

Characteristics of Superiority

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Achieve Noble Character

Characteristics of Superiority

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Acknowledgements

All praises are for Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds, who has given us the inspiration, opportunity and strength to complete this volume. Blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad whose path has been chosen by Allah, the Exalted, for the salvation of mankind.

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We pray that Allah, the Exalted, completes His favour on us and accepts each letter of this book in His august court and allows it to testify on our behalf on the Last Day.

All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

The following short book discusses some Characteristics of Superiority. This discussion is based on a conversation between a Roman king and one of his leaders which has been recorded in Imam Muhammad As Sallaabee's, The Biography of Abu Bakr As Siddeeq, Pages 685-686.

Implementing the lessons discussed will aid a Muslim to Achieve Noble Character. According to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that the heaviest thing in the Scales of Judgment Day will be Noble Character. It is one of qualities of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which Allah, the Exalted, complimented in Chapter 68 Al Qalam, Verse 4 of the Holy Quran:

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”

Therefore, it is a duty on all Muslims to gain and act on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to Achieve Noble Character.

Characteristics of Superiority

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: “We were defeated because they stand up at night (to pray)...”

In a Divine Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1145, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, descends every night to the nearest Heaven according to His infinite majesty and invites people to ask Him to fulfill their needs so that He can fulfill them.

Voluntary night time worship proves one's sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, as no other eyes are watching them. Offering it is a means to having an intimate conversation with Allah, the Exalted. And it is a sign of one's servanthood to Him. It has countless virtues for example, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614, declares that it is the best voluntary prayer.

No one will have a rank higher on Judgment Day or in Paradise than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and this rank has been directly connected to the voluntary night prayer. This

shows that those who establish the night voluntary prayer will be blessed with the highest ranks in both worlds. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 79:

“And from [part of] the night, pray with it [i.e., recitation of the Quran] as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.”

A Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3579, advises that a muslim is closest to Allah, the Exalted, in the last part of the night. Therefore, one can derive countless blessings if they remember Allah, the Exalted, at this time.

All muslims desire their supplications to be answered and their needs to be fulfilled. Therefore, they should strive to offer the voluntary night prayer as a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1770, advises that there is a special hour in every night when good supplications are always answered.

Establishing the voluntary night prayer is an excellent way to prevent one from committing sins, it helps a person to stay away from pointless social gatherings and it protects a person from many physical illnesses. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3549.

One should prepare for the voluntary night prayer by not over eating or drinking especially, before bed as it induces laziness. One should not unnecessarily tire themselves out during the day. A short nap during the day can help with this. Finally, one should avoid sins and strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as the obedient find it easier to offer the voluntary night prayer.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...fast during the day..."

In a Divine Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2219, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that all righteous deeds people perform are for themselves except for fasting as this is for Allah, the Exalted, and He shall reward it directly.

This Hadith indicates the uniqueness of fasting. One of the reasons it is described in this manner is because all other righteous deeds are visible to people, such as the prayer, or they are between people, such as secret charity. Whereas, fasting is a unique righteous deed as others cannot know someone is fasting by only observing them.

In addition, fasting is a righteous deed which puts a lock on every aspect of oneself. Meaning, a person who fasts correctly will be prevented from committing verbal and physical sins, such as looking at and hearing unlawful things. This is also achieved through the prayer but the prayer is only performed for a short time and is visible to others whereas, fasting occurs throughout the day and is invisible to others. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 45:

"...Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing..."

It is clear from the following verse a person who does not complete the obligatory fasts without a valid reason will not be a true believer as the two have been directly connected. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 183:

“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous”

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 723, that if a muslim does not complete a single obligatory fast without a valid reason they cannot make up for the reward and blessings lost even if they fasted every day for their entire life.

In addition, as indicated by the verse quoted earlier fasting correctly leads to piety. Meaning, simply starving during the day does not lead to piety but paying extra attention to abstaining from sins and performing righteous deeds during the fast will lead to piety. It is why a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 707, warns that a fast will not be significant if one does not abstain from speaking and acting on falsehood. A similar Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1690, warns that some fasting people obtain nothing except hunger. When one becomes more aware and careful in obeying Allah, the Exalted, while they are fasting this habit will eventually affect them so they behave in a similar way even when they are not fasting. This is in fact true piety.

