

Captured Thoughts on Noble Character

PodThought – Complete Series



Achieve Noble Character

Captured Thoughts on Noble Character

ShaykhPod Books

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Captured Thoughts on Noble Character

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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 book discusses some Thoughts and the lessons one can learn from them in order 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 Judgement Day will be Noble Character. It is one of the 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.

Captured Thoughts on Noble Character

A Fantasy World

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the powerful weapons the Devil uses in order to misguide people is to beautify an element of this world in order to create a fantasy which looks appealing. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 63:

"By Allāh, We did certainly send [messengers] to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds attractive to them..."

When a person observes others, the Devil will take a snapshot of that moment and beautify it in such a way that the person creates a whole fantasy world from it in their mind. For example, a person will observe a family who took a selfie while on holiday and this single moment is taken out of context by the person so that it distracts from obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him. For example, they might get jealous of the family and their moment of happiness on their holiday. Jealousy always leads to other negative traits such as bitterness. It may also cause them to belittle the good things Allah, the Exalted, has granted them. The one who behaves in this manner can never be grateful to Allah, the Exalted. The beautification process can also encourage them to strive to adopt the lifestyle which has been created in their imagination. This often causes one to misuse the blessings they have been granted. It causes

them to strive for the material world beyond their needs and causes them to neglect their responsibilities and duties. This always leads to stress and even sins. This in turn, will prevent one from preparing adequately for the Day of Judgement, which 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.

These are just some examples of what occurs when one falls for the Devil's trick. A Muslim should always remember that as they are looking at a moment from another person's life, they can never understand the difficulties and stresses they are facing. They merely see a small, narrow and exterior aspect of a situation which is very often misleading. For example, the family taking the selfie may well be hating their holiday and spending time with each other and only smile for the photo they have taken. A photo does not reveal the difficulties of family life. A Muslim must always remember that Allah, the Exalted, gives each person what is best for them, even if this is not obvious to them. 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.”

They should therefore concentrate on using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as their peace and success in both worlds lies in this. It does not lie in pursuing a fantasy concocted by the Devil from a single moment of someone else's life. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

A Good Life

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Muslims are often tricked into believing that even though learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, leads to Paradise in the hereafter, yet if they choose this path then they will be miserable in this world. They are convinced that peace in this world simply lies in fulfilling one's desires whereas Islam teaches one to control their desires, not unleash them. So in their minds, peace in this world and peace in the next world are both obtained through two different paths. This is completely untrue, as Allah, the Exalted, has in fact placed peace of mind in both worlds in one single straight path, the path of Islam. One must not be fooled by social media, fashion and culture and instead always bear in mind that the Controller of hearts, which is the station of peace of mind, is none other than Allah, the Exalted. Meaning, Allah, the Exalted, alone decides who obtains peace of mind in this world, just like He alone decides who obtains Paradise in the hereafter. Therefore, one must seek peace of mind in both worlds in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

If one incorrectly believes that peace of mind in this world and peace in the next world are obtained through two different paths, they will inevitably try to obtain peace of mind in this world and delay practically preparing for the hereafter. This attitude will only prevent them from obtaining peace of mind in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

A Purposeful Life

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is widely accepted that when an invention fails to fulfill its primary goal of existence then it is deemed a failure, even if it possesses many good characteristics. For example, a phone with many excellent features, such as a high quality camera, will be deemed a failure if it cannot be used to make phone calls, which is its primary function. Similarly, humans are an invention and creation of Allah, the Exalted, with a specific purpose. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."

The only purpose of mankind is to worship, meaning, obey Allah, the Exalted. This sincere obedience 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 will ensure one uses every blessing they were granted by Allah, the Exalted, in ways pleasing to Him.

But the person who fails to fulfil their purpose will lead a meaningless and purposeless life, even if they achieve much worldly success. This is quite evident when one observes society. They will clearly see that those who have achieved much worldly success are the most anxiety-ridden, stressed, depressed and addicted to drugs and alcohol than anyone

else. This occurs as they fail to fulfil their purpose of creation, which causes them to misuse the blessings they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

A Muslim must not fool themselves into believing they have a purposeful life if they fail to use their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, even if they fulfil the basic obligatory duties, such as the five daily obligatory prayers. One's purpose extends beyond a few daily and annual rituals and practices. It in fact encompasses one's every breath and every aspect of one's life e.g. financial, private, social, work and family life. The Muslim who fails to fulfil their purpose is like a vase which looks beautiful from the outside, as they fulfil the basic obligatory duties, but just like the vase is empty inside, so is their life. This is the reason why many Muslims who fulfil the basic obligatory duties still experience mental stress and depression as they fail to understand that their purpose encompasses their whole life, not just a few hours in the day or a few days out of the year.

One of the main reasons this reality is overlooked by many people, including Muslims, is due to blind imitation of society, fashion, culture and social media. When one fails to use their intellect, then they will falsely believe that a meaningful life is found in worldly things, such as wealth, a career, friends or family. One must avoid acting like cattle and instead learn from Islamic teachings and by observing the life choices of others and their consequences. When one correctly does this, they will understand that a meaningful existence does not lie in pursuing worldly

things, it only lies in fulfilling one's purpose of creation, just like value is given to an invention which fulfils its primary function of creation. Failing to recognize this is the real tragedy of mankind.

All people must strive to fulfill their purpose of creation, which involves using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as only this leads to a meaningful, purposeful and peaceful life in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Academic Studying

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims who study Islamic teachings to avoid an attitude which prevents them from benefiting from their studying. This is when one studies Islamic teachings with purely an academic attitude. The academic attitude is observed in those who pursue worldly knowledge and research. The worldly knowledge these students gain does not influence the way they live and interact with Allah, the Exalted, or the creation. It is a purely academic study which has no bearing on the student's everyday life, behaviour and attitude. This can occur in students of Islamic knowledge also. They become fascinated by the knowledge they gain but fail to understand the lessons and morals behind the knowledge and therefore the knowledge fails to mould their character, behaviour and life in a positive way whereby they increase their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. And their knowledge fails to encourage them to fulfill the rights of people, the least of which is to treat others how one desires to be treated by people. Approaching Islamic studies in a purely academic way may increase a person's knowledge but it will not mould their character in a positive way. This makes the knowledge they have gained fruitless. Chapter 62 Al Jumu'ah, verse 5:

“...and then did not take it on (did not act on their knowledge) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]...”

One must always bear in mind that their purpose and intention to study Islamic teachings should be to improve their behaviour towards Allah,

the Exalted, and people. If this does not occur then they are not on the right path and are therefore far from right guidance.

Accountability

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons the worship of false deities is common in society is due to the underlying intention of absolving oneself of being held accountable for their actions. The non-Muslims of Mecca, during the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, claimed that they worshipped idols in order to draw closer to Allah, the Exalted, as their idols represented different sacred beings, such as Angels, which were close and beloved to Allah, the Exalted. By worshipping them, they incorrectly believed the idols would intercede on their behalf on Judgement Day in the court of Allah, the Exalted, thereby rescuing them from being held accountable for their actions. In their eyes, this was a free ticket to do whatever they pleased as they would not be held accountable for their actions because of this intercession. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 18:

“And they worship other than Allāh that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say, “These are our intercessors with Allāh.”...”

And chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 3:

“...And those who take protectors besides Him [say], “We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allāh in position.” Indeed, Allāh will judge between them concerning that over which they differ. Indeed, Allāh does not guide he who is a liar...”

Unfortunately, a similar attitude has crept into the minds of some Muslims who adopt a similar belief whereby they attempt to find someone who is considered holy and close to Allah, the Exalted, and strive to please Him through pleasing them, through gifts, presents and in some cases, showing them an unhealthy level of respect and reverence. Their aim is to get these holy people to intercede for them in the court of Allah, the Exalted, in this world and in the hereafter. Even though supplicating for others is lawful and intercession on Judgement Day on behalf of the believers is an established fact, yet this does not mean one is absolved from being held accountable for their actions. Thinking otherwise is only making a mockery out of these realities.

This incorrect belief has driven many Muslims to adopt wishful thinking whereby they believe they can openly and persistently disobey Allah, the Exalted, yet will escape any type of accountability, through the intercession of these holy people. If this was true, the Companions, may Allah be pleased them, had the supplications and aid of the holiest man of all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet they constantly feared their accountability and therefore persisted in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Instead of attempting to find a way out of one's inevitable accountability, they should instead strive to prepare for it by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Otherwise they may well encounter a strict and difficult accountability on a Great Day.

Aiming Big

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Muslims often get caught up in striving to implement big projects, whether connected to religion or the world, such as building a Mosque. Even though aiming high is encouraged in Islam, one should always bear in mind not to overreach in their goals. When one overreaches beyond their resources attempting to implement their big idea they often fall short of achieving it. Instead, it is often better to aim high but within the limits of one's resources. It often occurs that when one has a habit of aiming high and overreaching, due to a lack of resources, nothing gets accomplished. So they move from one failed project to the next without achieving anything good. Whereas, the one who aims high but limits themselves within their resources, often achieves their goal. And they move from one small project to the next, achieving positive outcomes. Many small achievements then end up being more impactful than a potential large yet single achievement. This is one of the reasons why Islam encourages one to focus on quality instead of quantity. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised that the most beloved of deeds to Allah, the Exalted, are those which are regular even if they are few. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6464.

Finally, the one who aims within the limits of their resources is less likely to give up doing good and positive things, as they are more likely to achieve a positive outcome than the one who overreaches and aims beyond the limit of their resources.

Aims and Aspirations

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, clearly stand out as the best group of people that have ever existed, second only to the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. One of the things which made them great was their high aims and aspirations. In everything they did and said they always aimed for the hereafter instead of aiming for the material world. Even if one removes their abundant worship and only observes their daily activities, they will clearly see a group of people who truly believed in the hereafter, as the majority of their daily efforts were dedicated to the hereafter, as they always used the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and avoided using them in vain and sinful ways. On the other hand, if one removes the obligatory prayers from a modern Muslim's daily life they will not be able to differentiate them by their daily activities from a non-Muslim. This is only because of their low aspirations and aims. Meaning, the vast majority of their efforts are dedicated to this material world, just like a non-Muslim. One should not fool themselves into believing that they are doing the same thing as the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did. Yes, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, took part in business and raised families but the way they did these things were totally rooted in the teachings of Islam. They earned and spent only in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and avoided anything which would not benefit them in the hereafter. How many Muslims can claim they behave in this way? The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, got married but they chose a spouse based completely on the teachings of Islam and strived hard to fulfill the rights of their spouse according to the teachings of Islam instead of according to their own desires. How many Muslims can claim they behave in this manner? The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, raised children by teaching them the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and taught them to prioritize preparing for the hereafter over this world, by using the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to

Allah, the Exalted. Whereas, most Muslim parents today, only teach their children how to recite the Holy Quran without understanding it and acting on it and put their full effort in encouraging them to succeed in earning lots of wealth and buying lots of properties.

Modern Muslims do copy the actions of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, but as their aims and aspirations are focused on the material world they are very apart from the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them.

One must live their life in a way so that it becomes apparent to someone observing their day to day activities that they truly believe in the hereafter, as their aims and aspirations are all pointing towards the hereafter. This is achieved when one uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One cannot behave like this only during the five obligatory prayers, which takes less than an hour of a day, and instead show this attitude in every action and word. This was the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and is one of the reasons behind their greatness.

An Organized Life

One of the most fundamental aims of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is for people to achieve peace of body and mind in this world. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

This is only achieved when one sincerely obeys and follows these two sources of guidance, which in turn guides one to using the blessings they have been granted correctly, meaning, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and helps them prioritize the things and people in their life correctly so that they obtain peace of mind and body. This is like a library of books which have been arranged in the correct order, which allows for a person to easily find the book they need with minimal hassle. Whereas, the one who fails to follow the guidance of the two

sources of guidance, thereby misusing the blessings they were granted and incorrectly prioritizing the things and people in their life, is like a library of books which are completely unorganized. Finding a specific book in this library would be extremely difficult, stressful and time consuming and a person may not even find the book they desire.

Just like an organized library, when one sincerely obeys and follows the two sources of guidance they will place everything in its proper place within their life, thereby leading them to peace of mind and body. Chapter 10 Yunus, verses 57-58:

“O mankind, there has come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers. Say, “In the bounty of Allāh and in His mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than what they accumulate.””

Avoiding Extremes

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is commonly accepted that in order to obtain peace of mind and body one must obtain an organized and balanced mental and physical state. For example, an organized and balanced state is like a library of books which are organized in a good order, which allows one to find the book they desire easily. Whereas, an unorganized and imbalanced state is like an unorganized library of books which makes finding a specific book difficult and stressful. An organized and balanced state of mind and body allows one to place everything and everyone in their appropriate place in one's life whereby they avoid being extreme in some aspects of their life while neglecting other aspects. This leads to peace of mind and body.

But it is important to note that one cannot achieve this outcome while following society, fashion and culture, as these things are fickle by nature and often swing from one extreme to another. For example, what was considered deviant behaviour a few years ago is considered the norm today. What society deemed the most important thing, such as getting married, a few generations ago, is now being dismissed as a waste of time and energy. Not so long ago, society would urge people to be self-sacrificing and prioritize the feelings and happiness of others over oneself. Whereas, nowadays society urges people to only care about fulfilling their own desires and ignore the criticism of others whether it is constructive or not. Meaning, one should only consider their own happiness under every circumstance. The examples are endless of how society, social media, fashion and culture have always swung from one extreme to another. This attitude will always prevent one from obtaining an organized and balanced state of mind and body, which leads to peace of mind and body.

The only way one can avoid swinging from extremes is by learning and acting on Islamic teachings, as they are tailored for human nature, something which is timeless, and these teachings do not sway with fickle things like society, social media, fashion and culture. When one holds firmly onto Islamic teachings they will place everything and everyone in their correct place within their life and avoid being extreme in some aspects of their life while neglecting other things. This will ensure they obtain an organized and balanced state, which in turn leads to peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Avoiding Hindrances

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is commonly observed that when one decides to do a good deed which requires time, energy and even wealth, they are often put off by others. The first hinderer is the Devil, who tries hard to put one off from performing good deeds. The second hinderer is one's inner self, which is accustomed to laziness and greed. The final hinderer is other people. Unfortunately, many of these hinderers are often Muslims who possess weak faith. As their faith is weak, they fail to appreciate the greatness of performing even small good deeds. And their weak faith inclines them towards enjoying worldly pleasures which directly clashes with doing good deeds. So these people often question why a Muslim is trying to do a good deed, especially those deeds which require time, energy and wealth. For example, a Muslim might be determined to create a website which shares Islamic knowledge. Others will often put them off by belittling their plan, as they do not value the importance of good deeds. Those who are determined to give charity will be put off by others who possess weak faith. They will attempt to scare them into keeping hold of their wealth in case they face unforeseen financial difficulties. The examples are endless of how people, especially Muslims with weak faith, put off others from doing good deeds, through belittling what they desire to do.

In cases like this, a Muslim who desires to do something good must choose who they consult wisely. Just like a sick person only consults a doctor, or when someone having car troubles only consults a mechanic, a Muslim must only consult those who possess strong faith. This is the one who learns and acts on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Only this person will appreciate the importance of small good deeds and therefore encourage others to do them. One should not consult a person who does not possess Islamic knowledge, as they will only

belittle their plan and ultimately put them off from it, even if their intention is not bad. This advice has been indicated in chapter 30 Ar Rum, verse 60:

"...And let them not disquiet you who are not certain [in faith]."

Being Different

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main delusions of this world and a weapon of the Devil is when one convinces themselves that they are different from others and will therefore not share the fate of the vast majority of people who adopted a certain way of life and path. For example, many people who are not rich and famous, observe celebrities who are drowned in mental disorders, such as anxiety, stress and substance addiction, as a consequence of their way of life, and they falsely believe that if they were granted fame and fortune their outcome would somehow be different. How many Muslims claim that if they were granted abundant wealth, like the billionaires of this world, they would eradicate world poverty? This particular attitude has even been mentioned in the Holy Quran. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verses 75-76:

"And among them are those who made a covenant with Allāh, [saying], 'If He should give us from His bounty, we will surely spend in charity, and we will surely be among the righteous.'" But when He gave them from His bounty, they were stingy with it and turned away while they refused."

Another common example is when one chooses a person of bad character to marry, even though their relatives and friends warn them against it. But they foolishly believe that unlike the vast majority of people who married someone of bad character and suffered as a result, they will not meet this fate and instead somehow reform their spouse so they become a model Muslim and citizen.

A final common example, similar to the one mentioned earlier, is that even though Islam recommends and encourages Muslims to only earn the lawful wealth they need to fulfill their necessities and responsibilities, as the majority of people who earn more than this only become greedy or wasteful and extravagant, yet many Muslims ignore the outcome of the majority and claim that they will be different and will only spend their excessive wealth in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. If this was true they would be no poverty in the world.

The truth is that even though people possess different characteristics, yet people are still people. If the majority of people failed to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, when adopting a certain way of life, in most cases, the one who follows them will fail also.

A Muslim must use the perception Allah, the Exalted, granted them in order to make the right choices in life. They must observe the choices made by others and the outcome they encountered and not assume they themselves will somehow encounter a different result if they choose the same path as them. One should not think they are special and different from the majority of other people. This attitude prevents one from using their perception correctly and can therefore lead to a disastrous outcome. The wise person chooses a path where the majority of people who journeyed down it succeeded in both worlds. This is the path of learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. All other paths should be avoided, even if one believes they can transverse it safely, as this is nothing but a deception and a trick from the Devil.

Being Selfish

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is strange how many people often label others as selfish even though they are the ones being selfish. According to them, being selfish is when one chooses their own happiness while contradicting the choice, opinion and happiness of someone else. This is not selfishness according to Islam unless the rights of others are being violated in one's pursuit of their lawful worldly choice. One must understand that in a situation which directly involves them, such as choosing a spouse for themselves, then making a lawful choice on who to marry according to their own happiness is not selfishness, even if the opinion, choice and happiness of others, such as relatives, are contradicted. In reality, the one who demands others to follow their opinion and happiness, even though the situation does not directly involve them, such as their relative choosing a spouse, is the selfish person. When a lawful situation directly involves a person, they should consider the opinions of others but in no way is it selfish for them to choose what makes them happy, as long as the rights of others are not violated. It is an act of sincerity to others when one puts aside their opinion and choice in situations that does not directly involve them and instead only considers the happiness of the people directly involved in the situation, such as the couple getting married. Whereas, to force one's opinions and choices on others in situations which do not directly involve them is selfish, as the happiness of the people directly involved in the situation is the most important thing, as long as it does not involve the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. It is a shame how many people make others feel bad by accusing them of selfishness, even though they are the selfish ones.

To conclude, as long as the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, is avoided, which includes violating the rights of people, a Muslim should

choose their choice, opinion and happiness in the situations which directly involve them, as this is not behaving selfishly.

Being Sincere

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Muslims are often rightly advised the importance of gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. And how knowledge which is not acted on has little to no benefit in either this world or the next. A further important point needs to be understood on this topic. If one desires to be rightly guided, so that they obtain peace of mind and success in both worlds, they must adopt a sincere attitude. Meaning, the only one who will be rightly guided by Islamic teachings is the one who comes to this knowledge with the intention to completely accept and act on it according to their best effort, without cherry picking what teachings to accept and act and what teachings to ignore, according to their desires. One must submit, accept and act on all the teachings, irrespective of how much it contradicts their desires, to the best of their ability. The truth is that there will always be teachings from the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that will weigh heavily on a person, as it contradicts their desires and attitude. This is because everyone has an inner devil which dislikes being contradicted. Only when one sincerely tries to submit to these teachings, the teachings which contradict their desires, will they obtain right guidance. Cherry picking what to follow or ignore is what caused the misguidance of the past nations and it will prevent a Muslim from obtaining peace and success in both worlds. Just like people take bitter medicine, despite disliking it, knowing it is good for them, one must accept and act on all the teachings of Islam despite their desires being contradicted, knowing it is best for them. Allah, the Exalted, does not expect nor demand perfection but peace and success cannot be obtained until one approaches the teachings of Islam with sincerity and the intention to accept and act on all of it according to their ability, irrespective of how difficult that may be to do. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

"And We send down of the Qur'ān that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss."

Buying Things

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Even though performing spiritual exercises based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are praiseworthy, it is important for a Muslim to avoid engrossing themselves in spiritual exercises which are not advised in the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and avoid those done in order to obtain worldly things. This was not the behaviour of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, or his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. Behaving in this manner encourages one to treat the treasury of Allah, the Exalted, like a shop where one buys worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, in exchange for some spiritual exercises. This is a highly disrespectful and insincere attitude to adopt, as the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are not credit cards which can be used to purchase worldly things, such as a child or a visa. One must instead know their place and behave as a sincere slave of Allah, the Exalted, and not act as a customer in His divine court. They should sincerely obey Him by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him.

One is allowed to ask for lawful worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, in a way endorsed by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but must avoid other ways, as it leads to misusing the two sources of guidance and adopting a customer type attitude towards Allah, the Exalted. The aim of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are to guide mankind on how to live and use their worldly blessings correctly so that they obtain peace of mind in both worlds. When one ignores this purpose and instead uses them as a credit card to purchase worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, it will only

take them further from peace and right guidance and into the hands of con artists who claim they can help others gain worldly things through spiritual exercises. Ignoring this primary function is as aimless as someone who buys a car with many features, such as air conditioning, yet the car cannot be driven as it is missing an engine.

Calling to One

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the most powerful signs which indicates the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, and His supreme power and authority over the creation is experienced by most people irrespective of their faith or lack of it. When a person faces a genuine difficulty, which cannot be resolved by the means they possess or have access to, they often supplicate to One god, Allah, the Exalted. They do not even appeal to multiple gods as their soul prevents them from doing so during their time of desperation. This is a reality which is often shown in movies and television shows, where a character, who does not even believe in a God, appeals to One God in their moment of need. As hard as movie producers have tried to belittle religion, this reality is still shown quite often in the movie industry.

This innate desire to call on One god, Allah, the Exalted, in desperate times originates from one's soul. The soul which was once in the company of Allah, the Exalted, and testified to His Lordship, Oneness and absolute control and power over all things. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 172:

"And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified."..."

One should take heed of these moments, as it is clear sign of the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. This heedfulness will encourage them to believe in Him, if they do not already, and it will encourage them to sincerely obey Him, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as peace and a successful outcome lies in this. This is something one's soul testifies to, especially during times of difficulties. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 22:

"It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them¹ by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from every place and they expect to be engulfed, they supplicate Allāh, sincere to Him in religion, "If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful.""

And chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth..."

