore what they are and make the best use of them. But what happens for you and I is that we want the same things that somebody else has. Allah did not make you the same as anyone else and Allah did not open the doors of provision of rizk for you that he opened for other people - each of us has a unique set of opportunity and we're going to have to work hard to earn Allah's favor from within whatever we've been given and while not negatively comparing ourselves to anybody else.

Consequences of Envy:

Before I get to the rest of this ayah and the positive reinforcement inside of it, I want to share with you why Envy is a root cause for various major sins.

Crimes and rebellions it causes

- **The lesson from the Story of Adam A.S. and Iblis:** The first rebellion against the divine law that we know is a rebellion committed because of jealousy. The satan disobeyed Allah SWT on account of importance that He gave to Him and asked the angels to prostrate to him. Satan disobeyed considering Adam A.S. inferior to him on account of him being made from clay.

- **The first crime on earth:** The first crime that ever took place on the earth when humanity came here was the killing of Habil by his brother Qabil. That's also a matter of jealousy.

- **Yusuf's A.S. treatment by his brothers:** This jealousy can be so heinous and so ugly that even when you are the son of a prophet named Yaqub A.S. and your brother himself is a remarkable child who very clearly displays the prophetic qualities, it can lead you to the point where you're even willing to kill your brother and throw him in well.

- **Deviation of Yahood:** The Jews of Madinah who were waiting for the arrival of the final Prophet ﷺ refused to accept him on account of jealousy and arrogance even though they knew him very very well that was the final prophet. Their jealousy was rooted in the fact that Allah SWT honored Bani Ismael (the prodigy of Ismail A.S.) rather than Bani Israel. What a great loss they made on account of the disease in their hearts!

- **A cause of sectarianism:** Al-Hasad means a negative desire that you want something that others have to be taken away from them – health, status, beauty, happiness and so on. But it is not restricted to that alone. It can go into the religious sphere too where one organization is jealous about the followers of others and one masjid is worried about why the other masjid or Islamic center did a better fund-raiser than them. When they do not realize that there is the goal is one, it can lead to sectarianism.

- **If you let it there, it only worsens:** What I'm trying to get at is that jealousy and envy are not to be underestimated. They may seem like something going on inside of you or inside of me and we might think that it's just a feeling or an itch that I've, its consequences can be very grave. Our pious predecessors described it as an insatiable itch inside of the heart - like when some bug bites your skin and you want to just keep scraping it – this is what envy to the heart is. The more you scrape it, the worse it gets. You're just supposed to ignore it and let it pass. The feeling may come but you have to let it pass. The Islamic volunteer work is

not a business that we feel bad if the 'competitor' is performing better than our business. We can all work in harmony for the greater cause.

- **It will ruin your life through negativity**: A person who doesn't cure his or her envy would ruin his life with negativity. His mind would always be stuck on what he doesn't have rather than what he has. He would always be looking for something that would burn his heart. There is no sphere of your life where this can't affect you; it will ruin your work life, your business life your family life, your personal life, your spiritual life, as well as your communal life.

One of the most serious forms of jealousy: Jealousy regarding what Allah SWT has ordained

Another serious outcome of envy manifests in the form of jealousy of one creation of Allah SWT with another. Women often ask this question that why does Allah SWT have mentioned certain favors in Jannah for men. What about women? Why is the share for women in inheritance is not the same as men? These are very serious questions. It shows the deep-rooted problem. I am not saying that such questions should be ridiculed, but there's one thing that we have to be careful about - we're talking about Allah who when he gives regulation, I only try to understand the policy and teach it while keeping in mind that the One who gave the policy is the most merciful; he is the most loving and fair. If that question already smells of 'I think there's something unfair here', that's a very serious problem.

Allah SWT often asks the believers to ponder upon these things. They would come up with the reasons, as the scholars did and as they explained it to masses. The solution is in acquiring authentic knowledge. We are no-one to question Allah and His commands. All He said is most perfect. We should accordingly clean our hearts and never let our hearts move away from His unconditional obedience and love.

There is absolutely no doubt that whoever enters Jannah, men or women, would find it to so beautiful that they could never have imagined that, as we are told by Allah SWT. Allah says I have ways of blessing men and I have ways of blessing women; quit wishing for what the other has!

Cures

Count what you have, not what you don't have

Gratitude is one of the best cures for envy. Be thankful for what Allah SWT has blessed you; turn your focus towards that rather than what others have and you don't. If you can champion gratitude, it will bring positivity in all spheres of your life and you will be able to spot positive things and blessings everywhere.

The gratitude would also show you that not everyone has everything. They may have something that made you jealous off, but at the same time they would not be having something that you have, and this is how Allah SWT has created us all.

Someone's loss isn't our gain:

We have to keep in mind that someone's losing something will not add anything to our gains.

Muhasabah (self-accountability) and Muraqabah (Deep reflecting to cleanse the heart)

In order to protect ourselves from this disease, we need to constantly identify in ourselves if we carry this disease. For this do the muraqabah (internal cleansing and seclusion). By deeply contemplating the concepts of sustenance and loving for your brother or sister what you love for yourself, one is able to realize that the material gains are a blessing and bounty from Allah Alone and thus with this knowledge one is able to find the conviction that will replace the ills of the heart with peace and satisfaction.

Seek preferences only with Allah SWT

Rather than striving to have *fadhl* (or preference) over one another; seek the *fadhl* of Allah and come out of this false competition; Keep your hopes with Allah and don't worry about anybody else. If you can internalize that, you'll live a much happier life

Turn your jealousy into motivation to do well

Do something yourself rather than envy taking over you: Imagine you're sitting in a class and you're the only one who's not understanding. The teacher is talking about something and you are so lost that you don't even know which planet you are from. And then there is a boy next to you who is raising his hand every few seconds to either answer a question from a teacher or asking him about something. What would you do in this situation? Get envious with that guy? Plan to show him some way that he is not that superior from you? Or develop a bad feeling about him? Would you do all this? OR would you stop the teacher and tell him that I lost you some time ago, please explain this to me again. Would you make an effort yourself to come out of the situation that you are in? Are there any things that you can learn from the success of others and apply for your success? Just blaming someone being envious to someone would not solve the problem. When you don't have something in life and others have it, take it as a motivation to do great things in life. Work on things that are truly valuable, such as knowledge or good character or good deeds and exceed in that arena. You owe this to yourself.

Make dua for the person you felt envious about

Make a dua for the further prosperity of the person whose possession and belonging you like or after seeing which you felt jealousy in your heart. Be genuinely kind and loving towards them.

Is it really worth it to be envious about worldly gains

Reflect on the reality and value of the things – none of us would take any provisions for our next journey except our deeds. Why should we be bothered about the colors and glitter of this short life and a temporary station? We should be concerned about our permanent home instead.

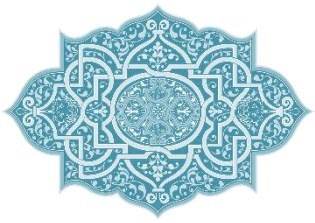
If at all you want to be envious…

If you have to be envious at all, then be envious in two situations only: Ibn Mas'ud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Envy is permitted only in two cases: A man whom Allah gives wealth, and he disposes of it rightfully, and a man to whom Allah gives knowledge which he applies and teaches it." [Riyad us Saliheen: Book 1, Hadith 544]. Try to spend more than such people and make all the effort to do so. Try to be more knowledgeable than these people. Take from their wealth of knowledge as much as possible by studying with them and lawfully making benefits from their books.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 18:

Inspect your heart. Do you find envy in there? Against whom? Read the cures for envy that we have explained in this lecture and think about how you can apply this treatment to your heart. Start from today!

KEY POINTS – LESSON 19



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Karim Abu Zaid[14]

THE DISEASE OF HATRED

Key objectives of Islam

One of the most essential outcomes of the true faith of Islam is the brotherhood among the believing community.

Allah said:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

The believers are but brothers, so make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy.

Surat al-Hujurat 49:10

And Allah said:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. Remember the favor of Allah upon you, when you were enemies and he brought your hearts together and you became brothers by his favor.

Surat Ali Imran 3:103

Most importantly, this level of brotherhood involves purifying the heart of all animosity, hatred, and malice for those who have faith, including for the righteous predecessors of Islam (al-salaf al-Salihin),

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those who believed in the previous prophets, and the general masses of believers throughout all of history.

Allah said:

يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

They say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts any resentment toward those who have faith. Our Lord, you are kind and merciful.

Surat al-Hashr 59:10

Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said:

لَا تَبَاغَضُوا وَلَا تَحَاسَدُوا وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا وَكُونُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِخْوَانًا وَلَا يَحِلُّ لِمُسْلِمٍ أَنْ يَهْجُرَ أَخَاهُ فَوْقَ ثَلَاثٍ

Do not hate each other, do not envy each other, do not turn away from each other, but rather be servants of Allah as brothers. It is not lawful for a Muslim to boycott his brother for more than three days.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari 5718, Grade: Muttafaqun Alayhi

The parable of the community of believers is that they are like one body in their love for one another. Just as each organ of a body is connected, so are the believers in their empathy and care for each other.

An-Nu'man ibn Basheer reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادِّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى

The parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari 5665, Grade: Muttafaqun Alayhi

In another narration, the Prophet said:

الْمُسْلِمُونَ كَرَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ إِنْ اشْتَكَى عَيْنُهُ اشْتَكَى كُلُّهُ وَإِنْ اشْتَكَى رَأْسُهُ اشْتَكَى كُلُّهُ

The Muslims are like a single man. If the eye is afflicted, then the whole body is afflicted. If the head is afflicted, then the whole body is afflicted.

Source: Sahih Muslim 2586, Grade: Sahih

This means the believers love for each other what they love for themselves. They avoid harming one another, they are generous with one another, and they behave in the best manner.

Al-Halimi comments on this tradition, saying:

وَكَذَلِكَ يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَكُونُوا وَكَمَا لا يُحِبُّ أَحَدٌ لإِحْدَى يَدَيْهِ إِلا مَا يُحِبُّ لِلأُخْرَى وَلا لإِحْدَى عَيْنَيْهِ أَوْ رِجْلَيْهِ أَوْ أُذُنَيْهِ إِلا مَا يُحِبُّ لِلأُخْرَى فَكَذَلِكَ يَنْبَغِي لَهُ أَنْ لا يُحِبَّ لأَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ إِلا مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

It is befitting for them to be like that. As one hand would not love except what the other loves and one eye or one leg or one ear would not love except what the other loves. Likewise, he should not love for his Muslim brother except what he loves for himself.

Source: Shu'ab al-Iman 10379

Enabler to achieve this objective – Salamatul Sadr

Salamatul Sadr is the ways and means which enable the achievement of the objective of brotherhood – heart to be clear of hate and rancor and envy or jealousy. Those who have these things in their heart are not truly the Muslims. People who have such feelings towards their brothers may have become Muslim, but the true faith is yet to enter their hearts and they are yet to become truly the momineen.

Imam Ibn Rajab writes:

فأفضل الأعمال سلامة الصدر من أنواع الشحناء كلها وأفضلها السلامة من شحناء أهل الأهواء والبدع التي تقتضي الطعن على سلف الأمة وبغضهم والحقد عليهم واعتقاد تكفيرهم أو تبديعهم وتضليلهم ثم يلي ذلك سلامة القلب من الشحناء لعموم المسلمين وإرادة الخير لهم ونصيحتهم وأن يحب لهم ما يحب لنفسه

The best of deeds is to secure the heart from every type of enmity, and the best of it is to be secure from the enmity of the people of desires and heretical innovations that challenges the righteous predecessors of the nation, their hatred, and malice towards them, and their charges of infidelity, heresy, and misguidance against them. Thereafter, following that is to secure the heart from enmity against the Muslims in general, to intend good for them, to give them sincere counsel, and to love for them what he loves for himself.

Source: Laṭa'if al-Ma'arif 1/139

Entry to Jannah is conditional with loving each other:

Our entrance to Jannah is linked to our mutual love. We should accordingly find any hatred in our hearts and fill them with love instead.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, "You will not enter Paradise until you believe and you will not believe until you love each other. Shall I show you something that, if you did, you would love each other? Spread peace between yourselves."

Source: Sahih Muslim 54

Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Muslim

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا تَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى تَحَابُّوا أَوَلَا أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ إِذَا فَعَلْتُمُوهُ تَحَابَبْتُمْ أَفْشُوا السَّلَامَ بَيْنَكُمْ

How to achieve Salamatul Sadr

Have a makhmoom heart:

It was narrated that ‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr said:

“It was said to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): ‘Which of the people is best?’ He said: ‘Everyone who has a makhmoom heart and sincere in speech.’ They said: ‘Sincere in speech, we know what this is, but what is a makhmoom?’ He said: ‘It is (the heart) that is pious and pure, with no sin, injustice, rancor or envy in it.’”

حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامُ بْنُ عَمَّارٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَمْزَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا زَيْدُ بْنُ وَاقِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُغِيثُ بْنُ سُمَيٍّ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، قَالَ قِيلَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ـ صلى الله عليه وسلم ـ أَىُّ النَّاسِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ "كُلُّ مَخْمُومِ الْقَلْبِ صَدُوقِ اللِّسَانِ " . قَالُوا صَدُوقُ اللِّسَانِ نَعْرِفُهُ فَمَا مَخْمُومُ الْقَلْبِ قَالَ " هُوَ التَّقِيُّ النَّقِيُّ لاَ إِثْمَ فِيهِ وَلاَ بَغْىَ وَلاَ غِلَّ وَلاَ حَسَدَ "

Grade: Sahih (Darussalam); Sunan Ibn Majah 4216

Free your heart from the rancor of humankind

Anas bin Malik narrates that we were sitting with the Prophet when he said: "Just now a man of Paradise is coming to you." Immediately a man from Ansar came there. His beard looked disheveled from the water of ablutions (Wudhu), and he was carrying in his left hand his shoes. On the second day also the Prophet repeated the same words, and the same man again appeared before them, in the same condition. On the third also the Prophet repeated the same thing and the man of Ansar again appeared in the same condition. When the Prophet stood up, Abdullah bin A'mar went after that man and made up a story to convince him to let him spend three nights with him at his house. Anas says that Abdullah bin A'mar says that he spent three nights in the company of that man, but he did not find him praying in the night; but whenever he went to bed, he used to remember Allah till he used to get up for the prayer of the morning. But Abdullah bin A'mar says that he did not hear anything from his mouth except words of goodness. Abdullah says: "When three nights passed and in my eyes his conduct did not hold any importance, I told that man that he had made up a story in order to stay with him; the reason for him asking this was that he heard the Prophet of Allah ﷺ saying that a man of Paradise is coming before us, three times, and you appeared before us. Then I desired to stay with you and to see what act of yours is that - so that I may follow the same, but I did not see you doing any extraordinary work. What is the reason that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said such a nice thing about you? He replied: "The reality is what you have seen." When I was returning he called me and said: "The reality is the same that has been witnessed by you; however, I do not keep any spite against any of my Muslim brethren, and if Allah has blessed someone with any good

thing, I am not jealous of him. Abdullah bin A'mar said: "This quality of yours must have reached the Prophet of Allah ﷺ." (Musnad Ahmed 20/124).

Spread peace:

As Muslims, we should be the harbingers of peace. We should spread Salamah (peace). It does not just mean saying Assalam o Alaikum. It means that when we see each other's face, we should feel a sense of brotherhood and peace. We should be each other's support like bricks in the wall. Let us review some of the relevant ahadith in this regard.

Abdullah ibn Amr reported: A man asked the Prophet, "Which Islam is best?" The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said:

تُطْعِمُ الطَّعَامَ وَتَقْرَأُ السَّلاَمَ عَلَى مَنْ عَرَفْتَ وَمَنْ لَمْ تَعْرِفْ

To feed the hungry and to greet with peace those you know and those you do not know.

Ammar ibn Yasir said:

ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ جَمَعَهُنَّ فَقَدْ جَمَعَ الْإِيمَانَ الْإِنْصَافُ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَبَذْلُ السَّلَامِ لِلْعَالَمِ وَالْإِنْفَاقُ مِنْ الْإِقْتَارِ

Whoever has three qualities will have completed the faith: fairness from yourself to others, offering peace to the world, and spending in charity even while poor.

Source: Sahih Bukhari 28, Grade: Muttafaqun Alayhi

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said:

لَا تَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى تَحَابُّوا أَوَلَا أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ إِذَا فَعَلْتُمُوهُ تَحَابَبْتُمْ أَفْشُوا السَّلَامَ بَيْنَكُمْ

You will not enter Paradise until you believe and you will not believe until you love each other. Shall I show you something that, if you did, you would love each other? Spread peace between yourselves.

Source: Sahih Muslim 54, Grade: Sahih

Causes of hatred

Careless word

We should be very careful about each and every word that comes out of our tongue. It can make or break us. There can be some words that are such disliked that they result in the person who says them to go into a pit that deep in hell that it would take him 70 years to reach there.

This tells how serious the matters of the tongue can be. Let's keep it jailed behind the two doors that Allah SWT has put it behind of. Let's use our tongue for speaking only the good; else it should remain silent.

If our words are not carefully chosen, Satan will trigger their recipient to cause resentment in their hearts. We should accordingly be proactive in managing our words.

Jealousy

If you are jealous, you would fall in hatred. Jealousy is one of the major causes of hate crimes in families, between friends and so on. We discussed this topic in detail in our yesterday's lesson.

Talking ill about the community members - backbiting

The persons who are talked bad about would definitely dislike this. This will sow a seed of hatred which would then bring about its ugly fruits. It is accordingly very important to avoid it from the first place.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said:

مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ

He who relieves the hardship of a believer in this world, Allah will relieve his hardship on the Day of Judgment. He who makes easy what is difficult, Allah will make it easy for him in the world and the Hereafter. He who conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in the world and the Hereafter, for Allah helps the servant as long as he helps his brother.

Source: Sahih Muslim 2699, Grade: Sahih

Love of positions and possessions

Often the love of position and worldly possessions become a source of hatred too. When other people achieve what we think we deserve, this feeling converts to jealousy and leads to hatred. What Islam commands us is to completely refrain from such thoughts. We should even distance ourself from something that our brother or sister is benefitting from so that they don't lose it because of us. Loot at the hadith below:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prohibited the practice of Najsh (i.e., offering a high price for something in order to allure another customer who is interested in the thing); and that a man should make an offer while the offer of his brother is pending; or that he should make a proposal of marriage while that of his brother is pending; or that a woman should try that a sister of hers might be divorced so that she might take her place. [Riyad us Saliheen - Book 18, Hadith 1778].

How to deal with the people who have resentment

The best way you can deal with such people is to let go and forgive. Even if they consider you weak for it, do not be bothered as you would be forgiving them for the sake of Allah and your reward would be with Him alone.

Let's finish off the lesson today with this inspiring story of forgiveness.

When the hypocrites spread the rumor about Ayesha R.A., it became the talk of the town. The sincere Muslims had no doubt in their mind about her innocence. Umar R.A. reassured this to the Prophet ﷺ. However, unsuspectingly influenced by the hypocrites' rampage, a few Muslim began to believe this false story. Some of these Muslims even actively help propagate it. Among them was Mistah bin Uthatha (RA), a cousin of Abu Bakr (RA). He was an extremely poor man with no money except that which Abu Bakr (RA) regularly gives him. Abu Bakr R.A. used to sponsor him for this housing, clothing, food and so on. Mistah's endorsement of the hypocrites' story added somewhat more weight to it in the eyes of some people, as he was a man with a fine reputation and he was a relation to Abu Bakr (RA). So the belief in this story was not just limited to the circle of hypocrites anymore. Hard heartbreaking months passed before Allah revealed the innocence of Ayesha (RA). The Muslims finally exhale a sigh of relief. Hurt and angered by Mistah's previous allegations, Abu Bakr (RA) took an oath that he will never spend on Mistah again. Think of Abu Bakr (RA) perspective; this is a perfectly justifiable, even expected, position as he was the one who tried to cause damage to Abu Bakr R.A.'s honor – his daughter and the wife of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Mistah was wholly dependent on Abu Bakr (RA) and yet was wilfully spreading and endorsing wild rumors about Abu Bakr (RA) beloved daughter. How could Abu Bakr react in such an ironic situation? How else could he have treated a person who slandered his daughter, the Mother of the Believers, with the worst of slander?

But look at what Allah SWT revealed:

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Allah revealed: "And let not those who are good and wealthy among you swear not to help their kinsmen, those in need and those who left their homes in Allah's Cause. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Verily! Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (Surah Noor 24.22)

Abu Bakr (RA), despite his anguish and hurt feelings, immediately responds by exclaiming, "By Allah, I would love it that Allah forgives me!" He returns to his previous habit, and promise that he will never cease spending on Mistah.

Mercy and forgiveness are two of the many lessons the Qur'an teaches us, mercy and ties of kinship that Allah is pleased to see in His servants.

Time to stop hatred

We are living in very difficult times. At one hand we have country after country where the Muslim population is being erased, and on the other, we face Islamophobia and the media stunts in the lands where many people go to seek peace. In such a situation, nothing can be worse than staying dividing or having hatred for each other, as individuals as well as communities. We have a huge job to get the non-Muslims to learn about the beautiful religion of Islam and see its true picture – unlike

the one-sided 'sensational' news they here on the media. They need to know that among the key aims of shariah, the second most important aim is the protection of life - whether Muslim or not. They need to know that the second biggest sin in Islam is taking an innocent life. This is what our religion is all about. We have to do this collectively and eradicate the hatred amongst us.

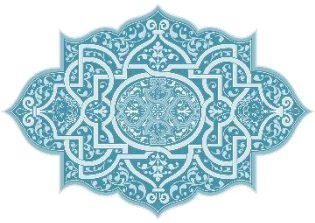
How to treat hatred

- If someone hates someone because of that person did to him or her, then for such situations, the first step is to forgive. If unable to do so, one should think about the reality of this world. Why would we be over-bothered about the disputes of this world while risking our aakhirah? There is certainly no risk in forgiving; however, holding a grudge and hatred can most probably make us fall.
- Additionally, it has been said that in order to cure hatred [bughudh], the afflicted individual must first recognize that hatred and be disgusted by it.
- The second step is for the individual to become genuinely ashamed of himself for thinking such terrible thoughts and of the type of person he has become. When a person is ill, the only way he will be able to free himself of his illness is by actually acknowledging the fact that he is ill. Only after this recognition will he go see a doctor and take the steps to cure his sickness. This inner feeling will lead to remorse which we discussed as a guiding force in our lesson on the three-step process for tazkiyyah or purification.
- The third step a person who intends to cure his hatred must take is to make sincere supplication [du'ā] for the person he hates. Again, this may not be an easy thing to do, but he must force himself to make the same type of heartfelt supplication [du'ā] for that person as he would for a loved one. A complimentary benefit of that is that one would get the same blessings for one's own self too as the Prophet ﷺ told us: bu Darda reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said: مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ مُسْلِمٍ يَدْعُو لأَخِيهِ بِظَهْرِ الْغَيْبِ إِلاَّ قَالَ الْمَلَكُ وَلَكَ بِمِثْلٍ. There is no Muslim servant who supplicates for his brother behind his back except that the angel says: For you the same. [Source: Sahih Muslim 2732, Grade: Sahih]

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 19:

Check your heart; do you see any hatred for anyone? Can you clean your heart of this hatred as it really doesn't benefit you? Can you try to adopt the quality of the companion who the Prophet ﷺ declared to be the dweller of paradise – getting rid of all hatred and spite from the heart without letting a day pass over it?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 20



Derived from a lecture by: Ustadh Abu Ibrahim Husnayn[15]

THE DISEASE OF BACKBITING

The definition of backbiting:

We can understand the definition of backbiting from this beautiful hadith:

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Do you know what is backbiting?" The Companions said: "Allah and His Messenger know better." Thereupon he said, "Backbiting is talking about your (Muslim) brother in a manner which he dislikes." It was said to him: "What if my (Muslim) brother is as I say." He said, "If he is actually as you say, then that is backbiting; but if that is not in him, that is slandering."