The righteousness mentioned in the verse quoted earlier is connected to fasting as fasting reduces one's evil desires and passions. It prevents pride and the encouragement of sins. This is because fasting hinders the appetite of the stomach and one's carnal desires. These two things lead to many sins. In addition, the desire for these two things is greater than the desire for other unlawful things. So whoever controls them through fasting will find it easier to control the weaker evil desires. This leads to true righteousness.

As briefly indicated earlier there are different levels of fasting. The first and lowest level of fasting is when one abstains from the things which will break their fast, such as food. The next level is abstaining from sins which damages one's fast thereby reducing the reward of their fast, such as lying. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 2235. Fasting which involves each member of the body is the next level. This is when each body part fasts from sins for example, the eyes from looking at the unlawful, the ears from listening to the unlawful and so on. The next level is when one behaves in this manner even when they are not fasting. Finally, the highest level of fasting is abstaining from all things which are not connected to Allah, the Exalted.

A muslim should also fast inwardly as their body fasts outwardly by abstaining from sinful or vain thoughts. They should fast from persisting on their own plans in respect to their desires and try to concentrate on fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. In addition, they should fast from inwardly challenging the decree of Allah, the Exalted, and instead except destiny and whatever it brings knowing Allah, the Exalted, only chooses the best for His servants even if they do not understand the wisdom behind these choices. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 216:

“...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

Finally, a muslim should aim for the highest reward by keeping their fast a secret and not informing others if it is avoidable as informing others unnecessarily leads to a loss of reward as it is an aspect of showing off.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...fulfill their covenants...while we violate the terms of our covenants..."

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2749, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that betraying trusts is an aspect of hypocrisy.

This includes all the trusts one possesses from Allah, the Exalted, and people. Every blessing one possesses has been entrusted to them by Allah, the Exalted. The only way to fulfill these trusts is by using the blessings in the way which is pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This will ensure they gain further blessings as this is true gratitude. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]..."

The trusts between people are important to fulfill also. The one who has been entrusted with someone else's belongings should not misuse them and only use them according to the wishes of the owner. One of the greatest trusts between people is keeping conversations secret unless there is some obvious benefit in informing others. Unfortunately, this is often overlooked amongst muslims.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...enjoin good and forbid evil...while we enjoin what is evil and forbid the things that please Allah, the Exalted..."

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2686, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that failing to fulfill the important duty of commanding good and forbidding evil can be understood with the example of a boat with two levels full of people. The people on the lower level keep disturbing the people on the upper level whenever they desire to access water. So they decide to drill a hole in the lower level so that they can access water directly. If the people on the upper level fail to stop them they will all surely drown.

It is important for muslims to never give up commanding good and forbidding evil according to their knowledge in a gentle way. A muslim should never believe that as long as they obey Allah, the Exalted, other misguided people will not be able to affect them in a negative way. A good apple will eventually get affected when placed with rotten apples. Similarly, the muslim who fails to command others to do good will eventually be effected by their negative behavior whether it is subtle or apparent. Even if the wider society has become heedless one should never give up advising their dependents such as their family as not only will their negative behavior affect them more but this is a duty on all muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928. Even if a muslim is ignored by others they should discharge their duty by persistently advising them in a gentle way which is supported by strong evidence and knowledge. Only in this way will they be protected from their negative effects and pardoned on the Day of Judgment. But if

they only care about themselves and ignore the actions of others it is feared that the negative effects of others may well lead to their eventual misguidance.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...enjoin good and forbid evil...while we enjoin what is evil and forbid the things that please Allah, the Exalted..."

In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3267, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who contradicts their own advice when commanding good and forbidding evil will be punished in Hell.