Compartmentalizing

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the major reasons why the Muslims who fulfil the basic obligatory duties of Islam still do not obtain the peace of mind which Islam guarantees to the one who submits to Allah, the Exalted, is because they have compartmentalized Islam. Meaning, they have made Islam part of their life but not allowed it to govern their life. For example, they reduce Islam to acts of worship and rituals, such as the obligatory prayers and blindly reciting the Holy Quran without understanding its meaning or acting on its teachings. Even though, all of these good deeds lead to reward but they do not fulfil the conditions required to obtain peace of mind through Islam. When one compartmentalizes Islam then they treat it like a coat which they sometimes put on and other times take off. Meaning, apart from the few acts of worship and rituals, Islam has little or no say or effect on how they use the blessings they have been granted, such as their relationships, wealth and time. They refuse to allow Islam to guide them through every situation they encounter. For example, many Muslims who encounter problems in their marriage will refuse to hear and act on the advice given by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Instead they act and speak as if Islam has no business in their marriage except for the actual wedding ceremony. They instead apply the misguided teachings of society, customs, fashion and culture in every aspect of their life and only come to Islam for their few acts of worship and rituals. If they happen to turn to Allah, the Exalted, during a problem they encounter, instead of hearing and obeying the advice given in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they resort to spiritual exercises, such as blind recitation of the Holy Quran, so that they are granted what they desire, even if their desire is misplaced.

When one treats Islam in this manner, where they only apply it in their rituals and acts of worship, they will not be guided to peace in this world. Peace in this world is obtained when one allows Islam to guide them in every situation, relationship and difficulty and time of ease. When one allows Islam to guide them in this way by learning and acting on its teachings, they will use every blessing they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. And this alone is the key to obtaining peace in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Desiring New Things

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Many Muslims have the habit of always searching, reading and listening to Islamic knowledge taken from sources other than the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. They behave in this manner as they desire to experience something new and different and therefore behave dismissively towards the teachings from these two sources of guidance. But they fail to understand that the key to peace of mind and success in both worlds lies in understanding and acting on these two sources of guidance. This is indicated in many verses, such as chapter 16 An Nahl, Verse 89:

"...And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims."

The clarification refers to all the things one needs to gain peace and success in both worlds.

Unfortunately, even many Islamic preachers have adopted this attitude in order to please and please their audiences. The time they should be preaching directly from the two sources of guidance, such as the Friday sermon, they dedicate to unauthentic events and stories from alternate sources.

In addition, seeking knowledge from alternate sources can lead to learning and acting on unverified and inaccurate knowledge, as many of these stories and events taken from other sources are not authentic and have been fabricated. And many of these stories deal with irrelevant knowledge and topics which will not be questioned about on Judgement Day. Furthermore, many of these stories and events are based on things which contradict Islamic teachings, but as these contradictions are often subtle they are overlooked by the majority of the audience. For example, these stories often push the topic of complete and unquestionable obedience to one's spiritual teacher, even though this is not something the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did with each other, even during the time of the rightly guided Caliphs of Islam, may Allah be pleased with them. In fact, there are many authentic and widely known events when the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, respectfully challenged the method of the rightly guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them. For example, Umar Ibn Khattab and many other Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, respectfully challenged, the first Caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, when he decided to fight against the Muslims who refused to donate the obligatory charity. Even though, Abu Bakr Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, was correct in his decision, none the less, the other Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did not blindly follow him. They instead, respectfully objected to his decision until he clarified his decision to them. This has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 124.

Total and unquestionable obedience is only for Allah, the Exalted, and His divinely guided Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

To conclude, a Muslim should understand that learning and acting on the two sources of guidance leads to peace and success in both worlds. In fact, the more they dedicate themselves to these two sources of guidance, the more doors of wisdoms and understanding will be opened for them. Therefore, there is no need to search for right guidance and Islamic knowledge from unreliable and unauthentic sources. This was the attitude of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and is the only path to success. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“As for those who struggle in Our cause, We will surely guide them along Our Way. And Allah is certainly with the good-doers.”

Different Times Same Human

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons why many Muslims in the modern world turn away from seeking peace of mind from learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is because they falsely believe that the teachings of Islam do not cater for their modern stresses, difficulties and problems. They wrongly believe that the teachings of Islam only caters for desert and village dwellers who were living in a bygone era. As a result, they only take the rituals and practices of Islam from Islamic teachings but abandon the day to day living advice that is found in Islamic teachings. This is a foolish mentality, as no matter what era a people belong to, humans are still humans. Meaning, the aims, hopes, aspirations, fears, anxieties and stresses faced by people over the generations have always been the same. Technology has advanced over time but the essence and nature of humans has always been the same. Humans have not evolved into a different species so that their emotions, feelings, desires, aims and wishes are completely different from the people that came in earlier generations. Just like the older generations had the desire to gain fame, fortune, authority, family, friends and a career, so do the modern day people.

As the teachings of Islam target the essence and nature of humans it is therefore timeless and applies to all humans till the Day of Judgement. It will only cease to apply if humans evolve into a different species, which is not going to occur.

In addition, as the knowledge of Islam comes from Allah, the Exalted, the Creator of humans, the advice is accurate and encompasses every aspect of a person's mental and physical makeup. This knowledge lies only with Allah, the Exalted, and no amount of research can ever fully reveal all aspects of a human. Just like an inventor is the best person to seek advice in respect to their invention, Allah, the Exalted, alone is the best One to seek advice regarding the mental and physical wellbeing of a human. Finally, as Allah, the Exalted, controls the hearts of people, the station of emotions, He alone has control over whether one achieves peace of mind and body in this world and the next. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 43:

"And that it is He who makes [one] laugh and weep."

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that with His remembrance and obedience lies good mental and physical health in both worlds. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Whereas, the one who forgets Allah, the Exalted, and instead misuses the blessings they have been granted, will find no peace of mind, irrespective of how many worldly things they own. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

To conclude, as long as a person remains human, the timeless teachings of Islam will always apply to them, irrespective of the age they belong to. As long as they remain a creation of Allah, the Exalted, only He can give them the solution to mental and physical wellbeing. Seeking this elsewhere will only lead to poor mental and physical health, which is obvious if one observes social media and the news.

Divine Aid

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When one observes the suffering of people around the world, especially Muslims who believe in Allah, the Exalted, they may question the lack of divine aid based on outward appearances. But it is important for a Muslim to make certain realities about Allah, the Exalted, clear in their mind, as this aids in sincerely obeying Him, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One of these realities is that divine help does not occur according to the way people often expect or desire. A person's perception and thinking is extremely limited, whereas the divine perception and knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, is infinite. He therefore decrees things, such as His help for those being oppressed, according to His plan and method, which takes into consideration things which are beyond human perception and understanding, to ensure the best thing occurs for the people involved. 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.”

This is similar to how a doctor may prescribe a bitter medicine, which outwardly seems to not help the sick patient yet in the long run it favors them, as in it lies their cure.

There are many examples of the divine aid of Allah, the Exalted, which in the short term, seemed absent yet in the long term and taking into consideration the bigger picture, was more beneficial than anyone could have comprehended. For example, the Holy Prophet Yusuf, peace be upon him, was thrown into a desolate well and abandoned by his brothers, while he was only a child. He was then sold into slavery and then unjustly imprisoned. Any person observing what occurred to him would believe that the help of Allah, the Exalted, was completely absent from him. Yet, in the long run these events ensured that the Holy Prophet Yusuf, peace be upon him, would become the finance minister of Egypt which allowed him to prevent the deaths of millions, through a great famine which occurred in his time. So in reality, the help of Allah, the Exalted, was never absent from him or the general population at all. Instead, the divine aid occurred in a way which was beyond human understanding and resulted in the best outcome for everyone involved. Therefore, the help of Allah, the Exalted, does not often come in a way which is obvious nor according to the desires and expectations of people, as this would not result in the best outcome for those involved.

In conclusion, it is important to gain and act on Islamic knowledge so certain realities in respect to Allah, the Exalted, can be learned and understood. This in turn will strengthen one's belief and their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 214:

"...Unquestionably, the help of Allāh is near."

Doubts Caused by Others

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the difficult realities Muslims are facing in this day and age, is the doubts in Islam caused by the behaviour of other Muslims. This is a reality which every nation has faced and has therefore been discussed in the Holy Quran. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 110:

"And We had certainly given Moses the Scripture, but it came under disagreement. And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord, it would have been judged between them. And indeed they are, concerning it in disquieting doubt."

When the scholars and religious people misused divine teachings for the sake of gaining worldly things, such as wealth and authority, the general population were put off from faith when they observed their bad behaviour. The same reality has also affected Muslims. They observe supposedly religious people who intentionally misinterpret divine teachings thereby failing to implement the correct teachings of Islam. For example, some Muslim nations prevent women from receiving an education, even though it is obligatory for every man and woman to gain knowledge, according to the teachings of Islam, such as the Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. Another widespread example, is when religious personalities spend all their time, energy and efforts in insulting, criticizing and defaming other Muslims. When the general population observes these types of behaviour they are put off from Islam, even if they do not outwardly show it.

First of all, all Muslims need to represent Islam correctly so that they fulfill their role as the ambassadors of Islam, in order to show the true face of Islam to the world. The root of this is possessing a good intention, to please Allah, the Exalted, and gaining and acting on correct Islamic knowledge, which is rooted in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Secondly, even though this reality exists, none the less, a Muslim is not excused from turning away from Islam because of the behaviour of others. They must instead gain the correct knowledge of Islam in order to verify for themselves what Islam teaches. There is no excuse in failing to do this, as the correct Islamic knowledge is widely available and accessible to the general public. Only through this method will one eliminate any potential doubts that can arise from observing the incorrect behaviour of other Muslims and prevent these doubts from infecting the coming generations of Muslims.

Effective Supplications

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is obvious when one observes social media that Muslims have become a nation of supplicators. Countless posts and videos can be observed which reference supplications found within Islamic teachings. Even though supplicating to Allah, the Exalted, plays an important role in Islam yet many have overlooked the fact that for supplications to be effective they must be coupled with sincere actions. The supplications in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are always coupled with sincere actions. For example, chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verses 127-129:

"And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites [of worship] and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.""

The Holy Prophets Ibrahim and Ismaeel, peace be upon them, were practically building the house of Allah, the Exalted, when they made this supplication. Meaning, their supplication was coupled with sincere good actions.

Another example is chapter 27 An Naml, verses 18-19:

"Until, when they came upon the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not." So [Solomon] smiled, amused at her speech, and said, "My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to do righteousness of which You approve. And admit me by Your mercy into [the ranks of] Your righteous servants.""

It is obvious that the Holy Prophet Suleiman, peace be upon him, lived up to this supplication by showing gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings he was granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. He did not simply supplicate and fail to couple it with actions.

In addition, even the timings recommended for supplicating to Allah, the Exalted, are closely linked to physical actions. For example, a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3499, advises that Allah, the Exalted, readily accepts the supplication made after the obligatory prayers and in the last part of the night. Both of these times for supplications are connected to physical actions: the obligatory prayers and the night voluntary prayer.

There are many Hadiths which warn against certain actions which prevent the acceptance of a supplication. For example, a Hadith found in

Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2989, clearly warns that the supplication of a person who earns and consumes the unlawful will never be accepted. It is obvious that supplicating for certain things while performing actions which contradict the supplication is futile. For example, the one who supplicates for protection from Hell, yet persistently commits the sins which lead to Hell. Or the one who supplicates for Paradise yet fails to establish the righteous deeds which lead to Paradise, such as the obligatory prayers.

In addition, Islam makes it clear that a person cannot simply supplicate for success without actively striving for it. For example, Allah, the Exalted, commands the believers to take their precautions during fighting, He does not simply tell them to only supplicate to Him for success. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 71:

"O you who have believed, take your precaution and [either] go forth in companies or go forth all together."

Even when a married couple have issues, Allah, the Exalted, does not simply tell them to supplicate to Him. He instead urges them to take practical steps to fix the issues. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 35:

"And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allāh will cause it between them. Indeed, Allāh is ever Knowing and Aware."

Even the greatest and most recited supplication is actively recited during every cycle of the prayer, thereby indicating that supplications must be coupled with sincere actions in order to be effective. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verses 5-7:

"It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray."

This discussion so far makes it clear that supplication by itself is not effective unless it is coupled with sincere actions. This is clear when one observes the attitude and behaviour of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them.

Therefore, one should utilize supplications correctly by supporting them with sincere and righteous actions. If one faces a difficulty, they must use the resources they have been granted in order to solve the issue practically, such as difficulties amongst relatives, and then supplicate for relief. One without the other is not the Islamic way. A sick person should seek medical advice and take medicine according to the teachings of Islam and also supplicate for relief. A person desiring a child, must get married first and try having a child with their spouse and then supplicate for it to occur. A person who desires to pass their exam must study and then supplicate for success. One must practically aid others in difficulty according to their means, such as financial support, and also supplicate

to Allah, the Exalted, on their behalf. One must adhere to the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, then supplicate for good things in both worlds.

Unfortunately, becoming a lazy nation of supplicators who fail to couple their supplications with sincere and righteous actions is one of the major reasons why the Islamic nation as a whole and the faith of the individual Muslims has dramatically weakened over time.

Empty Practices

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 16:

"Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allāh and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened..."

This verse indicates that as time progressed, the people of the book treated their faith as a bunch of empty practices, just like one fulfils cultural practices. The issue with treating faith like a cultural practice is that with the passing of time people give up cultural practices. For example, one will often observe a father who dresses according to his culture and heritage yet their child will dress according to a different culture. Therefore, as time passed for the people of the book, they eventually abandoned practicing on their faith, as they were nothing but empty practices to them, and their faith became just an empty shell whereby people claimed to believe yet failed to practice their religion. This is quite evident when one observes people today who claim to follow certain religions yet do not act upon their teachings at all. Once upon a time their religious institutions were always full of devoted learners and worshippers, now they are empty.

Unfortunately, the same thing has occurred with Muslims who, with the passing of time, observed their religion as a few empty practices, which eventually the coming generations abandoned.

The earlier generation of Muslims were devoted to Islam and therefore it was a way of life for them, not just practices and rituals. They dedicated themselves to learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and therefore Islam influenced their every word and action and every sphere of their lives, such as their personal, social, financial and work life. To them, Islam had fused with their blood and became inseparable from their daily activities. Practices can be abandoned, whereas something which is a way of life cannot be. For example, someone can give up a hobby because they do not feel like doing it but they cannot give up food or breathing oxygen for prolonged periods, as the latter is a way and means for life whereas the former is only a practice.

This attitude of the righteous predecessors has, in most cases, been abandoned, just like the people from other religions abandoned the teachings of their faith, as Islam is now observed as a set of practices and rituals with no real effect on one's day to day activities or conduct. This is the reason why the Mosques, which were always full during the five daily congregational prayers, are now practically empty. Only the practice of the Friday congregational prayer remains, but if things continue as they are, even that will be abandoned by the coming generations.

In addition, blind imitation of others is not good enough, as it prevents one from appreciating that Islam is a way of life and instead convinces

them and those who observe them, such as the next generation, that Islam is only a few empty rituals and practices, which can be abandoned, just like cultural practices can be abandoned.

The way to avoid this outcome is to understand that Islam is not a bunch of practices, rather, it is a way of life which affects every moment of a Muslim. This understanding only comes when one learns and acts upon the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as this ensures that every aspect of a person's life is connected to Islam. This ensures one uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This in turn leads to peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

False Hopes

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is vital for a Muslim to differentiate between hope in Allah, the Exalted, and wishful thinking, as the latter has no value in Islam. An easy way to differentiate between the two is that hope in Allah, the Exalted, will always be tied to His obedience, meaning, the one who tries to obey Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, then hopes for His mercy, possesses true hope in Him. Whereas, the one who persists in disobedience and fails to change for the better and then claims to hope in Allah, the Exalted, is nothing but a wishful thinker.

One of the root causes of wishful thinking is a person's incorrect and twisted belief in the Day of Judgement. This is something which has affected the previous nations who were granted divine revelation also. Their twisted belief of Judgement Day convinced them that someone or something will simply save them from their accountability and punishment and as a result they do not bother practically preparing for Judgement Day, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Even though intercession on Judgement Day is a fact, yet behaving in this manner is only mocking it. The one who hopes for intercession will strive to obtain it through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted.

Their twisted belief also convinces them that they will somehow make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day, even if they lived a life of disobedience. So in their eyes, the Day of Judgement is only the Day of making peace with Allah, the Exalted, and their actions will therefore

not be judged on that Great Day. They believe this even though the Holy Quran says otherwise. Chapter 30 Ar Rum, verse 57:

"So that Day, their excuse will not benefit those who wronged, nor will they be asked to appease [Allāh]."

Their twisted belief convinces them that Hell is not so bad. This was the attitude of the people of the book who claim that even if they go to Hell, it will only be for a short time, as if a short time there is bearable to endure. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 80:

"And they say, "Never will the Fire touch us, except for [a few] numbered days."..."

Expelling this false notion of belittling Hell is one of the main reasons Hell has been described in such vivid detail in the Holy Quran. For example, chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 56:

"...Every time their skins are roasted through, We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment..."

A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7088, also expels this false notion. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that on Judgement Day a person who had a life of ease and plenty of worldly blessings will be dipped into Hell a single time and will then be asked if he had experienced any ease during his existence. Because of the severity of Hell, he will reply he never experienced any ease.

Their twisted belief in Judgement Day also convinces them that even if they go to Hell they will eventually be let out and entire Paradise, as they were Muslims. But they fail to understand that no one who claims to be a Muslim in this world is guaranteed to die as one. If a person persists on sins, especially major sins, there is a real chance they will not leave this world as a Muslim. The eternal outcome of this person is well known.

All of these twisted and incorrect beliefs about Judgement Day is the reason why Muslims adopt wishful thinking in respect to Allah, the Exalted. As a consequence, they abandon learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as these sources of guidance are needed when one desires to practically prepare for the Day of Judgement.

It is vital for Muslims to avoid wishful thinking at all costs. This is only achieved when one learns and acts on the two sources of guidance. Through this, they will sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This attitude is truly hoping in Allah, the Exalted, and leads to good in both worlds. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405.

Finding Peace in Relationships

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People often care about and ask others whether they are a good person in respect to their relationship. For example, a mother will ask her child if they think she is a good mother. A person will ask their friend whether they think they are a good friend or not. Being someone society deems good in respect to their relationships should not be the main concern of a Muslim. Their main concern should be whether they are a good slave of Allah, the Exalted, or not. This question cannot be answered by society, culture or fashion. It can only be answered when one compares their behaviour to what is commanded and encouraged in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is even more important to prioritize when one reaches elderly age, as their time on Earth is running out swiftly. The issue with worrying about whether one is defined as good in their relationships with people according to the opinion and standards set by people, culture and fashion, is that these things are fickle and the opinions of people vary drastically. As a result, what one considers a good person in respect to their relationships, such as a good mother, another person will consider them a bad person in respect to that same relationship. For example, one son may consider their mother, a good mother, whereas his sister may consider their mother, a bad mother. This often occurs in society. As a result of this fickleness, one will never please people and therefore they will not find comfort and peace in their opinions.

In addition, the one who is always concerned about people, fashion and culture and their opinions about them in respect to their relationships, will easily neglect their relationship with Allah, the Exalted, which may result in them becoming a bad slave. As Allah, the Exalted, alone controls everything in this world and in the next, the one who fails to become a good slave of Allah, the Exalted, will not find peace and

success in either worlds, even if they strive hard to obtain the good opinions of people in respect to their worldly relationships.

Finally, even if one obtains the good opinions of people, fashion and culture in respect to their relationships, it will not save them from the consequences of being a bad slave of Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day. Whereas, the one who focuses on being a good slave of Allah, the Exalted, will obtain peace of mind, as they will only be concerned with Him and His opinion of them, instead of the varied opinions of countless people. Pleasing One is easier and more satisfying than pleasing many. In addition, the one who tries to be a good slave of Allah, the Exalted, will inevitably become a good person in respect to their relationships with people e.g. a good mother, friend, neighbour, etc., as fulfilling the rights of people is an important part of being a good slave of Allah, the Exalted. But the difference between this and the negative attitude of prioritizing the opinions of people, is that this good slave of Allah, the Exalted, will fulfill the rights of people but will not bother about the opinions of people in respect to them and their relationships. They will not care if people consider them bad in respect to their relationships, as most people's opinions are based on worldly standards. They will only care and live by the standards set by Allah, the Exalted. The one who lives like this will not be negatively affected by the bad opinions of people, fashion and culture, in this world or on Judgement Day. For example, a mother may believe her son is a terrible son, as she judges him based on worldly standards. But as he is a good slave of Allah, the Exalted, he fulfils the rights of his mother in this world and her negative opinion of him will not affect him in this world or on Judgement Day, meaning, he will be judged by Allah, the Exalted, as a good son.

To conclude, peace of mind and success lies in prioritizing being a good slave of Allah, the Exalted, and only worrying about His opinion about

them. Whereas, anxiety, stress and difficulties in both worlds lie in prioritizing the opinions of people in respect to their relationships.

Finding Peace

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Even though a person is deceived into straying away from the source of peace of mind and body in both worlds, namely, the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, by many factors, only two major factors will be discussed.

The first factor is the attitude which encourages one to blindly follow the majority of people. One of the main arguments every nation made against their Holy Prophet, peace be upon them, who called them to a better and higher code of living, was how could the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, and their small number followers be right, while the vast majority of people who rejected them, be wrong. When one observes society, social media, fashion and culture they will believe that true peace of mind lies in fulfilling one's desires and obtaining worldly luxuries, such as wealth, a big house, businesses and a career. Whereas, those who followed the teachings of Islam, insist that peace of mind only lies in sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. In order to avoid being deluded by the attitude which encourages one to follow the majority, one should observe and reflect on the people who gain the worldly things mentioned earlier and how those things only increases their stress, anxiety and depression and encourages them towards substance abuse and even suicide. On the other hand, those who sincerely obeyed Allah, the Exalted, live with peace of mind, even with a lack of worldly luxuries.

The second factor is when the Devil convinces a person that if they give up their worldly desires and instead use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, then they will never be happy in this world, as happiness and peace of mind is directly connected to fulfilling one's desires. Even though this sounds convincing none the less, it is nothing but a deception. The truth is that peace of mind is a mental state which is found in one's heart. It is Allah, the Exalted, alone who controls the hearts of people. If He chooses, He makes peace enter it and if He chooses, He makes darkness and constriction enter it. These outcomes have nothing to do with what worldly blessings one possesses. These outcomes are tied directly to how much or little one sincerely remembers and obeys Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. If one obeys Allah, the Exalted, then He will lodge peace into their heart. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

And chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”

Whereas, the one who disobeys Allah, the Exalted, will find darkness in their heart, even if they have the world at their feet. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

They may experience moments of fun and entertainment but overall their life will be miserable. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 82:

"So let them laugh a little and [then] weep much as recompense for what they used to earn."