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أتدرون ما الغيبة؟" قالوا: الله ورسوله أعلم قال: "ذكرك أخاك بما يكره" قيل: أفرأيت إن كان في أخي ما أقول؟ قال: "إن كان فيه ما تقول، فقد اغتبته، وإن لم يكن فيه ما تقول فقد بهته

Riyad us Saliheen, Book 18, Hadith 152

What reasons do people give for their backbiting

There are four excuses that people give for their backbiting:

- "What I am saying is the truth" – this reason doesn't stand a ground in the light of hadith above (refer to hadith above)
- "I will say it on his face too" – but at the moment when you are saying it, he is not present, and it is still back-biting
- I am not back-biting BUT… - People say whatever they want to say after this 'but'. You are still backbiting; the addition of these few words do not change the reality of what you are doing.

[15] Ustaadh Abu Ibraheem Husnayn studied at KIOU as well as received guidance from shuyukh such as Shaykh Sa'd Ash-Shithree, Shaykh Iqbal As-Salafi and Shaykh Hassan Raashid. He has gained an ijazah in Ruqya. He is active in Da'wah work in Brimingham, UK.

- "I don't want to talk about him because when I will talk, it will be considered backbiting" – so you are giving a subtle signal that there is something bad about that person; it is still considered backbiting. bad about him

We should understand these aspects and don't be fooled by Satan to fall into its trap through these false justifications.

Guidance from Sunnah:

Backbiting a brother or a sister is like eating their flesh which no-one likes. The same way we should dislike the practice of backbiting.

Allah SWT says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful" [Quran 49:12]

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported: We were sitting with the Prophet, peace, and blessings be upon him when a man stood to leave. Another man spoke badly about him after he left, so the Prophet said, "Pick your teeth." The man said, "O Messenger of Allah, why should I pick my teeth when I have not eaten meat?" The Prophet said, "You have eaten the flesh of your brother."

[al-Mu'jam al-Kabir 9951]

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ كُنَّا جُلُوسًا عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَامَ رَجُلٌ فَوَقَعَ فِيهِ رَجُلٌ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَخَلَّلْ قَالَ وَمَا أَتَخَلَّلُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَكَلْتُ لَحْمًا قَالَ إِنَّكَ أَكَلْتَ لَحْمَ أَخِيكَ

We see this as a common thread in the teachings of the beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that he was highly concerned about the honor and dignity of Muslims. Once Ayesha r.a. met a woman of short height and after she left she indicated about her height with her hand. Rasool Allah ﷺ did not like this and accordingly guided her that talking ill about others is such a great sin that it can turn the oceans black. Our mother, Ayesha R.A., did not know about this at that moment so she has no blame. But what about us? The complete religion has now been revealed and we are all hearing about the ills of backbiting from our childhood; yet we don't hesitate to call people, too fat or too slim or too short or too tall or too ugly. We need to ponder over this and fix our affairs.

The following ahadith also show the severity of the disease of backbiting:

Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "During the Mi'raj (the Night of Ascension), I saw a group of people who were scratching their chests and faces with their copper nails. I asked, 'Who are these people, O Jibril?' Jibril replied: 'These are the people who ate the flesh of others (by backbiting) and trampled people's honor."'

وعن أنس رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ''لما عُرج بي مررت بقوم لهم أظفار من نُحاس يخمشون وجوههم وصدورهم، فقلت: من هؤلاء يا جبريل؟ قال: هؤلاء الذين يأكلون لحوم الناس، ويقعون في أعراضهم!''. ((رواه أبو داود.))

Riyad us Saliheen, Book 18, Hadith 16

Narrated AbuBarzah al-Aslami:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: O community of people, who believed by their tongue, and belief did not enter their hearts, do not back-bite Muslims, and do not search for their faults, for if anyone searches for their faults, Allah will search for his fault, and if Allah searches for the fault of anyone, He disgraces him in his house.

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا الأَسْوَدُ بْنُ عَامِرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ عَيَّاشٍ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ جُرَيْجٍ، عَنْ أَبِي بَرْزَةَ الأَسْلَمِيِّ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يَدْخُلِ الإِيمَانُ قَلْبَهُ لاَ تَغْتَابُوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ عَوْرَاتِهِمْ يَتَّبِعِ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ " .

Sunan Abi Dawud 4880

The reality of backbiting:

Backbiting is, in reality, the careless or malicious words that come out of the tongue. We have to fear Allah regarding what we say. It happens to people that a word they say become a source of salvation for them and it also happens to people that the word they utter becomes a source of their punishment. We should accordingly be very mindful of what comes out of our tongue for it can never get back.

Why do people fall in backbiting?

- The weakness of faith and lack of piety – when they have no fear of Allah regarding their speech, they careless engage in backbiting
- To went anger against someone
- Because of their dislike of an individual
- With the purpose of having a sense of purity for self – they mention the faults of others and then get an inner satisfaction that they are better than them
- To acquire a false honor for themselves by trying to prove that others are very bad
- Because of jealousy and envy – any problem they see in people they are jealous of, they would not hold themselves from sharing it with everyone they know
- Under the influence of a mocking and joking attitude - not caring about what they are saying. Such people sometimes even ridicule Islamic principles – an act which is considered to be an act of kufr!

Examples from the salaf:

Al-Ghazali reported: Mujahid, may Allah have mercy on him, said, “Do not mention your brother in his absence except how you would love for him to mention you in your absence.”

Source: Ihya ‘Ulūm al-Din 2/181

عن الغزالي قال مجاهد رحمه الله لا تذكر أخاك في غيبته إلا كما تحب أن يذكرك في غيبتك

As-Samarqandi reported: Abu Umamah Al-Bahili, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “Verily, the servant will be given his record on the Day of Resurrection and he will see good deeds that he had not done. He will say: O Lord, from where have these come? Allah will say: These are from people who had backbitten against you while you were unaware.”

Source: Tanbih al-Ghafilin 1/164

عَنْ السمرقندي عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ الْبَاهِلِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيُعْطَى كِتَابَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيَرَى فِيهِ حَسَنَاتٍ لَمْ يَكُنْ عَمِلَهَا فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبُّ مِنْ أَيْنَ لِي هَذَا فَيَقُولُ هَذَا بِمَا اغْتَابَكَ النَّاسُ وَأَنْتَ لَا تَشْعُرُ

Abu Sa’eed Al-Khadimi reported: A man said to Hasan Al-Basri, may Allah have mercy on him, “Indeed, someone has backbitten you.” Hasan sent a dish of sweet dates to the backbiter and he said, “I heard that you have given me your good deeds as a gift, so I want to repay you for it, but please excuse me for I am unable to completely repay you.”

Source: Tanbih al-Ghafilin 1/164

عَنْ السمرقندي عَنْ الْحَسَنِ الْبَصْرِيِّ أَنَّ رَجُلًا قَالَ لَهُ إنَّ فُلَانًا قَدْ اغْتَابَك فَبَعَثَ إلَيْهِ طَبَقًا مِنْ الرُّطَبِ وَقَالَ بَلَغَنِي أَنَّك أَهْدَيْت إلَيَّ حَسَنَاتٍ فَأَرَدْت أَنْ أُكَافِئَك عَلَيْهَا فَاعْذُرْنِي فَإِنِّي لَا أَقْدِرُ أَنْ أُكَافِئَك بِهَا عَلَى التَّمَامِ

- Everyone in the city to slander
- Why give your good deeds to the one you don’t lie

Cures:

- The first cure is to reflect on the speech of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ
- The second cure is introspection – one should busy himself with his or her own faults rather than faults of others; Hassan al-Basri said that “if someone backbites someone about a sin that he has made repentance of, then the backbiter will suffer from the same sin”
- Keeping good company – Being in good company is like sitting at the shop of perfume-seller; one gets some fragrance while sitting there.
- Making a strong resolve of never backbiting – one of the great scholars made this resolve that he would fast every time he would back-bite. This drained him physically and helped him overcome backbiting. We can also establish a routine for ourselves to follow every time we fall into a sin such as back-biting.

Expiation of backbiting:

- If the news has not reached, make Tauba and the same gathering in which you mentioned his faults, establish his honor over there and praise him
- If the news has reached him, then go and seek his forgiveness

- Whoever has wronged his brother with regards to his honor should make a dua for his forgiveness

Cases where backbiting is permissible:

There are six situations in which backbiting is permissible

- Complaining about mistreatment in front of a judge or an authority
- Identifying a person (for example, if there are a number of people with the same name, then we can talk about certain physical aspects that can help the identification of the person being talked about)
- Warning people about someone (such as in the case of marriage proposals etc)
- Highlighting an open sin in order to prevent others from its harm
- Seeking a fatwa and explaining a situation of the case to a shaykh
- Seeking someone's help to remove and evil

Those who backbite often say that the backbiting that they are doing falls in one or more of these categories. However, there is a principle which should not be compromised. The above permission is available for the cases where a benefit is expected. If there is no benefit, then even the above should be avoided; especially if inside your heart, you feel good about talking to others about the fault of people, then there you are suffering from a disease that needs to be cured.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 20

Have you ever engaged in backbiting? What were the motives? How can you prevent that in future? How can you compensate for what has happened?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 21

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui

PURIFICATION OF INTENTIONS AND ACTIONS

Another very common diseases of hearts that we have to understand and tackle is the disease of showing off or ostentatiousness. The remedy for this is to purify our intentions and actions. In this lesson, we will inshaAllah look at these two important aspects which determine whether our actions are accepted or rejected.

A compass for our journey back home

We are all on our journey back home. The journey is not possible without movement and action. So we all have to act. But how do we know which direction to go in and how to act. So, here is a criterion and compass that would help us assess our actions and then act accordingly.

Our actions have to be pure internally as well as externally. Internal purification is acquired through Ikhlas (which will be explained shortly) and the external purification of the actions is acquired through itiba (which will also be explained shortly Insha'Allah). Both of these aspects are required to be there in our actions for them to be accepted.

Figure: Two essential conditions for the acceptance of deeds

Ikhlas

It is from the root 'khalasa' which means to get rid of everything. When we talk about it from the Islamic perspective with regards to our hearts, it means to rid our hearts of love of everything else and made our hearts available solely to the love of Allah SWT.

Ikhlas accordingly is a state of Qalb.

Levels of Ikhlas

Now, this purity can have three levels:

- One: Our hearts are filled only with the love of Allah SWT and all that we do is in his love
- Two: Our hearts do love Allah SWT but there are impurities in our hearts.
- Three: Our hearts are void of the knowledge and love of our Creator Allah SWT

The condition one is where we said to be in the state of Ikhlas. Allah SWT says in the Quran:

أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ

Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due? (Quran 39:3)

Consider the example of the **gold coin**. It will only be pure if it is 100% gold. If it has got impurities and it is 18 karat or 12 karats or 6 karats, its value will be lower as it would contain impurities in it. Same is the case with ikhlas – either it is pure or impure. The motivation for our actions could either be uncontaminated or contaminated depending on our ikhlas.

If I stand in salah and I come to it only for the pleasure of Allah SWT, only to come close to Him and attain His pleasure, this action would be with ikhlas. However, if other intentions merge with this, then it is not the pure ikhlas. If I come there to be entertained by some friends or if I think walking is good for me so let's walk to the masjid for that then it is not pure ikhlas. Though there is no harm in what we are trying to achieve, it is not pure ikhlas. This is the mild form of deviation from ikhlas. There can be much bigger deviations too.

Similarly, if I fast in order to control my nafs and do that for the pleasure of Allah SWT only, then it is Ikhlas. However, if my objective is losing weight or I do it as a practice in the society or the community we belong to, then it is not pure ikhlas.

The degree of ikhlas depends on the degree of contamination.

The opposite of Ikhlas: Ishraq

The opposite of Ikhlas is ishraq. This is from the root 'sharaqa' which means to make partners. It is the same root as the word 'shirk' (associating partners with Allah SWT). Ishraq also has various levels – major as well as minor. The state of contaminated intention is what is known as the state of Ishraq.

What does contaminate the motivation

There are a number of things that can impact the level of our ikhlas. Anything which is not the pure burst of the love and longing for Allah SWT is the contaminant. Whatever we don't do out of love or fear of Allah SWT is considered to contain impurities of various levels.

Such contaminations could be:

- Love for worldly gains
- Love for leadership
- Love for control over situations
- Love for being respected by people for one's action
- Love for the praise of people
- And so on.

Levels of Ishraq

If what motivates me for my good actions and religious practices is purely other than Allah, then it is shirk al-jali (clear and open shirk). In this context, we are not talking about the things from which we do not expect a reward in the aakhirah. We are talking about religious practices. If their intention is purely other than Allah, then we have fallen into the shirk. That was the condition of the pure hypocrites. Actions done in such state are no actions.

On the other hand, if the motivation is Allah SWT but other motivations have come in too as contamination, then it is not the state of full ikhlas.

There are certain characteristics, that demonstrate ishraq. One of such characteristics is Ar-Riya or showing off which we will shortly cover Insha'Allah.

Is partial Ikhlas accepted?

There are two opinions among the scholars regarding whether partial Ikhlas is accepted or not.

- According to one group of scholars, anything that has shirk or ishraq in that are rejected. All such good deeds are not considered good deeds and are invalid. One would be asked to seek the reward of such deeds from the people that they did them for. Ubay ibn Ka'b reported: The Prophet, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, "Give glad tidings to this nation of honor, victory, and stability. Yet, whoever does a deed of the Hereafter for the sake of the world, then he will have no portion of it in the Hereafter." [Musnad Ahmad 20717]. Similarly, it has been narrated that: Abu Sa'd reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "When Allah gathers the people on the Day of Resurrection, a day of which there is no doubt, an announcement will be made: To those who shared with anyone in deeds done for Allah, then let him seek his reward from those besides Allah. Verily, Allah is free of any partners." [Sunan al-Tirmidhi 3154]

- According to another group of scholars, the reward of deeds depends on the level of ishraq. If our ishraq exceeds our ikhlas, then we are liable for punishment. We learn about this from the hadith of the martyr, the scholar, and the charitable person who would be the first ones to be thrown in hell for their lack of sincerity in actions. On the other hand, if the ikhlas

exceeds the ishraq in our intention, then the deeds will be rewarded, however, their value would depend on the level of ikhlas we had.

Riya as a contaminant:

It is the less obvious form of shirk. The Prophet ﷺ called it the minor shirk. It leaves our action as no action – totally or partially.

Ar-Riya is defined as a person's wish to be seen and appreciated by others.

Levels of Riya:

We should understand these levels very well and try to avoid them as much as possible. In a hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said it's so dangerous that it's like the black ant on the black rock in the night with no moon. It can sneak up on you like this. So we should better guard ourselves against it.

- An action that is purely for other than Allah is a major shirk i.e. you do it solely for people to see it and appreciate and there is no love for Allah SWT. Such an action is a rejected action.
- The second level of Riya is that when the original motivation for our acts of worship is Allah SWT, but when people see us, it energizes us and we start doing it in a much better way. In seclusion, our state is different. It would certainly lead to less reward, if not punishment.
- The third level is when people see me, it doesn't change how I am performing the action, however, I feel good and happy about it. It is another level of Riya.
- The fourth and most hidden level is when a person performs an action for Allah, and it doesn't matter if anyone sees him or not; he does not feel any energy from people looking at him. However, the person, in his heart, believes, that he should be respected more for his piety and if people don't give him enough respect, he gets angry (even if he doesn't show his anger to others).

Should I abandon doing an action in which there are chances of Raya (showing off)

Rather than stopping our selves from doing good actions which may come with chances of falling in Raya, we should pause before doing them, clean our intentions and then do them for the sake of Allah alone.

Is the intention / niyyah good enough for acceptance of deeds?

Consider the example of a person who is overspeeding the vehicle. A police officer comes and stops the car. How would he feel about the person if he says that my intention was very good and I intended no harm to anyone? I was just overspeeding because it brings in a good gush of air in the car and I have not seen my family for 3 hours today; so I wanted to drive fast.

Is this intention good enough? No. The action has to be in accordance with the law too. What is the law for us to follow for our lives? The way of Rasool Allah ﷺ. If we follow him and love him, it is loving Allah. Loving him is a sign of Ikhlas as Allah SWT says:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say [O Prophet]: "If you love God, follow me [and] God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace." (Quran 3:31)

Itiba:

Doing the acts of worship and goodness in conformity with the shariah and the way of the Prophet ﷺ is called itiba. It is following the command with love.

The deen has been completed for us and we must follow that without division.

How do we move away from Sunnah:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

Today I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favor upon you, and chosen Islam as your way. (Quran 5:3)

What do we say in Khutbah:

At the beginning of most of his speeches, the Prophet ﷺ used to remind us that all newly invented matters in the religion are bid'ah and all acts of bid'ah lead to misguidance. And all misguidance leads to hell-fire. When we sit in the khutbah next time and hear these words again, we should ponder over them and reorientate our intentions towards Allah SWT alone.

Claims of those who do bid'ah:

It is to be noted that neither we can create anything new in the religion nor blindly follow the practices of people who have changed the religion. The following two ahadith provide guidance about both of these situations:

من أحدث في أمرنا هذا ما ليس منه فهو ردٌّ

"Whoever innovates something in this command of ours that is not of it, it will be rejected"

وَمَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُنَا فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

"Whoever does an action not based on our commands, it will be rejected"

Can you improve the 'perfect' things

What if I bring over a masterpiece painting and put on the wall and ask you to further enhance its beauty? What if you are not a painter yourself and the one whose painting I have put in front of you is the master in his field and is known to produce the best of works? If you add a brush here or there or if you remove some of what the painter drew, will you be beautifying the picture or taking away

its beauty? The answer is, of course, the second one. You cannot 'perfect' what has already been perfected.

Similarlarly, if you see that the bottle cover gives a lot of benefits. It protects the water from insects, dust and so on; and you decide to make it bigger what is required for the bottle. Would the bigger bottle cover be as effective as the right-sized one? What if you decide to save some plastic and make it smaller than what fits on the bottle? Would it add to the effectiveness or reduce it? The answer is, of course, the second one.

Then why do we not realize that what Allah SWT has given us is the best of guidance; it is a perfect religion. We can neither take away anything from it nor should we try to add anything to it. If we do such innovation or bidah with our religion, we will take away its beauty. It has to be kept pure and original.

"And verily, this is My Straight Path, so follow it. And follow not [other] paths, for they separate you away from this path. This He has ordained for you that you may become pious." (Surah al-Anaam:153)

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 21

Question your intentions. Do you find any other motives for your good deeds than the love of Allah SWT and His Messenger ﷺ? If you do, then repent and purify your intentions. Also, think of how you can purify your actions by doing the iteba of our beloved Prophet ﷺ and protecting yourself from Ibtida.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 22

Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Noman Ali Khan

DO NOT LOSE HOPE

Not having a hope is another disease of heart. In this lecture, we will get the message of hope from a beautiful passage from the glorious Quran. The discussion in this lesson is based on the following passage from Surah Aal Imran:

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ

إِنَّمَا ذَٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۖ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ ۖ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

They feel happy to have received Allah's grace and bounty and have come to know that indeed Allah does not waste the reward of the believers.

Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Apostle even after being deeply wounded; For those who do right and refrain from wrong, there is a great reward.

And who, when the people told them: "Your enemies have mustered a great force against you: fear them"; whereupon this only increased their faith, so that they answered, "God is enough for us; and how excellent a guardian is He!"

And they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah: no harm ever touched them; for they had been striving after God's goodly acceptance - and God is limitless in His great bounty.

Now you must have realized that it was the Shaitan who was trying to prompt you to fear his followers. But have no fear of them. Fear Me, if you are true believers.

And be not grieved by those who vie with one another in denying the truth: surely they can do absolutely no harm to Allah. It is God's will that they shall have no share in the [blessings of the] life to come, and tremendous suffering awaits them.

Those who trade belief for disbelief will never harm Allah in the least, and they will suffer a painful punishment.

Those who disbelieve should not think that living longer is good for them. They are only given more time to increase in sin, and they will suffer a humiliating punishment.

Allah will not leave the believers in their present condition; you are in this condition only until He separates the Evil from the Good. Allah will not do this by disclosing to you the secrets of the unseen. As for disclosing the unseen, Allah chooses those of His Messengers whom He pleases. Therefore, believe in Allah and His Messenger. If you have faith and guard yourselves against evil, you shall have a great reward.

And let not those who hoard up that which Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty think that it is better for them. Nay, it is worse for them They will be leashed by their necks on the Day of Judgment with whatever they used to withhold. For unto God [alone] belongs the heritage of the heavens and of the earth, and God is aware of all that you do.

(Quran 3:171-180)

Reflections on the battle of Uhud:

The loss of Muslims in the battle of Uhud after not following the instructions of the Prophet and the leader

The passage above deals with the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud - the second major conflict in Islamic. This is the battle in which the Prophet ﷺ was almost killed; he fell unconscious. His face covered in blood and a lot of companions actually thought he's been killed. They were completely demoralized until it was discovered, later on, that he was still alive and had fallen unconscious. There were some major losses for Muslims in this battle as seventy of the great companions were martyred and the Muslims had to actually retreat. At first, they were winning but because of a strange turn of events, the Muslims had to go and go into a retreat. The Quran captures that moment and tells the believers that when they were climbing up the hill and weren't even turning back to look at anybody else to save their lives, the Messenger ﷺ was actually still left behind because a lot of people thought he had already died. So, the Messenger ﷺ was still on the battlefield and he then called you from behind. This was the situation when catastrophe after catastrophe and emotional disaster on top of disaster struck you. So, this is a really deeply painful scenario in the Muslim community. The Muslims that survived were deeply injured and wounded.

A mistake by Quresh

The Quresh made a mistake at this point. They did not pursue the Muslims up the mountain. They spoke and talked trash to the Muslims from the bottom of the mountain. They left the Muslims in this state. Now the Muslims who've been demoralized also been humiliated in a sense are trying to gather their losses and are barely able to stand up. The news and intelligence came that the enemy had a thought a discussion in their ranks on their way back that they should come back and finish the Muslims, once for all. They thought that the Muslims are pretty injured right now and they're pretty demoralized and this can yield them a great opportunity to make another decisive blow.

Prophet's call and the response of companions

It's at that point that the Prophet ﷺ said that before the enemy gets back, we are going to get up and go after them! Note that he is not talking to an army that is deeply motivated and full of zeal and shouting takbirs. He's talking to an army that has seen many of their loved ones being slaughtered - including the Prophet's own uncle who was like a brother to him. On top of that, the ones that many of those who survived were deeply injured. In this demoralized situation, the Prophet ﷺ is asking to get up and go after the enemy – the same enemy from whom they had to run away and climb the mountain to save their lives. Now they're being told to get up - forget defense, we're going on the offense! That's what they're being told; and on that call, the companions that could barely stand up, got up. They stood up! They are bleeding themselves but still, they got up and came before the prophet ﷺ saying 'We hear and we obey'. These incredible human beings answered the call of the Prophet ﷺ. Allah SWT Himself decided to comment on this remarkable and timeless moment in our history.

So, this was the situation in which this passage was revealed.

Guidance of you and me

Quran is talking about you and your situation. How do these remarkable words of Allah SWT apply to us? I will not elaborate that; it is for you to ponder upon this and take action.

Allah does not waste any good deed or action

In the few ayahs before this passage as well as the first ayah, Allah SWT is talking about those who have been slain in the battlefield and they're already Shahada.