Instead of following in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by advising only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, many people advise for other reasons, such as to gain popularity and worldly things. For example, some scholars often strive to be in the spotlight of gatherings and events and are not pleased with a seat which is to one side as they desire a central seat. When their intention became like this Allah, the Exalted, removed the positive effect of their advice and thus they now have little positive influence over their listeners. They should have shown a practical example instead of saying one thing and doing another. This caused their advice to become ineffective.

Muslims should strive to always act on their own advice before commanding others to do so as behaving in this manner is hated by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 61 As Saf, verse 3:

“Greatly hateful in the sight of Allah is that you say what you do not do.”

This does not mean one must become perfect before advising others as this is not possible. Instead, they should correct their intention and prove this through their actions by striving to act on their own advice before advising others. Only with this attitude will they avoid the punishment mentioned in this Hadith. The failure in acting on this principle has caused the advice of muslims to become ineffective even though the number of advisers has dramatically increased over the years.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...enjoin good and forbid evil...while we enjoin what is evil and forbid the things that please Allah, the Exalted..."

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised the importance of objecting to evil things in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4340. This Hadith clearly shows that it is a duty on all muslims to object to all forms of evil according to their strength and means. The lowest level, as mentioned in this Hadith, is rejecting the evil with one's heart.

This shows internally approving evil actions is one of the ugliest of those things which are forbidden. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4345, that the one who is present when an evil is committed and denounces it is like the one who was not present. But the one who was absent and approved the evil deed is like the one who was present when it was committed.

The first two aspects of objecting to evil, mentioned in the main Hadith under discussion, are through one's physical actions and speech. This is only a duty on a muslim who has the strength to do so for example, they will not be harmed by their actions or words.

It is important to note, objecting to evil with one's hand does not refer to fighting. It refers to correcting the evil actions of others, such as returning the rights of someone which have been unlawfully violated. The one who is in a position to do so yet, refrains from doing so has been warned of a punishment in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4338.

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised muslims in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2191, that they should not fear the creation in respect to speaking the truth. In fact, the one who allows the fear of the creation to prevent them from objecting to evil things has been described as the one who hates themselves and will be criticized by Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4008. It is important to note, this does not refer to the one who remains silent out of fear of being harmed as this is an acceptable excuse but it refers to the person who remains silent because of the status people hold in their eyes.

A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4341, advises that a person can give up objecting to evil things through their actions and speech when others obey their greed, follow their incorrect opinions and desires and when they prefer the material world over the hereafter. It does not take a scholar to conclude this time has arrived. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 105.

“O you who have believed, upon you is [responsibility for] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided...”

But it is important to note, a muslim should continue with this important duty in respect to their dependents as this is a duty on them according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928, and in respect to those they feel physically and verbally safe from, as this is the superior attitude.

Objecting to evil things which are apparent is what the main Hadith under discussion refers to. Meaning, it does not grant permission to muslims to spy on others in order to find evil things to object to. Spying and anything associated with it in this respect are forbidden. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 12:

“O you who have believed...do not spy...”

It is important to note, that a muslim must object to evil according to the teachings of Islam and not their own desires. A muslim may believe they are acting for sake of Allah, the Exalted, when they are not. This is proven when they object to evil in a way which contradicts the teachings of Islam. In fact, what is considered a good deed may well become a sin because of this negative attitude.

A muslim must object to evil in a gentle and fair way preferably in private in accordance to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The

opposite of these characteristics will only push people away from sincerely repenting and may lead to further sins as a result of angering them.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...are just and fair among themselves...while we spread corruption throughout the Earth."

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 4721, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that those who acted with justice will be sitting on thrones of light close to Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day. This includes those who are just in their decisions in respect to their families and those under their care and authority.

It is important for muslims to always act with justice in all occasions. One must show justice to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. They must use all the blessings they have been granted in the correct way according to the teachings of Islam. This includes being just to their own body and mind by fulfilling their rights of food and rest as well as using each limb according to its true purpose. Islam does not teach muslims to push their body and minds beyond their limits thereby causing themselves harm.

One should be just in respect to people by treating them how they wish to be treated by others. They should never compromise on the teachings of Islam by committing injustice to people in order to obtain worldly

things. This will be a major cause of people entering Hell which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579.