As stated earlier, these two outcomes are obvious when one observes the news, social media and those who enjoy worldly luxuries compare to those who strive to obey Allah, the Exalted.

To conclude, a Muslim must avoid these two factors which prevent a person from obtaining peace in both worlds. An aspect of this is obtaining strong faith by learning and acting on the teachings of Islam. This will ensure they choose the right path in life, even if that means they oppose the mentality of the majority of people. A small price to pay to obtain peace of mind in both worlds. Chapter 31 Luqman, verse 33:

"...Indeed, the promise of Allāh is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allāh by the Deceiver [i.e., Satan]."

Forgetting Yourself

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In this time of widespread oppression of innocent people all around the world, it is a duty of a Muslim to object to evil according to their capacity and within the laws of Islam. Many Muslims carry out this important duty, especially on social media, by quoting verses of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which mention the threats given to oppressors. But it is important to note that these verses and traditions apply to all people, including oneself. When one observes mass oppression of people, such as mass killings, it is easy for a Muslim to belittle their own disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, and their own oppression of the rights of others by comparing it to the mass oppression carried out by others. For example, a Muslim who persistently behaves in a rude manner towards their spouse will belittle this act of oppression by observing the mass oppression of people in the news. They then concentrate on hurling verses of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which threaten oppressors to the people they observe in the news but forget to apply these Islamic teachings to themselves and their behaviour. Even though some types of oppression are worse than others, none the less, oppression is still oppression, and all forms of it will lead to darkness for the oppressor. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2447.

This discussion does not mean one should not object to evil according to their strength and within the bounds of Islamic law, but it means they should not forget the acts of disobedience and oppression they commit by belittling them when comparing them to the mass oppression caused by others. One must continue objecting to evil but also constantly assess their own actions in light of Islamic teachings so that they remove any aspect of oppression they commit through failing to fulfill the rights of

Allah, the Exalted, or wronging people. Otherwise, they may well find that on Judgement Day they are raised with the very oppressors they objected to, during their life on Earth. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 42:

"And never think that Allāh is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He only delays them [i.e., their account] for a Day when eyes will stare [in horror]."

Getting Fed Up

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People often complain about getting mentally and physically exhausted when it comes to earning their lawful provision in order to fulfill their needs and responsibilities, such as providing for their dependents. It is important to understand that as long as a person lives in this world, their provision, meaning, the things they need to survive in this world has been guaranteed by Allah, the Exalted. In fact, He allocated the provision for the creation over 50,000 years before He created the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 6:

“And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision, and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register.”

An aspect of this allotment includes the mental and physical energy needed to obtain one's provision. But the important thing to note is that the guaranteed provision is only the minimum required to survive in this world, there is no guarantee a person will get more than this minimum, even though most people do get more. This means, even though all people have been provided the mental and physical energy to obtain the minimum provision they need to survive in this world, they have not all been provided with more than that. Meaning, some people have been provided more than the minimal and therefore they have also been provided the mental and physical energy required to obtain it, whereas others have not. Therefore, when people strive to obtain more than their minimal requirements, which they were not allocated, then it will only result in getting mentally and physically fed up, as they were not

provided the extra mental and physical energy needed to obtain more provision. Whereas, the one who strives to obtain their necessities without waste, extravagance and excessiveness, will never get mentally or physically fed up, as this level of mental and physical energy has been guaranteed to them.

To conclude, if one wants to avoid mental and physical exhaustion in respect to obtaining their provision, they should strive to obtain and use according to their minimal requirements and teach their dependents to do the same.

Good Mental Health

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Many people, including Muslims, search for advice and information which can alleviate their mental problems, such as stress, anxiety and depression, from worldly sources, such as self-help gurus, psychologists and counsellors. Even though some of the information and advice they can obtain from these sources is good, as it is connected to the teachings of Islam, yet the vast majority of their advice and information will not be useful, as it is restricted by too many factors which prevents it being entirely useful. For example, a counsellor's knowledge and experience will always be limited, irrespective of how much learning they have undertaken or how many patients they have counseled. Their perspective will always be limited, as they can only observe and experience the mentality and behaviour of other people from a restricted point of view. They only know what the patient shares with them and are unaware of many feelings and emotions that their patient does not share with them, as they may struggle to put it into words. Researchers are limited by the sample of people they have taken during their experiments. These limitations are connected with age, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, and many more. In addition, a counsellor or self-help guru may well possess an unconscious bias for or against certain attitudes and behaviour because of their own experiences. For example, a male counsellor will more easily understand the mindset of a man. The counsellor may well lean towards a certain mindset because of their personal relationships. For example, a counsellor may well unconsciously picture their ex-wife when conducting couples therapy sessions. All of these biases are inevitable as humans are shaped by their experiences and are heavily influenced by their subconscious.

The only one that can completely aid the mental health of a person is the one who is completely unbiased in every situation and circumstance.

The one whose knowledge completely encompasses every type of emotion, behaviour, thought and characteristic a human can ever experience. The one who knows the cure for every mental issue. The one who is free of making mistakes in diagnosing mental conditions. The only One who can achieve all this and more is Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 67 Al Mulk, verse 14:

"Does He not know those whom He created..."

Therefore, if a person desires the cure for their mental issues they must seek it from Allah, the Exalted, through gaining and acting on the teachings of Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Through this method, the worldly sciences which run in parallel with Islamic teachings will then benefit them also. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 10:

"We have certainly sent down to you a Book [i.e., the Qur'ān] in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?"

And chapter 10 Yunus, verse 57:

"O mankind, there has come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts..."

Guilty Conscience

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There are two types of signs which point towards the truthfulness of Islam, such as the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. One of these signs is divine revelation, which studied carefully and with an open and unbiased mind points clearly to the truth. For example, chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 82:

"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān? If it had been from [any] other than Allāh, they would have found within it much contradiction."

The other type of sign is found within the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. For example, when one observes the perfect synchronization of the coming and going of the days and nights it indicates a Single Mighty Controller. All the perfect balanced systems within the creation, such as the water cycle, the distance of the Sun from the Earth, and many others, all eliminate the theory that everything within the creation is random. If they were more than one God, then each would desire something different and this conflict would destroy the creation. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 22:

"Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides Allāh, they both would have been ruined..."

One of these powerful signs that has been placed within the human body is the guilty conscience. As long as one has not drowned themselves within a sinful life, whenever they do something which is widely accepted as wrong, such as deceiving someone, they feel guilty. They feel this way even when they will not be apprehended by the police or criticized by others. Even when they fully believe they will get away with the wrong they committed yet they feel guilty. If there is no accountability for their actions in this world or in the next then why do people feel this guilt?

One feels guilt in this way as their conscience is connected to their soul, the soul which was in the company of Allah, the Exalted, a long time ago, and therefore knows the reality of Judgement Day, even if the person themselves denies it. Chapter 7 Al A'raf, verse 172:

"And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified."..."

As the soul knows that the person it is in will one day answer for their actions, it chides them whenever they commit a sin. This chiding is felt in the form of their guilty conscience.

As long as one does not bury their conscience within the darkness of sins so they stop feeling guilt, they should listen to their guilty conscience and reflect over its purpose and accept the reality that they

will one day answer for all their actions. Perhaps then, they will practically prepare for it by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth..."

Hopes and Fears

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In this world a person possesses many different hopes and many different fears. As a result, people use the resources they were granted in order to obtain their hopes and avoid their fears. But the strange thing is that on Judgement Day these fears and hopes will vanish and no one will give a second thought about them, except for the single fear of Hell and hope for Paradise. It is this reality that the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, understood and was a major reason why they lived the way they did. They knew that all one's worldly fears and hopes will be reduced to just one fear and one hope on Judgement Day, so as a result they made their hopes and fears into one hope and one fear, while they were still living on Earth. This ensured they used the worldly blessings and resources they were granted in order to obtain their single hope of Paradise and to escape their single fear of Hell. This allowed them to obtain peace in this world and in the next. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

This does not mean one should not fear or hope for anything other than Paradise and Hell. This discussion means, all the things they fear and hope for in this world must be rooted in the single fear of Hell and hope of Paradise. In other words, all of one's fears and hopes must be directly connected to the single fear of Hell and single hope for Paradise. All other fears and hopes should be discarded, as they are unimportant in

this world, even if this not obvious to a person, as they will be unimportant on Judgement Day. Behaving in this manner will increase one's comfort and peace in this world and ensure they are adequately prepared for escaping their single fear of Hell and obtaining their single hope for Paradise, in the hereafter.

Intentions and Actions

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Most Muslims understand the importance of having a good intention, as it is the foundation of Islam. Allah, the Exalted, judges the actions of people based on their intention. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1. But one important aspect is often overlooked by Muslims. The fact that having a good intention, especially towards others, is not good enough, as a good intention must also be supported by good actions, otherwise one's good intention becomes fruitless. For example, one cannot steal from the rich in order to give to the poor. Even if their intention is to help the needy for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, their action will not be accepted, as the action is unlawful in Islam.

Unfortunately, when dealing with other people, Muslims often overlook this fact. They often advise others towards certain lawful actions without thinking about the consequences of them nor understanding the reality that the actions are not in the best interest of the person they are advising. Instead of taking these important things into consideration before advising towards certain actions, these people often rely on their good intention towards others and press ahead without deliberation. For example, a parent may encourage their child to marry their relative or a family friend, simply because of the relationship between the two families, instead of taking other important aspects into consideration, such as whether that person will make a suitable spouse for their child. The parent simply relies on their good intention towards their child, which in reality, prevents them from acting with sincerity towards their child, according to the teachings of Islam. No one doubts that the parent wants their child to have a successful and happy marriage but this good intention is not enough according to the teachings of Islam. The parent must take into consideration other factors, such as suitability for their child, before moving forward with their intention.

Another example, is when one tries to learn and act on Islamic knowledge and are heavily criticized by their relatives. Each relative has a good intention towards them yet this deludes and prevents them from observing that what the person is doing is good and beneficial. By solely relying on their good intention towards their relative and failing to assess the situation correctly, they end up hindering them from good.

A good intention is simply not good enough, one must support their good intention with good and thought-out actions. This is one of the reasons why people have said that the path to Hell is paved with good intentions, as people make errors in judgement in respect to themselves and others and solely rely on a good intention for a successful outcome. The root of this behaviour is ignorance. One must avoid this attitude by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge so that they adopt and implement a good intention which is supported by good, sincere and well thought-out actions.

Judging Belief

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Every Muslim, irrespective of the strength of their faith, believes in the reality of Judgement Day, as this is one of the main pillars of faith. But the strength of one's belief in Judgement Day varies between Muslims. Even though assessing someone's exact level of belief in Judgement Day is beyond the capability of humans, as this is a hidden matter, yet there are some signs which do indicate the strength of one's belief. One of these signs is how much or little a Muslim is dedicated to learning and acting upon the two sources of guidance: the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The stronger one's belief in Judgement Day, the more they will practically prepare for it. This is only possible when one learns and acts on the two sources of guidance, which in turn shows them how to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. So the stronger one's belief in Judgement Day, the more they will practice on the two sources of guidance and the weaker one's belief, the less they will practice on the two sources of guidance. This is why the one who does not believe in Judgement Day will not bother with the two sources of guidance, as they have no need to prepare for something they do not believe in. From this, one can assess how much they truly believe in the Day of Judgement. If they hardly learn and act on the two sources of guidance, it indicates that they hardly believe in Judgement Day, even if they claim otherwise. Every Muslim must regularly conduct this self-assessment so that they ensure they do not fool themselves into believing they possess strong faith in Judgement Day, even though, practically speaking, they hardly believe in it.

Judging Faith

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to regularly judge and assess the strength of their faith in order to ensure they are heading in the right direction in life and improving themselves step by step. One of the best ways one can do this is by observing their condition in between the five daily obligatory prayers. Even though offering the five daily obligatory prayers is an excellent start but one must bear in mind that even the hypocrites in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would even pray. One must instead observe their condition in between the five daily obligatory prayers. They should assess their aims, desires, hopes and fears in order to evaluate whether they are living in the right way. All of these things influences how one uses the blessings they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted. The more one focuses their aims, desires, hopes and fears on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and preparing for the hereafter, the more they will use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This has been outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

If one finds that they are using the blessings they have been granted in ways which are vain or sinful, then they are failing to fulfil the purpose of their creation and have forgotten Allah, the Exalted, for the vast majority of their day, even if they pray. This will lead to stress and trouble in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

A Muslim must improve the strength of their faith by firstly minimizing using the blessings they have been granted in sinful ways. Then they must strive to minimize using these blessings in vain ways. They should assess each blessing and apply this model until they find that they are using all the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is the path to peace of mind and success in both worlds, as the Controller of the hearts will not allow this Muslim to suffer a dark and constricted life in either this world or the next. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Judging Others

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There is a common misconception which prevents a person from improving their character towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. People often comment that one should not judge others. Even though this is true to a certain extent, unfortunately, many people have completely twisted its meaning out of context in order to use it as an excuse to avoid improving their behaviour. In reality, judging others is a vital part of every aspect of one's life. For example, a person judges others in order to decide whether to befriend them or not. One judges another in order to decide whether they would make a good spouse for them or not. A person judges a company before applying for a job there. An employer judges candidates in order to find the best one to join their team. A parent judges a range of tutors before hiring one for their child. A business owner will judge another business owner to determine whether to do business with them or not. The examples of judging others in respect to their behaviour, character and actions are virtually limitless. So to claim one should not judge others at all is simply foolish, as one cannot live in this world without judging others.

In respect to Islam, a Muslim must judge the actions of others, otherwise they cannot fulfill the duty of advising good and forbidding evil in society. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 110:

"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allāh..."

According to the Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681, a Muslim cannot perfect their faith without loving, hating, giving and withholding for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. How is this possible to achieve without judging others?

The important duty of aiding others in good and avoiding helping others in bad things cannot be achieved without judging others and their actions. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

"...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression..."

Many of the examples listed earlier are encouraged by Islam, such as finding a suitable spouse and choosing suitable friends. None of these things can be fulfilled without judging others.

Judging the actions of others according to the teachings of Islam in order to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and to encourage others to do the same is a vital aspect of Islam. In this respect, the judgment of people may seem to come from a person but in reality, it is the judgment of Allah, the Exalted. Something, no Muslim must scorn or criticize.

Judging the ultimate outcome of a person; whether Allah, the Exalted, will forgive them or not or whether they will go to Paradise or not, or judging their intention, are something which a Muslim is not allowed to do, as these things are beyond the knowledge of a Muslim and therefore they have no right to discuss or comment over them.

To conclude, Muslims understand the correct concept of judging others so that they more readily accept the constructive criticism, which is based on the teachings of Islam, from others, so that they improve their character towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. Behaving in this manner is a vital part of right guidance and success in both worlds.

Key to Reflection

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. With the increased social media presence in the lives of all people and the ease with which one can socialize with others, it is important for Muslims to understand a key aspect of useful self-reflection. Self-reflection is needed to correctly assess a situation in order to make a sound and good judgement on how to deal with it. This is true in both worldly and religious matters. This self-reflection is only possible when one turns inwards and temporarily cuts off from external communication, such as talking to others. This is because a situation a person is experiencing can never be fully understood by another person, irrespective of how well they know each other. As every situation one faces creates different emotions and feelings which cannot be experienced by another, even if they experience a similar situation, as each person is different and therefore views and reacts to situations differently from others. This is why seeking advice from too many people only leads to confusion and making the wrong choices in life.

So even though seeking expert advice is recommended in both religious and worldly matters, one must still self-reflect over the situation in order to make the right decision according to their needs, character and ability.

In addition, it is not possible to multi task with self-reflection, just like a student cannot study correctly and surf on social media at the same time. But the one who is constantly drowned in socializing, whether they are listening and watching something, talking to someone or texting, will never make the right judgement in respect to the situations they face, as

they fail to truly self-reflect over them. It has become so bad that most people cannot even walk to a bus stop without socializing with others.

This self-reflection is important in all small religious and worldly matters, such as issues at work, and is important in respect to one's sense of direction and purpose in life. The one who over socializes, thereby failing to take regular time out to self-reflect, will lead a pointless and aimless life whereby they do not aim nor strive to fulfil their good aspirations, hopes and aims.

A Muslim must take time out to self-reflect so that they regularly question their purpose, the path they are on and whether they are heading in the right direction. It is through this one can correctly assess the worldly and religious situations they encounter and deal with them appropriately and ensure that they are heading in the right direction in life, so that they find peace and success in both worlds.

Know the Rights

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the major reasons why the relationships of people become fractured and broken over time is due to ignorance. When one does not know the rights that they owe others nor the rights people owe them, according to the teachings of Islam, people begin to expect and demand things they are not entitled to and they fail to fulfill the rights that they owe others also. For example, parents often believe that their children owe them complete obedience and submission meaning, their child must agree with and do whatever their parent suggests. But this is simply not true in Islam. A child does have the right to make their own lawful choices in life, even if it contradicts the opinions of their parents, as long as they maintain good manners towards their parents. The major cause of divorce is when people demand things their spouse does not owe them. Siblings often become estranged as they believe their siblings should also support them in every situation without exception and in ways pleasing to them. The examples are virtually endless.

Ignorance of the rights one is owed and the rights they owe others encourages one to make up these standards according to their own desires, culture and fashion. As the desires of people vary considerably, these fabricated standards are never fulfilled by people. This leads to bitterness between people, which over time leads to fractured and broken relationships.

Muslims must avoid this outcome by learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that they know and fulfill the rights they owe others and know the rights people owe them.

In addition, when one gains and acts on Islamic knowledge it will encourage them to behave leniently with others, hoping that Allah, the Exalted, will act leniently with them. This leniency will prevent one from demanding their full rights from others thereby making the lives of others easier, and reducing the risks of arguments. This leniency will also encourage one to let things go whenever they are wronged by others, so that they avoid pettiness. This leads to positivity and peace of mind and prevents fractured and broken relationships. On the other hand, living according to one's own standards causes the opposite to occur. A person easily becomes petty over small issues, they become bitter and continue to hold onto grudges for decades. This leads to enmity, negativity and a pessimistic attitude towards others. All these things prevent peace of mind and lead to fractured and broken relationships.

Muslims must therefore ensure they have healthy relationships with others by learning and acting on Islamic knowledge so that they know and fulfill the rights of people and know the rights people owe them.

Lasting Sweetness

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Whenever one aims to enjoy the lawful luxuries of the material world they will always notice how the sweetness it produces in their heart disappears extremely quickly. For example, when one returns from a holiday, the sweetness of the holiday experience quickly disappears, and so they begin to plan the next holiday in order to re-experience that sweetness. When one finishes watching a film or television show, the sweetness experienced quickly disappears and as a result they desire to watch something else in order to re-experience the sweetness again. This is true for all sinful or vain things. It is this desire to re-experience the sweetness of things which drives the entertainment industry. On the other hand, the sweetness experienced from anything which is connected to the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, is something that always endures in one's heart. For example, the Muslim who sincerely performed the Holy Pilgrimage continues to feel the sweetness of it in their heart decades later. The Muslim who sincerely completes a charity project, such as building a Mosque or sponsoring an orphan, continues to feel the sweetness of that act of charity for years to come. Because of this reality, the one who desires to feel inner sweetness continuously should seek it in things which please Allah, the Exalted, and not in vain or sinful things.

Secondly, this reality is a powerful sign which indicates what truly has value in this world. Anything which endures has value but the things which quickly fade away are fickle, and therefore have no real value or worth. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 96:

"Whatever you have will end, but what Allāh has is lasting..."

The value of each person is according to what they pursue. If they pursue what is enduring and valuable, then they will have value and their peace and actions will endure. But if they pursue what is fickle and valueless, then their sense of enjoyment will quickly disappear and their life will also be valueless.

Leap of Faith

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. For most Muslims, believing that the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, leads to Paradise is not much of a leap of faith. This is because this concept has been infused into their minds from a young age and is quite obvious to accept also. The real leap of faith actually involves believing that the one who uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, which is outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will obtain peace of mind and body in this world. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

One of the reasons this reality is hard to accept is that it seems to outwardly contradict logic. Logic dictates that a person will only find peace and happiness when they fulfill their desires. In addition, when

people observe social media, culture, fashion and the majority of other people, they all point towards and encourage one to obtain peace and happiness through fulfilling their desires. Even the Devil will not deny that the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, leads to Paradise but he scares Muslims from using their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, beyond the basic obligatory duties, by convincing them that if they did this they would experience a miserable life in this world.

All these reasons and more prevent one from using their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as they fear giving up their desires will prevent them from being happy and obtaining peace of mind. Instead, people unconsciously claim that if Allah, the Exalted, grants them peace then they will use their blessings correctly in order to obtain more. But Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that a person will not gain peace until they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him first. This leads to a person becoming inactive thereby preventing them from acting correctly and obtaining peace of mind and body.

One must study, learn 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 strengthen their faith, which will encourage them to take this leap of faith so that they obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds. For example, when one believes with certainty that the Controller of hearts is none but Allah, the Exalted, then they understand that no worldly desire will lead to peace of mind if one fails to use the worldly blessings they have been granted correctly. Whereas, no difficulty will prevent them from obtaining peace of mind, as long as they use the blessings they have been granted correctly, just like the Holy Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, obtaining peace and security in the midst of a fire. Chapter 21 An Anbiya, verses 68-69:

“They said, “Burn him [Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him] and support your gods - if you are to act.” We [i.e., Allāh] said, “O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham.””

Losing Out

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons why Muslims strive hard to obtain their worldly desires, at the cost of practically preparing for Judgement Day, is their fear of losing out on obtaining their desires in this world. This fear is an extremely powerful tool which the Devil manipulates in order to distract a Muslim from preparing for the hereafter, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In order to avoid this outcome, a Muslim must always remember that as long as they internally believe in Islam and actively practice on its teachings they will never face losing out on anything they hoped to gain. This is because a Muslim who genuinely strives hard to obey Allah, the Exalted, has been promised Paradise in the hereafter. Therefore, whatever they desired in this world and were fearful of losing out on obtaining it, they can have in Paradise. They will be able to enjoy the thing they wanted permanently and in its perfect form. Whereas, even if they obtained what they desire in this world, it would never be permanent or perfect. So in reality, there is no such thing as losing out on anything for a Muslim, as they will either obtain the thing they desire in this world or in the next. Therefore, if they do not obtain it in this world, it will only be a short delay before they obtain it in the hereafter. One only needs to reflect on how fast their life has gone by so far to understand that the hereafter is only a moment away. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 45:

"And on the Day when He will gather them, [it will be] as if they had not remained [in the world] but an hour of the day..."

Remembering the important reality that for a sincere Muslim, every good desire will be fulfilled, sooner or later, will prevent them from excessively chasing its fulfillment at the loss of preparing for their hereafter. There is no losing out for a sincere Muslim, only a delay.