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

They feel happy to have received Allah's grace and bounty and have come to know that indeed Allah does not waste the reward of the believers.

Allah says about those Shuhada that they are already in the company of Allah and enjoying themselves full of happiness; they're waiting for people that haven't yet joined them and in the moments of their joy, they're anticipating that there are more people who are going to make it into

Jannah. Allah says about those seventy people that couldn't be happier; so don't be sad for them. They are really happy right now and they are enjoying the glorious favors of Allah. They are overjoyed; they have now seen that Allah never wastes any of the compensation of believers whether they win or loss. When you did something for Allah, whether you saw results or not, none of it would ever go to waste. If I am delivering this lecture, it does not matter how many people are listening to it; my reward is recorded with Allah SWT and I have nothing to be upset about why there are this many listeners in the group and not that many. That's irrelevant. We're clear about why we do things. None of what the believers go through is going unrewarded. So the people of Jannah are very clear about this, as Allah SWT mentions in this Ayah. It assures the future people of Jannah that their efforts are not going to go unrewarded and they should not think any less of anything that they do.

Our responsibility in the times of trial:

In times of great trial, we start thinking 'what is my little effort going to do', 'what is me helping out at a Sunday school or doing a little thing here and there at iCAN or being an Islamic school teacher or helping out in a relief organization going to result in?'. We often fall into the trap of thinking 'I don't feel like I'm making any difference'. That's when you need this Ayah. Allah will not waste the compensation of any of those who believe in Him. If we respond to His call and the call of His Messenger ﷺ, He will make us "of those who answered the call of Allah and the Apostle even after being deeply wounded". الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ

These are the people who respond to the call of the Messenger ﷺ even after deep injury had struck them, even when they've been defeated, even when they're depressed and demoralized, and even when they have been crushed by their enemy - they still respond to Allah and the Messenger ﷺ.

Don't be depressed when the injury strikes you

The word الْقَرْحُ used in the second ayah of the passage does not represent a normal injury. It is an injury is an injury that goes through your flesh and cuts inside of your bone - a very deep injury which could even be lethal. Those blessed companions who were deeply wounded still got up. As they get up, the people who are already in Jannah are cheering up that they are not alone; there are other people will join them too; they're watching us when we are hit with injury. They're happy because it's time for us now to earn our Jannah too. So, we shouldn't be depressed when we are struck with an injury, when we're hurting, and when we're down. This is the time to earn the greatest rewards. This is the time to celebrate; we have been honored to be put in this position that we are going to answer the call of our Messenger ﷺ even when we are deeply wounded.

The faith of true believers increases when the trials come their way

Those believers who can excel, who can find the beauty of this deen and continue to do good and remain conscious and fearful only and only of Allah - such people are going to have great compensation from Allah SWT.

When the companions heard that everybody's gathering against them, that message made them even stronger in their faith and they turned back to Allah and said 'Allah is enough for us and he's enough to take care of everything we're going through'. When we hear the message that people are ganging up on us, that is not a reason to lose our faith in Allah. When the people of Jannah hear that, their Iman becomes even stronger. These are efforts that the enemy makes thinking that this will make the Muslims weaker. However, what happens to the real believers is that these hardships and attacks on them make them stronger than before.

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

So, when the Muslims answered the call of the Prophet ﷺ and the Quresh came to know that the Muslims themselves are coming after them, they got scared. Though the Quresh were almost victorious in Uhud before they suddenly left the battlefield, they still go scared. When the Muslims went out, the enemy had already fled. There was no Uhud 2.0. There was no rematch. The enemy could not face these devoted Muslims. This is how Allah gives protection to the true believers. All we have to do is to answer the call of Allah SWT and His messenger ﷺ with the best of our abilities and then Allah will take care of our affairs. However, we have to do our bit and we have to fulfill our pledge and promise and then Allah SWT will give us the rewards that we deserve.

Allah SWT also explained further:

فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ

No harm touched them. They followed only the pleasure of Allah. They went out there to make only and only Allah happy. They didn't go for victory. They didn't go to crush the enemy. They didn't go for revenge. The only thing before them was that our Messenger ﷺ asked them to get up and go after the enemy as this would please their Rabb. Allah said that when people get up for me I will let no harm come to them.

Fear Allah alone and be a grateful servant

That whole propaganda that people are coming, and that they're gathering against you in order to uproot your, is actually from Satan.

إِنَّمَا ذَٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ

Allah told us that he wishes to put the fear of his friends in the heart of the believers. He wants you to be scared of his friends. The ayah can also mean that only the people who are his friends, get scared of the enemy. He's only successful in scaring his friends. Allah SWT guides us that we should not be afraid of them but Him if we in fact believe.

فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Every time you and I stand in front of Allah, it's not just because we worship Allah, it's not just because we only believe in one God, that is also an acknowledgment that we fear no one but Allah

and that we bow before no one but Him. We also acknowledge that we humble ourselves before no one but Allah. Every Salah is a reminder there is no political circumstance, no rhetoric no media, no bias against us, and no crimes against that instill the fear of anyone other than Allah in our hearts. Despite all this, we choose to be His faithful servant.

Understand the reality of matters

Allah than tells us about those who are making a lot of efforts to look for the furthering the cause of disbelief, those who are making so many efforts to destroy Islam, those who are making so many efforts to turn believers into disbelievers, those who are making so many efforts to spread the disbelief on earth, spend all their wealth and resources for this task - don't let all of their efforts ever worry you.

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ

Allah SWT tells us that despite all these efforts, they will not be able to harm Allah SWT. Don't worry about their schemes and their plans and their plots and their propaganda, they can't harm Allah at all.

إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا

Now, one can think that I'm not worried about them harming Allah – He is all powerful and no creation can harm the Creator. I am actually worried about them harming me; so I was expecting that Allah will say ‘don't worry about their schemes; they won't harm you’. But Allah says, instead, ‘don't worry about their schemes; they can't harm Allah’. Why is that?

It is because Allah SWT is our protection and our shield. They can't do anything about this shield. So you're safe because your Allah is with you and He is sufficient for you and He is the best protection. With Allah on your side, you have nothing to worry about. Make an effort to make Allah your friend and your protection. Fall in love with him and abandon all forms of disobedience to Him.

Why does Allah not stopping the oppressors in the first place

A question can arise that why is Allah giving the enemies this opportunity to scheme and plot and to further their cause? Why is He allowing them to make things more and more difficult for the believers? Allah SWT answers:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Allah wants that they get nothing in the hereafter - not even a little bit of the akhirah. So the people that are evil and they want to continue to do more evil, they wish to continue on the path to injustice and oppression, Allah says I'd like to let you dig your hole a little deeper. Allah gives them the freedom in this world that if they wish to go the way of the kufr, they are free to do that. The longer they keep doing it, they harder their punishment would be.

You can think of this by imaging an experiment that has been previously done with some animals. If the animal is put in a small cage and the walls restrict its movement, it wouldn't get much hurt when it hits the walls. However, if it is allowed to run freely in a long lane and then suddenly the motion is stopped by placing a barrier, the impact and its consequences would be much much stronger. Same is the case with the non-believers. It is extended for a period of time and then pulled back. That would be the moment when they would get the severest of the punishments.

Don't sell your religion for short-term and temporary things

Allah SWT now turns out towards those who sell their religion.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

There are those who have sold their belief with disbelief. There are those who under the pressure of the enemy say that this Islam thing is too much for me to handle. When people look at them in a certain way, they give up their identity as Muslims. They think that I should rather be like everyone and do what others in the society do. They think that if I'll fit in better, I would be able to be more better off in the society that I am living in. Allah SWT says about them that they are also not going to do any harm to Allah's cause. They are only harming themselves and harvesting the punishment for themselves unless they repent. If they do so, Allah will turn their bad deeds into good deeds.

The disbelievers should not think that if they are given the freedom to do whatever they want to do is good for them. What they are doing is that they are increasing the punishment for themselves.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

Be steadfast when the tests come – it is how the impure is separated from the pure

After the above description, Allah SWT turns his attention to you and me. He says

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ

The tests in this life are inevitable. This is how Allah SWT separates the pure from the impure. Allah will not leave you alone in the state that you're in. Allah will not just leave you be and let you just think that you have faith. He will separate the good ones among you from the filthy ones. Some of us have filth inside of our hearts and when the state of fear comes, the pressure comes, and the stereotyping comes, some of us abandon our faith and the filth in their hearts take over whatever good they had in it. Allah says, he will put you and I through terrible difficult circumstances so that He can separate the filthy from within the pour and cut them out. May Allah not make us see any of us from them.

Do not be concerned about what Allah has chosen not to let you know

In this regard, we should also keep in mind that Allah will never be the one to inform you of the unseen.

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

People come to the Shaykh or the Imam and ask about when the problems of the world are going to finish. This information is with Allah alone and not with the Shaykh. Shaykh, just like you, is also going through the trials and the tests. Allah told us this thing very clearly so that we don't remain deluded. Allah is not going to tell you and me about these matters of unseen. However, Allah does select from his messengers whoever he wants - meaning Allah chose his Messenger ﷺ and decided to tell him what you needed to know. Focus on what Allah told you and not what Allah did not tell you. Don't get obsessed with the things that Allah Himself didn't give you. If it was valuable for you, Allah would have given it to you. So don't be so obsessive-compulsive about unnecessary details.

Allah SWT then tell's the criteria for success and the strategy to follow in tough situations.

فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

Just believe in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ and if you can continue to believe and continue to be fearful only of Allah, then you will have a great reward. What else do you and I want? Just have faith and be fearful of Allah in the toughest of times. The belief in Allah and His messenger is all you need. Everything else will work itself out. Don't be overdrawn into the problems.

Only Allah will remain and all the rest will perish

Don't ever think about those who are cheap, greedy, and miserly with what Allah has given them that they are better off. What they are considering good for them is actually bad for them. They are not realizing that the things they are trying to hoard and with-hold are not genuinely their own. They have come from Allah SWT. They didn't earn it themselves. This thing that they are falling in love with, will become the collar around their neck on the day of judgment with which they will be punished.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۖ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ ۖ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ

We accordingly have to spend from the resources that Allah SWT has given us. It is not just the money. All the blessing of Allah that He has given us and we are not using in His cause will be questioned. In this, there is a call for all the Muslims, particularly the youth. They're going to have to give up their free time that Allah gave them. Their free time cannot go into eight hours of video games anymore. There's no time for you to watch the next Netflix and Amazon series. You don't have that kind of time. O Muslim youth! Allah has given you free time. Allah has given you talent. Allah has given you creativity. That creativity cannot go be wasted by you making stupid jokes on social media. It needs to be used in much more productive ways.

When the people who Allah has given wealth, luxury, opportunity, health, and talent are cheap and miserly with it and they only use it for themselves, then they are missing the whole point. Much of they accumulate; they will never be able to make any benefit from it. Much of what they fill their bank accounts with will remain there while they will not be there to use it. If not used where it is

required to be used, that accumulation will be turned into a rope around their necks choking them on the Day of Resurrection. If you don't put these resources to the right cause, it is going to come and choke you on the day of resurrection. May Allah not make us of them.

وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Allah alone owns the entire inheritance of the skies and the earth. Allah is telling you and me whatever you own, whatever I own, whatever I enjoy in this life, I'm not going to get to keep it at the end of the day. I'm going to be in the ground and somebody else will be wearing my clothes. I'm going to be in the ground and somebody else will be driving my car. And they won't be driving it for that long either. They're going to be in the ground too. Somebody else will be living in that house that we have built we so much effort and hard work. 100 years from now somebody else is going to be eating the fruit of that tree that I have in my backyard. It's not going to be mine. And at the end of it all, all of it will return back to Allah. Everybody and everything will finish; only He will remain. We have to understand the temporal nature of the material world. Do not become materialistic in your goals and your aspirations. The only thing to worry about is what you will earn with Allah SWT in the hereafter. Put your efforts in this world. Do your very best. If you just want this world and have no concern for the hereafter, that that is what is exactly choking you; it will ultimately destroy you.

Our Deen is so beautiful; it provides us with a beautiful balance between what we want in the next life and what we get in this life - it merges the two of them. We're not just people of Akhirah alone and we are not the people of Dunya alone; we are the people of 'Rabban Aatina Fid-Dunya Hasanah, Wa Fil-Akhirati Hasanah' (Our Rabb! Grant us goodness in this world and goodness in the hereafter). We have to make a sincere effort to attain this.

وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Allah has full news and full account and a full perspective on everything that you're doing. He knows how we spend our resources. What inflictions come in our way and how we respond to them. He knows if our Imaan is increasing when the afflictions hit us or we let our gratitude go in such situations. He knows what is inside our heart and what we are doing to purify that.

The time for change is now

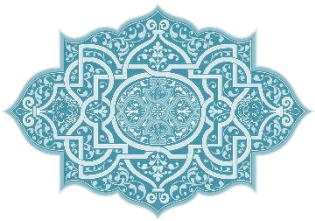
I sincerely remind myself and I remind all of you that this Quran is a living document. It's a living book. It will inspire. It will empower. Sometimes, it will scare. Sometimes, it will set you straight and calibrate you. If you want to turn to Allah SWT, then this is the book that you have to hold on tight. Sometimes you just need to get a slap in the face and get set out straight. The book of Allah will give you that too. It'll give you what you need because Allah is your Rabb; he's your master; He doesn't have to cater his message to what might make you feel better. He'll cater the message to what you need and what your heart needs. This is the time to change.

Allah SWT is telling us that if you are in the middle of a crisis, grow a spine and get strong. Don't be afraid of anybody else. Prove yourself to Allah and none of the efforts you do will go unacknowledged. May Allah azzawajal make us a courageous ummah, especially our youth. May Allah make them a source of confidence and a revival of this faith for the Ummah around the world. I make so many prayers for the youth in Muslim youth that they become the light which would brighten the whole face of the earth. My prayers are with you. I am so so very proud of you. So what if you've made mistakes in the past! So what if you haven't realized your potential in the past. That's okay! You're still breathing which means Allah still has hope in you. If you were a lost cause you wouldn't be breathing anymore. The fact that Allah has given you life is because Allah expects things from you. It's a new day. It's a new beginning and let us prove ourselves before Allah azzawajal and show Him what goodness we can bring into this world.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 22

Think about how you can make a contribution to the ummah? What is the special talent that you would utilize for serving the nation of Muhammad ﷺ? What can you do to happily face Allah SWT and His messenger ﷺ on the day of judgment? Think about that and start work from today!

KEY POINTS – LESSON 23



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui

OVERCOMING GREED: THE REAL WEALTH IS THE WEALTH OF HEARTS

We often fall a prey to the disease of greed by thinking that the real wealth is what fills in our bank accounts or what glitters in the lockers. However, the real wealth is not this. The real wealth is the wealth of hearts and those who understand this reality can live a happiest life even in the toughest of situations.

Imam Junaid and the bag of gold coins

I begin with a story from a long time ago. This is the story about Imam Al-Junaid who was one of the great scholars from our early predecessors. Once he was sitting in the courtyard inside the haram of Mecca along with his disciples. These disciples look very poor from the worldly perspective and were known as the Fuqara which is the plural of 'Faqeer' and literally means impoverished, or very poor. A good rich man approached him with a bag which contained six hundred golden coins. He gave that bag to Imam Al-Junaid and requested him to distribute that among his poor companions, the Fuqara. Junaid R.A. graciously accepted that and then pondered for a moment. Then he looked at the rich man and asked: Do you have more of this? He replied: Yes, I do have more of this. The Imam then asked him: Do you desire more of this? He said: Yes, why not. Then the Imam Junaid took that bag and gave it back to him saying: Please accept this from us.

What do we learn from this story? When the man came and gave that money to be distributed among the so-called fuqara or the poor people who looked needy, were actually in need. That is why they were called 'Fuqara'. But they were in need of Allah. They did not have many worldly things but if anyone asked them if they needed any worldly thing, they did not accept.

Why so? Because the real wealth is the wealth of hearts.

Who is the richest man

It is said that a wise man was sitting with another wise man. One of them said to the other: Who amongst people is the richest? The other man said: The one who finds what he desires every time. Whenever he needs or desire something, it is available for him; the person who is self-subsistent self-sufficient. This person then asked the questioner: Do you know someone who is richer than

that? The first person replied: Indeed, I do. He said that it is the one who does not desire anything and therefore does not need to find what he desires. The real wealth is the wealth of the heart. When the heart is filled with riches, it does not need to look for richness elsewhere.

It is not what we have that counts; but in actuality what does it do to our emotions. If we will feel on account of what we have secured, then security is in the heart; and if security is in the heart and it has other mechanisms by which it could be acquired. Accordingly, it is not necessarily acquired through wealth and power alone.

Do not be over-attached to the temporary beings – attached with the One who is truly and always Self-Sufficient

Please keep that in mind what you have shall come to an end and will come to an end. It will eventually extinguish. But what Allah has will never and will never extinguish. This is a reality that I and you need to internalize - not only to know and to memorize but also to internalize and make it a part of our conduct. We should make ourselves have this meaning in front of our thinking all the time - in our emotions, in our inner consciousness, in our hearts.

I should always know that Allah SWT says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاء إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

O Mankind! It is you that are in need [of Allah – i.e. you are the Fuqara]. but Allah is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise. (Quran 35:15)

If we recognize, and we know, and we ponder at home, at work, while traveling, and when we go and take moments alone to ponder, we should realize and internalize that what we have is temporary and will not exist soon. Allah essentially is self-sufficient - no matter what we do and how much we seek of him. We are in need of Allah SWT and Allah is the only self-sufficient. To Allah belong the treasures of heavens and earth. These treasures are not only treasures of material possessions or wealth or of power or of leadership. The treasures of Allah SWT also contain the treasures of the hearts such as patience, composure, tranquillity, kindness, benevolence, magnanimity, humility, humbleness, forbearance, forgiveness, kindness, justice, and so on. Allah SWT owns the keys of not only wealth and health and power and material possessions, but most importantly the treasures and the favors and the grace of the inner heart and the character.

How to fill one's heart with richness

Allah SWT sent our beloved Prophet ﷺ to perfect the character that any human being could ever attain. He SWT made our Prophet ﷺ to be a role model for not only Muslims but the whole humanity. He told us in a beautiful hadith al-Qudsi:

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمْلأْ صَدْرَكَ غِنًى

Allah SWT says: O son of Adam! Free yourself for my worship. I will fill your heart with richness [or contentment].

[Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 37, Hadith 4246]

The richness that many of us don't understand and don't seek after is the richness inside the heart. That's all that counts. I could be rich externally but extremely but internally be poor.

If we trust Allah SWT, he will suffice us against the poverty – the poverty of hearts. You will never feel poor if you do that and if you don't do that, and you have the choice, I shall fill up your hearts with worries of this world - social worries, psychological worries, family worries, financial worries and so on. There is no peace inside in such a situation. There is a turmoil inside. There is an agitation inside. There is poverty inside. A person in this state always feels poor – whether he has the worldly possessions or not. Such a person is always afraid to lose. I want my heart to be rich because I could have things but my heart is destitute, or I don't have and my heart is still destitute. If someone gets that richness, Allah SWT will fix for him or her all the worries and concerns and affairs. In other words, inside of you, you will have one direction. you will not be scattered and shattered inside and you. We all know that when someone has a lot of worries scattered here and there in their chests, how painful it is. Having too many concerns is a very painful experience. If our focus is on Allah SWT, then we will not have to worry about these too many directions.

This reality is explained in the hadith below:

عن زيد بن ثابت قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ كَانَتْ الدُّنْيَا هَمَّهُ فَرَّقَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرَهُ وَجَعَلَ فَقْرَهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَأْتِهِ مِنْ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَا كُتِبَ لَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَتْ الْآخِرَةُ نِيَّتَهُ جَمَعَ اللَّهُ لَهُ أَمْرَهُ وَجَعَلَ غِنَاهُ فِي قَلْبِهِ وَأَتَتْهُ الدُّنْيَا وَهِيَ رَاغِمَةٌ

سنن ابن ماجه كتاب الزهد باب الهم بالدنيا 4105

المحدث الألباني خلاصة حكم المحدث صحيح في صحيح ابن ماجه 3329

Zaid ibn Thabit reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever makes the world his most important matter, Allah will confound his affairs and make poverty appear before his eyes and he will not get anything from the world except what has been decreed for him. Whoever makes the Hereafter his most important matter, Allah will settle his affairs and make him content in his heart and the world will come to him although he does not want it.”

Source: Sunan Ibn Majah 4105

Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Al-Albani

The consequence of making Dunya one’s primary objective

As seen from the above, one who focuses his worries and his concerns and his aims on Dunya, the one whose the internal drive and the internal aim is the Dunya, it comes with consequences.

- The consequence one is that Allah will make that person always be worried about being poor. Their concerns would be on the 'what if' this happens or that happens and I get poor. Many of us live like that without realizing that this state of ours could be a result of what the condition of our spiritual hearts is
- The second is that Allah will disperse for him or her their matters. In other words, they will feel scattered, constricted, insecure, afraid, anxious and depressed inside their hearts. They will angry and restless and agitated.
- Thirdly, they will not get anything more the Dunya except what Allah has already decreed for him. What we get does not depend on how much effort we put on. Doing a regular effort to earn is Sunnah of our messenger; however, the returns for those efforts are not linked the amount of effort. Some people work hard and attain less and some work less and attain more. What we are going to get has been decreed. If we keep our focus on the Aakhirah while still making an effort to earn as per the Sunnah, we will get what is decreed for us. If we shift our focus to the Dunya at the cost of aakhirah, we will still receive what is intended for us but our matters will get constricted because of this approach.

What has he found who has lost You, O Allah!

One of the pious predecessors said, "What has he found who has lost You?". Even if someone gets all the riches of the world but is void of the presence of Allah SWT in his heart, if he is morally and spiritually empty, he is the poorest man. The real wealth is the wealth of hearts. One could feel to be physically, academically or intellectually fulfilled, but if he or she is spiritually empty, that person is in a great loss. The pious predecessor also continued his sentence and said, "What has he lost who found You". Even if that person has zero bank balance, even if he is cleaning the rubbish, if his clothes are not the best, that person is the richest person.

Strive to internalize this message

It requires effort and energy for you and me to internalize these meanings inside of my emotional, physical and spiritual space memory constantly. We all need to strive for that and make that effort. Unless I am constantly in the state of awareness and have these meanings in front me, whether in the physical or spiritual or intellectual realm, I would be destitute. We should, therefore, strive to embed them in our memories. That would give us a richness which would be far superior to the richness that comes from a bag full of gold coins, worldly assets, and possessions.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 23

Sit at a quiet spot and think: How much value do you give to the richness of heart? How much of your time do you spend in attaining the richness of Dunya as opposed to the richness of heart? How can you shift your love and alter your compass of life? If you shift focus on the hereafter, you would not get anything less than what is destined for you, however, tranquillity and serenity will enter your heart and your matters will be taken care of by the one in whose love you will fall.

SECTION 3

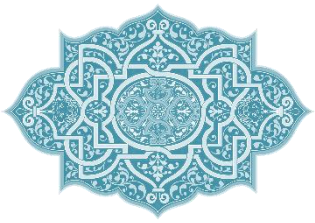
THE INNER DIMENSIONS OF WORSHIP

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SECTION

After the completion of this week, you should be able to:

- ✓ Understand the importance of inner dimensions of worship
- ✓ Understand the inner dimensions for purification, salah, fasting, and charity

KEY POINTS – LESSON 24



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Abdur Raheem Green[16]

THE INNER DIMENSIONS OF PURIFICATION

There are many among us who engage in various acts of worship but do not feel that inner connection. Many of us are solely focussed on the observable or physical aspects of these acts with little or no understanding of their inner dimensions. If we get to unveil such inner dimensions, in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, we will feel a taste in our worship that without experiencing that we can't even imagine that.