They should remain just even if it contradicts their desires and the desires of their loved ones. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 135:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both.¹ So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just...”

One must be just towards their dependents by fulfilling their rights and necessities according to the teachings of Islam which has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928. They should not be neglected nor handed over to others such as school and Mosque teachers. A person should not take on this responsibility if they are too lazy to act with justice in regards to them.

To conclude, no person is free of acting with justice as the minimum is acting with justice in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and oneself.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...are just and fair among themselves...while we spread corruption throughout the Earth."

One of the major reasons why society seems to be digressing is because people have abandoned acting justly. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6787, that previous nations were destroyed as the authorities would punish the weak when they broke the law but would pardon the rich and influential. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, being the head of state even declared in this Hadith that if his own daughter committed a crime he would enforce the full legal punishment on her. Even though members of the general public might not be in a position to advise their leaders to remain just in their actions but they can influence them indirectly by acting justly in all their dealings and actions. For example, a muslim must act justly in respect to their dependents, such as their children, by treating them equally. This has been specifically advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 3544. They should act justly in all their business dealings irrespective of who they deal with. If people act with justice on an individual level then communities can change for the better and in turn those who are in influential positions, such as politicians, will act justly whether they desire to or not.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they...are just and fair among themselves...while we spread corruption throughout the Earth."

Corruption is when a person abuses the blessings they possess, especially their social influence, in order to gain worldly things, such as power and wealth. It affects a muslim's duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and leads to much sins against people, such as oppression.

A Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4019, warns that when the general public cheats each other financially Allah, the Exalted, punishes them by appointing oppressive leaders over them. One aspect of this oppression is corruption which causes the general public great distress. The same Hadith warns that when the general public break their covenant of sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, then they will be overpowered by their enemies who will illegally confiscate their wealth and property from them. Again, this is an aspect of corruption where people of influence, such as government officials, freely take the belongings of others without any fear of the consequences. When the general public becomes corrupt then their leaders and other people in influential social positions are inspired to act in the same way believing this behaviour is accepted by the general public. This leads to corruption on a national level. But if the general public obeyed Allah, the Exalted, and avoided mistreating others through corruption then their leaders and those in an influential social position would not dare act in a corrupt way full well knowing the general public would not stand for it. And according to the Hadith quoted earlier, if the general public remain obedient to

Allah, the Exalted, He would protect them from corrupt officials by appointing people into influential positions who are just in their affairs.

Instead of taking the immature path of blaming others for the widespread corruption observed in the world muslims should truly reflect on their own behaviour and if necessary adjust their attitude. Otherwise, corruption in society will only increase with the passing of time. No one should believe that as they are not in an influential social position they have no effect on the corruption which occurs in society. As proven by this discussion corruption occurs because of the negative behaviour of the general public and it therefore can only be removed by the good behaviour of the general public. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 11:

“...Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...”

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they stand up at night (to pray), they fast during the day, they fulfill their covenants, they enjoin good and forbid evil and they are just and fair among themselves; and because we drink alcohol..."

In a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah number 3371, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that a muslim must never consume alcohol as it is the key to all evil.

Unfortunately, this major sin has increased amongst the muslims over time. This is the key to all evil as it gives rise to other sins. This is quite obvious as a drunk loses control over their tongue and physical actions. One only needs to look at the news to observe how much crime is committed due to drinking alcohol. Even those who drink moderately only cause damage to their bodies, which science has proven. The physical and mental diseases associated with alcohol are numerous and cause a heavy burden on the National Health Service and the tax payers. It is the key to all evil as it negatively affects all three aspects of a person namely, their body, mind and soul. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 90:

"O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful."

The fact that drinking alcohol has been placed next to things which are associated with polytheism in this verse highlights how important it is to avoid.

It is such a serious sin that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3376, that the one who drinks alcohol regularly will not enter Paradise.

Spreading the Islamic greeting of peace is a key to obtaining Paradise according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 68. Yet, a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 1017, advises muslims not to greet someone who regularly drinks alcohol.