Moment to Reflect

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Islam teaches people to be mindful of everything which occurs within their lives and the lives of others, as one can learn valuable lessons from them. For example, witnessing a sick person is a powerful reminder for a Muslim to make use of their good health before they lose it. Similarly, a Muslim should be mindful of their speech and the speech of others, as one can learn important lessons from them. People often experience slip of the tongue moments whereby they say something which may well reflect their inward state even if that is hidden from them and others. For example, when discussing the importance of family to someone, they may well state that the most important thing to a person should be their family. But when one correctly points out to them that the most important one in a Muslim's is Allah, the Exalted, the speaker quickly retracts their statement or replies that, that is what they meant, even though they did not say it. In these slip of the tongue moments, whether it occurs to oneself or others, one must reflect deeply on what was said and assess their own belief and actions to ensure they remain on the right course and continue to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and avoid deceiving themselves, even subconsciously.

Similarly, when others joke about something, there is often a layer of truth embedded in their joke. Meaning, a part of them does mean what they say, to a certain degree. One should be mindful of these things as they can learn deeper truths about their own psyche and behaviour, which is always important to monitor and if necessary, to adjust so that it runs in line with the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Normalization

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In reality, there are only two standards a person can live by in this world. The correct standard comes from the Creator and Sustainer of all things, Allah, the Exalted. These standards are discussed in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The other standard is what the world dedicates through social media, culture and fashion. This standard is fickle and changes with time and the one who adheres to them will adopt a fickle mental and physical state. When a Muslim abandons the standard set by Allah, the Exalted, they will inevitably follow the standard set by the world. One of the major issues this leads to is being influenced by normalization. This is when a particular attitude, behaviour or belief becomes acceptable to people as the wider society has accepted it and practices it. This can become a dangerous path to follow as it leads to sins and misguidance. For example, over time backbiting became normalized in society, as it occurs so much in society. As a result, many Muslims indulge in this major sin and dismissively state that everyone does it, whenever they are warned against it. Similarly, many Muslims incorrectly believe that it is enough to internally believe in Islam even if they do not practice on its teachings. As this attitude has become normalized in society, Muslims use the fact that many others behave in this manner to justify them adopting this deviant behaviour. A Muslim must always remember that using normalization in society as justification to commit sins is something Allah, the Exalted, will never accept. If everyone commits a specific sin, He will hold all of them accountable for it, even if it means He punishes them all.

Being negatively influenced by normalization in society can only truly be avoided when one chooses to learn and act on the standard set by Allah, the Exalted. This will ensure they use the blessings they have

been granted in ways pleasing to Him. This leads to peace of mind and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

If one turns away from this standard, then they will inevitably follow the standard of life set by the world. This will cause one to forget Allah, the Exalted, and misuse the blessings they have been granted by Him. This only leads to a difficult life in this world and one's excuse of following what was considered normal in society will not be accepted on Judgement Day either. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs

come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten."

Peace and Desires

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Even though society, social media, fashion and culture urge people to seek peace of mind in fulfilling their desires, it is obvious when one reflects on Islamic teachings and the mental health and state of those who try to obtain peace of mind through fulfilling their desires, that this common belief is completely wrong. Those who fulfill their desires are often the furthest from peace of mind, as they are often hounded by mental issues such as stress, anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies and are often drowned in addiction to drugs and alcohol.

One must understand that obtaining peace of mind and fulfilling all of one's desires can never mix, such as fire and ice can never mix. The more one seeks one of these two, the further they will go from the other, just like the one who journeys towards the east will travel further from the west. Therefore, one must pick and strive for one or the other, obtaining both, in all circumstances, is simply not possible. As fulfilling one's desires takes them away from peace of mind and towards all sorts of mental and health problems, the wise option is to seek peace of mind and give up pursuing all of one's desires. As Allah, the Exalted, created and controls the human spiritual heart, the abode of peace, they must understand that they will only obtain it through His obedience. This involves using the blessings He has granted one in ways pleasing to Him. This is explained in the Holy Quran and in the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The more one sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, by using their blessings correctly, the more peace of mind they will obtain. Peace of mind which is more valuable and satisfying than fulfilling any worldly desire one might have. Meaning, through peace of mind one is more than compensated for giving up their worldly desires in both this world and the next. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

On the other hand, the one who uses the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to themselves, has only given up peace of mind and therefore they will face a miserable life in both worlds, even if they fulfil all their worldly desires and obtain everything the world has to offer. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

To conclude, one must understand that obtaining peace of mind and fulfilling all of one's worldly desires cannot be joined together in this

world. One must choose one over the other and it does not take a scholar to decide which one should be chosen.

Peaceful Places

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Muslims who travel to special holy places, such as Mecca and Medina, often state that they find a lot of peace of mind and body there. Even though holy places that have a special connection to Allah, the Exalted, do receive a greater portion of His mercy, which is a reason for their peaceful state, none the less, another important reason is the actions of the Muslims that travel there. Typically the Muslims who journey to these holy places increase their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in their actions and speech, throughout their day. For example, they will offer their obligatory prayers at the Mosques, use their resources, such as their time, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and become more cautious in committing verbal and physical sins. These are the conditions Islam has set for obtaining peace of mind and body. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life..."

In most cases, when Muslims return to their homelands, they do not maintain this obedience in their day to day activities, meaning, they do not continue using the resources and blessings they have been granted, such as their time, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is true even if they fulfill the few obligatory duties of Islam. Instead, they concentrate more on using their blessings in ways pleasing to themselves and other people. This prevents them from fulfilling the conditions set by Islam for obtaining peace of mind and body. As a result, they begin to incorrectly believe peace lies in a specific place when it actually lies in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and is therefore not bound by time or space.

Positive Behaviour

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for people to avoid a major cause of fractured and broken relationships. Namely, behaving negatively towards others when they have not committed a sin. This is often observed in families when one treats their relative in such a manner, whereby they often criticize, chide and take digs at them in order to show their disapproval with their life choices and lifestyle. For example, a parent may take digs at their child who married someone they did not approve of, even though no sin was committed. People, especially elders, wrongfully believe that the people they behave negatively towards must love and respect them under all circumstances. But they fail to understand that people are not Angels. If one is chided and criticized enough over things which are not sinful, a day will certainly come where the person dislikes speaking, seeing or socializing with their relative, even if it is their own parent. This does not mean they do not love or respect them. It means that as people are not Angels, the negative attitude creates negative feelings in a person's heart which causes them to feel anxiety and stress whenever they have to deal with their relative who behaves negatively towards them. In order to avoid this stress and anxiety they feel like avoiding their relative, even though they still love and respect them. For example, a person will avoid attending a family event because of this stress and anxiety, as they do not want to be subjected to negative behaviour and comments. This is a very common reaction and consequence of treating others negatively which is often seen within families.

Muslims must not underestimate the long term effect of treating others in a negative way, even if it only involves criticism and negative comments, as this can build up over time and cause their relationship to fracture and break. When others have not committed any sins, one should not behave negatively towards them and instead accept the life choices they

make. They should concentrate on fulfilling the rights of others by treating them how they themselves desire to be treated by others, which includes treating them in a positive way through one's words and actions, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Socializing

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In the modern world, one of the things which is heavily emphasized and given a lot of attention to in the lives of all people, is socializing. Islam does not prohibit socializing with others and in fact commands Muslims to fulfill the rights of people, according to the teachings of Islam. None the less, Islam always encourages people to understand the purpose of socializing. The main purpose is to aid one another in practically preparing for the hereafter. This involves aiding and encouraging one another to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This attitude leads to peace of mind in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

On the other hand, society, social media, culture and fashion urges people to connect and socialize for the sake of worldly gain and enjoyment. This attitude defies the purpose of mankind being together on this Earth. Socializing is not an end itself, it is only a means to an end. The ultimate end is to reach the Day of Judgement safely. The example of people being put together in this world for the aim of working together so that they prepare adequately for the hereafter, is like how a team of strangers are put together by a company in order to work together to achieve a business goal, such as designing, manufacturing and advertising a product. If this team of people failed to remember the

purpose of them being together, they will waste time on having fun and other social activities. This will result in them neglecting the purpose of being together and thus their team would be labelled a failure. Similarly, if Muslims fail to understand and fulfill the main reason of socializing then they too will fail to prepare adequately for the hereafter, as they were too busy socializing for worldly reasons. One is allowed to have lawful fun through socializing but they should never behave as if that is the purpose of socializing.

To conclude, people have been put together not to connect to each other as an end goal in itself but to connect to each other so that they can aid each other to connect to Allah, the Exalted. One must never fail to differentiate between the two, otherwise they will completely miss the purpose of being placed together in this world. The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, understood this reality and therefore always connected and worked together in order to obey Allah, the Exalted, and as a result they spread justice and peace within society like no other group has ever achieved. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

“...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...”

On the other hand, the one who forgets the purpose of socializing will only cause trouble for themselves in both worlds whenever they socialize with others. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

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

Strong Faith

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Muslims often complain that even though they are aware of the consequences they will face in the hereafter by disobeying Allah, the Exalted, namely, entering Hell, and many of them know the details about Hell and its horrors, yet they are not deterred from disobeying Allah, the Exalted. Similarly, even though they have some knowledge about the consequences of sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, such as peace of mind in this world and Paradise in the next, yet their knowledge is often not enough to motivate them to sincerely obey Him, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. One of the major causes of this attitude is weakness of faith. This can be understood by an example. When one is shown a scary picture or video, such as a cobra attacking someone, even though the person feels some apprehension, as they imagine being in that scary situation, yet this attitude is not enough to change their behaviour. For example, after seeing the scary picture or video, they do not flee out of fear. Whereas, if a person directly experiences something scary, such as being confronted by a cobra, it will create a greater level of fear in them than the first scenario and they will be motivated to act in order to save themselves from harm, such as fleeing the scene. The same principle applies for observing a beautiful picture/video compared to experiencing a beautiful event. Witnessing the event will always cause a more practical effect on the person than simply viewing it. This is the difference between weak and strong faith. The one who has weak faith will feel fear when they think or hear about the consequences of disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and feel joy when thinking and hearing about the consequences of sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted. But this fear and joy is not enough to affect their practical behaviour. It is similar to viewing a photo/video of something scary or beautiful. On the other hand, the one who possesses strong faith is blessed with an inner vision so that it is like they can physically observe the consequences of

disobeying and obeying Allah, the Exalted. This inner vision is so powerful that it affects them practically and therefore encourages them to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, and avoid His disobedience. This inner vision has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99.

One must strive to obtain strong faith and adopt this inner vision so that their behaviour towards Allah, the Exalted, and people improves. This is achieved by sincerely gaining and acting on the knowledge of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Without this knowledge and action, one will live without this inner vision and as a result of their weak faith, any reminders of the consequences of sincerely obeying or disobeying Allah, the Exalted, will have little or no effect on their behaviour.

The Bigger Picture

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main causes of people failing to show patience from the onset of a difficulty is when they lose focus on the bigger picture of life. Every situation a person faces is like only a single jigsaw piece compared to the whole jigsaw puzzle. But when one focuses completely on that single piece, which often represents a difficulty, they lose focus on the whole jigsaw puzzle and as a result, the difficulty appears much more serious than it truly is and its negative consequences seem more severe than they actually are. This hinders one from demonstrating patience, which involves avoiding complaining about the situation through speech or actions while maintaining one's sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. One of the best ways to avoid this outcome is to constantly focus on the Day of Judgement. This will help them to understand that their problem or difficulty is not such a big deal, as no Earthly difficulty compares to the difficulties of Judgement Day. Nor are the negative consequences of Earthly difficulties more severe than those of Judgement Day. One must remember that this is a Day when the Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation and each person will sweat according to their deeds. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2421. A Day when the same relatives one stressed about and desperately tried to please, will flee from them. Chapter 80 Abasa, verses 33-37:

"But when there comes the Deafening Blast. On the Day a man will flee from his brother. And his mother and his father. And his wife and his children. For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him."

A Day when one will reflect over their deeds, after they witness Hell.
Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verse 23:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?”

When one focuses on this Day, their worldly problem and difficulty will not seem like a big deal. This attitude will aid them in demonstrating patience from the onset of the difficulty and to evaluate and deal with it in an appropriate manner which minimizes their stress.

In addition, keeping one's focus on Judgement Day will also ensure they turn away, ignore and belittle anything which will not seem important on the Day of Judgement, which includes the difficulties and stresses one faces during their life. Instead, they will focus on the things which will be relevant on the Day of Judgement, such as demonstrating patience in the face of difficulties. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

“...Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit].”

Perhaps this correct attitude was part of the reason why the magicians of Pharaoh, who after accepting faith, were not fazed or put off by the

threats of physical torture given by Pharaoh, as they were focused on Judgement Day. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verses 49-50:

"[Pharaoh] said, "You believed him [i.e., Moses] before I gave you permission. Indeed, he is your leader who has taught you magic, but you are going to know. I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you all." They said, "No harm. Indeed, to our Lord we will return.""

The Gathering

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the objections given by those who deny the Day of Judgement is that they find it hard to believe Allah, the Exalted, will gather the dust and bones of people, which in most cases have been scattered and mingled with the Earth and other things, such as water, such as those who have their bodies cremated and the remains scattered in an ocean. The fact that Allah, the Exalted, is All Knowing indicates that He is fully aware of the location of every particle which makes a human being and He also has the power and control to bring these particles together once again. In order to understand this one should reflect on the different foods they eat and items they buy. These foods and items are made from different parts that are grown and cultivated from different parts of the world. They are brought together to a single location in order to manufacture the item or make the food, which is then delivered to a shop or directly to a customer. If humans have the ability to gather different ingredients and parts from all over the world in order to manufacture an item or make a food dish then why is it surprising that Allah, the Exalted, the All Knowing, All Able, will gather together the particles of a person in order to give them life again, just like He gave them life the first time. No mistakes will occur with this process as Allah, the Exalted, is fully aware of everyone's unique features, such as their DNA and fingerprints. Chapter 75 Al Qiyamah, verses 3-4:

"Does man think that We will not assemble his bones? Yes. [We are] Able [even] to proportion his fingertips."

The Right Context

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One the main reasons Muslims who fulfil the basic obligatory duties, such as the five daily obligatory prayers, still fail to achieve peace of mind is because they take Islamic teachings out of their context and apply them in their lives according to their own desires. While they believe they are acting on the teachings of Islam, they are in fact only following nothing except their own desires. This prevents them from using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This causes them to forget Allah, the Exalted, during their day to day activities, even if they manage to fulfill the basic obligatory duties. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

A person who desires to fulfill their lawful yet vain desires will take certain verses of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, out of context in order to support their desires and aims. For example, this person will misinterpret chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 77:

"But seek, through that which Allāh has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and do not forget your share of the world..."

They will claim that this verse encourages one to enjoy lawful worldly pleasures. Even though Islam does not prohibit lawful worldly desires, yet it warns against over indulging in them, as this prevents one from preparing practically for the hereafter, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is the meaning of this verse. One must not abandon the world nor abandon fulfilling their necessities in it. Instead, they should use their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, without neglecting their necessities or the necessities of their dependents.

Another example is when parents quote the verses and Hadiths which mention the high virtue of parents and use them in order to prove that their children must always obey them and never disagree with them. Even though the teachings of Islam does emphasis the importance of treating parents with the utmost respect and kindness but none the less, this does not mean they should blindly obey them under every situation. They must not obey them if it involves the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. And children do have a right to disagree with their parents in lawful things, as long as they maintain respect. They are even allowed to make lawful choices their parents disagree with. For example, if the parents desire their daughter to marry their relative, she has the full right to decline the proposal, especially if she has valid reasons, such as the man not being able to financially support her if they did get married.

Taking Islamic teachings out of their proper context is a major cause of misguidance and failing to fulfil the rights of Allah, the Exalted, and people. It can lead to avoidable arguments especially, when one misuses Islamic teachings against others. The cure for this is to firstly adopt a good intention, which is to please Allah, the Exalted, under all

circumstances and then to gain and act on Islamic knowledge correctly. This leads to fulfilling the rights of Allah, the Exalted, and people and peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

The Test of Success

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Worldly success can be broken up into fame, fortune, authority, family, friends and a career.

It is important to understand that even though it is not unlawful to strive for and obtain worldly success, one must understand that worldly success is granted to people as a test. Generally speaking, there are four paths one can choose from after they are granted worldly success which determines whether they pass the test or not. The first path is that after obtaining worldly success, such as a good career, a Muslim loses themselves in their career and prioritizes progressing in their career above all else. They are less bothered about making money and concentrate more on advancing in their career. This type of person is common, whereby they happily give up a higher salary for a lower one just because the latter has more opportunities to progress in their career. Their intention and striving distracts them from finding peace in this world and practically preparing for the Day of Judgement, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The second path one can choose after being granted worldly success is to lose themselves in gaining more and more wealth, such as expanding their business and investing in financial opportunities. This person is less bothered with advancing in their career and spending their wealth but only cares about making more wealth. Their intention and striving distracts them from obtaining peace of mind and practically preparing for

the Day of Judgement, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

The third path one can choose after being granted worldly success, is when one becomes engrossed in enjoying the worldly success they have obtained, such as wealth or fame. They worked hard to obtain worldly success and therefore feel entitled to enjoy it. These people are less bothered with making more wealth or advancing in their careers and instead only care about enjoying themselves and therefore lose themselves in entertainment, fun and games, such as going on holidays and attending parties. Their intention and striving distracts them from obtaining peace of mind and practically preparing for the Day of Judgement, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

These three paths causes a person to fail the test of being granted worldly success, even if they adhere to the lawful, as these things were not the reason why the worldly success was granted to them.

The final and correct path one can choose when they are granted worldly success is when they use the success, such as wealth, in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Through this, they pass the test of their worldly success and obtain peace of mind and body. They obtain a good balance between making use of their worldly success in order to lead a comfortable life yet avoid excessiveness, waste and extravagance. This does not mean one cannot enjoy worldly success, but it means success lies in enjoying it in moderation so that one is not distracted from obtaining peace of mind

and practically preparing for the Day of Judgement, which involves using the worldly blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is only possible to do when one learns and acts on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is not possible to do for the one who chooses one of the first three paths discussed after they are granted worldly success.

The Three Outcomes

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When one observes the teachings of Islam and the life of others, they can clearly see that there are three ways people can use each blessing they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, and the consequences of each choice. The first way is to use the blessings one has been granted in sinful ways. This will lead to a potential punishment in both worlds. In this world, their blessings will become a curse for them and a cause of their difficulties and misery. For example, the one who raises their child on the unlawful, will find that their child becomes a source of misery and difficulty for them. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

The second way of using the blessings one has been granted is in ways which are considered vain by Islam. This involves using the blessings in ways which are not sinful and nor do they result in a good deed. Behaving in this manner will be a great regret for people in the hereafter, especially when they observe the reward given to those who used their blessings correctly. In addition, using one's blessings in vain ways may well prevent the scales of Judgement Day tipping in their favour. Using the blessings one has been granted in vain ways also results in stress and anxiety in this world. For example, the one who uses their time in vain ways often encounters more stress, such as arguments, than those who avoid using their time in vain ways. Those who seek more wealth than they need to fulfill their responsibilities often stress more than those who only seek and utilise according to their needs.

The final way a person can use the worldly blessings they have been granted is in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact showing gratitude to Him and therefore leads to an increase in blessings. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

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

In addition, behaving in this manner is remembering Allah, the Exalted, and therefore leads to peace of mind and body. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”

The one who behaves in this manner has fulfilled the purpose of their creation and will therefore lead a good, purposeful and meaningful life in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely

give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Finally, even when this person faces difficulties they will be rightly guided to respond with patience and receive further blessings and reward. They will be like the patient under anesthesia who does not feel the pain of treatment they are being administered. Meaning, they may face difficulties but their heart will always be at peace.

To conclude, these are the three ways and consequences one can use the blessings they have been granted. It does not take a scholar to conclude which way a person should act upon.

The Way It Is

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People often confuse the things which they have no power over with the things they have control over and are responsible for. As a result of this confusion, they fail to adopt the correct mentality and behaviour thereby missing out on obtaining the peace of mind which Islam offers. Instead, their confusion causes them to adopt an unbalanced mental and physical state which causes them to swing from one extreme mood to another in a short space of time, which results in mental disorders, such stress, anxiety and depression.

One must understand certain things in order to avoid this outcome. There are two elements in one's life. The first are the things which are external and they have no control over them, such as falling sick. These things are connected to destiny and the divine will and cannot be averted or avoided. The second element is internal and is linked to one's behaviour. This element a person has complete control over and is what they will be judged on by Allah, the Exalted.

The confusion occurs when one fails to understand that they have control over their behaviour and are responsible for it, and as a result they fail to adopt a balanced state of mind whereby they do not become overly happy meaning, exultant, in times of ease and overly sad, meaning, grief, in times of difficulties. Instead, they fail to adopt control over their behaviour and instead treat it as if it is out of their control and a part of destiny, just like the external situations they face. As a result of failing to control themselves, they become exultant over insignificant things and extremely upset over insignificant and petty issues.

Whenever they recover from their extreme behaviour they simply shrug their shoulders and comment that such is life and that is the way it is. As a result, they do not improve their behaviour with time, nor learn from their experiences, as they do not take responsibility for their behaviour and instead place it with the things they have no control over. This is an incredibly rude and foolish attitude to adopt as one blames Allah, the Exalted, the One who decides destiny, for their bad behaviour and attitude, even though their behaviour is fully under their control.

When one adopts this attitude they will come to believe that swinging from one extreme mood to another is simply a norm in this world and that is how life was supposed to be lived. This is closer to a mentally unstable person's lifestyle than a balanced Muslim's life, a balance which Islam teaches.

To conclude, one must avoid confusing what they do not have control over with what they have full control over i.e. their behaviour and attitude. By differentiating between the two, a Muslim can and will learn from their experiences and with the support of Islamic knowledge, they will adopt a balanced state of mind whereby they avoid extreme moods. This leads to peace and mind in this world. Chapter 57 Al Hadid, verses 22-23:

"No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register, before We bring it into being - indeed that, for Allāh, is easy. In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult over what He has given you..."

To Be Steadfast

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to differentiate between being steadfast in Islam and adopting stubbornness in Islam. Even though they can outwardly appear similar yet they are very different. Stubbornness in faith is the result of blind imitation and not learning and acting on Islamic knowledge. Blind imitation is disliked in Islam, as people have been created with a high mental ability and should therefore not act like cattle, who blindly follow each other. A Muslim must follow the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, who strived to gain and act on Islamic knowledge. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 108:

"Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allāh with insight, I and those who follow me..."