We will, therefore, focus on the inner dimensions of common acts of worship in week 5 of our course, insha'Allah, starting with purification today.

Four levels of purification:

Purification can be classified to the following four degrees:

1- Purification of the body from dirt and impurity,
2- Purification of the organs front sins.
3- Purification of the heart from immorality.
4- Purification of the heart from others than Allah

When we read the hadith "purity is half of faith", scholars explain that it does not just include the external purity but also includes these other levels.

The last degree is the most superior one, which can only be attained people of deep insight. Narrow-minded people, in contrast, confine themselves to the first degree, ignoring the other important

[16] Abdurraheem (Anthony) Green was educated in a Christian monastic school and although held strong Christian principles dabbled with other religions. This continual quest to find meaning to life eventually led him to embrace Islam in 1989. Abdur Raheem spent many years at speakers corner in Hyde park, where he made his name as an inspirational orator. He has delivered talks across UK and given lectures at various universities. He also appears on various international platforms such as Peace TV. Sheikh Abdur Raheem Green is a founding member and chairman of iERA. He has been active in the field of dawah since embracing Islam thirty years ago and is efforts have resulted in thousands of people coming in the fold of Islam and becoming a part of this global brotherhood and sisterhood.

degrees, and so they waste most of their time in being excessive with the externalities of purification while ignoring their inner dimension.

This is contrary to the practice of the companions. The sahaba used to barely remove the dust and grease from their hands. Many times, they would walk bare-footed. They had no hesitation in prostrating in mud or on bare-earth. Umar R.A. used to make wudhu with a pot that was of Christian origin. The Prophet ﷺ is known to have taken bath using a pot that was used for eating food and had some remains in it. These great people were not overly concerned about the external dimension and only did what Allah SWT asked them to do or what He permitted them to do. On the other hand, we have people in our society nowadays who consider someone walking bare-foot to be someone very strange or who do not consider it appropriate to offer salah on the ground without the prayer mat. The result of this is that we are unable to focus on the inner dimensions which are the real crux and very sought-after outcome from these acts of worship.

In today's lesson, Insha'Allah we will see how the external dimensions of purification carry deep meaning and how we can move up from the first level of purification to the higher levels.

Benefits of Wudhu:

Being Grateful to Allah SWT

Cleanliness is half of our faith. Whenever we are required to cleanse ourselves from ritual impurity, we use water. When it is not available, we do tayammum. This cleanliness and concern for cleanliness is a great blessing of Allah SWT. We now know after centuries of research that water is one of the best anti-septics and cleansing agent and that cleaning often prevents a number of diseases. Allah SWT knew this before even He created water and human beings. We accordingly have to be thankful to Allah SWT for making us Muslims and giving us this opportunity to cleanse our external bodies and the inner self through the beautiful faith of Islam.

Opportunity to utilize the connection between external and the internal

It is a scientific principle that if we act to be happy and smile, we actually become happy as the happiness hormones in our body are released when they receive the signal that the person is smiling. Same goes with sadness. So what is outside us, changes the conditions of what is inside us. Similarly, we see that the feeling that we internally have is often displayed on our face and in our body language. So, the principle is that there is a connection between our internal and external state.

When we are cleaning ourselves and remain concerned about whether we have purified certain parts of our body, this external care for cleanliness also penetrates inward and gives life to our conscious. It encourages us to be concerned about the cleanliness of our inside too.

Similarly, we know from the Prophetic traditions that he ﷺ used to ask companions to straighten the rows and mention that if the rows in salah are not straight, the hearts would not remain straight and

aligned too. This is another example of where you see external impacting the internal. We all feel that. When we are standing in straight rows, our hearts feel that we are all the same and everyone is equal in the sight of Allah – the higher levels in the sight of Allah are for those who are more righteous. We also feel the brotherhood that we are all part of one big family of believers and are brothers to each other.

Similarly, when we make wudhu, we should feel as if we are going to see Allah SWT; think that all your acts of disobedience are going to be presented in front of Him; and think of the good deeds that you have done between this and the previous salah that you would be going to happily present them to Allah SWT. This feeling and thinking about the presence of Allah can significantly help us in streamlining the direction of our life and shifting our focus to Allah SWT alone.

Why use water for purification:

Allah SWT tells us that he sends the water from the sky and it gives life to the dead earth and then it produces fruits of various kinds. Same goes with our hearts and characters too. This is the significance of water. It gives life to the dead hearts too and the fruits of great character are produced.

Reminded about our origin:

We are all made from water; People of all races, countries, and color are made from water. When we touch this water and use it, we have to remind ourselves of this fact. We are no superior or inferior to anyone based on where we belong to, where we live and how much worldly possessions we have. We have no grounds to be arrogant and oppressive.

Think about those who don't have water

When we are making wudhu, we should never waste it. We should remind ourselves of the saying of the prophet in which he commanded us not to waste water even if we are sitting at the bank of the river. When we develop this feeling, we will be able to feel the pain of those who are deprived of sufficient quantity of water and those who have to walk miles every day to obtain water for their family. Think that those people will be there to question us on the day of judgment when they are struggling to get this blessing and we are mercilessly wasting it.

Fadhail or Virtues of wudhu

The virtues of good deeds provide encouragement for doing those good deeds in the best of the ways. The following are some of the virtues of wudhu that we have to remind ourselves of when making the wudhu: to do it in a good manner

- When we wash our face, the sins of the eyes are forgiven
- When arms are washed to the elbow, the sins of hands are departed
- The sins of where our feet took us are departed when we wash our feet

- Each part that we wash will shine on the day of judgment - think about this and shift your focus to the hereafter and think about meeting your beloved ﷺ in this state and drinking water from Al-Kauthar

Acts during the wudhu

Intention – Preparing to stand in front of Allah SWT:

The first thing that we do before purification is making the intention about it in our hearts; this intention has to be in the hearts and not necessarily on tongues. Make your self aware that you are doing this for the sake of Allah alone. Tell yourself that the actions are judged based on their intentions. Do not make the salah for society or parents or colleagues or someone else. Do it for Allah. Revive your intention and question yourself why you do what you do. If it is for the sake of Allah, it should be done in a manner that shows our respect and love for Him.

Clean your heart for Allah and remove all the impurities from it. But do not allow Satan to make you abandon the good action by putting you in doubt about your intentions. If there is a doubt about Riya in your heart, pause for a minute, clean your intention and then proceed ahead with the good deed. Do not abandon even the smallest of good acts.

Saying Bismillah:

After making the intention, we have to say Bismillah. Remind yourself that you are making this wudhu with Allah's permission. There are many who are deprived of this blessing; you are enjoying an opportunity to get close to Him and acquire His please. It should also be a reminder for yourself and me that everything that happens, happens because of Allah's will. I cannot do anything at my own irrespective of whatever intellectual, physical, financial or other resources I may have.

Washing the hands

The first thing we do after the Bismillah is the washing of hands. When washing them, imaging in your mind that you are washing them so that you can hold the book of your deeds in them. is wash our hands; By cleaning them, make an intention that we want them to hold the book of our deeds in them.

Washing mouth and nose:

When washing the mouth and nose, think about the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ in which he asked about what topples people on their faces in the hell-fire; he explained 'the harvest of the tongues'. We should think about purifying our tongues. Asking forgiveness from those who we have wronged and if we are unable to find them, then make utmost repentance and seek Allah's forgiveness.

Washing body-parts and feet

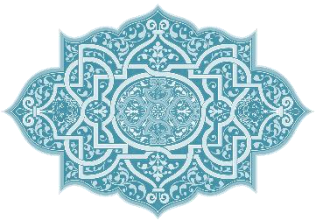
When washing the body part, think that these parts will be shining on the day of judgment. Think that you are washing them to prevent them from going to the hell-fire if you don't do any major disobedience afterward.

When washing your feet, think about the bridge of As-Sirat which everyone will need to walk through. Make a dua for your success on that day when you wash your feet.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 24

Summarize the points discussed in today's lesson and do a wudhu while thinking about all the things we have discussed today. Make this a routine practice.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 25



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Gehad Hashim Brown[17]

THE INNER DIMENSIONS OF SALAH – PART 1

When we try to offer prayer and discuss the fiqh of prayer, we want our actions to be most closely aligned with how the Prophet ﷺ offered the prayer, as he said that 'pray as you see me pray'. The Prophet ﷺ also told us that Allah SWT does not look at our appearances and our bodies, but at our hearts. Accordingly, it is very important that our hearts should be at the right place too when we are offering the prayers. That is the objective of this lecture.

The lifting of veils between the slave and his Lord

In the salah, there is a connection between the slave and his Lord – the veil between you and Allah SWT is lifted. In a hadith, it is mentioned that when a slave stands in prayer towards Allah SWT, the gates of paradise are opened for him and the veils between him and his Lord are lifted and the companions that are waiting for him in the Jannah, look attentively at him so long as he doesn't engage in activities that show that he is careless, like spitting or blowing nose etc. We often forget the prophetic guidance like this. When these veils are lifted, we should feel drawing near to Allah and feel the closeness. We should try to make the maximum benefit out of this opportunity.

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Know who you are standing in front of and what you are saying to Him

Also, in the prayer when we speak, we have to be very clear who we are standing in front of and what respect He deserves. We should also try to understand the meaning of what we are saying so that we can enjoy the private and intimate conversation that we do with Allah SWT. He hears us and knows what is inside us. He even hears the footsteps of a black ant on a black mountain in a pitch-dark night. He is very well aware of what our hearts say when we are in praying. In a hadith, it is mentioned, when you are in prayer, you are speaking to Allah SWT, so long as you are in spot of praying; Allah SWT is in front of the slave when he prays, i.e. Allah is paying attention to it and Allah remains giving this special attention as long as we remain attentive.

Remembrance of Allah SWT in the prayer and outside

In the prayer, you have the dhikr. Your individual dhikr plays a role in how you are able to remember Allah SWT in prayer. These two are inter-related and interdependent. The dhikr also includes the focus and remembrance of Allah SWT and chasing away any thoughts that distract us. When we realize that we have focussed away towards something in our salah, we should stop that thought and regain our focus in salah. This should be a regular practice; the more practice you do, the easier it becomes.

How wonderful is this that when we remember Allah SWT, He remembers us too. So, when we remember Allah SWT in prayer, we have to feel that Allah SWT, is remembering us. If we remember Him in a gathering, He remembers us in a gathering better than ours. Every kind of dhikhr of Allah SWT results in Allah SWT remembering us.

When we say Bismillah before the Fatiha

Scholars explain that the summary of the meaning of the entire Quran can be found directly or indirectly in al-Fatiha and it is considered to be a summary of the Quranic guidance. Scholars have also pointed out that the summary of the meanings of Al-Fatiha is included in Bismillahi Ar-Rahman ir Raheem. We start with Allah's name and negate everything else. We acknowledge that what is, is and whatever will be, will be and whatever was, was because of Allah's will. He alone is the most powerful. Whoever He guides, no one can misguide. And whoever He lets go astray, no one can guide him. May He make us from the ones that are guided by Him.

Understand what you say in Al-Fatiha:

Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet ﷺ, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, "A prayer performed by one who has not recited in it the foundation of the Quran (Surat al-fatihah) is deficient and incomplete." It was said, "Even though we pray behind the Imam?" Abu Huraira said: Recite it to yourself, for I heard the Prophet say, "Allah Almighty said: I have divided prayer between myself and my servant into two halves, and my servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says 'all praise is due to Allah the Lord of the worlds,' Allah says: My servant has praised me. When he says 'the Gracious, the Merciful,' Allah says: My servant has exalted me. When he says 'the Master

of the Day of Judgment,' Allah says: My servant has glorified me and my servant has submitted to me. When he says 'you alone we worship, you alone we ask for help,' Allah says: This is between me and my servant, and my servant will have what he has asked for. When he says 'guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored, not those who went astray,' Allah says: This is for my servant, and my servant will have what he has asked for."

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ صَلَّى صَلَاةً لَمْ يَقْرَأْ فِيهَا بِأُمِّ الْقُرْآنِ فَهِيَ خِدَاجٌ ثَلَاثًا غَيْرُ تَمَامٍ فَقِيلَ لِأَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ إِنَّا نَكُونُ وَرَاءَ الْإِمَامِ فَقَالَ اقْرَأْ بِهَا فِي نَفْسِكَ فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى قَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ فَإِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى حَمِدَنِي عَبْدِي وَإِذَا قَالَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَثْنَى عَلَيَّ عَبْدِي وَإِذَا قَالَ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ قَالَ مَجَّدَنِي عَبْدِي وَقَالَ مَرَّةً فَوَّضَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي فَإِذَا قَالَ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ قَالَ هَذَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ فَإِذَا قَالَ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ قَالَ هَذَا لِعَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ

صحيح مسلم كتاب الصلاة باب وجوب قراءة الفاتحة في كل ركعة وقراءة غيرها إن لم يحسنها 395

Obtaining nearness to Allah SWT

If you wish to reach Allah SWT, you don't have to follow a particular direction; you can find Him everywhere. Many theologians say that our soul is not part of the physical world and is free of directionality. It is therefore that, irrespective of the direction that the body is facing, the soul can still find Allah SWT. That is why Allah SWT said in the Quran the Al-Birr or complete goodness is not that you turn your direction towards east or the west – it is linked to having the right belief and doing the right actions. This was revealed in response to the what the Jews were saying when the qibla for the Muslims was changed from Jerusalem to Makkah as commanded by Allah SWT. Allah SWT told that this is not the criteria of goodness that people have established. We all pray towards one direction out of the wisdom of Allah SWT; otherwise, He is free from direction and He is everywhere. With this content, try to understand the secret that Allah SWT has told us. When we make the Sajdah, we are close to Allah SWT, as explained in a narration. We should, therefore, feel this closeness when we bow down and put our foreheads in front of Allah SWT in our humble submission.

The presence of the heart in the salah

The prayer should have our heart and soul engaged in it. It is for the remembrance of Allah SWT. The person who does not have his heart in salah is from the heedless as he is not fulfilling the purpose of prayer. Allah SWT asks us to establish the prayer for His remembrance – that is the purpose of the prayer. If we don't remember Him in the prayer, then we are not meeting the objective for which it was enjoined upon us. Allah does not accept the work of a slave until his heart is there with the action of his body. With regards to the prayers in which we were heedless, we will not be required by shariah to re-offer them but their rewards would diminish because of our heedlessness and inattentiveness. We can try to bridge this gap with extra voluntary salah and fix our affairs for the future. It is necessary for the person, therefore, to bring his heart to the prayer.

The components of the presence of heart

The following are the characteristics of the heart that is ready for prayer:

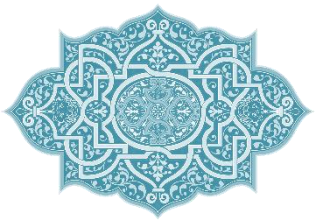
- One should empty the heart for the purpose of words of prayer
- One should empty the heart for the pondering over the actions of prayers
- One should avoid all that occupies the heart causing the deviation from the above

How to attain the presence of heart

The scholars have suggested the following in order to attain the presence of heart in salah:

- Step 1: Focus on the words and the actions of salah
- Step 2: One should have a comprehension of the meaning of words that he is saying in prayer
- Step 3: In particular, understand the meaning of what we say to glorify Allah SWT in our prayers, e.g. Subhana Rabi Al-Aala, and the Tahmeed, such as Alhamdolillah. Understand the magnificence of Allah. Understand the dhikhr you say in prayer.
- Step 4: One should understand the reality of actions that one is doing in prayer. E.g. when we stand, our poster should show respect. We should be mindful about how we carry ourselves in salah and question our behavior, movements, and postures. Similarly, when we bow, we accept the greatness of Allah SWT and our humility. In order to understand the greatness of Allah SWT, ponder over the meaning of His beautiful names.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 26



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Navaid Aziz[18]

THE INNER DIMENSIONS OF SALAH – PART 2

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Every individual must stand before Allah twice: when he stands before Him in prayer and when he stands before Him on the Day he meets Him. Whoever stands before Him as he should in the first instance, the second standing will be made easy for him, but whoever is heedless with regard to this standing, and does not stand before Him (in prayer) as he should, that standing (on the Day of Resurrection) will be made difficult for him.

[Al-Fawaid]

Accordingly, in order to prepare for our standing on that day, it is very important that we should pay attention to perfecting our standing in this world. One of the keys to attaining that is connecting with the inner dimensions of salah and offering it with complete focus.

Pre-Salah Requirements for focus in prayer

Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim has divided the focus in salah between the pre-salah and during the salah phases. The pre-salah phase has three main requirements:

[18] Shaykh Navaid Aziz is a Canadian Muslim scholar. He is the Director of Religious and Social Services for the Islamic Information Society of Calgary, Canada. He is also a regular lecture at Al-Maghrib Institute and serves as their Director for Public Relations. In addition to this, the sheikh has also served at a number of other important positions during his diverse career. One of the key highlights of his scholarly career is his counselling work with the youth and at-risk communities. In 2015 Navaid became the first ever Muslim chaplain with the Calgary Police Services. Through his involvement with CPS he consulted in the development of their world renowned redirect program. He is currently working on establishing further opportunities for preventing radicalization and enhancing youth integration. Shaykh Navaid has also served as editor for an Islamic magazine.

His qualifications include Diplome d'etudes Collegiales (D.E.C.) in commerce and Social Sciences from Champlain College, Montreal, Quebec, Associates Degree in Arabic Language and Literature, and Bachelors in Islamic Law from Islamic University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia.

Sheikh Navaid Aziz is a very sought after public speaker who has has lectured across four continents and dozens of countries around the globe.

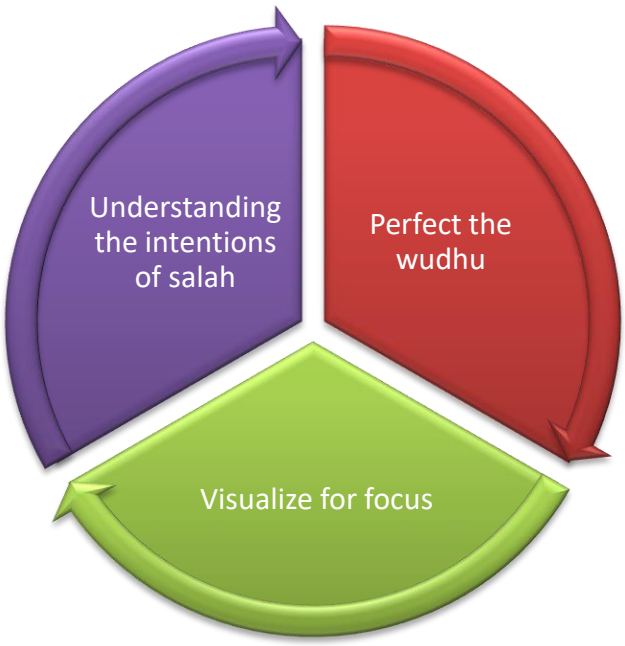


Figure: Three essential pre-salah requirements for focus in Salah

The first pre-salah phase requirement is understanding what our objectives from the salah are. There are three main objectives that we should concern ourselves with:

- To establish the remembrance of Allah SWT (i.e. the true remembrance is established when the remembrance of Allah envelops one's whole life and one remembers Him in everything that one does)
- To prevent ourselves from falling into bad deeds (i.e. in order to fall in sin, one will have to empty his heart from the remembrance of Allah SWT and fill it with the love of something else; he will also need to be away from the places of remembrance of Allah and be at places where sinning is conducive; this is something not possible for the people of as-salah)
- Seeking forgiveness from Salah (i.e. trying to make sure that one beautifies one's prayer in such a manner that it becomes a source of forgiveness for him)

The second pre-salah requirement is to eliminate the distractions. If one is hungry, one should eat first so that one can then dedicate his or her complete attention to the salah. Similarly, if someone is extremely sleepy, or requires to go to the toilet and so on, one should fulfill these requirements and then dedicate his or her complete focus and undivided attention to Allah SWT.

One should try to perfect the wudhu by performing it doing the itiba (as per the way of the Prophet ﷺ) while connecting with its inner dimensions, remembering its virtues and utilizing this opportunity to mentally prepare for salah.

Visualize for attaining focus. Many predecessors used to visualize such things that would enhance their focus. One of them used to think that the angel of death is standing beside him and he has to

beautify his salah in a manner as if it is his last salah. Another predecessor is reported to have the habit of visualizing the Jannah and thinking that as he moves towards salah and progresses in it, he is moving closer to Jannah. Another predecessor used to visualize the angels recording their deeds while they pray. These visualizations can greatly impact the quality of focus in salah.

The Secret of Salah lies in devotion to Allah

The secret and the essence of salah is to devote oneself to Allah while praying. Just as the abd (slave) should not turn his face away from the direction of the Qiblah, he should also disallow his heart from giving attention to anything except his Lord. Therefore the abd should let the Ka'bah - the House of Allah - be the direction of his body and face, and let Allah be the direction of his heart and soul. Allah shall give His attention to His abd in proportion to the level of his devotion and focus in salah[19]. Thus, if he turns away from Allah (by becoming unmindful), He too shall turn away from him - truly, as you judge, shall you yourself be judged.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The kind of wandering that is prohibited whilst praying falls into two categories:

1. When the mind wanders and the heart is distracted from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, towards something other than Allah, may He be exalted.
2. When the gaze wanders and one looks around.

Both are not allowed.

Devotion to Allah in salah is of three levels

Devotion in salah is of three levels:

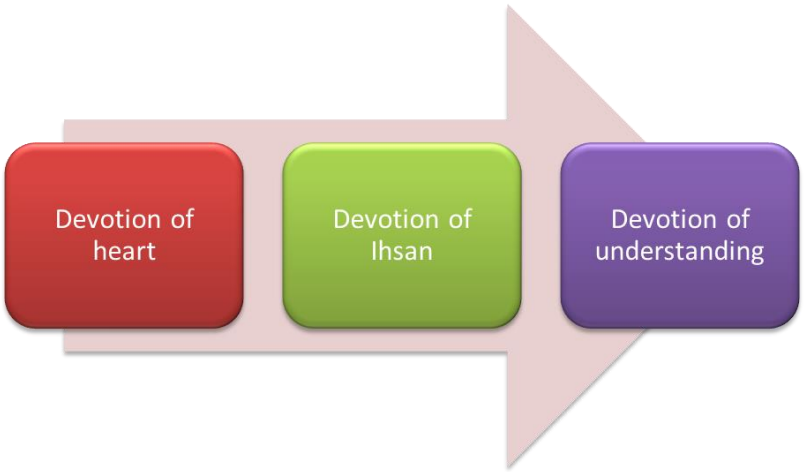


Figure: Three levels of devotion

[19] According to a hadith: "Allah is turning towards His slave so long as he does not look around, so when you pray, do not look around." Narrated by Ahmad (17800)

1. The devotion of the heart: This level safeguards the heart and rectifies its affairs from the sickness of desires and the whispers of Satan, as well as all thoughts that may nullify his salah or lessen its reward.
2. The devotion of Ihsan: This level is when the abd is mindful of Allah in his salah to the degree that he becomes as if he worships Him while seeing Him.
3. The devotion of understanding: This level is reached when the slave reflects upon and comprehends the meanings of the words of Allah (i.e. Qur'an) that he recites. And, when he contemplates the details of the worship (i.e. salah) in order to pay its due right in humility and tranquillity. Even if we ponder about Surah Al-Fatiha[20], there is so much to think and ponder about that one can get overwhelmed. Scholars have explained seven different levels of understanding of this surah and written volumes and volumes of books on this surah alone. If this one surah requires this much pondering, then how about the whole Quran and what Allah SWT has legislated for us to recite in our prayer.