Alcohol is a unique major sin as it has been cursed from ten different ways in a single Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3380. These include the alcohol itself, the one who produces it, the one it is produced for, the one who sells it, the one who buys it, the one who carries it, the one to whom it is carried to, the one who uses the wealth obtained through selling it, the one who drinks it and the one who pours it. The one who deals with something that has been cursed like this will not obtain true success unless they sincerely repent.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they stand up at night (to pray), they fast during the day, they fulfill their covenants, they enjoin good and forbid evil and they are just and fair among themselves; and because we...fornicate..."

This is connected to chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 68:

"...and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty."

The true servants of Allah, the Exalted, avoid all forms of illegal relationships. The fact that adultery has been placed next to polytheism and killing an innocent person in this verse indicates its severity.

Muslims should take precautions in order to avoid being tempted into illegal relationships. Firstly, they should learn to lower their gaze. This does not mean one should always stare at their shoes but it means they should avoid looking around unnecessary especially in public places. They should avoid staring at others and maintain respect for the opposite gender. Just like a muslim would not like someone staring at their sister or daughter they should not stare at other people's sisters and daughters. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 30:

“Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision¹ and guard their private parts. That is purer for them...”

Whenever possible a muslim should avoid spending time alone with the opposite gender unless they are related in a way which prohibits marriage. This has been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1862.

Muslims should dress and behave with modesty. Dressing modestly avoids attracting the glances of strangers and behaving modestly prevents one from taking the initial steps which could lead to an illegal relationship such as talking unnecessarily to the opposite gender.

Understanding the blessings of avoiding illegal relationships is another way to protect oneself from them. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has guaranteed Paradise to the one who safeguards their tongue and chastity. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2408.

Fearing the punishment of being involved in illegal relationships will also aid a muslim to avoid them. For example, faith will depart from the person who is committing fornication. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4690.

In reality, a muslim does not need illegal relationships as Islam prescribes marriage. Those who cannot afford to marry should fast often as this also helps to control one's desires and actions. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 3398.

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In a long Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6806, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned seven groups of people who will be granted shade on the Day of Judgment by Allah, the Exalted.

This shade will protect them from the horrors of the Day of Judgment which includes the unbearable heat caused by the Sun being brought within two miles of the creation. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421.

One of these groups includes a person who is invited towards fornication but rejects it out of the fear of Allah, the Exalted. Controlling one's desire especially when no one except Allah, the Exalted, will know about it is a great deed. Muslims should strive to avoid situations where they might be invited to sins by firstly avoiding places where sins are more common, such as a nightclub. This is extremely important as a person's environment often has a deep impact on their attitude and behaviour. Just like a student is more likely to study in a quiet library compared to a busy and loud house a muslim is less likely to be attracted to sins when they avoid places where sins occur regularly and openly. The other

important thing is to avoid people who openly commit sins and invite others to them. A person will adopt the characteristics of their companions whether good or bad. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833. Muslims should not only ensure they accompany good people but also encourage their dependents, such as their children, to do the same. If muslims truly concentrated on this it will dramatically reduce the amount of youth who become involved in gangs and crime. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they stand up at night (to pray), they fast during the day, they fulfill their covenants, they enjoin good and forbid evil and they are just and fair among themselves; and because we...do unlawful acts..."

Sins have been classified as minor and major. Over time many definitions have been given regarding what exactly a major sin is. One simple classification is that any sin which Islam has commanded the Islamic government to punish is classed as a major sin. Another classification is that if any sin is mentioned with Hellfire, the anger of Allah, the Exalted, or the curse of Allah, the Exalted, then it is a major sin. For example, backbiting is a major sin as it is cursed in the Holy Quran. Chapter 104 Al Humazah, verse 1:

"Woe to every backbiter, slanderer."

Some muslims believe there are only seven major sins which have been mentioned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2766. But they fail to realize that even though these seven are major sins it does not mean that they are only seven. In fact, there are other Hadiths which mention other major sins such as, disobeying parents. This Hadith is found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6273. The seven major sins declared in the Hadith quoted earlier are: polytheism, magic, killing an innocent, dealing with financial interest, usurping the wealth of orphans, fleeing a battlefield and accusing an innocent woman of fornication.