Stubbornness in faith therefore does not lead to strong faith. This prevents one from remaining firm on the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in every situation, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A stubborn Muslim may obey Allah, the Exalted, in certain cases but will ultimately fail to obey Him in others, as they do not possess the strong faith required to achieve this.

In addition, stubbornness in faith prevents one from improving their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, as they will not change for the better, if it means contradicting their habits. Whereas, steadfastness in Islam will encourage one to change and improve their behaviour every time they learn something new. For example, the stubborn Muslim will continue to offer their voluntary prayers at the Mosque even after they have been told that it is an established tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to offer one's voluntary prayers at home with the exception of the two cycles of prayer offered when entering the Mosque. This has been confirmed in many Hadiths, such as the one found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6113. A stubborn Muslim will even hold firmly on to practices which are not taken from the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, even if they have to sacrifice acting on his traditions.

Steadfastness in faith on the other hand, is rooted in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. This attitude encourages one to change and improve their behaviour constantly, as they increase their knowledge. It leads to strong faith, which ensures they remain sincerely obedient to Allah, the Exalted, in all situations. This is therefore, the attitude a Muslim must adopt if they desire to achieve peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 46 Al Ahqaf, verse 13:

“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

To Let Go or Not

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Muslims often misunderstand the concept of letting things go and moving on with one's life. They incorrectly apply and advise others with this attitude in every situation and case. This attitude is highly encouraged in Islam only under certain circumstances, which the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, make clear. This again, indicates the importance of gaining Islamic knowledge, as ignorance misleads people. The situation where the attitude of letting things go and sweeping it under the rug applies, is when the situation is minor, has no long term negative effects and is unlikely to resurface in different shades and forms amongst the people involved. The examples of this scenario in Islamic teachings are virtually countless. For example, Allah, the Exalted, encouraged Abu Bakr Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, to pardon and overlook the mistake of his relative without changing their relationship, when his relative indirectly took part in the slander of his daughter, Aisha Bint Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with them. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“And let not those of virtue among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of Allāh, and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allāh should forgive you? And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.”

This event has been discussed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3180.

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was encouraged to let it go without changing his relationship with his relative, as his relative was not going to repeat the mistake again, as he was a sincere Companion, may Allah be pleased with him.

Another example, is when the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, had a small argument on the way back from an expedition. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was informed about it, he simply told them to let it go. He did not give them a lecture nor organised a counselling session between those who argued in order to solve their dispute. This incident has been discussed in Imam Muhammad As Sallaabee's, *The Noble Life of the Prophet (PBUH)*, Volume 1, Pages 1314-1315.

Again, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, simply told them to let the issue go and sweep it under the rug, as he knew it was a minor issue with no future negative effects and nor would this issue resurface in the future.

On the other hand, there are many examples found within Islamic teachings which make it clear that certain situations must not be simply ignored, overlooked or swept under the rug. Instead, they must be addressed so that the root issue can be solved. Otherwise, these issues will have long term negative effects on the people involved and will continue to resurface within their lives in different forms. For example, Allah, the Exalted, encourages a married couple facing problems to seek the help of others, when the root issue is serious. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 35:

"And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allāh will cause it between them. Indeed, Allāh is ever Knowing and Aware."

In another place, Allah, the Exalted, comforts the married couple who determined to divorce. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 130:

"But if they separate [by divorce], Allāh will enrich each [of them] from His abundance. And ever is Allāh Encompassing and Wise."

In both verses, Allah, the Exalted, does not command or encourage the married couple to simply ignore, overlook and to sweep under the rug their serious marriage issues. He instead encourages them to face and address the problems, as they are serious, far reaching and will resurface again and again if left unaddressed i.e. circular arguments.

Another common example, which is unfortunately very common amongst Muslims today, is when a wife, who is persistently physically abused by her husband, is told by her relatives and friends to return to him, her abuser, and to instead overlook, pardon and ignore this serious problem, as Allah, the Exalted, supposedly recommends this attitude. The one who gives this advice deserves a slap! Islam never advises to ignore these types of situations.

One must learn what issues to overlook, ignore and to sweep under the rug and when to address them in order to solve their root causes. This is achieved when one studies the teachings of the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Failing to do this leads to circular arguments, stress, anxiety and an unhappy life and relationships.

In cases where the issue is minor and has no long term negative effects on the people involved and is unlikely to resurface in the future, one should learn to ignore, overlook and sweep them under the rug, as hashing out these issues leads to pettiness, negativity and a life full of arguments. On the other hand, in cases where the issue is major, is likely to have long term negative effects on the people involved and is likely to resurface, in the form of circular arguments, the issue must be faced, addressed and practical steps must be taken to solve the root issue and cause.

What Will People Say

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There is a powerful and misguiding mentality which has taken deep roots within the Muslim community, namely, being heavily influenced by the concept of "what will people say" about one's actions and choices. This mentality is often clothed under the guise of righteousness so that Muslims adopt it. They claim that if someone fails to care about what others say about them then they will become shameless. In reality, shamelessness is rooted in not caring about the divine vision, hearing and judgment of Allah, the Exalted, not the criticism of people, as most of their criticism has no value in the sight of Islam and one can easily hide their shameless behaviour from people.

The mentality of "what will people say" affects and corrupts many aspects of a person's life and faith. Arguably, the most dangerous affect it has is that a Muslim begins to perform good deeds for the sake of people instead of for the sake of pleasing Allah, the Exalted. For example, a Muslim will only attend a relative's funeral simply to please their other relatives and not in order to please Allah, the Exalted. This Muslim will find that on Judgement Day they will be told to gain their reward for their insincere good deeds from the people their acted for, which will not be possible to do. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154. It is important to note that one should not behave to please people as this is minor polytheism and also leads to the loss of reward, as Allah, the Exalted, is free from any partners.

The mentality of "what will people say" also encourages Muslims to behave in ways that are disliked by Islam, such as being extravagant, wasteful and excessive. For example, the majority of Muslim weddings aim to please the relatives of the married couple, as their fear the criticism of people. This causes them to spend lavishly and wastefully.

This mentality can also encourage one to commit sins in order to protect oneself from the criticism of people.

The mentality of "what will people say" also prevents Muslims from acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as their teachings often contradict the silly cultural beliefs and practices Muslims have adopted. Fear of being criticised by people prevents one from abandoning their cultural practices for the sake of the two sources of guidance.

The mentality of "what will people say" also prevents Muslims from making the right choices which will lead to their happiness and well-being. For example, many Muslims remain in abusive marriages simply out of fear of the criticism of people, especially their relatives, if they get divorced.

Finally, the mentality of "what will people say" prevents one from making good lawful choices as they fear the criticism of people. For example, Muslims from certain countries will not let their children marry Muslims

from different countries as they fear the criticism of their relatives, even though the marriage proposals are lawful and good.

It is the duty of a Muslim to act in order to please Allah, the Exalted. They must fulfil the rights of people according to the teachings of Islam but this does not mean they should act to please them. It means they must fulfil their rights according to the teachings of Islam whether the people are pleased with them or not. Their pleasure or lack of it is irrelevant. The one who acts according to the pleasure of people will never find peace and happiness in this world nor will they ever obtain the praise of people. Whereas, acting to please Allah, the Exalted, leads to peace and happiness in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

Free Will

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Allah, the Exalted, guides those who sincerely try to obey Him. This involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But those who persistently disobey Him are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Therefore, it is vital for Muslims to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, as persistent disobedience leads to corruption of the spiritual heart and one's actions.

This is similar to a person who is warned by a judge not to behave in an unlawful way but after the person persists on this behaviour the judge gives the order for them to be locked up in prison. Therefore, Allah, the Exalted, has not wronged them they have only wronged themselves.

But it is important to note that as being abandoned in misguidance is a spiritual thing and therefore hidden to mankind, it is important for Muslims not to assume certain people have reached this point. Instead they should think positively about all people and therefore sincerely practically aid them in reforming their belief and behaviour.

Allah, the Exalted, has created human beings with the best possible capabilities. He gave them knowledge and power to differentiate between good and evil and even placed in them an innate inclination to like what is good and to dislike and avoid what is evil. This has been

indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2389. Allah, the Exalted, has also granted mankind free will to choose between good and evil. This choice plays a role in enhancing or diminishing a person's natural faculties of reason. Chapter 91 Ash Shams, verses 9-10:

“He has succeeded who purifies it [the spiritual heart – the greatest faculty of reason]. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].”

When a person chooses a path of goodness their natural potential develops and Allah, the Exalted, grants them further support in their efforts. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

But if one follows their evil desires and chooses the evil path gradually their spiritual hearts will become engrossed with darkness and no good will remain therein. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3334. If a person fails to repent then the main verse under discussion comes into effect. This person becomes so engrossed in evil that they find joy in their evil mentality and actions. They absolutely hate anything good.

The Miraculous Holy Quran

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Holy Quran possesses an uncountable amount of qualities which separates it from any other worldly book. This aspect of the Holy Quran is so intense that it cannot even be explained or discussed over countless lifetimes. But a few of these qualities will be mentioned here. First of all, in the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, has given an open challenge to the entire universe (not just people) and not only a challenge to those who were present when this divine revelation was revealed but to all of creation till the end of time. The challenge being if the people believed the Holy Quran was not a divine revelation from Allah, the Exalted, then they should produce a chapter that can rival a chapter of the Holy Quran. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 23:

“And if you are in some doubt, concerning what We sent down upon Our special devotee, then bring one chapter like it, and call upon all your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful.”

There is no book on the entire planet that can and has given this type of open challenge. But over 1400 years ago the Holy Quran gave this challenge to the entire universe and to this day this challenge has not been won by the non-Muslims nor will it ever be God willing.

Another quality of the Holy Quran is that it stated the outcome of future events. But the more amazing thing about these statements is that the

outcomes seemed impossible at the time. For example chapter 48 Al Fath, verse 28:

“It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth that he may make it prevail over all other religions And Sufficient is Allah as witness.”

When this verse was revealed the entire city of Mecca was Islam so when the people of Mecca heard this verse, unfortunately for them, they believed that Islam was too feeble and would therefore not survive long and certainly would not spread beyond the borders of Mecca let alone the entire world. But within a some years Allah, the Exalted, fulfilled this promise.

Another example of how the Holy Quran prophesied a future event which was unimaginable at the time is found in chapter 30 Ar Rum, verses 2-5:

“The Romans have been subdued. In the nearby land and after their subjugation they will soon overcome. In a few years. The command is of Allah only before and after. And on that day the believers shall rejoice. With the help of Allah, He helps whom He pleases. And He is the Might, and Merciful.”

These verses of the Holy Quran were revealed during a time where the Romans (Christians) were at war with the Persians (Fire worshippers). This war has been confirmed by many authentic historic books. At this particular time the Persians were on the verge of winning the war. At one point Rome itself was surrounded by the Persians. But Allah, the Exalted, stated that the Romans would eventually reign victorious. The non-Muslims of Mecca who themselves were idol worshippers favoured the Persians and agreed with the majority that it was impossible for the Romans to win. But Allah, the Exalted, as always proved these verses true and allowed the Romans victory.

A final example which appeals to the scientists of the world is seen in chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 33:

“And it is He Who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Each one is floating in a circumference.”

For centuries scientists have fought over theories on how exactly the solar system is arranged e.g. whether the sun remains still and the Earth rotates around or vice versa. Only relatively recently it has been proven by scientists from all different faiths and backgrounds that each object; sun, moon and the Earth all rotate on their own axes and rotate around each other in a set orbit. But Allah, the Exalted, declared this over 1400 years ago. All the science related verses of the Holy Quran are slowly being proven by scientists today. This is a huge piece of evidence that proves that the Holy Quran are the words of the One and only true God, Allah, the Exalted, who has created this universe and everything in it, because only a Creator can truly explain his creations.

Even though many commands of the Holy Quran may not be understood by people does not mean they are incorrect. Certain verses of the Holy Quran whose wisdom was hidden to man became apparent when society reached a certain level of development. As the whole Holy Quran is a book of wisdom and guidance it must be accepted irrespective if one understands its commands or not. This situation is just like a child who is suffering from a cold and desires ice cream but is not given it by their parent. The child will continue to cry without understanding the wisdom behind but those that possess knowledge will agree with the parent even though outwardly it appears as if the decision of the parent is wronging the child.

When studying the Holy Quran one will realize that it contains different levels of superiority through both obvious and subtle meanings that it discusses. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 1:

“...[This is] a Book whose verses are perfected and then presented in detail from [one who is] Wise and Aware.”

The expressions in it are unparalleled and its meanings are explained in a simple straight forward way. Its verses are extremely eloquent and no other text can surpass it. The Holy Quran also mentioned the stories of the previous nations in detail even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was not educated in history. It commanded every type of good and forbade every type of evil, those that affect an individual and those that affect an entire society so that peace and security can spread throughout homes and society. The Holy Quran is free from exaggerations, lies or falsehood unlike poems and

stories. All the verses, whether short or long, in the Holy Quran are beneficial. Even when the same story is repeated in the Holy Quran different important lessons can be learned from it. Unlike all other books the Holy Quran does not become boring when it is repeatedly recited and a seeker of truth never gets fed up of studying it. The Holy Quran not only provides warnings and promises but supports them with unshakeable and clear proofs. When the Holy Quran discusses anything which can seem abstract, such as adopting patience, it always provides an easy and practical way of implementing it. It encourages one to fulfil the purpose of their creation and prepare for the eternal hereafter in a simple yet profound way. It makes the straight path clear and appealing to the one who desires true success in both worlds. The knowledge within it is timeless and can be applied to every society and age. It is a healing for every emotional, economical and physical difficulty when it is understood and applied correctly. It is the cure for every problem an individual or an entire society can ever encounter. One only needs to turn the pages of history to observe the societies which implemented the teachings of the Holy Quran correctly in order to understand its all encompassing benefits. Centuries have passed yet not even a single letter has been edited in the Holy Quran as Allah, the Exalted, promised to safeguard it. No other book in history possesses this quality. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verse 9:

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the message [i.e., the Quran], and indeed, We will be its guardian.”

This is undoubtedly the greatest and timeless miracle of Allah, the Exalted, granted to His final Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But the only one who will benefit from it is the one who seeks the truth whereas the seekers of their desires will only find it difficult to hear and follow. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 82:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.”

Freedom vs Restrictions

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Those who disbelieve or avoid acting on their faith in Islam do so out of love for the material world and the things within it. They believe that believing or acting on their faith will prevent them from enjoying worldly blessings meaning, for them faith is something that restricts their desires and therefore they turn away from it either literally or practically. Instead they turn towards the material world and strive to fulfill their desires without restrictions believing that true peace lies in this. They look down at those who accept and actualize their faith by controlling their actions and using their worldly blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They believe that these pious Muslims are lowly slaves who been restricted from enjoying themselves whereas they, the disbelievers and the misguided, are free. But in actual fact this could not be further from the truth as the real slaves are those who fail to accept and submit to Allah, the Exalted, and the superior ones are those who have done this as they become free of slavery to the world. This can be understood by an example. A good parent will restrict the type of food their child eats meaning, they will only let them eat junk and unhealthy food once in a while and instead force them to follow a healthy diet. This child therefore believes that their parent has placed undesirable restrictions on them and that they have become slaves to their parent and their healthy diet. On the other hand another child has been given permission from their parent to eat whatever they desire, whenever they desire and how much they desire. So this child believes that they are completely free of all restrictions. When these children come together the child who has been given complete freedom criticizes and looks down on the child who has been restricted by their parent. The latter child will also feel sorry for themselves when they observe the other child has been given free reign to behave however they wish. Outwardly it appears the child who has been granted freedom has obtained happiness whereas the other child is too tied up with restrictions to enjoy life. But years down the line the truth will become manifest. The child who had no restrictions grows up to become extremely unhealthy e.g. obesity,

diabetes, high blood pressure, etc. As a result of this they even become mentally unhealthy as they lose confidence in their body and the way they look. Because of this they become a slave of medications, diseases, mental and social problems. All these things restrict their happiness and life. Whereas, the child who was restricted by their parent grows up healthy in mind and body. As a result they become confident in their body and ability, which aids them to succeed in life. They become free of any slavery to medications, diseases, mental and social problems as they grew up with the correct balance and guidance. So the child who had no restrictions grew up becoming a slave to many things, whereas the child who had restrictions grew up independent of all restrictions.

To conclude, the real slave is the one who becomes a slave to all other things except Allah, the Exalted, such as social media, society, fashion and culture, and this leads to mental, physical and social problems, whereas the real free person is the one who submits only to Allah, the Exalted, thereby achieving peace of mind and body.

Forgive and Forget

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In the ninth year after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, migrated to Medina, a delegation representing the non-Muslim tribe of Thaqif visited the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to accept Islam. Wahshi, the man who killed Hamza Bin Abdul Mutalib, may Allah be pleased with him, at the Battle of Uhud, joined this delegation in order to secure his safety and accept Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When he reached Medina, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, asked about what he had done to Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, and accepted his testification of faith but asked him if he could avoid unnecessarily meeting him in the future, as seeing him reminded the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, of the killing and mutilation of his uncle, Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him. This has been discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, Number 4072.

Even though Wahshi's sins were forgiven, as he accepted Islam, yet the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, requested him to avoid meeting him unnecessarily. First of all, this indicates the human nature of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. He felt the same feelings that any other human would feel, such as anger and grief. In addition, this request was a great relief for the Muslim community as it made things easier for the Muslims. If the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, behaved as if Wahshi had done nothing, then it would have forced all the Muslims to behave in this manner, as adopting the way of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is obligatory. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...””

The vast majority of Muslims would not be able to deal with others in such a manner. Therefore, the request of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, made things easy for them. This corrects the false notion of forgiving and forgetting. This incident proves that humans are not computers, who can erase memories from their minds. People are not expected to forget the actions of others, they are instead encouraged to forgive others for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and continue to fulfill the rights of others. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6133, that a believer does not get stung from the same hole twice. Meaning, a Muslim should forgive others and fulfill their rights, but they should not blindly trust others, especially when they have been wronged by them in the past. Ignoring the past actions of others may well encourage them to behave in the same way in the future. Therefore, Muslims must learn from this incident and learn to forgive others and strive to fulfill their rights but they are not expected to forget the actions of others nor blindly trust them.

False Deities

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The truth is that each worshipper of false deities only worships their own desires. Their deities are just a physical manifestation of their desires which they worship. This is obvious as a person who worships a deity in the form of an idol knows that the lifeless idol cannot command them to live their life a certain way so the worshiper themselves decides how they imagine their lifeless idol would like them to live. And this code of conduct is based on nothing but their own desires. Therefore, their worship of their desires is the root of their worship. The influential and rich are more drowned in this mentality as they are aware that accepting the truth meaning, Islam, will force them to live according to a specific code of conduct which will prevent them from acting on their misguided desires. They advise others to follow them as they do not wish to lose their influence and authority. This is why history as shown they were the first to reject and oppose the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. This attitude has nothing to do with Islam being the right or wrong religion based on clear evidence, it is simply about fulfilling one's desires.

Honouring Women

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Prior to Islam women would themselves be counted as something which was inherited by others. Islam abolished this unjust practice and gave them rights which surpassed any other society.

On a general note, before Islam, in the age of ignorance, it was common practice for women to be equated with articles of home use. They would be bought and sold like cattle. A woman had no rights in respect to marriage. Far from being entitled to some share in the inheritance from her relatives, she herself was treated as a piece of the inheritance like other household items. She was considered as something owned by men while she was allowed to own nothing. And she could only spend according to the wishes of a man. Whereas, the man could spend any wealth which should belong to her, like wages, according to his desires. She did not even have the right to question this method. Some groups from Europe even considered women not to be a human and equated her with an animal. Women had no place in religion. They were considered unfit for worship. Some even declared women to possess no souls. It was considered completely normal for a father to kill his newborn or young daughter as they were seen as a shame on the family. Some even believed that no act of justice would be taken against the one who killed a woman. Some customs even killed the wife of a dead husband as she was not seen fit enough to live without him. Some even declared that the purpose of women was only to serve men.

But Allah, the Exalted, through the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, taught man to respect all people, made justice

and equity the law and men were made responsible for fulfilling the rights of women parallel to their own rights on them. Women were made free and independent. She became the owner of her own life and property, just like men. No man can force a woman to marry someone. If she is forced to without her consent then it becomes her choice to continue the marriage or annul it. No man has a right to spend anything from what belongs to her without her consent and approval. After the death of her husband or after divorce she becomes independent and she cannot be compelled by anyone to do anything. She gets a share in the inheritance like men according to the responsibilities given to her by Allah, the Exalted. To spend on women and treat them well has been declared an act of worship by Allah, the Exalted. All these rights and more have been given to women by none other than Allah, the Exalted. It is strange how those who stand up for women's rights today criticize Islam even though it gave women rights centuries earlier.

Importance of Prophetic Teachings

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There are two types of divine revelation. One are the exact words of Allah, the Exalted, which is represented by the Holy Quran. The other is the inspiration given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by Allah, the Exalted. This is called Hadith or narrations, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not speak out of his own desire. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 3:

“Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination.”

The Holy Quran cannot be understood correctly without the Hadiths/traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the Hadith explain the verses in their proper context e.g. why they were revealed, what are they referring to, etc. This is why it is obligatory to follow the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

“...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from...”

And chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...”

And chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 59:

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger...”

And chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has truly obeyed Allah...”

Another reason why Hadiths are needed is that the Holy Quran does not explain everything so therefore one is forced to turn to the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, the three pillars of Islam: Obligatory charity, the Holy Pilgrimage and the obligatory prayers. The obligatory prayers, which is the central pillar of Islam, is not explained in the Holy Quran in detail, such as the way to offer the prayer is not mentioned at all in the Holy Quran. The timings are vaguely indicated but not explained in detail.

The exact amount of the obligatory charity which is due is not clarified in the Holy Quran, only the groups which are entitled to it are. But even then one must turn to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to fully understand the different groups.

Only some parts of the Holy Pilgrimage are very briefly mentioned in the Holy Quran. But the precise order of activities or what to do at each place is not mentioned in the Holy Quran.

Without the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, these three out of five pillars of Islam cannot be completed correctly.

It is important to understand that Allah, the Exalted, preserved the Holy Quran and the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verse 9:

“It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it.”

The word Quran is not mentioned in this verse. Instead, reminder is mentioned, which includes both types of divine revelation: the Holy

Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The very people who transmitted the Holy Quran to the following generations, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, are the same people who transmitted the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. If a person rejects one then it casts doubt on the other.

Finally, the people who understood Islam the best are the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and they made it clear that the Holy Quran cannot be correctly implemented without the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Without these traditions it becomes easy to misinterpret and take the verses of the Holy Quran out of their proper context. It is the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which clarify the verses in order to show what they really mean. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the practical model of the Holy Quran.