If the slave successfully reaches these three levels, he will have truly established and performed his salah in the most perfect manner and in return, he will receive the full attention of Allah.

Devotion in various acts in Salah

Various aspects of this devotion during the acts of worship are meant to guide our thinking during the salah and bring our focus to what we are performing:

- **Takbeer**: The devotion of standing upright before Allah in salah comes into effect when the slave devotes his attention to the Greatness of Allah and His Attribute of Self-subsistence, as this will ensure that he turns neither his face nor his eyes from side to side. The devotion of standing in front of Allah SWT in prayer comes through the understanding of the fact that the standing in front of Allah in Dunya is what makes it easy for us to stand in front of Him in the hereafter. Also, it helps us resemble the angels who also stand in straight rows in front

[20] We ask Allah SWT for guidance when we recite Al-Fatiha. Regarding guidance, Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim mentions that it is circular in nature and consists of the following four levels as we see it in Al-Fatiha.

- Sincerity for guidance (i.e. when we express 'It is only You who we worship and it is only You whose help we seek')
- Pursuit of guidance (i.e. when we ask 'Guide us to the straight path')
- Understanding what guidance is (i.e. when we ask Allah SWT to guide us to the path of those who Allah SWT has blessed)
- Understanding the consequence of disobeying guidance (i.e. when we ask Allah SWT to not let be like those who received His wrath and those who went astray)

If we really want to seek guidance, we have to make an effort to attain the above four. The Quran is replete with guidance and motivation regarding the above-mentioned four aspects.

of their Creator. This external state, as discussed in a previous lecture, can impact our internal state and ease our way to attain the Malaiki or angelic self[21]

The devotion of the statement "Allah is the Greatest" by which the slave commences the salah is realized when the slave devotes his attention and focus to Allah's greatness, glory, and exaltation. When saying this, one denounces greatness of anything else but Allah SWT. He is the greatest. Nothing should distract the slave when he is in the company of the greatest. Nothing is worthy of my attention greater than my Lord. We say this statement with various movements within our salah to remind ourselves of what we are doing and refocus our thoughts onto the greatness of our Rabb.

- **Opening Supplication:** The devotion of the opening supplication happens when the servant extols and glorifies and praises Him profusely, ascribing to Him all that befits Him and declares His transcendence above everything that does not befit Him, and praises Him for His Attributes and Perfection. It was the practice of the Rasoolullah ﷺ that he used to make various prayers during his opening supplications as we come to know from ahadith. Accordingly, we should also try to remember, understand, and say the various wordings that he ﷺ used. This would allow us to obtain a better focus in salah. Imagine, if varying the dua we make at the beginning of salah can help us with the focus this way, how would reciting various passages of the Quran help. We should accordingly try not to remain stuck on a few quick surahs which we recite without much reflection on various levels of meaning they carry.
- **Ta'awudh (seeking Allah's protection from Satan):** The devotion of taking refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan is realized by having confidence and faith that Allah shall support him, protect him and aid him against Satan.
- **Recitation:** The devotion of reciting the Qur'an lies in the slave's endeavor to learn about Allah through His Words as if trying to see Him through His revelation. One of the righteous Salaf said: Allah manifests Himself to His slaves through His Speech (i.e. Qur'an). It is, however, the case that the degree of devotion while reciting and praying varies from one person to another, and the difference between them is like the difference between the one whose both eyes are sound and unimpaired, and the one-eyed individual, the blind person, the deaf person, etc. in their levels of perception. The abd should be as heedful as possible to His Essence, Attributes, Actions, Commandments, Laws, and Names.
- **Rukoo:** The devotion of bowing down is contained in being mindful to the Greatness and the Pride of Allah, Exalted be He. For that reason, it is prescribed for him to say while he is in the state of bowing down, "Glory to my Lord, the Most High".
- **Raising up from the rukoo:** After he rises up from his bowing stance, he should focus his attention upon glorifying and praising Allah repeatedly, so as to manifest his servitude to Him, the One in whose Hand is the sole authority to bestow and deny.
- ProstratiThe sajdah is the only action in each rakah of the salah which is repeated twice. One reason for that is physical and the other is spiritual. Physically, it is the most humble posture.

[21] One of the four types of selfs that we studied earlier (categorized according to the traits it demonstrates); Refer to lesson 7 and 8 if you wish to refresh this concept

The spiritual aspect is the closeness of the slave with His master in the sujood. When the servant falls into prostration, he ought to focus his attention on feeling his nearness to Him, overwhelmed in humility in the hope that He forgives him, guides him, sustains him, protects him and bestows His mercy upon him. Then, when he raises his head and adopts the sitting posture, his inner condition takes on a different nature, one that is similar to the condition of the pilgrim when he performs the last circumambulation because at that point, his heart begins to realize that he is about to complete his prayer and with it leave this blessed condition that he is experiencing and that soon he will be returning to the dreariness of his worldly affairs that he had detached himself from just before standing before his Lord. Once again he will be subject to the feelings of pain and anguish that his heart endured before he started praying, all of which melted away as soon as he commenced his salah. At that point, his heart rushes to enjoy the nearness of Allah for the last time, to bask in His grace, and to be saved from the disruptiveness of his worldly affairs.

- The feeling of bitterness he endures is due to his recognition that all this lasts only as long as he is praying. At this stage, the heart cannot but feel burdened and troubled knowing that all this is about to end and that he is about to return to these worldly affairs and concerns. This agitates the ahd to the point that he starts wishing that this salah were the final act of his life. Not to mention the slave's awareness that as soon as he finishes praying, he will resume communicating with those who bring him nothing but concerns, worries, and harm after he had been invoking and supplicating his Lord. However, this kind of feeling cannot be experienced except by those whose hearts are alive with the remembrance and love of Allah and who are cognizant of the negative effect that mankind leaves on their hearts. This is because interacting with people puts him in the way of harm and worries, agitates his heart and makes him overlook or miss good deeds, not to mention causing him to commit more sins. More importantly, it distracts him from invoking Allah, the most High.

In our salah, we should take our time to ponder over the above and not rush through it. We have to know that when we remember Allah SWT, He remembers us. When we recite al-Fatiha, he responds to what we are saying. Isn't it disrespectful than that we rush through it without giving any pause and reflecting on these beautiful aspects?

Discussion on Tasleem[22]

The abd of Allah is either exposed to:

1) The universally decreed Judgment of Allah pertaining to his inward and outward conditions, which necessitates him to act in accordance with his state of servitude and slavery to Allah since each judgment is associated with a special condition of servitude to Allah.

[22] Taslim (تسليم) is the concluding portion of the salah i.e. when one recites السلام عليكم ورحمة الله As-salāmu ʿalaikum wa-raḥmatu 'llah ("Peace and blessings of Allah be unto you") once while facing the right, and once while facing the left.

2) The actions that the abd performs out of his servitude to Allah and these necessitate the judgments that ensue from the prescribed religious commandments.

Each of these aspects necessitates that the abd (of Allah) submits himself to Allah, Exalted be He. In fact, this is the reason for naming him a Muslim, with reference to Islam - which is derived from the word tasleem, which means submission. As the slave submits to the divine law of his Lord as well as His universally decreed Judgment by demonstrating his servitude to Him and abstaining from following his own desires and sins, he will be as if he's saying: I am destined to bear the title of Islam deservedly.

Exposition on the fruits al-Khushoo (focus in salah)

After his heart has been filled with tranquillity through the remembrance of Allah, recitation of His Words, expressing his love for Him as well as demonstrating his servitude to Him, he leans towards his Lord and draws closer to Him to find peace, receiving safety and peace through his man and experiencing happiness through his Ihsan. It is for this reason that, abiding by these two ideals is of utmost necessity, failing this he shall neither enjoy life, success nor happiness. However, because the slave has been tried with an innate nature that entices him to commit sins, base desires that serve the callings of his innate nature, not to mention the seductive whispers of Satan, all of which aim to waste his share of his reward or, at the very least, decrease his share of the reward, the wisdom of Allah, the Most Merciful and the Mighty, has decreed for him the salah, to compensate him for the missed reward and to revive his willpower and rectify his man. The Mercy and Wisdom of Allah manifest themselves again when He, Exalted be He, decreed a period of time to pass between five prayers so that the slave can regain his composure and blot out the sins he earned in between.

Furthermore, He made the actions of salah such that they symbolize his submission, surrender, and humility to Allah; thus He made for each body limb a duty to perform what demonstrates its servitude to Allah. He also made the spirit of salah and the means to reap its fruits that the slave gives his full attention and complete devotion to Allah. And he made its reward and place be when he enters upon Allah (i.e. commences salah) and He ordered his 'abd to adorn himself before commencing the salah as a reminder for him of the Day of Judgment when he shall be screened for questioning.

The fruit of salah is true devotion to Allah

- The fruit of fasting is the purification of the soul.
- The fruit of Zakah (obligatory alms) is the purification of wealth.
- The fruit of Hajj (pilgrimage) is forgiveness.
- The fruit of jihad (fighting is submitting the soul) that Allah bartered from His servants in exchange for Paradise.
- The fruit of salah is the attention of the abd upon his Lord and the attention of Allah given to His abd. However, embarking towards Allah with complete devotion in salah encompasses

all the aforementioned fruits because the fruits of all good deeds are found when the 'abd embarks towards Allah with true devotion.

This explains why the Prophet ﷺ never said, my comfort lies in fasting, or Hajj or al-umrah or any other good deed but rather he said: “my comfort has been made in the salah”. It is also worthwhile to pay attention to the Prophet’s ﷺ choice of words in this statement. He said “my comfort is made in salah ” and did not say “my comfort is made with salah ” because the former means that comfort is achieved only after commencing the salah, while the latter implies that such comfort is received even when not praying. This is why when he sought the comfort of his heart he would say: “O Bilal, call for salah. give us comfort by it” meaning, call for the prayer so that we can pray and relieve ourselves from the hardships of this life, just as how a tired person finds repose as soon as he arrives at his house and settles down in it, breaking away from the hardships and the fatigue he endured outside.

You ought to pause and reflect again upon his choice of words that reveal another subtlety; the Prophet ﷺ did not say, let us relieve ourselves from the burden of duty (i.e. salah), which is the attitude of those who pray just to release themselves from the obligation of praying, who feel hassled every time they have to pray - and when they pray they cannot wait to finish it because the source of their comfort is found outside the salah, since their hearts are filled with everything except Allah. Thus, praying merely keeps them from indulging in this worldly life that they love so much. They are easily observed from their manner of performing prayer; they pray in a rush and lack tranquility and calmness. The only thing that compels them to pray in the first place is that they know it is a must (obligation). However, their salah is deficient; they utter with their tongues that which does not conform to what is in their hearts. All the while, the voice of their heart echos, let’s get this salah over with! Therefore the difference between a person whose comfort is found in the salah and a person whose comfort is found outside the salah is obvious and self-evident. The former finds salah to be a grace upon his heart through which he experiences tranquillity, calmness, and pleasure, whereas the latter finds salah akin to heavy chains shackling his limbs and a gloomy cell imprisoning his heart.

Truly, those whose comfort is not found in salah feel as if praying was a prison for their soul and chains confining their limbs from committing sins. Despite that, the salah of this type of people might be a means whereby their sins are forgiven and they receive a share of Allah’s Mercy depending on how much servitude to Allah they manage to demonstrate while praying. But on the other hand, it is also possible they might be punished for the deficiency in their salah. As for those whose comfort is to be found in salah, for them praying is the garden in which they find comfort, pleasure, tranquillity, and the grace of their hearts and souls.

It brings them nearer to Allah and elevates their rank, so that they only have a reward similar to those that preceded, but they also enjoy a special rank that none ever had, by being brought near to Allah, in addition to the mere reward they receive for the performance of their salah.

From the benefits of Salah is nearness to Allah

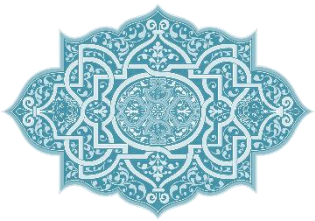
It is customary for kings to promise reward and nearness to those whom they are pleased with. The magicians said to Pharaoh, “Is there indeed for us a reward if we are predominant?” [al-Shu'ara 9 (26): 41] and he answered that they would be rewarded and be among those near to him, saying “Yes, and, [moreover], you will be among those made near [to me].” [al-Ar'df (7): 114]

The example of the first type is like a man who entered the abode of the king but was unable to gain entrance to him as there was a barrier standing between him and the king, hence he was unable to see him or gain access to this person. The barrier is an embodiment of his desires and lusts as well as the smoke screen of his hopeful wishes in this life; his heart is sick and his self is wrapped up in what it desires wanting only its immediate share in this life. It is for these reasons that all the while they pray they are in an unhappy state wherein they are not only unable to obtain any comfort, but are also empty of feelings of fear and hope in Allah, which makes prayer a suffering for them that only ceases when they finish praying, as only then are they able to return to that in which they find their comfort (i.e. worldly affairs and pleasures).

The example of the second type is like a man who entered the house of the king upon which the barrier screening him from the king is removed; thus he is able to find delight in looking at the king and being at his service and in his obedience. In return, the king lavishes upon him every form of grace and brings him near to himself. For all these reasons, he is unable to bear leaving the house and wishes to remain standing before him to enjoy the sweetness of being close to him, the tranquillity that he experiences from it, and being held in esteem by Allah while he basks in His good Words (i.e. Qur’an). He also enjoys being in such a state of humbleness and humility before Him, for which he invokes Him more and more while he is being showered with His graces from every direction, not to mention the calmness that his soul experiences while his heart and limbs are fully attentive to his Lord. He is pleased and comfortable, worshipping Allah as if he sees Him, for He manifests Himself to him through His Words (i.e. Qur’an). It should thus come as no surprise that the most distressing thing for him is to have to leave all that (i.e. conclude the salah). And Allah is the Guide and the Helper.

The aforementioned are just some brief glimpses and hints about salah and disclosure of some of its subtle qualities and hidden gems.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 27



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui

LEARN TO BE STILL IN SALAH

Our original state of "Uns"

Once upon a time, we were not here. Once upon a time, we were in Jannah in the genomes of our Father Adam A.S. and our mother Hawa A.S. The human being, 'Ins' was in 'Uns'. The human being was in the presence and company the divine with all of that what that implies of - infinite beauty, an infinite perfection, and majesty beyond any visualization.

That state of being of the human being, the insane, is called Uns.

That Uns was an internal out-of-this-world soothing gentle feeling in the heart that is different than that feeling one has when one is pleased after eating or drinking or playing or reading a book or solving a problem. We all have different feelings of elation and satisfaction and pleasure when we accomplish certain things or when we indulge in certain desires.

The life of this world is the journey to get Uns

Now when the human being is stripped from that and when we are devoid of that, we lose our nature and become different to what our true nature is. This Dunya and its life is a quest and journey to regain our Uns with Allah SWT and to reclaim our original nature. We wish to go back to our original home and be in the Uns – the wonderful feeling of being in the company of divine where the veil will be lifted and the people of Jannah will be able to see their Lord, as the Prophet ﷺ told us. This, to those people, will be the most beloved thing.

Is it possible to attain Uns in the Dunya

People in the Dunya can attain various levels of Uns at the level that this world would permit by the grace of Allah or not attain Uns. It depends on a number of factors some of which we will cover as we move on in this lesson.

What is our state when we are not in the state of Uns

When not in Uns, we are in a state called *Wahshah*. The word wahshah is driven from the word 'wahsh' which means a wild beast. When I'm alone, I am either in Uns [and in that state feel a glimpse of my true humanity] or I am in the wahshah.

What happens when we are in the state of Wahshah

When in the state of Wahshah, a person does not feel the serenity in the heart. He is lost in worries and runs after the created world and the desires. When I am alone, it is on account of something happening inside of me that makes me very restless and uncomfortable and even afraid and maybe anxious. When I am alone and when I am with me, if my state is that of Wahshah, I will be afraid of me. The wild beast and the predator insider I would make me restless and I won't be alone in an empty room because what's inside of me would be a confluence and combination of many different energies and noises.

Energies inside our bodies – how do they come about?

These energies, when I am in the state of wahshah, are not from the kind that is divine and what is born out of a feeling of awareness of the Divine. It is because I am not connected to the divine; I am rather connected to the noise of this world, this lower world, and the worries, concerns, thoughts, and feelings that I accumulated during my day in my ears, or being attached and connected to other than Allah SWT and because of the way I use my eyes.

Every time I use my eyes, I receive data and signals and signs and information and noise. Everything that is not desired is the noise. So, if receive noise from my senses and my hearing and my eyes, it gets stored in me. I store that inside of me whether I like it or not. My ears are not in sukoon or focus; rather they are allowed to move and are allowed to be not still in focus. My eyes are not still and not in focus. They are allowed to receive all sorts positive and negative energies which stored inside of me. The way I use my tongue and the way I choose my words, and the meanings that I convey, are also means by which I store energy inside of me. Similarly, the way I use my hands and the way I use my legs and the way I feel things with my skin, and where I go results in positive or negative energy stored in me.

How do these energies impact us

What I store in me will come to hunt and to haunt me. With the way I use my senses, I am losing my Uns. It is because of this improper use of my senses in receiving and absorbing all types of signals that will cause stir-ups inside of me; that will have consequences such as either quietude, tranquillity, or anxiety, restlessness, fear, depression, anger, and other ailments.

What is the solution – Acquire stillness

I need my eyes to be still, my ears to be still, my tongue to be still, my hands to be still, my legs to be still, and other senses of mine to be still by controlling what goes inside of me.

Salah – An opportunity to be still

Allah has given us various opportunities to be still. Salah is one such great gifts. That's an opportunity to learn to be still. We must learn to be still first in Salah.

Often it happens that Satan puts in front of us or on top of our mind what we have stored through the eyes and ears and tongue and worldly actions and activities. Satan triggers these things and plays back this while I am in salah. This happens when I am internally not still when my heart is not still.

Learn to be still in Salah in order to develop your Khushoo

One day, a man was offering the prayer and moving his hand inappropriately [for touching his beard and so on]. When one the great early scholars saw him in this state, he said, 'had his heart been still, his limbs would have been still'.

When we enter Salah, we are intended to be still so that we reflect that into the stillness. Every motion we do in Salah, other than the motions told to us by the beloved of Allah ﷺ, are improper. Every motion of our heads or our eyes or our hands is highly improper. Were it not for the grace of Allah SWT, He would have said that such salah is invalid. But He is very kind and still accepts. But this salah is not a good enough Salah. When I'm not still while I am in Salah and I move even my eyes, my gaze to the right or to the left and when the Qalb is not in focus or khushoo, then it is said in a hadith Al-Qudsi that Allah SWT asks: Where to my slave? Somewhere better than me?

We have to feel really feel it. When we move our gaze here and there or when I think about the created things while in Salah, we have to ask ourselves, 'Where to? Somewhere better than Allah SWT?'. I have to realize that I am standing in front of Him spiritually and still I am attached to other than Him? I am still thinking about the created realm? Where to? Somewhere better than Allah? Why do you use your eyes to look towards that which keeps you distant from your Lord? Why do you use your ears to listen to sounds and words that do not keep you closer to your Lord? Why do you use your tongues freely to keep you away from your Rabb? Why do you go places where it takes you away from Your Rabb? Why with your heart and your mind, you navigate in fields and in realms of the created world to keep you away from your Allah? Why don't you learn to be still to find Allah?

If I want to listen in a forest to the sounds of nature and there are so many of them, I need to stop myself from even walking. I make noise even when I walk. This disconnects me from the sound of nature. So, I have to learn to be still and void my body and mind of any movements.

The Prophet ﷺ informed us in a hadith al-Qudsi that Allah SWT says:

يَقُولُ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمْلأْ صَدْرَكَ غِنًى

Allah SWT says: O son of Adam! Free yourself for my worship. I will fill your heart with richness [or contentment].

[Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 37, Hadith 4246]

O child of Adam, empty yourself, liberate yourself, remove the noise inside of you so that you are able to receive me. Empty yourself, I shall fill up your heart with richness. But you have to remove the noise and learn to be still. You have to learn to spend moments alone to develop that stillness and to develop that Uns. You have to learn to learn to remove gradually the Wahshah inside of us to build up the Uns and reclaim our nature.

Salah is our opportunity to be still. In our salah, we should be motionless - no movements of a hand and of lags or eyes except what is the way of the Prophet ﷺ for it is what is the best way to worship. The intent behind this stillness is to keep my heart and your heart is focused or at least learning to be focused on Him with an awareness inside me that he is watching me.

One of the great scholars mentions that 'I am watchful and I learned to be watchful by being aware and conscious in my heart about the watchfulness of Allah. This is the key to attaining taqwa and being free from noise.

If I don't learn to be still and to disengage with my senses, my lens and my eyes and my ears and my tongue, If I never disengage from the sources of noise that we get fed with, I will never be able to taste the sweetness of Uns.

Acquire stillness through the Dhikr After Salah and push out the noises from your heart

I need to provide myself time alone to think and push out such noises from my heart – I need to learn to be in Khalwah (seclusion) to push out the noises. I have to gift me these moments of retreat alone. Allah has given me an opportunity to do this in my Salah and in the dhikr after the salah. If I practice it properly, it teaches me to be still. Let me be not that person who does not reflect in salah and who is busy with undue movements even during the salah. Let me be not the person who, as soon as he says 'Assalam o Alaikum wrb', runs away to feed the senses with noise and unnecessary superfluous energies. Don't be in a hurry to move to look right and left regardless of what others do around you, even if it were our Imam who leaves us. Everyone has a share, everyone has a station, everyone has a state.

When we get tempted to run away straight after Salah without our mindful dhikr, we should question ourselves: Where to? Somewhere better than Allah? Learn to enjoy that moment or at least attempt to be in Uns.

The light for the hearts

I have to know that they are Anwar of Allah SWT which He blesses the hearts of His servants with. The Anwar or the gifts of Allah are the spiritual gifts in the form of special feelings and tranquility that descends on the heart. I have to give my heart an opportunity to engage in dhikr and let the

Anwar descend on it. They will enter my heart only if I prepare my heart to receive them – first, by being still externally and second, by being still internally.

The word Anwar is the plural of Nur and it is associated with light. We need light for our bodily and external eyes to see. Similarly, we need the Anwar of Allah SWT to descend upon our spiritual hearts so that we can then see the reality of this world and our life through them. Without this light, the eyes of our heart will not be able to see the reality of things around us and we will remain blind.

فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَٰكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts in the chests that grow blind (Quran 22:46)

Another thing that we need to understand from this parable is that if our eyes are sick and they don't function properly, they cannot see – even in the presence of light. Same is the case with our hearts. If they are sick, the light would not result in their ability to see. So, we have to fix these sick hearts to be able to take benefit from the light.

In order for this light to enter my heart and give me vision, I have to rid myself of all forms of negative energies – whether in public or private. I have to rid myself of unlawful sounds and unlawful sights and unlawful words and unlawful movements. Otherwise, these negative energies will always keep me distant from Allah SWT – even during my salah.

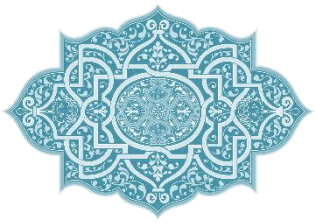
That's why we need to learn to be still in Salah and need to be alone after Salah to sit and disengage for some time - even just closing my eyes for a while. Closing my eyes is to stop the inputs and providing my opportunity to be still. When doing so, I intend to liberate my heart from what's in it. It is to instill a sense of awareness inside of me that Allah is watching me. I want to remove thoughts and feelings that come into my heart that are improper in any sense.