It is important to note, that when one persists on minor sins they become major in the sight of Islam.

Major sins are only forgiven with sincere repentance whereas minor sins can be erased by avoiding the major sins and performing righteous deeds. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 31:

“If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins...”

Sincere repentance includes regret, seeking the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, and anyone who has been wronged, making a firm promise not to commit the same or similar sin again and making up for any rights which have been violated in respect to Allah, the Exalted, and people.

Muslims should ensure they avoid all types of sins irrespective of size as one of the traps of the Devil is that he inspires muslims to disregard small sins. One should always remember that mountains are made up of small stones.

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In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6116, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised a person not to get angry.

In reality, this Hadith does not mean a person should never get angry as anger is an innate characteristic which is even found in the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. In fact, in some rare cases anger can be useful for example, in self-defence. This Hadith actually means that a person should control their anger so it does not lead them to sins. In addition, this Hadith shows that anger can lead to many evils and controlling it leads to much good.

Firstly, this advice is a command to adopt all the good characteristics which will encourage one to control their anger, such as patience. This Hadith also indicates that a person should not act according to their anger. Instead, they should struggle with themselves in order to control it so that it does not lead them to sins. Controlling anger for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is a great deed and leads to divine love. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 134:

“...who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good.”

There are many teachings within Islam which encourage muslims to control their anger. For example, as anger is linked to and inspired by the Devil a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3282, advises that an angry person should seek refuge in Allah, the Exalted, from the Devil.

An angered Muslim has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2191, to cling to the ground. This could mean that they should prostrate on the Earth until they calm down. In fact, the more one takes an inactive body position the less chance they will lash out in anger. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4782. Acting on this advice allows one to imprison their anger within themselves until it passes so that it does not negatively affect others.

A Muslim who is angered should follow the advice given in the Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4784. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised the angry muslim to perform ablution. This is because water counters the innate characteristic of anger namely, heat. If one then offers prayer this would help them control their anger further and lead to a great reward.

The advice discussed so far helps an angry muslim to control their physical actions. In order to control one's speech it is best to refrain from

speaking when angered. Unfortunately, words can often have more of a lasting effect on others than physical actions. Countless relationships have been fractured and broken because of words spoken in anger. This behaviour often leads to other sins and crimes as well. It is important for a muslim to note the Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3970, which warns that it only takes a single evil word to cause a person to plunge into Hell on Judgement Day.

Controlling anger is a great virtue and the one who masters this has been described by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as a strong person in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6114. In fact, the one who swallows their anger for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, meaning, they do not commit a sin because of their anger, will have their heart filled with peace and true faith. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4778. This is a characteristic of the sound heart which is mentioned in the Holy Quran. It is the only heart which will be granted safety on the Day of Judgment. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 88 and 89:

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."

As mentioned earlier, anger within limits can be useful. It should be used for repelling harm to one's self, faith and possessions which if done correctly, according to the teachings of Islam, is counted as anger for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. This was the state of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who was never angered for the sake of his own desires. He only became angry for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim,

number 6050. The character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was the Holy Quran, which has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1739. This means he would be pleased with what it was pleased with and angered with what it was angered with.

It is important to note, that becoming angered only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is praiseworthy but if this anger causes one to exceed the limits then it becomes blameworthy. It is absolutely vital for one to control their anger according to the teachings of Islam even when they are angered for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. A Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4901, warns of a worshipper who angrily claimed Allah, the Exalted, would not forgive a specific sinful person. As a result this worshipper will be sent to Hell while the sinner will be forgiven on Judgment Day.

The origins of evil consist of four things: failing to control one's desire, fear, evil appetites and anger. Therefore, the one who accepts the advice of this Hadith will remove a quarter of evil from their character and life.