Wisdoms of Winning & Losing

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In the third year after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, migrated to Medina, the non-Muslim leaders of Mecca decided to take revenge for the loss at the Battle of Badr which occurred in the previous year. This led to the Battle of Uhud. When the battle commenced the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, quickly overcame the non-Muslim army which caused them to retreat. But some of the archers the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, commanded to stay on a small mountain, Jabal Al Rumah, which is in front of Mount Uhud, irrespective of the outcome of the battle, believed that the battle was over and the command no longer applied. When they descended Jabal Al Rumah, it exposed the rear of the Muslim army. The non-Muslim army then rallied together and attacked the Muslims from both sides. This led to the martyrdom of many Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and their bodies were mutilated by the non-Muslims. This has been discussed in Imam Ibn Kathir's, the Life of the Prophet, Volume 3, Pages 29-30.

It is clear that the main reason why the Muslims suffered so many losses was the misjudgment of the archers. They unintentionally disobeyed the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as they believed the war was over and his command no longer applied. This indicates that as long as a Muslim sincerely obeys the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will be granted success but if they disobey him, this support will be withdrawn. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has truly obeyed Allah...”

and chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], “If you should love Allāh, then follow me, [so] Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.””

And chapter 24 An Nur, verse 63:

“Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already Allāh knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So let those beware who dissent from his [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him] order, lest disaster strike them or a painful punishment.”

In addition, it is customary for the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, to sometimes gain the upper hand over their enemies and on some occasions their enemies gain the upper hand, even though the ultimate victory is always in favour of the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. The reason for this alternating of circumstances is to separate the true believers from the hypocrites and the opportunists, who always join the successful group in order to reap worldly benefits. If the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, always won, then the hypocrites and opportunists

would become inextinguishable from the sincere believers. If the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, always lost, then this would hinder their mission. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 140:

“If a wound should touch you - there has already touched the [opposing] people a wound similar to it. And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people so that Allāh may make evident those who believe and [may] take to Himself from among you martyrs...”

Another reason for this alternating of victory and defeat is to teach the believers how to adopt both patience and gratitude. If they lost all the time, then they may well become patient but would find it difficult to be grateful. If they won all the time, then they may well adopt gratitude but will struggle to adopt real patience. The alternating of situations allows for them to adopt both patience and gratitude, two halves which are vital to obtain success in both worlds.

Divine Kingdom vs Worldly Kingdom

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People have often conceived Allah, the Exalted, to be similar to those worldly rulers who immerse themselves in a life of ease in their grand palaces. Such rulers are normally far removed from their subjects. To all intents and purposes they are well beyond the direct access of their subjects. The only way for their subjects to reach them is through the chosen and favourite courtiers. And even if a subject succeeds in conveying their pleadings through a courtier these rulers are often too arrogant to directly respond to such pleadings. This is one aspect of the function of a courtier - to communicate to a ruler the pleadings of his subjects and also to communicate to the subjects the response of the ruler.

Since Allah, the Exalted, was often conceived in the image of such worldly rulers many people fell prey to the false belief that Allah, the Exalted, is above the reach of ordinary human beings. This belief spread further because many evil people found it profitable to propagate such a notion. Because of this the general public felt Allah, the Exalted, could only be approached through powerful intermediaries and intercessors. The only way that a person's prayer could reach Allah, the Exalted, and be answered by Him was to approach Him through one of these holy people. It was therefore, considered necessary to bestow gifts to these religious personalities who supposedly enjoyed the privilege of conveying a person's prayers to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 11 Hud, verse 61:

"And to Thamūd [We sent] their brother Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allāh; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you

from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive.”

The Holy Prophet Salih, peace be upon him, struck at the root of this ignorant system. This he achieved by emphasizing two facts: that Allah, the Exalted, is extremely close to His creatures and that He answers their prayers. Thus, he refuted many misconceptions about Allah, the Exalted: that He is far away, withdrawn from human beings and that He does not answer their prayers if they are to directly approach Him. Allah, the Exalted, no doubt, is transcendent and yet He is extremely close to every person. Everyone will find Him just beside themselves. Everyone can whisper to Him the innermost desires of their heart. Everyone can address their prayers to Allah, the Exalted, both in public and in private, verbally or secretly. Moreover, Allah, the Exalted, answers the prayers of all His creatures directly. The purpose of spiritual guides is to teach their students how to understand and act on the teachings of Islam and because of this they deserve respect. But their role is not to stand in between their students and Allah, the Exalted, by claiming that the only way to reach Him and get His attention is to go through them. This attitude completely contradicts the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

The Inevitable Day of Judgement

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Logically speaking, the Day of Judgement is something which must occur. If one observes the universe they will notice many examples of balance. For example, the Earth is at a perfect and balanced distance from the Sun. If the Earth was slightly closer or further away from the Sun it would not be inhabitable. Similarly, the water cycle, which involves the evaporation of water from the ocean into the atmosphere which is then condensed in order to produce rain, is perfectly balanced so that the creation can continue living on Earth. The ground was created in a balanced way so that the weak branches and shoots of seeds can penetrate through it in order to provide crops for the creation yet the same ground is tough enough to withstand heavy buildings being built on top of it. There are many such examples that not only clearly indicate a Creator but also balance. But there is one major thing in this world which is clearly unbalanced namely, the actions of mankind. One often observes oppressive and tyrannical people who escape punishment in this world. Conversely, there are countless people who are oppressed by others and face other difficulties yet do not receive their full reward for their patience. Many Muslims who sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, often face many difficulties in this world and only receive a small share in reward whereas those who openly disobey Allah, the Exalted, enjoy the luxuries of this world and only face some problems. Just like Allah, the Exalted, has set up a balance in all His creations the reward and punishment of actions must also be balanced. But this obviously does not occur in this world so therefore it must occur in another time namely, the Day of Recompense i.e. the Day of Judgment.

Allah, the Exalted, could reward and punish fully in this world. But one of the wisdoms behind not fully punishing in this world is that Allah, the Exalted, gives opportunity after opportunity to them so that they

sincerely repent and correct their behaviour. He does not fully reward Muslims in this world as this world is not Paradise. In addition, believing in the unseen namely, the full reward waiting for a Muslim in the next world, is an important aspect of faith. In fact belief in the unseen is what makes faith special. Believing in something which can be perceived through the five senses, such as receiving full reward in this world, would not be so special.

Having fear of full punishment and hope in receiving full reward in the hereafter will encourage one to abstain from sins and perform righteous deeds.

In order for the Day of Recompense to commence this material world must end. This is because punishment and reward can only be given once everyone's actions terminate. Therefore, the Day of Recompense cannot take place until the actions of people have been concluded. This indicates that the material world must end, sooner or later.

In addition, when one observes the Heavens and Earth and observes the countless cycles of life and death, such as the coming and going of the day and night, the seasons and the lands for growing crops, they will understand that they too will face a cycle of death and life namely, the resurrection on Judgement Day.

When one reflects on this discussion it will strengthen their faith in the Day of Judgement thereby encouraging them to prepare for it by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and

by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 22:

“For Allah created the heavens and the earth for a purpose, so that every soul may be paid back for what it has committed. And none will be wronged.”

A Representation of Judgement Day

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The obligatory prayers, which are central pillar of Islam, are more than a few movements. They are in fact a representation of Judgement Day. Each position of the prayer reflects a specific state on Judgement Day. Standing upright during the prayer is how people will stand when they are being judged by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 83 Al Mutaffifin, verses 4-6:

“Do they not think that they will be resurrected. For a tremendous Day The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds?”

Therefore, the one who is upright with Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and are upright to people, by treating them in ways they themselves desire to be treated by people, will find standing in front of Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day easy.

Bowing in the prayer will ensure a person is not labelled on Judgement Day as one of those who did not bow during their life on Earth when they were commanded to bow. Chapter 77 Al Mursalat, verse 48:

“And when it is said to them, “Bow [in prayer],” they do not bow.”

This bowing includes one's internal, verbal and practical submission to Allah, the Exalted, during every situation and moment. The one who fails to behave in this manner may well be accused of failing to bow to Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day.

The sitting position is how people will kneel before Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day, out of extreme fear. Chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 28:

“And you will see every nation kneeling [from fear]. Every nation will be called to its record [and told], “Today you will be recompensed for what you used to do.””

The one who kneels before the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in this world will find the kneeling on Judgement Day easy.

Finally, those who failed to prostrate themselves to Allah, the Exalted, in this world, in the prayer and in every aspect of their practical life, by using the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Him, will not be able to prostrate to Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day. Chapter 68 Al Qalam, verses 42-43:

"On the Day when matters become dire, they will be invited to prostrate themselves but will be prevented from doing so. Their eyes humbled, humiliation will cover them. And they used to be invited to prostration while they were sound."

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4919, that on Judgement Day those who used to prostrate in prayer for the sake of showing off will not be able to prostrate on Judgement Day, as their backs will become too stiff.

When one prays while bearing all this in mind, then they will return to their everyday activities with an intention to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, by using the worldly blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, so that they obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds and successfully overcome the difficulties of Judgement Day. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Finally, the five obligatory prayers being spread over the day, ensures that whenever one forgets Judgement Day, the next prayer will remind them of it and the importance of practically preparing for it.

When one take these things, and more, into context, then the prayer has a much deeper meaning than simply completing a few acts of motion, a few times a day.

What You Own

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When a Muslim truly believes that everything they possess belongs to Allah, the Exalted, then using the blessings they possess correctly, such as giving charity, through the grace of Allah, the Exalted, becomes easy. One who adopts this attitude realizes they are simply returning a loan that was given to them by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 254:

“O you who have believed, spend from that which We have provided for you...”

This behaviour also protects one from destroying their good deed of charity through pride. Pride makes a person believe they are doing Allah, the Exalted, and the needy a favor by donating charity. But the same way one returns a bank loan without pride Muslims need to realize their charity is a way of repaying the loan given by Allah, the Exalted. In addition, the needy are doing the donor a favor by taking their charity. The needy are a means for them to obtain reward from Allah, the Exalted, and without them this would be impossible. If one believes that their wealth was accumulated through their intelligence and strength they must understand that these things were also given by Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, this loan in the form of blessings such as wealth must be returned to Allah, the Exalted, otherwise they may face a penalty that will begin in this world and continue into the hereafter.

When one donates charity their transaction is not with a needy person in fact it is with Allah, the Exalted. When a person sincerely does business with Allah, the Exalted, they can be confident of an unimaginable profit which will benefit them in this world and in the next. This has been indicated in the main verses under discussion. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 245:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?...”

Illegal Relationships

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Allah, the Exalted, encourages marriage and forbids illegal relationships. When a couple are not truly devoted to each other, like a married couple, then any real difficulties they face will lead to more emotional stress for the couple, as they fail to support each other correctly. Coming in and out of multiple relationships over one's life undoubtedly has a detrimental affect on their mental health. It is no surprise that those who separate from their boyfriends/girlfriends often end up in counselling.

In addition, any children that are born unintentionally from the relationship will put further stress on their relationship which often results in them splitting up, as they do not desire to share the responsibility of raising a child. This creates a broken home for the child to grow up in where they do not have the support and supervision of both parents, which often leads to trouble for everyone. It is a clear fact that the majority of youth involved in crimes and gangs and those children who are groomed by sexual predators, come from broken families. Raising a child correctly when one desires a child is extremely hard, then can one imagine the emotional stress of raising a child correctly when the parent did not desire to have the child in the first place? This negatively effects the upbringing of the child and often leads to the problems mentioned earlier. This stress often leads to the single parent giving up the child for fostering or adoption, which in the majority of cases, has a detrimental negative and long term impact on the child, some of which were mentioned earlier. This further increases the chances of the child becoming misguided. Allah, the Exalted, removed theses branch problems by addressing the root problem meaning, forbidding illegal relationships and encouraging marriage whereby both couples sincerely devote themselves to each other and their children.

By addressing the concept of marriage, divorce and children in the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, has given the key to a successful society. When the members of the family, whether together or divorced, fulfill each other's rights and create a stable and happy home for the children it causes a positive ripple effect throughout society. Similarly, when a family is unhappy and fail to fulfill each other's rights then this causes a negative ripple effect to spread throughout society.

Many thinkers have come and gone which have addressed the issues people and society face but as these solutions target branch issues the benefit of these solutions are minimal. Whereas, Allah, the Exalted, through this method of addressing root issues, which affect an individual and the society, has clarified all things so that people can achieve success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 89:

"...And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy..."

Gift vs Loan

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. As indicated by the following verse, a Muslim will inherit Paradise meaning, they will be given ownership of it. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 72:

“And that is Paradise which you are made to inherit for what you used to do.”

This is the reason why Muslims will be free to do whatever they please in Paradise as they will be granted its ownership. Whereas, the blessings in this material world have been granted to people as a loan and not as a gift. A gift indicates ownership whereas a loan means the blessing must be returned to its true Owner namely, Allah, the Exalted. The only way to return the blessings of this material world which have been given as a loan to people is by using them in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is in fact true gratitude and leads to increase in blessings in both worlds. Chapter 14 Ibrahim, verse 7:

“...If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...”

The worldly blessings which have been granted to people as a loan must return to its true Owner namely, Allah, the Exalted, willingly or forcefully. If it is returned willingly then they will be blessed with much reward but if

it is returned forcefully, such as through their death, then these blessings will become a burden for them in the hereafter.

It is vital for Muslims to understand the difference between a gift/ownership and a loan so that they are encouraged to use the blessings in this material world in a correct way patiently.

A Complete Code

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the major reasons the faith of Muslims has weakened over time is due to how they perceive faith and Islam. The righteous predecessors understood that Islam was a complete code of conduct which directly influenced every aspect of one's life, every situation they face and every blessing they were granted by Allah, the Exalted. They therefore learnt and implemented this code of conduct from the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. As a result, they obtained peace of mind and body despite the tests and difficulties they faced. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

But with the passing of time, Muslims began to perceive Islam as nothing but a few daily, weekly and annual rituals and acts of worship. This encouraged them to deal with every situation they faced and every blessing they were granted according to the standards set by culture, fashion and society. This caused them to reduce the Holy Quran to a pleasant melody which does not need to be understood or acted upon. And they reduced it to something which is recited in order to obtain worldly things, such as a spouse and child. This attitude also encouraged them to misuse the blessings they were granted. As a result, their faith became nothing but an empty shell, which is adorned by acts of worship but has no practical effect on their lives. This attitude

is one of the main reasons why Muslims, who fulfill the basic duties of Islam, still fail to obtain peace of mind and body.

If this attitude persists, then just like the former nations who eventually abandoned their few acts of worship, as they were nothing but empty practices, so will the Muslim nation. Then they will call themselves non-practicing Muslims. This only leads to difficulties in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

A Muslim must therefore avoid this attitude and outcome by learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, so that they adopt the correct attitude and code of conduct in every aspect of their life. Only through this, will one find peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

Asking for Things

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to recognize their extreme short sightedness and lack of knowledge, especially in respect to their desires and choices. Ignoring this reality often encourages one to supplicate for specific worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, even though obtaining them might not be good for them in the long run. It is praiseworthy to ask for the specific things which have been recommended by Islamic teachings, such as security and safety in this world, but beyond them, one must recognise their short sightedness and ignorance and therefore only ask for general good worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, and avoid specific worldly things, even if they are convinced that the consequences of obtaining that thing will be good. Instead, one should trust that Allah, the Exalted, gives each person what is best for them, even if this is not obvious to people. Chapter 42 Ash Shuraa, verse 27:

"And if Allāh had extended [excessively] provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the earth. But He sends [it] down in an amount which He wills. Indeed He is, of His servants, Aware and Seeing."

And 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."

When a person behaves as if they know better than Allah, the Exalted, and therefore asks for specific worldly things not recommended by Islamic teachings, it only leads to trouble in both worlds. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verses 75-77:

"And among them are those who made a covenant with Allāh, [saying], "If He should give us from His bounty, we will surely spend in charity, and we will surely be among the righteous." But when He gave them from His bounty, they were stingy with it and turned away while they refused. So He penalized them with hypocrisy in their hearts until the Day they will meet Him - because they failed Allāh in what they promised Him and because they [habitually] used to lie."

And chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 200:

"...And among the people is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he will have in the Hereafter no share."

When a Muslim accepts their lack of foresight and knowledge and avoids asking for specific worldly things and instead trusts Allah, the Exalted, to give them what is best, it leads to obtaining what is best for them in both worlds. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 201:

"But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

Blessing or Curse

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Many Muslims use classic excuses in order to avoid learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, a parent will use their preoccupation with raising their child as an excuse to avoid learning and acting on Islamic knowledge. Anything which prevents one from fulfilling their purpose of creation, which is to use their blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is nothing but a punishment and a curse for them.

Firstly, a Muslim must be honest with themselves, as lying to oneself only hinders them from peace of mind and body in both worlds. If a Muslim has time to watch films and television shows, then they have time to learn and act on Islamic knowledge.

Secondly, a Muslim must understand that every worldly thing they have been granted only becomes a blessing when they use it in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This involves learning and acting on Islamic knowledge and fulfilling their duties and responsibilities towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation. If these worldly things, such as a spouse, children or a career, prevents one from learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, then they should know that these worldly things have only become a curse and punishment for them, as a direct consequence of their laziness and bad attitude.

One should dedicate whatever time they have to learning and acting on Islamic knowledge. Allah, the Exalted, does not expect Muslims to become scholars, but they must dedicate some time, whatever time they can find to learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, so that they can gradually improve their behaviour towards Allah, the Exalted, and the creation, which involves using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted.

Comparing to Others

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to avoid falling into a mentality which prevents one from sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This mentality involves comparing oneself to other people who appear worse than them in obeying Allah, the Exalted. This mentality only encourages one to belittle their own disobedience to Allah, the Exalted, as they observe the greater sins of others. This attitude also encourages laziness, as one will not urge themselves to improve their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, and their behaviour towards the creation, when they observe the sins of others. They will believe they are doing a good job, even though they are barely fulfilling the basic duties of Islam towards Allah, the Exalted, and people, as they constantly observe people who appear worse than them. One must never forget that one's judgement on the Day of Judgement will not be based on a comparison with other people. The benchmark for all people on the Day of Judgement is the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Meaning, the actions of each person will be compared to these sources of guidance, not the actions of other people. So a thief will not escape punishment on Judgement Day by claiming they never killed anyone, just like the many killers who will be present on the Day of Judgement. As the benchmark on Judgement Day is the two sources of guidance, similarly, the benchmark in this world is also these two sources of guidance. A Muslim must therefore avoid the foolish attitude of comparing themselves to people who appear worse than them and instead compare their actions to the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to correct themselves if they desire peace and success in both worlds, as comparing oneself to worse people may make them feel better but it will only lead to difficulties in this

world and a difficult accountability and a potential punishment in the hereafter. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Correct Attitude

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. A common attitude which is often found amongst non-Muslims has become apparent in Muslims also. Those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement often claim that even if it was real, they would make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on that Day. Unfortunately, this attitude has also affected many Muslims who turn away from practically preparing for the Day of Judgement, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and simply claim that they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day. The issue with believing that this attitude will lead to success on Judgement Day is that one adopts an incredibly disrespectful and rude belief about Allah, the Exalted. They begin to believe that Allah, the Exalted, will treat the one who ignored Him and followed their desires equally to the doer of good, the one who used the blessings they were granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. If a worldly judge behaved in this manner they would be highly criticised and even dismissed from their post, as it completely contradicts justice. As Allah, the Exalted, is the All Just, how can a Muslim believe and attribute such a negative attitude to Him? Allah, the Exalted, extending His infinite mercy to the creation is one thing but allowing those who persisted in disobedience and harming others to escape the consequences of their actions is simply unjust, something Allah, the Exalted, would not do.

In addition, if Allah, the Exalted, was going to forgive everyone, irrespective of the deeds they committed, then it makes life in this world pointless, as the purpose of this world is to differentiate between those who did good and those who did not. Creating pointless things directly challenges the infinite Dignity, Majesty and Wisdom of Allah, the

Exalted. How can someone who believes in Him then attribute such a silly thing to Him?

To conclude, a Muslim must never be fooled by the false belief that they will make peace with Allah, the Exalted, on Judgement Day. The place of actions is this world, whereas Judgement Day is only the place of consequences. Therefore, one must prepare for these consequences by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 30 Ar Rum, verse 57:

"So that Day, their excuse will not benefit those who wronged, nor will they be asked to appease [Allāh]."

And chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 21:

"Or do those who commit evils think We will make them like those who have believed and done righteous deeds - [make them] equal in their life and their death? Evil is that which they judge [i.e., assume]."

Correcting Focus

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the prevailing attitudes which has affected many Muslims today is believing that just because something is not defined as a sin by Islam, one can indulge in it.

First of all, one should remember that vain things, which are not classified as a good deed or a sin, often lead to sins. For example, vain speech often leads to lying, backbiting and gossiping.

In addition, just because something is not a sin does not mean one is invited to indulge in it. For example, eating small amounts of sugary foods is not labeled as unhealthy by doctors but this does not mean one is therefore invited to eat many sugary foods. Just like eating a lot of sugary foods can lead to problems, so can indulging in vain actions.

A Muslim must understand that persisting on vain things only distracts them from preparing adequately for the hereafter, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

In addition, a Muslim has more important things to do than indulge in vain activities. This is similar to a student who has an important exam

coming up yet chooses to play video games instead of studying. Even though the student is not committing a sin by playing video games, any sensible person will still object to their actions by arguing that the student has more important things to do, such as a revising for their important exam. Similarly, a Muslim has more important things to do than indulge in vain activities, such as preparing for their ultimate and final exam: their accountability on Judgement Day.

If a Muslim claims they fulfil the basic obligatory duties, such as the five daily obligatory prayers, even then, they must understand that every blessing and moment they have been granted which they did not utilise in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, will be a source of regret, stress and danger for them on Judgement Day. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned that if a person spent their entire long life in worship and obedience to Allah, the Exalted, they will still feel they did not do enough good when they reach the Day of Judgement. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Musnad Ahmad, number 17649.

If this is the case of a person who spent a long life obeying Allah, the Exalted, what will be the state of the Muslim who spent barely an hour of a day fulfilling the basic obligatory duties of Islam?

Islam does not prohibit dedicating one's resources to vain things but it does teach one to minimise these activities so that one does not become excessive, wasteful or extravagant. These things can be considered sinful and they all prevent a Muslim from using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, which in turn,

prevents them from finding peace and success in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

The right attitude is even more important to adopt as one ages, as they are that much closer to their death and their Final Judgement.

To conclude, minimising indulging in vain things is important, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, that a Muslim cannot become pious until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful.