In this state, I then have to engage dhikr after my salah and ponder over what it really means. I have to tell my heart that La Ilaha, there is no god (with small 'g'). I don't want the gods inside of me - my connections, my relations, worries, attachments, my negative drives, my past, my negative feelings - I want none of that to distract me. I don't want to allow anything inside of my heart. La Ilaha – Ila Allah. The place in my heart is only for Allah SWT. I want Him to illuminate my heart with all His attributes. I have to acquire this feeling through my salah and dhikr after it. If I develop this feeling, I begin to learn not to see and not to hear other than what pleases Allah SWT. I want to do that because I am the Mureed of Allah SWT. I want Him and I want nearness to Him. إنا اريد قرب الله. The Mureed is someone who is already focused and who has a destination. That destination I must never lose sight of. And therefore I need to consistently give myself a diet of being alone - sitting alone still or developing the stillness.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 27

Give yourself a moment of stillness in salah today – don't move your hand, hands, eyes, and mind unnecessarily. After the salah, engage in dhikr and remove all the false gods that may reside in our hearts without us realizing their presence, many a times.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 28



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Abdur Raheem Green

THE INNER DIMENSIONS OF FASTING

This lecture is divided into two parts.

- Part 1 deals with the virtues of fasting
- Part 2 deals with three levels of fasting as explained by Imam Ibn Qudamah in his book Minhaj ul Qasideen

Virtues of Fasting

There are many virtues of Ramadan and fasting expressed in the Qur'an and in the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. If only one of these virtues was told to us it would have been enough motivation to perfect our fasting seeking that reward and the pleasure of Allah, but it is again from the mercy of Allah that He taught us many virtues of fasting so that we get encouraged even more. I will focus mainly on the virtues of forgiveness, salvation from Hellfire and reward of Paradise, but before that, I shall mention a few other virtues that are not less important than the latter.

A means to attain Taqwa

Allah says [meaning]: "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for people before you so that you will (learn how to) attain Taqwa" [al-Baqarah, 2:183]

The people of Taqwa are the successful people in this life and in the hereafter where they will be the dwellers of Paradise. Allah says [in meaning]: "This is the Book; in it is guidance sure without doubt to the Muttaqeen [people of Taqwa]. Who believe in the Unseen are steadfast in prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee and sent before thy time and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true) guidance from their Lord and it is these who are successful. (al-Baqarah 1:1-5)

He also says [meaning]: "Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth prepared for the Muttaqeen [people of Taqwa]. Those who spend (freely) whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good. And those who having done something to be ashamed of or wronged their own souls earnestly bring Allah to mind and ask for forgiveness for

their sins and who can forgive sins except Allah? And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done. For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens with rivers flowing underneath an eternal dwelling; how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!". [Aali `Imraan, 3:133-136]

A merciful recommendation from Allah

"And fast, it is better for you, if only you knew" [al-Baqarah, 2:184]

Indeed if Allah says that something is better of us, it is really better for us and we should strive to perfect it.

The practice of the Prophets

`Abdullah Ibn `Amr said: The Messenger of Allah, ﷺ said: The fast most loved by Allah is the fast of Dawood and the most loved prayer is the prayer of Dawood. He used to sleep half the night, pray for a third of the night, and then sleep during the last sixth of the night. He would also fast one day and then eat on the next. [Ahmad]

A great reward for those who fast

The Prophet said, "Allah said: The Fast is for Me and I will give the reward for it, as he (the one who observes the fast) leaves his sexual desire, food, and drink for My Sake. Fasting is a screen (from Hell) and there are two pleasures (moments of happiness or joys) for a fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord. And the smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better in Allah's Sight than the smell of musk." [Bukhari]

He also said: "Every action of the son of Adam is given manifold reward, each good deed receiving ten times its like, up to seven hundred times. Allah the Most High said: 'Except for fasting, for it is for Me and I will give recompense for it, he leaves off his desires and his food for Me'. For the fasting person there are two times of joy; a time of joy when he breaks his fast and a time of joy when he meets his Lord, and the smell coming from the mouth of the fasting person is better with Allah than the smell of Musk." [Muslim]

A means to cut sexual desires

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ordered the one who has strong desires and the need for marriage, but is unable to marry, to fast. Fasting is thus a means of cutting desires, since it reduces the vigor of the limbs of the body, it calms them and bridles them.

The supplication of the fasting person is granted

Jabir, radhiya Allahu `anhu relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:" In every day and every night, during the month of Ramadan, there are people to whom Allah grants freedom from the Fire, and

there is for every Muslim a supplication which he can make and will be granted". [al-Bazzaar, Ahmad and Ibn Majah; Sahih]

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet, ﷺ, said: "There are three people whose supplications are not rejected: the fasting person when he breaks the fast, the just ruler and the supplication of the oppressed". [Tirmithi, Ibn Majah and Ibn Hibban]

A Means of intercession on the Day of Judgment

`Abdullah ibn `Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The fast and the Qur'an are two intercessors for the servant of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. The fast will say: 'O Lord, I prevented him from his food and desires during the day. Let me intercede for him.' The Qur'an will say: 'I prevented him from sleeping at night. Let me intercede for him.' And their intercession will be accepted." [Ahmad]

In Ramadan, there is Laylatul Qadr (the night of Decree)

"Indeed We have revealed it (Qur'an) in the night of Decree. And what will explain to you what the night of Decree is? The night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descends the Angels and the Spirit (Jibreel) by Allah's permission, on every errand: (they say) "peace" (continuously) till the rise of Morning!" (97:1-5)

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (S) said " The blessed month has come to you. Allah has made fasting during it obligatory upon you. During it, the gates to Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are locked, and the devils are chained. There is a night [during this month] which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived [of something great]. [Ahmad, an-Nisa'i, and al-Bayhaqi].

An Umra in Ramadan is equivalent to Hajj

`Ata' said: I heard Ibn 'Abbas saying, "Allah's Apostle asked an Ansari woman (Ibn 'Abbas named her but 'Ata' forgot her name), 'What prevented you from performing Hajj with us?' She replied, 'We have a camel and the father of so-and-so and his son (i.e. her husband and her son) rode it and left one camel for us to use for irrigation.' He said (to her), 'Perform 'Umra when Ramadan comes, for 'Umra in Ramadan is equal to Hajj (in reward),' or said something similar." [Bukhari].

A Means of Forgiveness

It is a reality that none of us is perfect. We all have some weaknesses and shortcoming and we find ourselves committing sins out of ignorance or out of submission to our desires and whims and thus driving ourselves away from Allah darkening our heart and sealing them from the guidance and overloading our books of bad deeds. However, Allah said of Himself that He is the Most Merciful the oft-Forgiving. As part of this infinite Mercy, He made available for us various ways of achieving forgiveness and sin expiation. Among the most important and beneficial of these ways of forgiveness

is fasting in general and in Ramadan in particular. Let us discover this glad tiding from the sweet words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: "The time between the five prayers, two consecutive Friday Prayers, and two consecutive Ramadan are expiations for all that has happened during that period, provided that one has avoided the grave (major) sins." [Muslim]

Abu Huraira narrated that Allah's Messenger said: "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven." [Bukhari]

"Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadan (and that is called Qiyam) faithfully out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not for showing off), all his past sins will be forgiven. [Bukhari]

Abu Hurairah also narrated that the Prophet, ﷺ, climbed upon the mimbar (pulpit) and said: "Aameen [O Allah grant it], aameen, aameen". So it was said, "O Messenger of Allah, you climbed upon the mimbar and said: "Aameen, Aameen, Aameen"? So he said: "Jibraa'eel, `Alaihi Assalam, came to me and said, 'Whoever reaches the month of Ramadan and does not have [his sins] forgiven and so enters Fire, then may Allah distance him, say aameen". So I said "aameen". [Ibn Khuzaimah, Ahmad and al-Baihaqui: Sahih]

Hudhaifah Ibn al-Yamaan reported that the Prophet, ﷺ, said: "The evils caused for a man through his family, wealth and neighbor are expiated by prayer, fasting, and charity." [Bukhari and Muslim]. In another narration in Sahih al-Jami`: "The evils caused for a man through his family, his wealth, himself, his children and his neighbor are expiated by fasting, prayer, charity, enjoining the good and forbidding the bad.

Three levels of fasting

There are three levels of fasting:

- the general fast which most people keep
- the specific fast which fewer people are able to keep, and
- the fast of those who attain closeness to Allah SWT

The fast of general people

The general fast is the refraining of one’s stomach and private parts from fulfilling their desires.

The first of these three levels entails the abstinence which is fulfilled, the fast is considered complete in view of the one having met the legislated requirements [i.e. It does not have to be repeated or made up, the servant has indeed fasted.]

The specific fast which fewer people are able to keep

The specific fast is the refraining of one's gaze, tongue, hands, feet, hearing, and eyes, as well as the rest of his body parts from committing sinful acts.

From the characteristics of the specific fast is that one lowers his gaze and safeguards his tongue from the repulsive speech that is forbidden, disliked, or which has no benefit, as well as controlling the rest of his body parts. In a hadeeth by al-Bukhari:

''Whosoever does not abandon false speech and the acting upon it, Allah is not in need off his food and drink.''

Another characteristic of the specific fast is that one does not overfill himself with food during the night. Instead, he eats in due measure, for indeed, the son of Adam does not fill a vessel more evil than his stomach. If he were to eat his fill during the first part of the night, he would not make good use of himself for the remainder of the night. In the same way, if he eats to his fill for suhoor, he does make good use of himself until the afternoon. This is because excessive eating breeds laziness and lethargy, therefore, the objective of fasting disappears due to one's excessiveness in eating, for what is indeed intended by the fast, is that one savors the taste of hunger and becomes an abandoner of desires.

If the second is level is not met, the fast will be of less value to the servant, than if it were met and likewise for the third.

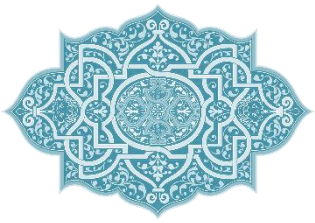
The fast of those who attain nearness to Allah SWT – the desired level

The third type of the fast which is the fast of highly devotional people is the fasting of heart from the evil thoughts. it is the heart's abstention from its yearning after the worldly affairs and the thoughts which distance one away from Allah, as well as its (the heart's) abstention.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 28

Analyze the type of fast you keep. Is it just the fast of the stomach and private parts or do you also prevent your other body parts from sinning? What about your heart? Do you prevent it from having any evil thoughts too? If not, devise a strategy for making the upcoming Ramadan to be the best Ramadan of your life.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 29



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Abdur Raheem Green

INNER DIMENSIONS OF CHARITY

Zakah (obligatory charity) is one of the pillars of Islam and almost everywhere in the Quran, Allah SWT has mentioned it with another fundamental pillar of Islam – Salah. The books of fiqh provide a detailed explanation of the important topic of zakah.

Three types of people who give charity

There are three types of people who give:

- There is the first group who do not save anything for themselves and give all of what they have for the sake of Allah SWT. Our Prophet ﷺ even use to take loans from others in order to fulfill someone's need. Once Abu Huraira R.A. was very hungry and he came to the Prophet. All the Prophet ﷺ he had in his house was a bowl of milk. He asked him to come along with his other fellows from Ashab us Suffah, the poor companions who used to reside in the mosque of the Prophet ﷺ and use to engage in learning the deen. The Prophet ﷺ made Abu Huraira R.A. sit on his left and he asked people from the right to drink. Abu Huraira R.A. thought that when the bowl would reach him, it would not have anything. However, contrary to what he was thinking, when the bowl reached him, it was as full as before due to the barakah of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ asked him to drink from it. He kept drinking till he got full and did not have any further need. This is not just a description of the miracle of the Prophet ﷺ and his barakah, but also a description of how he used to give all his possessions in the way of Allah SWT.
- The second group of people is those who spend on a few things and save a few things. Many of the companions used to fall into this category. The companions were the people who did not consider the zakat to be merely 2.5%. They believed that if someone is in need, it is their utmost duty to give and they used to do so from the possessions and things that they loved.
- The third type of people who give are those who stick to the minimum mandatory requirements. This also can save us if done with a sincere heart. However, if we add more to it, insha'Allah, it will increase our light on the day of judgment.

May Allah make us from those who not only regularly give their minimum due zakah, but also top it up with as much as they can.

Ethics of Zakah

Certain inward altitudes and duties are incumbent on those who seek, through paying Zakah, the way that leads to the Hereafter as follows:

Fix a timeframe for Zakah

Though there is no prescribed time of the year in Shariah which one should fix for giving the zakah. However, it is explained by the scholars that having a fixed time and significantly help with the regularity as well as with the calculations. In certain times of years when one is spiritually uplifted, such as Ramadan or Muharram or first 10 days of Dhul Hajjah, it can be a more suitable opportunity to pay zakat in them every year.

Giving Zakah in secret:

Secrecy in paying Zakah is farthest removed from hypocritical display and reputation seeking. Giving Zakah openly may harm the poor when he feels humility. One of the scholars said that the there are three things from the treasures of the righteous. One of them is giving charity in secret. On the day of judgment when there will be no shade, one of the persons who would be provided shade by Allah SWT, as the beloved Messenger ﷺ explained to us, will be the person who used to give charity so secretly that his one hand did not know while the other was giving charity.

Understanding the significance and objectives of Zakah:

Objectives of Zakah test the degree of love for Allah, elimination of miserliness and showing gratitude. Both of these fruits result in the softness of heart.

Avoiding taunting and hurting peoples' feelings:

One should not invalidate his Zakah by taunting and hurting peoples' feelings. Whatever that may be, there is no problem between the donor and the poor recipient until the former comes to see himself as a benefactor. One should, moreover, realize that giving Zakah is actually paying Allah SWT what is due while the poor man is actually receiving Ins sustenance from Allah, to Whom it has first passed,

Showing humbleness:

This signifies the importance of thinking little of one's donation; if one considers it big and great, it is as if he is inviting that self-righteous pride which is one of the deadly sins, rendering good deeds worthless.

Paying Zakah from what is good and lawful:

According to a Hadith narrated by Muslim, Allah, Most High, is Good and does not accept but that which is good. Zakah should be given from the best of one's wealth. In this context, Allah, The Most High, says:

‘O ye who believe! Give of the good things which you have {honourably) earned, and of the fruits of the earth which we have produced for you, and do not even aim at getting anything which is bad, in order that out of it ye may give away something.’ (Al-Baqarah: 267)

‘By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which ye love, and whatever you give of a truth Allah knows it well.’ (A’ 'Imran: 92)

Giving Zakah to those who are most worthy and deserving:

One should seek out a truly worthy recipient for his Zakah, rather than be content with just anybody who happens who fall within the eight categories of legally qualified beneficiaries. For among those generally eligible persons, there are some with special qualities. Consideration should be given to the following six qualities:

- First: One should seek out those righteous people who have renounced the world and devoted themselves solely to the Hereafter. The reason for this is that your charity will help the righteous person bolster his piety; by helping him you will have a share in his worship.
- Second, the recipient should be chosen from amongst the people of learning, in order to support him in his quest for knowledge.
- Thirds the recipient should be sincere in his faith and should have a profound devotion to Allah alone. This singleness of worship and devotion (Tawhid) is apparent when, on accepting a gift, he offers praise and thanks to Allah, Most High, regarding Him as the source of the blessings rather than any intermediary. Such a man is truly grateful to Allah, Most High, recognizing that all blessings flow from Him.
- Fourth, the recipient should be a person who has remained anonymous and kept his need to himself, not being given to fuss and complaint. In this connection, Allah, Most High, says: ‘Charity is for those needy people who are engaged so much in the cause of Allah that they cannot move about in the land to earn their livelihood: the ignorant think that they are wealthy on account of their modest behavior. You can recognize them by their look because they do not make insistent demands on people. Whatever you spend on them, surely Allah knows it.’ (Al-Baqarah: 273) Such people should be sought out by a thorough investigation of the religious people in each neighborhood, and by looking deeply into the instances of good and decent people since the reward for addressing charity to them is many times greater than for spending on those who are vociferous in their begging.
- Fifth: The recipient should be someone saddled with a large family, or else disabled by illness or some other cause.

- Sixth: The recipient should be a close relative, whether paternal or maternal. The offering will then serve the additional purpose of strengthening ties of kinship, the reward for which is incalculable.

Now, we should keep in mind the fact that if anyone can be found in whom all these qualities are combined, that is the greatest treasure and the supreme prize. If one fails to find such a man, then the person in whom five qualities are combined is better than the person in whom four qualities are found, and so on.

Qualities of the Recipient

The recipient of Zakah should be one of the eight categories of legally qualified beneficiaries. He, moreover, should be characterized by the following four qualities:

1- He should understand that Zakah is levied upon the well-to-do Muslims in order to meet his needs, and so he should concern himself with seeking the pleasure of Allah alone.

2- He should thank the giver of Zakah and call upon Allah on his behalf. In a Hadith narrated by Abu Dawud, it is confirmed that one who does not thank people does not thank Allah, Most High. Yet, this form of voicing gratitude should not exceed the limit of thanking an intermediary whom Allah, Most High, decrees to give that charity, while Allah remains the source of all bounties. This quality necessitates that a recipient should not think little of the gift. Furthermore, a recipient of Zakah should cover the faults of the gift.

3- He should accept only what is lawful.

4- He should take only what meets his needs.

Virtues and Ethics of Optional Charity

Virtues of optional charity are numerous. Below are some of them:

The inclination of miserliness is broken by developing the habit of giving. The habit of miserliness causes a lot of anxiety in our hearts. The giving in the way of Allah will open our heart and we feel joyful when we spend on the right causes.

The act of giving removes the curtains of materialism that block our vision. We realize the importance of real things in our life. We see the reality of things. We come to know that feelings are more important than the filled bank-accounts. We feel the love when we do something for Allah SWT. That feeling, as those who have tasted it know very well, is one of the most soothing feelings in this world.

The zakah gives purity to our wealth and our hearts. The amount of purity we receive depends on the purity of our intention in giving zakah.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Who among you considers the wealth of his heirs dearer to him than his own wealth? They (the Companions of the Prophet) replied “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, There is none among us but loves his own wealth more." The Prophet ﷺ said, "So his wealth is whatever he spends (in Adah's Cause) during his life (on good deeds) while the wealth of his heirs is whatever he leaves after his death ." (Reported by AI- Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: If somebody gives out in charity something equal to a date from his lawfully gained money - for nothing ascends to Allah except that which is good - then Allah will take it with his Right (Hand) and bring it up for its owner as anyone of you brings up a baby horse ; until it becomes like a mountain. ” (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

Another Hadith states, "Give out charity for it guarantees your salvation from the Hell-fire.” (Reported by At-Tabarani)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Charity does not in any way decrease one's wealth; ' the servant who forgives y Allah adds to his respect, and the one who shows humility t Allah elevates him in the estimation (of the people).”

(Reported by Muslim)

The Mother of the Believers, ' Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that once they slaughtered a sheep when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked her, “What is remained of it (after giving charity)?" She replied, "Nothing has remained except its shoulder.” Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “All of it has remained except its shoulder (meaning that what is given in charity will remain for them in the Hereafter)." (Reported by At- Tirmidhi)

As to the ethics of optional charity, they are the same as the ethics of obligatory Zakah.

Muslim scholars, however, have differed on deciding which is better for the poor to take from Zakah or from optional charity: A group of scholars has preferred to die former while others have given precedence to the latter.

As to the best charity, it is explained in the Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that a man asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), "O Messenger of Allah! What kind of charity is the best?” He replied: "To give in charity while you are healthy and greedy hoping to be wealthy and afraid of becoming poor. Don't delay giving in charity until that time you will be on the deathbed when you say r ' Give so much to so-and-so and so much to so-and-so,' and at that time the property is not yours but it belongs to so-and-so (i. e. , your inheritors).” (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 30

Which of the three categories of types of people who give charity do you fall into? How can you increase the giving? Feel the pain of those who are suffering all around us? Can you give something for the sake of Allah today and make a dua to make it a source of cleansing for your self? May Allah accept it from us all.

SECTION 4

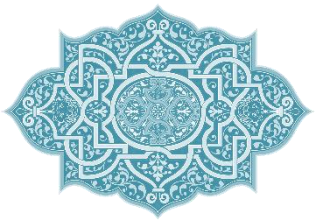
LIVING THE THREE STEPS OF TAZKIYYAH

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SECTION

After the completion of this week, you should be able to:

- ✓ Refresh the 3-step model for tazkiyyah with some more details
- ✓ Understand how to leave an enduring legacy before leaving this world

KEY POINTS – LESSON 30



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Yahya Adel Ibrahim[23]

LIVING THE THREE STEPS: KNOWLEDGE

In the final week of this course, we are going to focus on the practical implementation of the three-step model for tazkiyyah (purification of hearts) that we presented in lesson 7 of this course. The first step in the model is 'to acquire knowledge'. In this lesson, we will provide further explanation for this aspect.

First Guidance of Islam:

The Prophet ﷺ used to go into the cave of Hira in Makkah before receiving the Prophethood in order to deeply ponder about the reality of this life and the marvelous creations of Allah SWT. He knew that none of it is created in vain and there is a purpose to it. Allah SWT then blessed him with the Prophethood and explained the purpose behind their existence and our existence – Uboodiyyah of Allah SWT – being his true and dutiful servants - so that we can all attain His love and reward and go

[23] Shaykh Yahya Ibrahim, is the man with the golden touch – touching hearts. Shaykh Yahya started his knowledge journey with the memorisation of Qur'ān in his teens and then pursued his studies in exegesis, jurisprudence and hadith with scholars from the Hijaz, and in Egypt as well.

As a proud Canadian yet happy Aussie, he travels the world regularly from his base in Perth, enriching the lives of thousands with his wise and balanced commentary on matters that are most important to Muslims in our time. His initiatives in Australia include diversity training, cultural sensitivity programs, educational lectures and media presentations. His expertise is sought by schools, universities and a wide range of government & non-government organisations.

Although, Shaykh Yahya is known for his spiritually uplifting discussions and addressing topics of Qur'ānic exegesis, Sunnah and tradition and juristic limitations, he is passionate also presenting on social topics including domestic violence, misogyny, gender discrimination, child protection, respectful relationships, disability and mental health.

Reflecting his dedication to these goals, Imam Yahya was awarded the West Australian Multicultural Community Service Award for Individual Excellence in 2013. He was also the selected facilitator for the federal government's Muslim Community Reference Group for the Conference of Australian Imams. He currently served as Langford Islamic College in Perth as the vice principal and regularly delivers lectures around the globe at various universities, Islamic centres and other events.

back to our original home, Jannah. The first step that was told to the Prophet ﷺ was 'Iqra' – 'read'. Acquiring knowledge is accordingly the first step in our journey of uboodiyyah.

Key to knowledge is the ability to question

One acquires deep knowledge if he really wants to. Accordingly, in our hearts, there should be a quest and hunger for knowledge. If that hunger is not there, we will not be keen to acquire knowledge if it is made within our closest reach. One of the ways to develop that hunger for knowledge is to ponder over the things and ask questions. In Islam, we are encouraged to seek clarification and ask those who know more than us. Allah SWT says:

"Then ask those who possess the Message (Ahl adh-Dhikr) if you do not know." (Quran, 21:7 and 16:43)

Asking questions is the Sunnah of the Prophets and their companions:

Quran is replete with examples where the Prophets A.S. have asked questions to Allah SWT. This questioning was not because of lack of faith but for the further strengthening of Iman in the hearts. Some of the examples of this are given below:

- Ibrahim A.S. once asked Allah SWT about how he would give back the life to the dead. Allah SWT asked him if he did not have faith in his heart? He replied that he indeed had full faith; the question was only to soothe his heart. Allah SWT then asked him to slaughter four birds and put their meat at far off locations. He asked Ibrahim A.S. to call the birds back. When he called them, they came flying back to him.
- Nuh A.S. was told by Allah SWT that he and his family will be saved from the storm. Nuh A.S. tried to convince his son to join him on the boat but he refused. A large wave came and drowned him. To this, Nuh A.S. asked a question to Allah SWT that His promise is always the truth. What was the reason for his son to be drowned? Allah SWT than told him that he was not from Nuh's family as he was the doer of other than good deeds. To be able to be called the son of the Prophet, physical or biological ties are not enough; one has to meet the spiritual requirements and taqwa of that status too.
- The companions of Isa A.S. who had seen a number of his miracles already asked him to pray to God to bring down a table of food from the heavens. He asked them 'have you not seen a number of miracles already'. To this, they replied that they are only seeking further contentment in the heart.