To conclude, it is vital for muslims to control their anger so it does not cause them to act or speak in a way which will lead them to a great regret in both this world and the next.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they stand up at night (to pray), they fast during the day, they fulfill their covenants, they enjoin good and forbid evil and they are just and fair among themselves; and because we...become (uncontrollably) angry and oppress others..."

In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the bankrupt muslim is the one who accumulates many righteous deeds, such as fasting and prayer, but as they mistreated people their good deeds will be given to their victims and if necessary their victim's sins will be given to them on Judgement Day. This will lead to them being hurled into Hell.

It is important to understand that a muslim must fulfil two aspects of faith in order to achieve success. The first are the duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, such as the obligatory prayer. The second aspect is in respect to people which includes treating them kindly. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has declared in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, that a person cannot be a true believer until they keep they physical and verbal harm away from the life and possessions of others.

It is important to understand that Allah, the Exalted, is infinitely forgiving meaning, He will forgive those who sincerely repent to Him. But He will

not forgive the sins which involve other people until the victim forgives first. As people are not so forgiving a muslim should be fearful that those who they have wronged will exact revenge on them by taking away their precious good deeds on Judgment Day. Even if a muslim fulfils the rights of Allah, the Exalted, they may still end up in Hell simply because they have wronged others. It is therefore important for muslims to strive to fulfil both aspects of their duties in order to obtain success in both worlds.

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Disbelief can be a literal rejecting of Islam or through actions, which involves disobeying Allah, the Exalted, even though one believes in Him. This can be clearly understood by an example. If an unaware person is warned by another of an approaching lion and the unaware person takes practical steps to obtain safety they will be considered someone who believed in the warning given to them as they adapted their behaviour based on the warning. Whereas, if the unaware person does not practically change their behaviour after being warned, people will suspect that they do not believe in the warning given to them even if the unaware person verbally claims belief in the warning given to them.

Some people claim that their belief and obedience to their God is in their hearts and they therefore do not need to demonstrate it practically. Unfortunately, this foolish mentality has infected many Muslims who believe they possess a pure faithful heart even though they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has clearly declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3984, that when one's heart is pure the body

becomes pure which means their actions become correct. But if one's heart is corrupt the body becomes corrupt which means their actions will be corrupt and incorrect. Therefore, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling their duties practically can never have a pure heart.

In addition, demonstrating one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, practically is their proof and evidence which is required on Judgment Day in order to be granted Paradise. Not having this practical evidence is as silly as a student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming their knowledge is in their mind so they therefore do not need to write it down by answering the exam questions. The same way this student would undoubtedly fail so will a person who reaches Judgment Day without the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in the form of fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, even if they possess faith in their heart.

When the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Yarmouk, HaraqI, the Roman king, interrogated his leaders on how this defeat was possible when their army was around six times larger than the Muslim army. Only one elderly leader had the courage to give an honest reply, he said: "We were defeated because they stand up at night (to pray), they fast during the day, they fulfill their covenants, they enjoin good and forbid evil and they are just and fair among themselves; and because we drink alcohol, we fornicate, we do unlawful acts, we violate the terms of our covenants, we become (uncontrollably) angry and oppress others, we enjoin evil, we forbid the things that please Allah, the Exalted, and we spread corruption throughout the Earth." HaraqI replied, "You have answered me truthfully."

Even though the number of muslims have increased over time it is obvious that the strength of muslims has only decreased. Each muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith believes in the authenticity of the Holy Quran as doubting it would cause them to lose their faith. In the following verse Allah, the Exalted, has given the key to obtaining superiority and success which would remove the weakness and grief muslims are experiencing all around the world. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 139:

"So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers."

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that muslims only need to become true believers in order to achieve this superiority and success in both worlds. True belief involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted,

refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This includes the duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and those towards people, such as loving for others what one loves for themselves which has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515. This requires one to learn and act on Islamic teachings. Through this attitude was success and superiority granted to the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. And if Muslims desire to achieve it then they must return to this rightly guided attitude. As Muslims believe in the Holy Quran they should understand this simple teaching and act on it.

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds and may peace and blessings be upon His final Messenger, Muhammad, his noble Family and Companions.

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