Earn for Yourself

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Some Muslims have adopted a lazy attitude which is important to avoid. It is to refrain from striving in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and instead rely on others to supplicate on their behalf while they are alive and after they have died. This was not the attitude of those who understood Islam better than anyone else; the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. None of them resorted to laziness by asking the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to supplicate on their behalf. They instead strove hard in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and then requested the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to supplicate on their behalf. If supplication from a righteous elder was only enough, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, would not have sacrificed everything they were granted for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 9 At Tawbah, verse 99:

"But among the bedouins are some who believe in Allāh and the Last Day and consider what they spend as means of nearness to Allāh and of [obtaining] invocations of the Messenger. Unquestionably, it is a means of nearness for them. Allāh will admit them to His mercy. Indeed, Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful."

Even if one asks others, who appear pious to supplicate on their behalf, it will not benefit them until they strive to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, first. Adopting this lazy attitude mocks the concept of

supplication and mocking any aspect of Islam will not lead to a good outcome.

Just like a sane person does not expect to achieve worldly success through someone's supplication, such as passing an exam, without putting in practical effort, neither will they achieve religious blessings, such as peace of mind and body in both worlds, without striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even if everyone supplicates on their behalf to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 39:

"And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives."

Escaping Temptations & Tribulations

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In this time of open tribulations which Muslims are constantly bombarded with, some often state that the key to escaping them is to move away, such as moving to an Islamic nation, or to self-isolate oneself and their family, such as homeschooling. Even though these possible solutions are not bad, as they can help to a certain degree in escaping the temptations and tribulations of this world, but they are not the main solution. The issue with adopting an escape type mentality is that unless one moves into an isolated cave with their family and never emerges, it is not possible to constantly escape these temptations and tribulations. Sooner or later, a Muslim will have to face them in some shape or form. For example, there is no doubt that single gender schools do better in their results than mix schools, yet a day will certainly come when a student will encounter the opposite gender during their life. In this day and age of social media, one does not even need to leave their bedroom in order to fall into evil temptations and tribulations. Even if a family moves to an Islamic country, which seems impossible to find nowadays, none the less, they will still face these tribulations and temptations, as every country and city has their own kind. Does the pilgrim and traveler not see the injustice and unfairness that even occurs in Mecca and Medina?

It is often observed that when Muslims who come from more traditional countries travel to the west, they often fall deeper into sinful temptations and tribulations than the Muslims who were born and raised in the west. This is because when these foreign Muslims, who have lived a more restricted and traditional life, enter the west, the tribulations and temptations hit them like a tidal wave and as a result they slip up more easily than those who are born and raised amongst these tribulations and temptations. Therefore, adopting the escape type mentality is simply not practical in this day and age.

The main key to successfully overcoming these tribulations and temptations, as indicated by Islam, is adopting strong faith through learning and acting on Islamic knowledge and teaching this attitude to the next generation. Strong faith will ensure a Muslim remains firm in the face of all temptations and tribulations, irrespective of where they are, by continuing to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

This education will teach the young Muslims the wisdoms behind the prohibitions found in Islam. Adopting an escape type mentality will not provide this education, it will only provide some restriction from accessing these temptations and tribulations. Similar to a criminal who is temporarily restricted in prison. The moment the criminal is released, they will return to their life of crime until they are educated against it. Similarly, a young Muslim will have natural desires which are fueled by these worldly temptations and tribulations, and without this education they will most likely fail, when they are tested.

When a person is simply told of a prohibition without the wisdoms behind it, they are less likely to adhere to the prohibition and are more likely to be tricked into it. Whereas, the one who is aware of the wisdoms behind the prohibition is more likely to adhere to it. For example, the one who has the knowledge of the negative aspects of alcohol, such as the damage down to one's physical and mental health, its strong connection with crimes, arguments, fights and assaults, its financial effect on people and the other negative consequences of becoming an addict, such as destroying one's relationships and life, is more likely to stay away from it

than the one who knows the prohibition but does not know the wisdoms behind it.

To conclude, a Muslim should take practical steps so that they and their family avoid tribulations and evil temptations but they should know that the main step to achieve this is education; learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, so that one understands the wisdoms behind avoiding the prohibitions of Islam and so that they strengthen their faith. This will ensure they continue to obey Allah, the Exalted, under all circumstances, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verses 39-40:

"[Iblees] said, "My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them [i.e., mankind] on earth, and I will mislead them all. Except, among them, Your sincere servants.""

Evaluating Correctly

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the main reasons people struggle to obtain peace of mind and body in this world is due to incorrectly evaluating the value of worldly things, as their definition of good and bad, success and failure is incorrect. A business owner will become bankrupt if they cannot correctly evaluate the value of the merchandise they buy and sell. Similarly, the person who incorrectly evaluates the value of worldly things will misplace their efforts and prioritize things incorrectly, thereby causing themselves stress and anxiety in both worlds. Most people define success and failure, good and bad, based on definitions given by culture, fashion and social media and as a result they incorrectly determine the value of things. For example, according to these standards, having many properties is a good thing whereas having a few worldly possessions is a bad thing, even though this is not true at all. Those who possess many worldly things, such as properties, are often the most stressed and anxiety ridden people in the world. A classic example of this is Pharaoh, one of the richest and most influential men to ever exist, as opposed to the one who did not possess many worldly things: the Holy Prophet Musa, peace be upon him. It does not take a genius to figure out who was granted peace of mind and body in both worlds.

Incorrectly evaluating things causes one to allow culture, fashion and social media to drive their life. If one allows the wrong person in the driver seat of their car, they will not take them to the correct destination: peace of mind and body in both worlds. As a result, a Muslim places their faith in the backseat or even in the boot of the car, and only turns to it during their few acts of worship and rituals.

But if one desires peace of mind and body in both worlds, they must choose the correct driver so that they reach the correct destination: peace of mind and body in both worlds. The correct driver is Islam. When one lives by the definitions of success and failure, good and bad, given by Islam, they will correctly evaluate the real value of worldly things and therefore place their efforts in the correct place and use the resources they have been granted correctly, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, the Exalted, the Controller of hearts, which is the abode of peace, will then grant them peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Facing Difficulties

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the false notions which some have accepted is that they expect not to face difficulties in this world if they obey Allah, the Exalted. First of all, the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, goes beyond the few obligatory duties, such as the five daily obligatory prayers, and involves using all the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The one who behaves in this manner will be granted peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

And chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

But this does not mean one will not face tests in the form of difficulties. This is inevitable, as this is the very purpose of living in this world. Chapter 67 Al Mulk, verse 2:

"[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is better in deed..."

But the one who sincerely obeys Allah, the Exalted, will be granted peace of mind and body, even when they face difficulties. They will be granted the strength to deal with the difficulty so that they overcome it both mentally and physically, while maintaining obedience to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. This is similar to a patient who has been anaesthetized so that they do not feel the pain of a medical procedure.

On the other hand, the one who does not obey Allah, the Exalted, will also face difficulties. But in their case, they will not be granted peace of mind or body during it. They will not have the mental or physical strength to overcome it and as a result they will continue to disobey Allah, the Exalted, without connecting their disobedience to their difficulties. Instead, they will wrongfully blame the cause of their difficulties on things and people, such as their relatives and friends. This will cause them further problems, as they will attempt to remove these things from their lives. They will attempt to escape their difficulties through worldly things, such as entertainment, drugs and alcohol. But all these things will only increase their anxiety, stress and depression. They will thus continue to live a dark and constricted life, even if they have the world at their feet. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life..."

This outcome is quite evident when one observes the news and social media.

To conclude, each person will face tests and difficulties but through their choice and behaviour, they will either obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds or obtain a difficult and dark life in both worlds.

Facing the End

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Devil tries to misguide people in countless different ways. Knowing about his traps can aid a person to avoid them. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 6:

"Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze."

One of his biggest aims is to put one off from remembering their death, grave and their Final Judgement. He knows remembering death encourages one to prepare for it, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, encouraged Muslims to often remember death, as it is the destroyer of pleasures. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4258. Therefore, the Devil tries to prevent one from remembering death by reminding them of their never-ending worldly preoccupations so that they fail to prepare for it adequately.

If one happens to remember their death, then he diverts them to thinking about it from the perspective of other people. Meaning, a person will think about the effects of their death on other people, such as their children. Even though worrying about the future of one's children is not a

bad thing, nonetheless, a Muslim should never forget that the Provider and Sustainer of their children is none other than Allah, the Exalted. He simply uses the parent for this process and He can easily replace the parent with some other means. Secondly, thinking about death from other people's perspective, diverts a person's attention from preparing for their death. Instead, they will be encouraged to work harder in this world in order to obtain and hoard more wealth and properties for their dependents, out of fear of leaving them poor and needy, if they happen to die. This again distracts them from practically preparing for their own death. One must note, there is a big difference between reasonably saving wealth for one's children and going overboard, which most Muslims do.

One must push past these distractions set up by the Devil and instead truly reflect on their death from their own point of view, so that they practically prepare for it, their lonely and dark grave, where all their relatives, friends and worldly possessions will abandon them, and for their Final Judgement, when they will face the consequences of their actions, alone. Chapter 80 Abasa, verses 34-37:

"On the Day a man will flee from his brother. And his mother and his father. And his wife and his children. For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him."

Perhaps through this reflection one will avoid this particular trap of the Devil and practically prepare for these inevitable stages of existence.

Facing the Truth

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is commonly observed around the world how many people, such as politicians, criticize Islam and its different aspects in order to put off Muslims from acting on it and non-Muslims from accepting it. The truth of the matter is that their problem is not with Islam or a part of it, such as the dress code of women and men. Their issue with Islam is the fact that it is not merely a set of rituals and practices but a complete code of life which affects every aspect of one's life, such as their personal, social, financial, family and work life. But as these people desire to live according to their desires, the life of animals, and not a higher moral code of conduct, it pains them to observe Muslims adhering to the code of conduct set by Islam, as the practicing Muslims make them look like nothing except animals, that only live to fulfil their desires. In order to mask their animalistic behaviour, they attempt to punch holes into the code of conduct Islam advocates, even though anyone with a little common sense sees straight through their poor attempt, as Islam is a logical, flawless and upright way of life. For example, these people often criticise the dress code Islam commands women to adhere to. Even though countless women, especially those living in the west, desire to dress according to the standard set by Islam out of their own free will, yet these people insist they must band Islamic dress code, as it oppresses women. Anyone with common sense can clearly see that preventing a Muslim woman who desires to dress according to Islamic teachings is oppression in itself. So they seek to rescue an oppressed person by oppressing them further. These people also claim these women have been brainwashed, which is highly insulting, as they are claiming women are weak minded. Finally, it is strange how these people have an issue with the Islamic dress code yet they have no problem or objection to any other dress code. There is no institution, major business or organisation that does not have a dress code, such as educational institutions, hospitals, the army, the police force, the retail sector, businesses and even the political buildings, which these politicians who criticise Islam

work at. They never criticize the dress code of all these places, which encompasses the majority of the world. This makes it clear that they only target Islam and its different aspects in order to shield themselves from being labelled animals, as they only wish to fulfill their own desires and not live by a superior code of conduct.

A Muslim must never be fooled by people like this. They should instead strengthen their faith through learning and acting on the teachings of Islam so that they remain firm on sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, in the face of foolish criticism. Obedience involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Following Desires

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Some Muslims incorrectly believe that as long as something is lawful, one can indulge in it as much as they please. This attitude contradicts Islamic teachings, as something being lawful does not mean one should indulge in it. In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2451, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, advised that a Muslim cannot become pious until they avoid something which is not harmful to their religion out of caution that it will lead to something which is harmful. In addition, the following verse makes it clear that pursuing one's desires, even lawful ones, can lead to misguidance. Chapter 38 Saad, verse 26:

"...and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allāh. Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allāh will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account."

This verse outlines the reason why indulging in desires, including lawful ones, leads to misguidance. When one excessively pursues their worldly lawful desires it will distract them from practically preparing for the Day of Judgement. This preparation involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Pursuing one's desires will always encourage them to use their blessings incorrectly, which in turn leads to trouble in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten."

One must therefore be kind to themselves and minimise pursuing their lawful desires and instead concentrate on using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. As Allah, the Exalted, controls one's spiritual heart, the abode of peace, and controls one's judgement in the hereafter, He will ensure they obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Gaining Rest

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is commonly understood that a person will receive in this world according to their efforts. For example, the student who does not study so hard might pass their exams, yet they will probably not obtain as much worldly success, like a good job, as the student who studied harder and therefore obtained a better grade. Similarly, Allah, the Exalted, rewards people according to their efforts, not just their verbal declaration of faith and good intention. For example, when describing those who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter, the first blessing mentioned in the following verse is not high ranks in Paradise or huge palaces, it is instead rest. Chapter 56 Al Waqi'ah, verses 88-89:

"And if he was of those brought near [to Allāh]. Then [for him is] rest and bounty and a garden of pleasure."

Those who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, are granted rest before anything else because they tired themselves in His obedience in this world. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Therefore, just like one typically receives worldly success according to their efforts in this world, similarly they will receive spiritual success in

this world and in the next according to their efforts and intentions. Therefore, each Muslim must decide how much spiritual success they desire to obtain in this world and in the next and strive in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, accordingly.

Giving Value to Things

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In order to correctly evaluate the worth of things, one must never accept the views of social media, fashion and culture, as they often get this wrong. For example, social media and culture teaches that having lots of wealth is valuable. Whereas, the truth is that having excess wealth only leads to stress, especially when it is misused.

An excellent way of judging the value of things, which, in most cases, correlates with the teachings of Islam, is by observing whether something endures or not. All things which have real value, such as peace of mind and good deeds, endure. For example, a person who performed a righteous deed, such as the Holy Pilgrimage years earlier will still feel the peace of mind it brings whenever they think about it. Peace of mind granted through the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, is something which also endures, irrespective of the situation one faces. Whereas, the things which have little real value never endure, such as fun and entertainment. For example, when one finishes watching a movie, they begin looking for the next thing to watch, as the fun they experienced with the movie vanished when it finished. Going on leisurely holidays is the same. When one returns from holiday, they often begin planning the next one, as the fun they experienced on holiday vanished the moment they returned home. Having friends is another classic example. Many people sacrifice much for the sake of friendship even though those friendships which are rooted in the world often fade away with the passing of time. Best friends become strangers.

Observing things according to whether they endure or not is therefore an excellent way to judge what has real value and what does not. From this one can learn where they should dedicate their efforts and resources. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 96:

"Whatever you have will end, but what Allāh has is lasting..."

Importance of Worldly Education

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Striving to gain worldly or religious knowledge which will aid one to obey Allah, the Exalted, is praiseworthy in Islam. Unfortunately, many communities within Muslims fail to encourage their children, especially their daughters, towards education, as they claim they will simply get married, have children and live as house wives/mums. Even though, there is no harm in a woman choosing to be a house mum/wife if she desires to be one, none the less there are many benefits of a worldly education which must not be overlooked. A worldly education is important as it helps to shape and mould one's character. Through it, one learns how the world works and how to deal with different situations and types of people. All of these things will aid a Muslim woman to deal with the different situations she is bound to face in life.

In addition, a worldly education which leads to a good career allows a Muslim woman to be more selective when choosing a spouse. Whereas, an uneducated woman will always have less freedom of choice. Being more selective will allow a Muslim woman to choose a suitable spouse, according to the teachings of Islam, who will fulfill her rights.

Having a worldly education also causes others to respect her more, such as her husband. The one who is respected more is bound to be treated better by others.

Finally, the educated Muslim woman who has a career becomes financially independent of all others, such as her husband. This will cause others to respect her more and it will reduce the chances of her being wronged by her husband, as a major cause of a wife being mistreated by her husband is when he knows she is completely dependent on him. In many cases, if the abuse is too much, an uneducated woman is much less likely to walk away from her abusive husband as she is completely dependent on him. She may well be turned away by her parents also, as they cannot afford to take care of her and her children. This often occurs within the Muslim community. Whereas, if the Muslim woman was educated, she is in the right financial position to leave her husband and provide for herself and her children through her own career. This does not mean she should leave her husband over petty issues, as this is childish and criticised by Islam. But it means that a worldly education gives a woman financial freedom, something which is vital when facing marriage difficulties, such as divorce.

These are just some reasons why it is vital for Muslims to gain a worldly education for themselves and encourage the next generation to do the same.

Loyalty

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. In the following verse of the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, criticizes a mentality which the past nations adopted, which has now been adopted by the Muslim nation. Chapter 23 Al Mu'minun, verse 53:

"But they [the people] divided their religion among them into portions [sects] - each faction, in what it has, rejoicing."

If one observes the Muslim nation, they will see this attitude amongst countless schools of thought and sects. Each firmly believes they are on the side of the Angels and in many cases, they criticise and condemn the other sects and schools of thought. They are completely satisfied with their interpretations and understanding of Islam without any signs of doubts in their creed. It is strange to observe so many different schools of thought yet all of them are completely sure they alone are on the right path.

One of the main reasons this attitude is adopted by people is due to misplaced loyalty. Instead of following in the footsteps of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, whose loyalty was to none other than Allah, the Exalted, and His Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the people after them placed their loyalty to their school of thought and their elders above all else. Even if they felt like an Islamic concept taken from another school of thought

seemed more accurate, they still rejected it and instead followed the interpretation put forward by their own school of thought, simply out of blind loyalty. As people are not perfect, their interpretation of Islamic teachings will never be completely perfect. Therefore, no school of thought, which relies on the interpretations given by their elders, can be completely perfect. Someone who is loyal to Allah, the Exalted, and His Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, will recognize this truth and will therefore accept the best interpretation of Islamic teachings from any school of thought. Muslims must avoid blind loyalty and blind following as it can lead to misguidance and as it contradicts the way of Islam. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 108:

"Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allāh with insight, I and those who follow me..."

Instead, one must maintain their loyalty to Allah, the Exalted, and His Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by accepting and acting on the best interpretations of Islamic knowledge, irrespective of who it comes from.

Marriage Issues

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is no secret that the rate of marriage issues and divorce amongst Muslims has exponentially increased over the years. There are many factors for this, some of which will be briefly discussed.

One of the main reasons Muslims face marriage issues and divorce is a direct consequence of choosing a spouse based on worldly reasons, such as beauty/love, wealth and because of their lineage, such as one's relatives. None of these things determine a good spouse. In fact the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5090, that the one who marries for these reasons will be a loser. He advised Muslims to choose a spouse based on the quality of their faith, meaning, their piety. This means how much they sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, refrain from His prohibitions and face destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The one who bases their choice on this advice will be supported by Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds, even if they misjudge the person they marry. The reason why piety is important is that it ensures that one will not wrong their spouse, even when angry, as they fear the consequences of facing Allah, the Exalted, with this sin. In addition, piety encourages one to fulfill the rights of people, such as one's spouse.

Furthermore, another major reason Muslims face marriage difficulties and divorce is because of ignorance. When one does not know the rights they are owed by their spouse or the rights they owe their spouse, they will demand things which their spouse does not owe them. These

demands often lead to arguments and divorce. Therefore, before getting married, a Muslim must learn the rights they are owed and the rights they owe their spouse in order to reduce the chance of arguments.

Finally, with the passing of time, the stigma associated with divorce has decreased, which is another reason why the divorce rate has increased over time, especially amongst Muslims. Even though getting divorced is lawful, one should not allow this reduction in the stigma associated with divorce to treat marriage like a toy, which can be used and discarded over the pettiest of reasons. This attitude only turns the sacred bond of marriage into a joke. An attitude a Muslim will not get away with in this world or the next. One should try their best to make their marriage work according to the teachings of Islam and only resort to divorce in extreme cases or when there is no chance of reconciliation.

Perfect Balance

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. People often struggle to balance pursuing their happiness and pleasing people, such as their relatives. The issue with following social media, fashion and culture is that it will cause one to adopt an extremist attitude. They will either swing to one side whereby they pursue the pleasure of people, which is something advocated by many cultures. This will only cause one to behave like a headless chicken who rushes between serving different masters in order to please them. But as people are different, what pleases one person will upset another. So this person will never please everyone and therefore never obtain peace of mind or body themselves. Or they will swing to the other extreme side, whereby they stop caring about the rights of others and their feelings and instead only pursue their own desires, in an attempt to obtain peace of mind. They will refuse to listen to any constructive criticism, something which is required for the positive development of a person and a society. They will neglect their responsibilities in respect to others, which will only lead to further problems for them and the rest of society. In pursuing their desires, they will easily forget Allah, the Exalted, as they are too busy using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to themselves, as they no longer care about anything else. This will lead to a loss of peace of mind and body. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

The one who follows social media, fashion and culture will always swing from one extreme to another. The only way to achieve a balanced state of mind and body is to obey Allah, the Exalted, the Creator of the human mind and body. When one does this, they will prioritise pleasing Him above all else. As a result, they will not rush from person to person seeking to please them. Instead, they will fulfil the rights of others according to the teachings of Islam, as this is what Allah, the Exalted, has commanded, but they will not expect nor hope for any payback or gratitude from people. So whether people are pleased with them or not does not matter, as they aim to please Allah, the Exalted, in all their affairs. But as they obey Allah, the Exalted, they will not wrong others and instead fulfill their rights. They will accept any constructive criticism, as long as it runs in line with the teachings of Islam. This will lead to a positive improvement in their conduct towards Allah, the Exalted, and people. As they aim to please Allah, the Exalted, they will use their blessings in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This will lead to a balanced state of mind, which leads to peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Practicing Islam

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to avoid a false belief which has become quite prevalent, namely, believing in Islam without practicing it. This is an extremely foolish attitude as the very word Muslim means the one who has internally and practically submitted to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, one cannot be a Muslim that does not practice, as the condition of being a Muslim is practicing Islam. This does not mean that the one who does not practice Islam is a non-Muslim, even though many scholars would agree with this, as one's internal faith is between them and Allah, the Exalted. If He counts them as a Muslim, then they are one, even if others beg to differ. This discussion means that a Muslim must practice Islam in order to be a complete and correct Muslim. There are countless verses and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which clearly indicate that belief without practice has very little value. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2618, that the difference between belief and disbelief is abandoning the obligatory prayers. Allah, the Exalted, has connected obtaining Paradise with actions coupled with belief in countless verses of the Holy Quran. For example, chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 82:

"But they who believe and do righteous deeds - those are the companions of Paradise; they will abide therein eternally."

Allah, the Exalted, has also connected obtaining peace of mind for those who support their faith with actions. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

In some cases, He has clearly stated that Paradise is granted because of deeds, just to highlight the importance of actions coupled with faith. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 32:

"The ones whom the angels take in death, [being] good and pure; [the angels] will say, "Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do."

Faith is like a plant which is nourished with good deeds, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. If one does not practically perform good deeds, their plant of faith may well die, just like a plant dies when it does not receive nourishment. This is the greatest loss.