These, and numerous other examples, tell us the importance of asking questions.

The purpose of asking questions

It is very important to ask questions with the right purpose. We know the example of Jews of Madinah who asked questions trying to trick the Prophet ﷺ, but Allah SWT helped His Prophet ﷺ and their plans and their attempts to extinguish the light of Allah went in vain. These were the people

who had diseases in their hearts. We also know the attitude of the people of Makkah who asked questions such as why did God send a man as a prophet and that too an orphan. The hypocrites in Madinah are also known to ask similar questions to the Prophet ﷺ in order to irritate him. What is the common theme in this?

The common theme is that their purpose was not to seek knowledge but to debate, disbelief and insult. We someone asks questions with this intent, then he is fulfilling the Sunnah of the groups mentioned above. The Sunnah of our messenger is to ask questions in order to strengthen Iman. This is what he always encourage.

Once a group of companions was going somewhere and one of them fell and received a big wound on his head. The other companions tried to save his life by tying a cloth around his head which stopped the bleeding and he came back to life. Then came the time for prayer and the injured companion said that if I make wudhu with water, I may die. The other companions said that the instruction from the Prophet ﷺ is very clear; you can only do tayammum (cleansing through sand) if there is no water. So, the injured companions opened the cloth wrapped around his head, made the wudhu and died. When this matter was brought the Prophet ﷺ he showed his displeasure with what happened and asked the companions about why they did not ask.

What we learn from this is that we have to ask those who are more knowledgeable than us. We should not think that our opinion is the right one. There may be aspects of it that we have not fully understood. Our religion, accordingly, encourages questioning.

The methodology of seeking knowledge:

The above highlights to us the importance of acquiring the correct knowledge from the correct sources. Scholars have laid down the steps that one has to follow in order to acquire the knowledge of the deen. These steps are as follows:

1. **Understanding the virtues of seeking knowledge**: It is the human nature that when we understand the virtues of something, it becomes easier to acquire that or perform an associated action. The virtues of seeking knowledge are abundant as explained to us by Allah SWT and his Messenger. Allah the Exalted asked His messenger to say: وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا. Say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge. This tells us that this is the commodity that irrespective of how much you have, you are more in need of it. Even the Prophet of Allah ﷺ to whom Allah SWT bestowed more knowledge than any other human being is asked to seek more knowledge. Similarly, it is reported in a hadith that when Allah wishes to do good to a slave, He blessed him with the deeper understanding of the religion. Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said: مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ. Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah makes easy for him a path to Paradise. So one should internalize these virtues and motivate himself to pursue the journey of seeking knowledge.

2. **Sincerity**: The person who decides to seek knowledge should cleanse his intentions and identify the reason why he is seeking knowledge. If it is for anything other than Allah SWT, this knowledge would only harm him.
3. **Action:** Put in practice what you learn. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ used to take a portion of the Quran, internalize and implement in their lives and then move on. This should be our approach too. We should not let any of our learning go unimplemented in our lives. If we don't do that, we are missing the real objective of why we should seek knowledge.
4. **Teaching**: The sadaqa of the knowledge is that one should teach it to others. If someone learns with a mindset that he or she will then be teaching this knowledge, the learning is much deeper and much more meaningful. One should never think that one is too uneducated in religion to teach. We are authorized to teach even if it is one verse that we are going to teach, as long as we teach it in its true sense. This is what will become a light for us in the hereafter and our shade on the day of judgment Insha'Allah.
5. **Be humble**: The final step is to acquire humbleness along with knowledge. The knowledge and the fact that we are teaching it to others should not become a source of arrogance for us. Rather we should feel humble. We should not feel shy to say that 'I don't know' or 'Ask someone who is more knowledgeable than me'. These were the statements that the famous Imams such as Imam Malik, Imam Ahmed, and others never felt shy of uttering. Then who are you and me in front of these giants. We should never give an incorrect response to a question for the sake of establishing a rapport with the questioner. That would become fire for us. If we don't know, we should say that we don't know; never misguide anyone. This also comes back to the questioner to seek knowledge from the people who have properly learned the religion and then internalized it.

Three important take-home messages from this lesson:

Establish a connection with the people of knowledge

We have seen that when the Prophets and Messengers had any questions, they asked Allah SWT. When the companions of our beloved Prophet ﷺ required clarity on some matter, they used to bring the matter to the Prophet ﷺ and asked questions. For now, we have to realize that the inheritance of the Prophet ﷺ, the knowledge of this deen, has been bestowed to the scholars of this ummah. If we also want to drink from the same fountain of knowledge, we have to establish a connection with the scholars. Trying to come with answers by one's own self and not asking questions to the Ulema (scholars) can offer result in deviation. It happens with many of us that when we receive a certain level of qualifications, we start to consider ourselves too big to go to scholars, sit in their feet and ask questions. Some try another different route and try to find answers from the sources that are either not meant to provide answers to our questions or are incapable of. This is a journey that leads towards misguidance. We accordingly should establish close connections with the authentic scholars who truly represent the deen of Islam.

Never kill questions

As parents, especially if we are living in the West, we come across difficult questions from our children. On these questions, we should never get angry and shut them up. If we do so, it will so a seed of confusion in their hearts which will grow with the passage of time. We should rather try to answer these questions. For this, there are two approaches that we can follow:

- Acquire the knowledge yourself so that you can answer the queries from your kids. This would help you in two way – it would strengthen your own yaqeen as well as the yaqeen of your kids
- Connect your children to authentic scholars and help them in finding the answers to their questions.

Both these aspects have to go hand in hand.

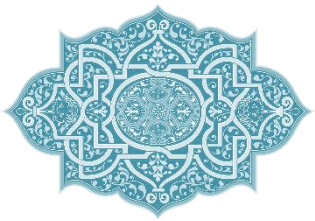
Never give up till you get an answer:

Whenever a question arises, do not settle down unless you find an answer. Go from one scholar to the other and seek their opinions. Choose what you consider to be closest to the Sunnah of the beloved Messenger ﷺ. Make sure that you go to scholars rather than the immature people who do not possess the sound knowledge.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 30

Find out how you can spare between 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time daily for learning the deen of Allah SWT. Can you spare it from your sleep if it is more than 7 to 8 hours? Can you spare it from your screen time on mobile, tv, or computer? Can you identify an opportunity to find this slot when you are doing other things such as driving, walking, cooking and so on? We at least should dedicate this much time to accumulate our wealth for the hereafter, shouldn't we?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 31



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Yasir Qadhi

LIVING THE THREE STEPS: REPENTANCE

Human beings are special

We have to keep in mind that human beings are not created as perfect beings. We are bound to make mistakes. The creation that does not sin is angels. When we were being created, the angels asked Allah SWT about why He wanted to create a being that would be a sinful being. Allah SWT told them that He knows what they don't. Scholars explain various wisdom behind this. One of such wisdom is that it is one of the manifestations of Allah's mercy that He is merciful to not only those creations that are always obedient, but also those who disobey Him and break His commands. His mercy also engulfs them – even at those times and moments when they are indulged in the disobedience to their Creator.

Keep in mind that All sons of Adam sin

When we fall into sins, we should never think that it is the end of the story and that there is no way out. One should not feel bad about one's self. If you are breathing, there is an opportunity in front of you, irrespective of your past. Satan would put you into despair. He will tell you that once you have done a mistake, then you should keep doing it. Sometimes, he would say that you are already going to be punished, so don't bother if you sin a few more times. Sometimes, he would come to us and delude us by saying that Allah will forgive all your sins irrespective of what you do – don't change your lifestyle.

Islam, like in all matters, provides us the balanced path. Allah SWT will forgive all sins if we sincerely repent. There is hope in this for the believers. One should never give up. Even if we have mountains of sins, Allah will forgive them all and that would not at all bother him – as long as we keep returning back to him with true repentance.

We have to keep in mind what our beloved Prophet ﷺ told us. All sons of Adam sin. But the best of sinners are those who repent. The goal is not to become perfect and sinless. The goal is to become the best of the sinners and repent.

Allah's mercy is most abundant

There are various names of Allah SWT mentioned in the Quran and Hadith. There are countless of His names and attributes that we are unaware of. However, we know the 99 names which have been given more prominence over the others. When we analyze them, we find that one of the most common themes in these names is the Rahmah of Allah SWT. He is Ar-Rahman, Ar-Raheem, Al-Ghafoor, Al-Wadood, Al-Kareem – he is the Most Merciful and Most Kind.

He, therefore, forgives His slaves whenever they come back to Him with sincere repentance irrespective of how many times they have repented and broken their promises. Allah forgives them again as long as they are sincere. He even forgives the shirk when one repents.

We have to keep in mind that losing hope is one of the biggest sins. There are three categories of sins as explained by the scholars:

- Al-Saghair (smaller sins)
- Al-Kabair (major sins)
- Akbar ul Kabair (The greatest sins)

One of such greatest sins is losing hope in Allah SWT. Why is it considered such a big sin? Because, with this approach, you are putting a limit to the limitless. It is vehemently against what Allah SWT has told His servant. Before Allah created the human beings, He said that His compassion will always overcome His anger. When we know this reality, how can we lose hope in the mercy of Allah SWT?

The process of repentance:

There are four steps that are required to be followed when one repents:

Remorse

The first step is to have genuine remorse in the heart. This is the energy that will pave the way for the sincere repentance. The bigger the remorse, the stronger will be the Tauba. There Prophet ﷺ said that النَّدَمُ تَوْبَةٌ. It is the beginning and the crux of repentance.

There are various ways in which we can strengthen this remorse. Think about the punishment because of the sin, think about betraying the trust of Allah's messenger and the people that we have wronged, think about how far back you have got left in your journey, think about that account of your good deeds and the bad deeds and whether the good deeds are enough to save you in the hereafter.

Ask of Allah for forgiveness

The second step is to sincerely ask for Allah's forgiveness. This has to start from the heart. There are also various adhkar mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah that when can use to express the feelings of

remorse and asking for forgiveness. When we do a mistake, we can also use the words of forgiveness that Allah SWT told our father Adam A.S. when he did a mistake.

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost. (Quran 7:23)

Make up for the sins by doing extra good deeds

When we do a bad deed and fill our scales with bad deeds, we have to recompense that with the good deeds. We should humble ourselves in the worship of Allah SWT. We should try to fulfill our mandatory duties and then top it up with the voluntary acts of worship. We should prove that our repentance was genuine and we have become true slaves of Allah SWT. This is the story of the lives of many of the great scholars of the past. When they made repentance from their sins, they did not just become an average Muslim but exceeded all others in goodness and knowledge as their repentance was absolutely truthful.

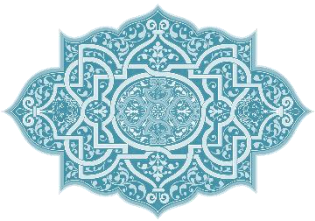
Seek forgiveness from those who you have wrong

The above three conditions apply to situations between what is you and Allah. When it comes to people, you have to ask forgiveness from them too. If you have wronged someone, go and ask their forgiveness. If you have backbitten someone, ask for their forgiveness. If that is not possible, then mention their good attributes in the gatherings where you destroyed their reputation. If you stole money or something, return it to the one you stole it from. If that is not possible then give the same amount, at least, in Sadaqa. Also, gift good deeds to people even when they are alive. This way you will not have to give your good deeds to them in the hereafter, Insha'Allah.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 31

In your seclusion today, feel the remorse of the sins that you have done in your life and the neglect of the commands of Allah SWT and our beloved Messenger ﷺ that you are guilty of. Cry to Allah SWT for forgiveness in your seclusion. Make a promise to change your life forever and never return to those sins again. Your merciful Rabb is waiting for you! What is stopping you from turning back to Him?

KEY POINTS – LESSON 32



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Mokhtar Maghraoui

LIVING THE THREE STEPS: MAJAHADAH (SEVEN KEYS FOR DOORS TO HEARTS)

When does Satan enter our hearts

As long as we remain engaged in the remembrance of Allah SWT while deeply pondering over it, Satan is unable to enter our heart. However, when we are not engaged in the remembrance through Dhikr, he finds ways to enter our heart. In order to achieve that, he makes us busy using our sensing and our body parts in a way that they are not supposed to be busy like that. From our senses, he makes us receive such inputs that would create inertia for bad deeds in us. Once we see or hear or taste or touch something, it creates a desire which often leads to sin. He also makes us activate our body parts in a way that either leads us towards sin or we get too busy in things that we forget what is happening in the world of our hearts.

We should, therefore, be very vigilant and not let Satan use the seven keys mentioned in this lesson; if we give these keys to him, he will find a way to our heart and lead us towards his Sunnah, i.e. disobedience to Allah SWT.

An Important principle to remain aware of

Allah SWT has blessed us with abundant blessings in our body and outside. Whenever we misuse them, we are showing our ungratefulness and it is one of the forms of Kufr. This is called 'kufran an-na'imah' (the neglect or concealment of the blessing). The senses we have got and the body parts that we have got and the wealth, property and assets that we have got, and the physical and mental abilities that we have got – all of these will be questioned.

If I take something on rent or loan from someone, I am bound to use those things in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the agreement. If I don't abide by what I have agreed to, I am a criminal and deserving of justice. Allah SWT is free from similes and examples. However, we can use this analogy to understand the concept. Allah SWT has given us a lot of blessings. He has also given us a direction regarding how to use these blessings. If we misuse them, aren't we doing the kufr of these blessings? Aren't we inviting Allah SWT's wrath? We all have to ponder and ensure that we use these resources in accordance with the commands of Allah SWT. These body parts, intellect, money in my pocket, the house that I live in, the human beings around me that I love – none of them are my

property. All these things are blessings of Allah SWT. I am no one to be autonomous in deciding how to use them. They have to be used and taken care in accordance with the conditions stipulated by the One who gave them to me.

Seven keys for the doors of our hearts

Eyesight

Eyes are one of the favorite keys for satan to unlock his entry in our heart. Allah SWT has provided us with a curtain over them which we should lower down or shut whenever an inappropriate thing comes in front of them. Don't use your eyes to look at the opposite gender in a way that is inappropriate. Don't use them for seeing things that are forbidden, watching images and videos that are inappropriate, and getting mesmerized by the beauty of worldly things. This will all pave the way for Satan's entry into our heart. It would trigger the desires which often make people fall in sin.

We should rather see our eyes to see the goodness in people. We should see the things that increase our Iman. We should use our eyes to read the Quran and to acquire the beneficial knowledge. We can look at the majestic creations of Allah SWT and ponder about Him and His majestic attributes. If we busy our eyes with the inflow of this beneficial stuff, Satan's entry to our hearts through them would become impossible. This requires a Mujahadah or struggle that we all have to uptake. This requires an internal fight with our nafs till we conquer it. Allah SWT has given us the power to do that. It is now our decision regarding when and how we want to do it.

Hearing

Satan also wants our ears to receive inputs that would trigger inappropriate thoughts and feelings in our mind. It would make us listen to rock and roll and other inappropriate noises. It would make us love to hear when other people are bad-mouthed about and so on. We should not sit in gatherings where our ears receive vain talk. We should accordingly understand this trick of satan and fail him in this.

We should rather engage ourselves in using our ears to receive the beneficial inputs. We can listen to Quran and the beneficial knowledge through them. We can listen to the words of the scholars through them. We can listen to nature and the beautiful sounds of praising birds, flowing water and singing leaves.

Tongue

The tongue is one of the most critical parts of the body. Once the Muadh R.A. asked the prophet if the words we speak here and there would also become a reason of people's entry in hell. The Prophet ﷺ told him, 'What else would result in people being thrown in hellfire on their faces except for the harvest of tongues'. This accordingly requires utmost care.

There is wisdom in all creations of Allah SWT – in the way he has made them and a number of other aspects. When we look at ourselves, we see that Allah SWT has given us one tongue and two eyes

and two ears. It is because we are meant to speak less and see and hear the beneficial things more. Also, our tongue is guarded by our lips which keep it prisoned unless we wish to release it.

We learn from the Sunnah that our Prophet ﷺ used to observe long periods of silence; And when he spoke, he spoke pearls and diamonds. We should also remember the advice from the Prophet ﷺ and the pious predecessors that we should either speak good or remain silent. We should not let our tongue engage in anything that is inappropriate. We should not let it backbite. We should not let it utter words of uncontrolled anger. We should not let it say immodest things. We should not let it trigger undue emotions in others. This tongue is only meant for dhikr of Allah SWT and engaging in what is positive and beneficial.

Stomach

The stomach is another route of Satan. He encourages us to overfill and be overly concerned about satisfying the taste buds. When we get over-filled, we are unable to concentrate on our real purpose of Uboodiyyah to Allah SWT.

Part of the etiquette of eating is to be moderate in eating and not to fill the stomach. The most that is acceptable in this regard is for the Muslim to divide his stomach into three parts: one third for food, one third for drink and one third for air, because of the hadeeth: “The son of Adam does not fill any vessel worse than his stomach. It is enough for the son of Adam to eat a few mouthfuls to keep him going, but if he must (fill his stomach), then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for air.” That will lead to a lean and light body because eating one’s full leads to heaviness, which makes one too lazy to do acts of worship and strive.

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ, his family and our early predecessors only used to eat twice per day. It was narrated that ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “The family of Muhammad ﷺ (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not eat two meals in one day but one of them was dates.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6455.

We should also try to adopt this lifestyle and control our stomachs. If you keep filling according to your desire, it will feed your nafs; the qalb will not get much.

Sexual Organs

Much of the corruption we see around is because of the drive of the sexual organs. This is what has created a multi-billion dollar porn industry which is destroying the health as well as the families. Many of the ruined married lives are because of this disease. We have to keep guard from those which are trying to exploit this essential human requirement for reproduction to be used in ways that lead to stress, ruined marital relations, deformities and diseases in children and so on.

The Prophet ﷺ guaranteed Jannah for those who can guarantee the safeguarding of what is between their jaws, i.e. the tongue, and what is in their legs, i.e. the sexual organs. We should be the ones who should be controlling them rather than they control and govern what we do and how we behave.

Hands

Our hands are made to make things – not to destroy them. From breaking a branch of a tree (unless by necessity) to killing someone, all the improper actions of hands are to be completely avoided. What we do with our hand, triggers in our minds an acceptance for what we do. We often try to justify that action get attached to it. We should accordingly stop it at the beginning. If we ever misuse our hands, we should immediately feel remorseful or attach it to a negative consequence to decrease the likelihood of that happening again.

Legs

We should be very mindful about our legs. They should not be allowed to take us to the gatherings where Satan dominates and where the commands of Allah SWT are openly broken. We should not let them keep us away from the remembrance of Allah SWT by feeling tired. They should be allowed to stay at home and not walk to the Masjid.

Figure: Seven keys of the doors to the hearts

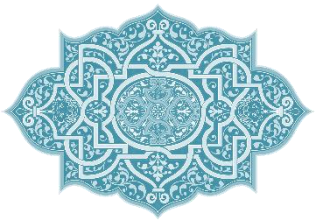
How to control these keys

- One of the key steps to control these aspects is to remain engaged in the dhikr of Allah SWT while you don't just say it with your tongue but your heart also feels it and understand it. That would protect you from the misuse of your senses and body parts Insha'Allah.
- Surround yourself in gatherings and in the acts of worship where no inappropriate use of your senses and body parts is possible.
- Make a habit of reflection and connection with the Quran.
- Then, you should also engage in the Muraqabah and clean your mind of any ill-thoughts or ill-intentions of doing something and using your senses and body parts in a certain way.
- You should also do your self-accountability. You should ponder at least once a day on how you have used your eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, hands, legs, and sexual organs.
- Make a plan regarding how would you stop the purposeless or harmful uses them. Make a plan regarding how you can expose yourself to positive and beneficial inputs through these seven doors. Make a daily plan and keep doing the self-accountability.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 32

How have you used your senses and body parts in the last 24 hours? Is it according to the commands of Allah SWT or against them? List down some of the good exposures you can give to your eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, hands, and limbs? Do a daily self-accountability on them.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 33



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Omar Suleiman[24]

LIVING THE THREE STEPS: MAJAHADAH (MAKING THE CHANGES)

It happens very commonly that when we attend a course or a lecture series, we become very motivated. However, we don't take the essential next steps and that motivation accordingly dies after a short while. In order to break that cycle and be able to bring the real change, there are some important pre-requisites that we are required to meet. This lesson covers five of them in a brief way.

[24] A few words are not enough to talk much about this great scholar of present. However, here is a modest overview of some of his services: Imam Omar Suleiman is the President of the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research and a professor of Islamic Studies at Southern Methodist University. He's also the resident scholar of the Valley Ranch Islamic Centre, and Co-Chair of Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square, a multi-faith alliance for peace and justice.

Originally from New Orleans, LA, he began his journey of traditional Islamic learning in the year 2000 and has spent years studying in the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Malaysia, etc. Upon becoming certified in various traditional sciences, he completed a Bachelor's degree in Islamic law, a Bachelor's degree in Accounting, a Master's degree in Islamic Finance, a Master's Degree in Political History, and is in the process of completing his PhD from the International Islamic University of Malaysia in Islamic Thought and Civilization. His career started in his hometown of New Orleans where he served as the Imam of the Jefferson Muslim Association in New Orleans for 6 years and directed the ICNA Relief "Muslims for Humanity" Hurricane Katrina Relief effort. It was in this time that he was noted on a national level as being a strong advocate of community service, interfaith dialogue, and social justice. He co-founded the East Jefferson Interfaith Clergy Association and was awarded for his outstanding civic achievement by the Mayor and City Council of New Orleans in 2010. He then moved to Dallas and became the Resident Scholar of the Valley Ranch Islamic Centre in 2013 and more recently, Co-Chair of Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square. In Dallas, he has been a noted leader and voice for peace, and has partaken as a representative of the Muslim Community in many city functions. He has since been a guest at various national functions to share his experiences in community building.

Shaykh Omar most recently founded the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research which is a think tank that focuses on instilling conviction based on Islamic texts, and producing contribution. He also founded M.U.H.S.E.N (Muslims Understanding and Helping Special Education Needs), a non-profit umbrella organization serving the community to establish a more inclusive "Special Friendly" environment for our Brothers & Sisters of all Disabilities. Shaykh Omar has taught Islamic Studies at the university level since 2008. As a valued Al-Maghrib instructor, Shaykh Omar developed one of the most successful seminars "Behind the Scenes: An In-Depth Study of the Spiritual Practices of the Best Generations". He also is one of the main features at our annual conferences and retreats: IlmFest and IlmSummit. In media, he's one of the creators of the internationally acclaimed "Inspiration Series" which has reached millions of Muslims and Non-Muslims through YouTube and Islamic Television stations worldwide. He's also known for his series on Quran weekly as well as his contributions to Hadith of the Day.

Change starts from you

Before we start our discussion, it is to be noted that the change comes only to those, who want it. There is no compulsion in religion. Allah SWT will not force it upon you. You yourself have to decide to change. And then when you tread on this path, Allah SWT will make it easy for you. When you would strive on the path of acquiring knowledge for the deen, He will make the path of Jannah easy for you. But it is you who have to decide to move. You have to identify the things in you that are required to be changed. We all talk a lot when we have to criticize others. But self-criticism, for the sake of improvement, is what is required. It shouldn't be the case that we talk about how so much is wrong in the world, yet when it comes to our own selves, we are not willing to even spend a few hours of volunteer work. Start the change from your own self.

It is also to be kept in mind that when we start this journey, we should be concerned about how we are going. It is not our concern to point out the mistakes of our fellow travelers [unless we wish to help them with that]. Imam Hasan Al-Basri once said that 'May Allah SWT shower His blessings on the person who is too busy with his own faults to be worried about anyone else's faults'. I need to make sure that when I return back from this world, I am prepared for my meeting with Allah SWT and have a few things that I can proudly show him.

Let love be your guide

When you truly love someone, you would see him everywhere. We all know the story of newly-weds. The see the world around them to be all pink and red. Everything they see reminds them of their loved one – be it the wind, the darkness, the light, the day, the night and what not. If the love of human beings can be this powerful that the person is able to enjoy in the scorching heat thinking about his or her loved one and not be bothered, when the person is in such an internal state of love that he does not really bother about the outside – THEN how powerful would be the love of Allah SWT! The power of this love is well-evident from the lives of our pious predecessors and the wonderful things this love made them too – the things that no ordinary human beings could achieve. That is the power of the love of Allah SWT. If we make this love our guide, everything around us would start to make sense and would take us closer to Allah SWT. On that other hand, we would perceive the very same things in a completely different manner if our hearts are not filled with the love of Allah SWT.

If we make this love our guide, we will be able to bring about the real sustainable change. This lesson is going to provide 5 practical suggestions in order to accomplish that.

5 Keys steps for change

1. Remove the poisons from your life

Remove the poisons that don't allow you to change. Do you think you would develop the khushoo when your eyes have been all over the place all day? Do you think that Allah SWT would ever allow you to have that relationship with Him if you spend most of your time on things that take you away

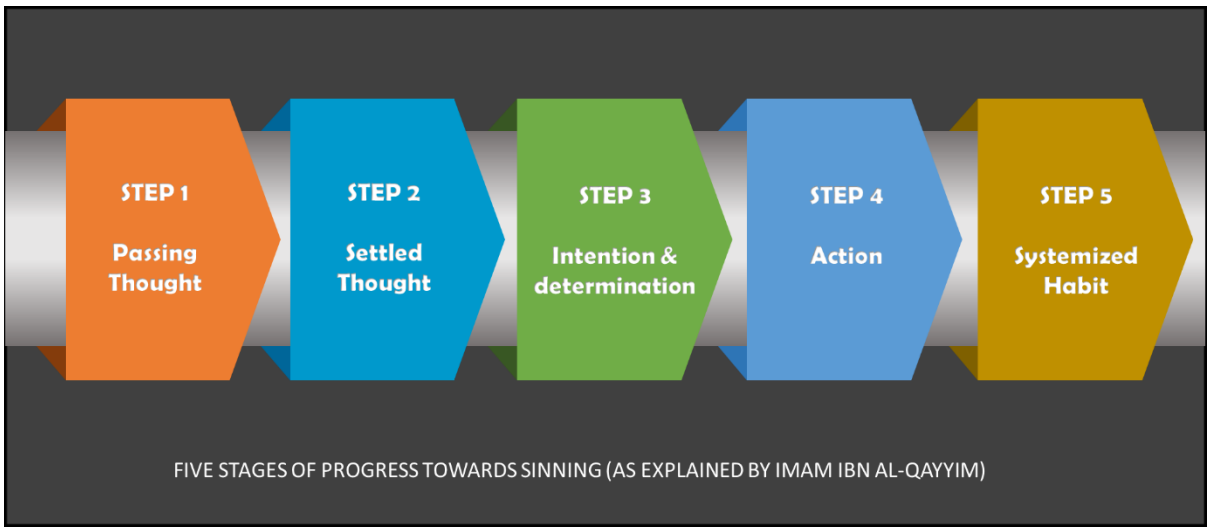
from him? Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim R.A. said that our heart is a space where if you have anything other than Allah SWT, you will not be able to have His true love in there.

Once Imam Sufyan Ath-Thauri was asked about whether asking for forgiveness should take precedence or the tasbeeh or good deeds. He gave a beautiful reply. He said that if you have a dirty shirt, you don't accessorize it; you clean it first. If your white shift has a big stain, you don't worry about putting the $200 cufflinks first. You have to worry about removing the stain. Same is the case with us. We have to remove the poisons from our hearts. If we don't, then our beautification would not work. The stains would take all the attention of those who see us. No matter what accessories we put on, this stain will ruin our personality and appearance.

2. An ounce of prevention is better than pounds of cure

Some people wait for the things to get really verse before they make any change. We have to realize that when the action acquires inertia, it becomes very difficult to stop it. Before that stage of high inertia comes, we there are various stages. We have to recognize these stages and early signs and accordingly prevent ourselves from going further. Here are the five stages that all the sins go through:

1. Initially, it is a passing thought
2. If you don't rid yourself of that thought, it gradually becomes a settled thought
3. If you don't break this settled thought, it becomes an intention to perform sin
4. If you don't control yourself at this stage, the intention results in an action
5. If you don't repent and keep doing that sin, it becomes a habit which then makes it very easy to repeat the sin again; the barrier of hesitation breaks.



We have to train our selves to a level that whenever a passing thought of some sin come to us or if our gaze catches something which it should not be looking at, we should immediately turn to istaghfar and seek forgiveness from Allah SWT. Do not entertain the thought for sinning and do not let it settle down.

We have to keep in mind that if we do not ward away that passing thought and let it settle down, Satan would come to us and show us the benefits of that act of sin. It might be a temporary pleasure or a temporary benefit, but Satan would make us overlook the major major side-effects that sin comes with.

If the thought stays in our mind for long, it gets transformed into the intention of doing the sin. If that intention is not uprooted and thrown away, it becomes an 'Azeemah' – a full determination to perform the sin. At this stage, one is so determined that he or she is able to overcome many internal and external oppositions.

If this stage is not cut off, one goes ahead with the action. If you repent at that moment and create that internal energy of remorse at your mistake, your state improves. However, if you ignore your condition and remain indulged in that sin, it would become a habit. The habits work in a way that they don't just require us to think when going through the habit loop. We will just do them – sometimes without even knowing.

That is why we ask Allah SWT's forgiveness for the sins that we do knowingly as well as those that we do without an active awareness and because we have let them become our habit by not removing them from us earlier.

اَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ رَبِّيْ مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ اَذْنَبْتُهٗ عَمَدًا اَوْ خَطَأً سِرًّا اَوْ عَلَانِيَةً وَّاَتُوْبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ الَّذِيْ اَعْلَمُ وَ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ الَّذِيْ لَآ اَعْلَمُ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ وَ سَتَّارُ الْعُيُوْبِ وَ غَفَّارُ الذُّنُوْبِ وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيْمِ

"I seek forgiveness from Allah, my Lord, from every sin I committed knowingly or unknowingly, secretly or openly, and I turn towards Him from the sin that I know and from the sin that I do not know. Certainly You, You (are) the knower of the hidden things and the Concealer (of) the mistakes and the Forgiver (of) the sins. And (there is) no power and no strength except from Allah, the Most High, the Most Great".

If you have developed a habit of certain sin, do not lose hope. There are various strategies for breaking the loop of bad habits. Some of the cures for that we have already discussed in this course.[25]

3. Do good deeds consistently, even though they are small

When a person goes to his or her, they wish to come back to the world just to offer to rakahs of salah so that Allah SWT may forgive them because of this. So, while we are alive, we have to look for something that we are capable of doing and then do that consistently. Think big, start small. If you start with a plan that you can never execute, you would very easily get demotivated.

[25] In order to obtain further insights into the science of making and breaking habits, you can also watch the 'Power of Habits' Workshop by iCAN. You can either search for it with the phrase "The Power of Habits – Training Course" or use the link below:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI1aD03UEhqioesmW9Y35q2KQ_Yyu5khQ

You may not be able to change the world at this moment, but you can certainly do something with your community. You may not be able to feed all the starving people in the world at this moment, but you can certainly do something about the starving people in your locality. Do good, even if it small; do it consistently. That is why the Prophet ﷺ told us:

عن أبي هريرة قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اكْلَفُوا مِنْ الْعَمَلِ مَا تُطِيقُونَ فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الْعَمَلِ أَدْوَمُهُ وَإِنْ قَلَّ

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, “Take up good deeds only as much as you are able, for the best deeds are those done regularly even if they are few”.

The story of Imam Ahmed and the baker

Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal was one of the most famous scholars of all times. He was so loved that his funeral was attended by 1.3 million Muslims. It was his habit to go to various circles of knowledge and visit various teachers and students. Once he was traveling to Ash-Sham (present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan). In those days, there were no cameras, photographs, and Facebook and people generally did not know each other by face. While he was traveling, night fell and he decided to stay in the masjid during the night. When he was laying there, the guard for the mosque came and asked him to leave as he did not recognize him. The humble Imam did not ward him by telling him that he was the Imam of Ahlus Sunnah, the great Ahmed Ibn Hanbal. He rather presented to him his situation that he was traveling and did not have anywhere else to stay. The guard did not accept this and asked him to leave so that he could lock the mosque. The Imam left and slept the door-steps of the mosque. When the guard saw that, he dragged him by his legs and threw in the middle of the road.

A baker was seeing all this from his bakery across the road. He invited Imam Ahmed to come in which he accepted. Imam Ahmed observed that this man was continually in the dhikr – Subhan Allah, Alhamdulillah, Allaho Akbar. While he was busy making the doughs, he did not waste a second and remained busy with the dhikr. Imam Ahmed asked him about what he has received from Allah SWT for the state he is in [i.e. constant remembrance]. The man said that I have never made a dua or a prayer accept that Allah SWT has accepted it – except one dua. The Imam asked him, what dua it is. The baker said that I made a dua that I should be able to meet the great Imam Ahmed. Tears came to Imam Ahmed’s eyes and he hugged the man and said, “Allah has dragged Ahmed by his legs and dropped at your door-step”.

This is what we get when we are regular in our good deeds and when we don’t consider any of our good deeds to be too small. We should keep doing whatever we can, consistently and with the purest of intentions; and this will pave the way for our success.

4. Think Progress

How many times do we see sisters who do not want to wear hijab by thinking that ‘I don’t even offer my prayers on time, how can I wear this?’ or ‘I feel like a hypocrite when my other things are messed

up while I wear the hijab'. We also hear many people who don't go to hajj saying that 'I work in haram; how can I go to hajj when I know I will be doing this again when I come back'. This is the thinking that Shaytan wishes for us to have. He wants us to go backward. Rather than gaining more good things, he wants us to strip ourselves of any good deeds that we already have or we wish to have. Why not fix your prayers and keep wearing the hijab? Why not fix your sources of income and do the hajj too? Why do we make an assumption that we can't leave the bad but we are fine to leave the good? This is not how things should work. We should think progress and progress forward.

5. As you become a more religious person, excel in manners too

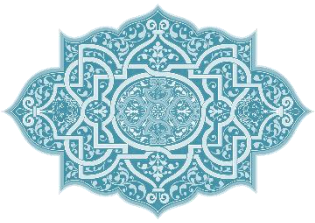
Many times it happens that we try to become religious, we start seeing so many faults in others. This makes us angry and results in bad behaviors. This is really not what Islam teaches us and if we engage in such acts, we really have to work on implementing Islam on ourselves. As become more religious and more practicing, we should be highly concerned about our character. Our beloved Master ﷺ was sent for the perfection of manners and Akhlaq; if we claim to be upholding his sunnah, we have to become a reflection of his great khuluq and great manners. We should become more compassionate and more loving as we become more practicing. We should remember that hadith about that woman who used to perform all her duties but did one wrong thing – she was abusive to her neighbors. The Prophet ﷺ told about her that she is in the hell-fire as she has no good in her. All that she was doing was superficial. The real beauty is the beauty of inside. We have to work on our Aklhaq to be able to keep our heart sound and return back to our Creator in this state.

Figure: Summary of five essential requirements for making a change

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 33

As a contemplation task for this lesson, ponder about some of the pollutants or poisons in your life that are hindering your way towards becoming a better Muslim? Make a plan regarding how you can remove them from your life.

KEY POINTS – LESSON 34



Derived from a lecture by: Shaykh Dr. Tawfique Chaudhary[26]

LIVING THE THREE STEPS: MAJAHADAH (PROVE YOUR LOVE TO ALLAH SWT)

What is your proof for your love to Allah SWT

According to the stats, there are 1 billion people in this world, who are chronically hungry. There are millions of orphans in the world who look forward to being fed and loved. There are millions of people who do not have a roof above their head when they sleep.

The question is: What have you done to prove your love to Allah SWT? Have you made an attempt to feed some of these hungry people? Have you ever lovingly rubbed your hand on the heads of orphans? Have you ever tried to make a difference to the communities you live in? What is the proof of your love to Allah and the proof of your love to humanity for Allah's sake?

This is what we are going to ponder upon in today's lesson.

Feel the love of Allah SWT

We all have to realize the Allah SWT loves all of us and He has shown us the path of attaining the eternal paradise. He keeps on feeding us and clothing us and letting us breathe even in the times when we are disobeying him. He is al-Wadood – the loving God. He has distributed one part of love and mercy in this world and the love of mothers and fathers for their children, love, and mercy of

[26] If we say that Sheikh Dr. Tawfique Chowdhury is one of the most inspiring entrepreneur scholars of present age, it would not be wrong. He has founded an array of Islamic institutions such as Mercy Mission, Al-Kauthar Institute, Seven Skies School, National Zakat Foundation and many others. All these organizations are making significant impacts globally.

He has, from an early age, excelled in academic studies, consistently being awarded prizes and accolades for his various achievements. He acquired his Islamic college from the University of Madinah from where he specialized in fiqh. Being a prolific speaker, Sheikh Tawfique Chowdhury has travelled internationally, sharing his knowledge worldwide. He is renowned for his inspiring lessons on tafseer, Islamic finance, Muslim Family Law, Islamic Medical Ethics and other inspiring topics.

In addition to being a qualified scholar, Sheikh Tawfique is also a graduate of Medicine from the University of Bond, Australia. He is an Australian citizen and currently resides in Malaysia where he has pioneered a chain of Islamic education schools.

husband and wife for each, love of brothers for each and all the love that we see is from that 1%. He SWT has reserved 99 part of mercy for the hereafter. That is Imam Sufyan Ath-Thawri used to say that 'I would rather let Allah SWT be my judge on the day of judgment than my own parents'. We should realize that love of Allah SWT and internalize that feeling.

Negative thinking

We all wish to love Allah, but there are some barriers which prevent us from that. One of such big barriers is negative thinking.

Many times we don't tread on the journey for change thinking that we have very little knowledge or we have too many sins or we are not good enough. We think that we can't become great as we are not special. Indeed you are special! When you stand up in prayer and recite Al-Fatiha, Allah SWT responds to what you are saying and talks to you. You are special that you have the ability to talk to Allah SWT. You are not 'a' person in six billion living around the globe. You are 'the' person who Allah SWT talks to and gives attention to.

Your tears are more beloved to Allah SWT than the Kaaba

Imam Shaukani mentions the following hadith from the Prophet ﷺ :

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "There are seven whom Allah will shade in His Shade on the Day when there is no shade except His Shade: a just ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for Allah's sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position (for illegal intercourse), but he says: 'I fear Allah', a man who gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a man who remembered Allah in private and so his eyes shed tears.'"

So, here we have the criteria to become the beloved of Allah SWT. Imam Shawqani explains this hadith and says that the tears of believers are more beloved to Allah SWT than the Kaaba. So, it is now in our own hands. Remember Allah SWT and let your eyes flow with tears remembering him and having remorse over your sins and disobedience to your Lord.

Consider your self special. Allah loves you and will love you. Don't be negative. Say to Allah, 'O Allah you are more important to me than anything'. Allah has blessed you to make your contribution to the change in yourself and this ummah. No contribution is too small. Do your bit, starting from your own self, and Allah SWT will give you barakah Insha'Allah.

In the face of negativity, be positive

We can take examples from the stories of the Prophets that Allah SWT has narrated to us. When people were negative, the prophets remained positive.

When Yusuf A.S. was in thrown in well, Jibreel A.S. came to him and told him that a day will come when you will tell them what they did to you and they won't recognize you. The time does not remain the same. There is no reason to be despair and lose hope. When the mother of Musa A.S. was despairing, Allah said to her that she should put the baby in the box and put in the river; Allah will protect him and return him back to her. When Ibrahim A.S. was being thrown in the fire, he said حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ – 'Allah (Alone) is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us).' When the Quresh came right in front of the cave where the Prophet ﷺ was staying along with Abu Bakr R.A., and Abu Bakr R.A. was feeling afraid, the Prophet ﷺ told him. 'Don't be afraid, Allah is with us'. All of this gives us a lesson – when Allah is on our side, we do not have to fear anyone or anything. All we have to do is to make an effort to have Allah on our side. Try to prove your love to Him and He will not waste your effort. If you come to Him walking, He will come to running. If you come back to him 1 step, He will come towards you 70 steps. He will make things easy for if you are sincere.

The Prophet's dua

One day the prophet ﷺ make a long prayer for the ummah. He asked his Lord, 'Ya Rabb! My Ummah, My Ummah!'. He was so much in emotion that he could not say any other words. He kept saying this and weeping the whole night. In the final part of the hour when the fajr time was about to come, Allah SWT sent Jibreel A.S. and informed the Prophet ﷺ that Allah SWT will not disappoint him regarding his ummah.

We know that Allah SWT will not disappoint the Prophet ﷺ regarding his ummah. The question is about us; Can we ensure that we don't disappoint our Prophet ﷺ too? Are we doing the things that grieve him or are we engaged in doing what he wishes for us to do?

Let us all be from those people who fulfill the vision of our beloved master ﷺ. Let us make his mission, our mission. Let us spend our lives for spreading his deen to all corners of the globe. Let us make this an aim of our lives to be the torchbearer of the faith which lit the whole world. Let us illuminate our lives with the light that he brought from the cave of Hira and then take that light to the whole globe. Let us do something that when we reach back to our Creator He looks at us and smiles. Let us do something that when we meet our master Muhammad ﷺ, he hugs us and feels proud of what deeds we come with. Let us prove to be his dutiful and obedient servants.

No situation is too big to stop you from this mission

For those who are facing Criticism

Do not be afraid of criticism. The great Imam Ash-Shafi said that 'measly is the state of the person who is not criticized'. People will not stop criticizing irrespective of what you do. All you have to ensure is that make sure that your intention is right and you are trying your best to follow the methodology that is according to the Sunnah. Ignore the criticism, get off and fulfill the mission of the prophet ﷺ!

For those who are facing difficulties in life

If you are one of those who are facing difficulties in life, remember Al-Mutanabi, the famous Arabic poet whose poetry is now part of the Islamic studies institutions around the globe and he gets his good deed increased every time a student opens his book and learns something. He mentions that the best of his poetry came out of him when he was afflicted with pain and difficulties in life. He used to wait for such moment so that his very best could come out of him and he could pour it on paper.

For those who are facing difficulty in Dawah

For those who find difficulty in dawah, you have to keep in mind the story of Abdullah ibn Mubarak and his Jewish neighbor. He lived with him for 20 years and behaved with him in the best of manners. During all these 20 years, the neighbor did not think of accepting Islam. However, one day some men from the government came to him and said that they will need to demolish his house as it was coming in the way of a road that they wanted to build. The Jewish man said that he is willing to sell his house to them for 2000 gold coins. The men asked, 'Why 2000 coins when the price of the house is no more than a thousand'. The Jewish man replied, '1000 gold coins for the house and 1000 for not being able to be the neighbor of Abdullah Ibn Mubarak anymore.' The man then went to Abdullah Ibn Mubarak R.A. and accepted Islam.

What we learn from this is that we have to be patient with our dawah and never give up. Everyone and everything has a tipping point. No good effort is dawah is going to be wasted. It doesn't matter if you don't see the results straight away. All your efforts are filling a pot and one day it will reach the tipping point. Sometimes people realize our value when they lose them. But ultimately, you will see the results. If not in this world, then in the Aakhirah.

Those who think they can't do anything because of their tough situation

Those who have lost hope and think they can't do anything good because of the situation they are in should think about Imam Sarakshi who was tortured and then imprisoned into a well. His students used to gather around the opening of that well in order to listen to their teacher. He used to dictate them the lessons from inside the well till the time the students were able to collect 27 volumes of the famous book 'Al-Mabsoot'.

Whenever you think you are unable to do things because of your situation, remember the great Imam Sarakshi. If he could dictate such a massive book while imprisoned in a well, what can't you do?

Those who think they can't do anything because they are harmed and hurt

If you are harmed and hurt, remember the situation of Imam Ahmed R.A. who was tortured to such an extent that his arm came out of the socket but he did not give up his struggle.

Those who are the despair of the situation of the Ummah

Those who are the despair of the condition of Muslims around the globe, you have to keep in mind the situation of the Ummah at the time of Mongols when they colored the streets red with the blood of the Muslims. But Allah SWT raised a generation of Muslims from among them. You have to keep in mind the times of the crusades when the Al-Quds fell in the hands of crusaders and they slaughtered the Muslims over there. They put the cross on the Masjid Al-Aqsa and tied the pigs in there. Then Allah SWT raised a hero among the Muslims who changed the whole situation. He broke the shackles of pessimism and recaptured the holy land after 91 years.

Those of you who are in despair, keep in mind that we could be in that 91st year. The mercy of Allah may be about to come. Do not give up. Make your contribution. Never despair and prove your love. Do every work of good that you can.

Those who think that they can't do great things because they don't have any special skills

You can learn from the stories of great people. Many of them were the very ordinary people before they became great. They became great not because their skills were more advanced and more special than the others, but on account of their commitment, passion, and devotion. This is the case with all visionaries. Sometimes people think that they are fools and they are daydreamers. But on account of their vision, they are able to do things which others can't even dream of. Develop a passion and a vision and then pursue that.

Make a promise to Allah SWT today

Make a promise to Allah SWT today that you are going to prove your love to Him and His Messenger ﷺ. Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Ahzab:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ ۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا

Among the believers there are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah: of them, some have completed their vow through sacrificing their lives, and some others are waiting for it, and have not changed their determination in the least.

(Quran 33:23)

This verse was revealed regarding Anas Bin Nazar R.A. who missed participating in the battle of Badr. He made a promise to Allah SWT that if He gives him one more chance, he would prove his love to Him. Allah gave him a chance in the battle of Uhud where he proved what he promised and gave up his life for the cause.

The question is about us now; what sacrifice you are I are going to give? Are we committed to our promise? Are ready to spend our lives for the deen of Muhammad ﷺ? For our beloved who used to weep for us and pray for us all night? Are we ready to return some of his favors to him?

Make a promise today! Change your life today! Do not let this effort that we have put in the last six weeks go in vain. Let this bring a lasting change in you. Let's all make a promise today that we will remain committed to the mission of our master Muhammad ﷺ till our last breath. We will not give up being the flag-bearer of this beautiful religion of Islam. We will do what we can to further this cause. Let us make a promise that spreading this message will be our foremost priority in life. Let us make a promise that 'my prayer, and my worship, and my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds'.

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 34

We have reached the end of the course now. Think about how you can implement the learnings from this course and change your life. How can you make sure that the motivation you received from this course is not short-lived? How can you make this your companion for the rest of your life?

A course for the heart

The heart is the centre of a believer's life: when it is sound, the whole of life is sound. This book gathers thirty-four lessons on reviving and purifying the heart, drawn from the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

It explains the signs of a hardened heart, its causes and its cures, and offers practical steps and a daily routine for those who wish to return to Allah with a sound heart.

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