Therefore, it is important for people to give up wishful thinking, whereby they falsely assume internal belief is enough to gain peace and success in both worlds. The Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, have made it clear that

faith supported by good deeds is required to achieve this. The one who turns away from this will lose in both worlds, as Islam literally means practically submitting to Allah, the Exalted. This has been clearly stated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 99. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 85:

"If anyone seeks a religion other than [islam] complete devotion to God, it will not be accepted from him: he will be one of the losers in the Hereafter."

Satisfaction

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When people obtain any type of worldly success they feel a sense of satisfaction with the efforts they put into achieving that success. For example, a university student will often feel satisfied with the many hours of revision they endured when they obtain their degree. The greater the worldly goal, the greater the satisfaction one feels. Similarly, those who obtain Paradise in the hereafter will be satisfied with the efforts they put into obtaining it during their lives on Earth. In fact, this feeling of satisfaction is the first thing mentioned when the people of Paradise are described in chapter 88 Al Ghashiyah, verses 8-9:

"[Other] faces, that Day, will show pleasure. With their effort [they are] satisfied."

Therefore, each Muslim must reflect on how much satisfaction they desire to feel on Judgement Day and work accordingly. If one desires to feel this satisfaction, just like they look forward to feeling worldly satisfaction, they should strive to achieve it through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Second Chances

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There are many factors which prevent a Muslim from practically preparing for the Day of Judgement, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but only one of the more subtle factors will be discussed.

In the vast majority of cases in this world a person who fails a particular task or activity is given a second chance. In some cases, the second chance is direct, such as retaking a failed driving test, and in other cases the second chance is indirect, such as a divorcee getting married to someone else. The concept of second chances also applies in religious matters. For example, everyone experiences the sister of death: sleep, and most of these people are given another chance to sincerely obey Allah, the Exalted, when life is restored to them when they wake up. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 42:

"Allāh takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought."

This concept of second chances often becomes so engraved in the mind of a Muslim that subconsciously they begin to behave as if they will be

given a second chance on Judgment Day, if they fail to adequately prepare for it. This is a subtle delusion and trick of the Devil which a Muslim must be careful to avoid. It is so subtle that one can behave practically in this manner without realising it, simply because they are under the assumption that just like they always had second chances in this world, they will somehow be given it on the Day of Judgement also.

The best way to combat this subtle delusion is to strengthen one's faith. This is only achieved through learning and acting on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, so that one remains steadfast on practically preparing for the Day of Judgement at all times, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 31 Luqman, verse 33:

"...Indeed, the promise of Allāh is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allāh by the Deceiver [i.e., Satan]."

Seeing Clearly

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. One of the major things which prevents a Muslim from sincerely obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the passive and active criticism and ridicule they face from those who do not believe in Allah, the Exalted, or from the Muslims who possess weak faith. These two groups belittle the devotion and obedience of the devoted Muslims who choose to use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, instead of using them in ways pleasing to themselves. They overcome their desires and choose to follow the code of conduct set out by Islam, instead of living according to their desires. Those who fail to appreciate the value of obeying Allah, the Exalted, which involves peace of mind and body in both worlds, believe these devoted Muslims are insane and as a result of their attitude, they are losing out from enjoying the luxuries of the world. Their example is like two people who are presented with a meal which appears delicious. But only one of them, the one who possesses insight, realizes the food is poisoned. They warn the other person not to eat the poisoned food but as they are intoxicated with the love of worldly things, they ignore this advice and eat the food while believing the advisor is a fool for not enjoying the delicious food.

The one who fails to gain this insight will be put off from practically obeying Allah, the Exalted, when they are passively or actively criticized by others.

A Muslim must always remember that peace of mind and body in both worlds lies only in obeying. Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Whereas, disobeying Him, by misusing the blessings they have been granted, only leads to trouble in both worlds. This is quite evident when one observes those drowned in worldly desires and lusts. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

Secondly, A Muslim must strive to gain the insight which convinces them of this truth. This is obtained when one learns and acts on the teachings of Islam and when they observe the consequences of the choices made by others, such as how those who drown themselves in worldly luxuries often face anxiety, stress, depression and suicidal tendencies. This

insight will ensure one maintains their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, at all times. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 212:

"Beautified for those who disbelieve is the life of this world, and they ridicule those who believe. But those who fear Allāh are above them on the Day of Resurrection. And Allāh gives provision to whom He wills without account."

Success is Not Always Obvious

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Unlike worldly success, which is extremely fickle by nature, religious success is not always obvious to people. Worldly success is always connected to material gain, such as fame, fortune and authority, and is therefore obvious to people. But a Muslim must understand that real lasting success, which is connected to Islam, is not always obvious. In most cases, religious success involves peace of mind and body, something which is hard to observe. In addition, Allah, the Exalted, does not guarantee obvious worldly success to those who sincerely obey Him, as it is fickle in nature and does not lead to peace of mind and body. Obedience involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in the Holy and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, the following verses discuss the outcome of maintaining one's sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, during difficulties. None of the rewards are connected to worldly success. They are instead connected to spiritual success, which is often difficult to observe. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verses 155-157:

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient. Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allāh, and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided."

Therefore, a Muslim must not believe that obeying Allah, the Exalted, leads to worldly success, such as wealth and authority, as in most cases

the two are not connected. One should instead aim higher and prefer spiritual success, meaning, peace of mind, as it endures through every situation in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Tangible Benefits

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. A part of faith, which is a test in itself, is that when one obeys Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings He has granted them in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they are not guaranteed to receive tangible benefits, such as an obvious increase in wealth. The benefits associated with obeying Allah, the Exalted, are often more subtle and experienced in one's spiritual heart, such as obtaining peace of mind. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

The one who possesses weak faith often seeks tangible benefits from Allah, the Exalted, such as good health, a nice house and a good career. As Islam does not guarantee these things, the Devil often puts off people from faith entirely or from at least acting on their faith, as outlined earlier. This reality is a test which a Muslim must pass successfully by obtaining strong faith. This involves learning and acting on Islamic knowledge, so that one becomes sure of the countless benefits one obtains in both worlds through obeying Allah, the Exalted.

In addition, one should always use their common sense by understanding that real benefit is often not tangible, such as a positive change in one's mental health and wellbeing. A person who has the world at their feet will happily give it up for this intangible benefit. A Muslim must therefore not be fooled into seeking tangible benefits from Allah, the Exalted, as they have not been guaranteed. Doing so can even push one further away from His obedience, when one does not receive the tangible benefit they desired. This leads to a loss in both worlds. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

The Different Signs

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. The Holy Quran describes two types of signs which point out the truthfulness of Islam. One type of signs are the verses of the Holy Quran and the other types of signs are found within the creation. Every person is urged to reflect on both of these types of signs in order to deduce for themselves the truthful nature of Islam. For example, when one reflects on the multiple perfect systems within the universe, such as the perfect distance the Earth is from the Sun, the perfect density of the oceans, which allow ships to sail on them and sea life to thrive within them, the water cycle, and many more, they will deduce the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted. All of these signs, when recognized, strengthen one's faith in the different aspects of Islam, such as the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, the resurrection, etc.

Often, these signs within the universe are collaborated by science, which further strengthens one's belief in them. Even though Islam does not need to be proven through science, none the less, one can appreciate when this occurs.

For example, scientists have proven that when a star reaches the end of its life, it expands and becomes red. Interestingly, on Judgement Day, which is the end of the universe, the colour of the sky will appear reddish, which would occur if the Sun became red in colour. Chapter 55 Ar Rahman, verse 37:

"When the sky is torn apart and turns crimson, like red hide."

In addition, on Judgement Day the Sun will be brought within two miles of the creation. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2864. This movement of the Sun can occur when it expands in size, during the end of its life.

Scientists have also deduced that the universe is constantly expanding. One can imagine that when an object continues to be stretched and eventually reaches its breaking point, the object will be torn apart and whatever is within it will be scattered in different directions. This is how the end of the universe has been described in the Holy Quran. Chapter 82 Al Infitar, verses 1-2:

"When the sky will be cleft asunder. And when the stars have fallen and scattered."

It is amazing how science has agreed on the teachings of Islam which was revealed over 1400 years ago.

A Muslim must pay attention to both types of signs so that they strengthen their faith. This will ensure they remain firm on the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, as outlined in

the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This leads to peace of mind and body in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

Ignoring these signs only leads to weak faith and misusing the blessings one has been granted. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 105:

"How many a sign there are in the heavens and the Earth, which they pass by and they are heedless to them."

This leads to difficulties in both worlds. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

The Right Path of Peace

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. There are three paths a person can choose from in this world. Two of these paths lead to stress and difficulties in both worlds whereas, the third path leads to peace of mind and body in both worlds. As Allah, the Exalted, alone controls the spiritual heart, the abode of peace of mind, He alone controls one's emotions, irrespective of what worldly things they may possess, such as fame and fortune. Chapter 53 An Najm, verse 43:

"And that it is He who makes [one] laugh and weep."

One of the three paths is when one disobeys Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He has granted them in sinful ways. As they have directly opposed and contradicted the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be him, it will lead to mental problems and difficulties in both worlds.

The second path involves using the blessings one has been granted in vain ways. Even though behaving in such a manner is not sinful, none the less, as they have diverged away from the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will not find peace of mind or body, as they did not fulfil the condition of obtaining it. This involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

Therefore, neither of these first two paths lead to peace of mind or body.
Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

The final path involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. As this path runs in line with the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, one will obtain peace of mind and body in both worlds, as they fulfilled the condition of obtaining it. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."

They will still face difficulties and tests but as they obey Allah, the Exalted, they will overcome them and obtain an abundant reward. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 2:

“...And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out.”

The three paths are clear. It is now left to each person to decide which path they desire to take.

Using Opportunities

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. If one observes people, they will clearly see that peace of mind and success do not lie with fame, fortune, authority, family, friends or one's career. This is obvious, as the people who possess the most of these things face more emotional and mental issues than anyone else, such as anxiety, depression, stress and suicidal tendencies and are the most addicted to drugs and alcohol. As Allah, the Exalted, alone, controls the hearts of people, which is the station of peace of mind, He alone decides who obtains peace of mind. The only condition for obtaining it is sincerely obeying Him, by using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life..."

Whereas, the person who turns away from this obedience will be prevented from obtaining peace of mind and success in both worlds,

even if they have the world at their feet. Chapter 20 Taha, verses 124-126:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed [i.e., difficult] life, and We will gather [i.e., raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allāh] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot [i.e., disregarded] them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten.""

But the point of this discussion is to understand something further. As peace of mind and success are not at all connected to worldly things, such as wealth, it does not mean one should abandon this material world and the opportunities they have been granted by Allah, the Exalted, such as the opportunity to educate oneself. Islam is a religion of balance and balance is best even in this case. A Muslim should use the lawful opportunities granted to them without them being prevented from using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. For example, one should not abandon education and pursuing a good and lawful job just because peace and success does not lie with them. One must understand that worldly success in itself is not bad, it becomes bad or good depending on how it is used. Therefore, one should use the good and lawful worldly opportunities they have been granted in order to obtain worldly success so that they can increase the amount of good deeds they perform and in order to spread goodness within society. For example, the one who obtains a good job, such as becoming a doctor, should use their salary and social influence in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. They can reduce the amount they work, as their high salary covers their expenses and financial responsibilities easily, so that they can dedicate more time to learning and acting on Islamic knowledge and dedicate more time to taking part in beneficial projects. All of these things will increase one's sincere

obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in the form of doing good deeds and spreading goodness in society. All of these things are difficult or impossible to do when one does not obtain the worldly success someone with a good job obtains. This is the reason why many of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not refuse the good worldly opportunities that were offered to them, such as being a governor of a city. They completely utilised this worldly success in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and therefore increased their peace of mind and success in both worlds.

To conclude, a Muslim must understand that peace of mind and success in both worlds only lie in the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Him. They should use the good worldly opportunities granted to them while maintaining this obedience in order to increase their peace and success in both worlds and they should not turn away from worldly success, unless they truly believe they will not be able to maintain their sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted.

Unlawful Relationships

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Allah, the Exalted, encourages marriage and forbids illegal relationships. When a couple are not truly devoted to each other, like a married couple, then any real difficulties they face will lead to more emotional stress for the couple, as they fail to support each other correctly. Coming in and out of multiple relationships over one's life undoubtedly has a detrimental affect on their mental health. It is no surprise that those who separate from their boyfriends/girlfriends often end up in counselling. They end up suffering from mental disorders, such as depression, more than those who avoid these relationships. In casual relationships, the couple are often not on the same wavelength. Meaning, one of the two always takes the relationship more seriously, such as desiring to settle down with their boyfriend/girlfriend, whereas the other does not feel the same. When this difference in attitude eventually boils to the surface it often leads to long standing emotional trauma to the one who took the relationship more seriously. Whereas, a married couple from the very first step are on the same wavelength, in respect to their long-term commitment to one another. A married couple are devoted to each other in every situation, whether they face situations which are planned or unplanned, such as having children. This attitude is very rarely found amongst normal couples. Having a relationship with another also fools a person into believing they completely know their partner and so if they do get married they often complain about their spouse changing after marriage. In most cases, they did not change. The things that changed were the responsibilities and pressures of their relationship. This issue often leads to marriage issues for those couples who were in a relationship prior to their marriage. Even if they live together prior to marriage, even then the same issue will occur. In addition, it is no secret that whenever one faces trouble with their boyfriend/girlfriend how severely it affects every other aspect of their life. For example, many young people drop out of college/universities simply because they cannot face seeing their ex-partner there every day. As marriage is a deep connection and

commitment between two people, they are less likely to breakup over the same petty issues normal couples breakup over.

In addition, any children that are born unintentionally from the relationship will put further stress on their relationship, which often results in them splitting up, as they do not desire to share the responsibility of raising a child. This creates a broken home for the child to grow up in where they do not have the support and supervision of both parents, which often leads to trouble for everyone. It is a clear fact that the majority of youth involved in crimes and gangs and those children who are groomed by sexual predators, come from broken families. Raising a child correctly when one desires a child is extremely hard, then can one imagine the emotional stress of raising a child correctly when the parent did not desire to have the child in the first place? This negatively effects the upbringing of the child and often leads to the problems mentioned earlier. This stress often leads to the single parent giving up the child for fostering or adoption, which in the majority of cases, has a detrimental negative and long term impact on the child, some of which were mentioned earlier. This further increases the chances of the child becoming misguided.

Allah, the Exalted, removed these numerous branch problems by addressing the root problem meaning, forbidding illegal relationships and encouraging marriage, whereby a couple sincerely devote themselves to each other and their children.

By addressing the concept of marriage, divorce and children in the Holy Quran, Allah, the Exalted, has given the key to a successful society. When the members of the family, whether together or divorced, fulfill

each other's rights and create a stable and happy home for the children it causes a positive ripple effect throughout society. Similarly, when a family is unhappy and fail to fulfil each other's rights then this causes a negative ripple effect to spread throughout society.

Many thinkers have come and gone which have addressed the issues people and society face but as these solutions target branch issues the benefit of these solutions are minimal. Whereas, Allah, the Exalted, through this method of addressing root issues, which affect an individual and the society, has clarified all things so that people can achieve success in both worlds. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 89:

“...And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy...”

Obtaining Peace

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Throughout the divine scriptures there are many examples which indicate that a person shall be treated according to how they act. For example, in one verse of the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, declares that He will remember the person who remembers Him. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 152.

“So remember Me; I will remember you.”

Another example is found in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 40:

“...fulfill My covenant [upon you] that I will fulfill your covenant [from Me]...”

Finally, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1924, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that whoever shows mercy to others will be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted.

It is quite obvious that people strive in this material world as they desire peace of mind and contentment. In light of the earlier discussion, peace in one's life is often achieved when a person allows others to live in peace. If one reflects on their own life they will realise that people can be split into two categories: those who mind their business and allow others to live in peace and those who do not. It does not take a genius to figure out that those who let others live in peace are the ones who gain peace. Whereas, members of the other group never find peace irrespective of how many worldly blessings they may possess. This is one of the reasons why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3976, that a Muslim cannot perfect their Islam until they avoid things which do not concern them. Those who ignore this advice and busy themselves with interfering with other people are the ones who never find peace. As they deprive others of peace in turn Allah, the Exalted, deprives them of it.

Therefore, a large step towards achieving peace of mind is to let others live in peace. It is important to note, this does not mean one should abandon commanding good and forbidding evil as this is an important duty. But it means that those things which are not sinful should be left alone as constantly chiding others on issues which are not unlawful only leads to enmity and the loss of peace in peoples' lives. There was a day and age when people loved being advised by others on all lawful and unlawful matters even if this meant they were being chided as they desired to reform themselves for the better. But that day has long passed. Nowadays, most people dislike being chided over the unlawful let alone those things which are lawful yet undesirable. So it is best to avoid this attitude if one desires to gain a bit of peace in their life.

To conclude, the one who lets others live in peace shall be granted peace by Allah, the Exalted.

The Help of Allah (SWT)

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the verse of the Holy Quran found in chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

This verse means that if one aids Islam then Allah, the Exalted, will help them in both worlds. It is strange how countless people desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet do not fulfil the first part of this verse through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The excuse most people give is that they do not have time to perform righteous deeds. They desire the help of Allah, the Exalted, yet will not make time to do the things which please Him. Does this make sense? Those who do not fulfil the obligatory duties and then expect the aid of Allah, the Exalted, in their moment of need are quite foolish. And those who do fulfil the obligatory duties yet refuse to go beyond them will find that the aid they receive is limited. How one behaves is how they are treated. The more time and energy dedicated to Allah, the Exalted, the more support they will receive. It really is that simple.

A Muslim needs to understand that the majority of the obligatory duties, such as the five daily prayers, only takes a small amount of time in one's day. A Muslim cannot expect to barely dedicate an hour a day to offering the obligatory prayers and then neglect Allah, the Exalted, for the rest of the day and still expect His continuous support through all difficulties. A person would dislike a friend who treated them in such a manner. How then can one treat Allah, the Exalted, the Lord of the worlds, like this then?

Some only dedicate extra time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, when they encounter a worldly problem then demand Him to fix it as if they done Allah, the Exalted, a favour by performing voluntary good deeds. This foolish mentality clearly contradicts servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. It is amazing how this type of person finds time to do all their other leisurely activities, such as spending time with family and friends, watching TV and attending social functions yet finds no time to dedicate to pleasing Allah, the Exalted. They cannot seem to find time to recite and adopt the teachings of the Holy Quran. They do not seem to find time to study and act on the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. These people somehow find wealth to spend on their unnecessary luxuries yet seem to find no wealth to donate in voluntary charity.

It is important to understand that a Muslim will be treated according to how they behave. Meaning, if a Muslim dedicates extra time to please Allah, the Exalted, then they will find the support they need to journey through all difficulties safely. But if they fail to fulfil the obligatory duties or only fulfil them without dedicating any other time to pleasing Allah, the Exalted, then they will find a similar response from Allah, the Exalted. Put simply, the

more one gives the more they shall receive. If one does not give much they should not expect much in return.

Let Things Go

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over something which all Muslims hope for. They all hope that on Judgment Day Allah, the Exalted, will put aside, overlook and forgive their past mistakes and sins. But the strange thing is that most of these same Muslims who hope and pray for this do not treat others in the same way. Meaning, they often latch on to the past mistakes of others and use them as weapons against them. This is not referring to those mistakes which have an effect on the present or future. For example, a car accident caused by a driver which physically disables another person is a mistake which will affect the victim in the present and future. This type of mistake is understandably difficult to let go and overlook. But many Muslims often latch on to the mistakes of others which do not influence the future in anyway, such as a verbal insult. Even though, the mistake has faded away yet these people insist on reviving and using it against others when the opportunity presents itself. It is a very sad mentality to possess as one should understand that people are not Angels. At the very least a Muslim who hopes for Allah, the Exalted, to overlook their past mistakes should overlook the past mistakes of others. Those who refuse to behave in this manner will find that the majority of their relationships are fractured as no relationship is perfect. They will always be a disagreement which can lead to a mistake in every relationship. Therefore, the one who behaves in this manner will end up lonely as their bad mentality causes them to destroy their relationships with others. It is strange that these very people hate to be lonely yet adopt an attitude which drives others away from them. This defies logic and common sense. All people want to be loved and respected while they are alive and after they pass away but this attitude causes the very opposite to occur. While they are alive people become fed up with them and when they die people do not remember them with true affection and love. If they do remember them it is merely out of custom.

Letting the past go does not mean one needs to be overly nice to others but the least one can do is be respectful according to the teachings of Islam. This does not cost anything and requires little effort. One should therefore learn to overlook and let the past mistakes of people go perhaps then Allah, the Exalted, will overlook their past mistakes on the Day of Judgement. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 22:

“...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

Adapting Behavior

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the bad characteristic of stubbornness and its negative effects on the one who possesses it and those around them. Even though this characteristic can lead to many problems only a major one will be discussed. Some adopt stubbornness in worldly matters and as a result they do not change their character for the better. Instead, they remain steadfast on their attitude believing this is somehow a sign of their great strength and wisdom. Steadfastness in matters of faith is a praiseworthy attitude but in most worldly matters it is only called stubbornness, which is blameworthy.

Unfortunately, some believe if they change their attitude it demonstrates weakness or it shows that they are admitting their fault and because of this they stubbornly fail to change for the better. Adults behave like immature children by believing that if they change their behaviour it means they have lost while others who remain steadfast on their attitude have won. This is simply childish.

In reality, an intelligent person will remain steadfast on matters of faith but in worldly matters they will change their attitude, as long as it is not sinful, in order to make their life easier. So changing to improve one's life is not a sign of weakness it is in fact a sign of intelligence.

In many cases, a person refuses to change their attitude and expects others in their life to change theirs, such as their relatives. But what often occurs is that due to stubbornness all remain in the same state which only leads to regular disagreements and arguments. A wise person understands that if the people around them do not change for the better than they should. This change will improve the quality of their life and their relationship with others which is much better than going around in circular arguments with people. This positive attitude will eventually cause others to respect them as it takes real strength to change one's character for the better.

Those who remain stubborn will always find something to be annoyed about which will remove peace from their life. This will cause further difficulties in all aspects of their life, such as their mental health. But those who adapt and change for the better will always move from one station of peace to another. If one achieves this peace does it really matter if others believe they only changed because they were wrong?

To conclude, to remain steadfast on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is praiseworthy. But in worldly matters and in cases where no sin is committed a person should learn to adapt and change their attitude so that they find some peace in this world.

Be the Best

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with them, and what made them the best group ever created after the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. The fact they physically observed the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, during his lifetime is definitely one factor. But anyone who knows about their life and their righteous deeds understands that their superiority is due to more than just this unique and great deed.

One of the main reasons for their superiority is shown in a Hadith involving the Companion Abdullah Bin Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, which is found in Sahih Muslim, number 6515. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, was once riding on his conveyance in the desert when he came across a Bedouin. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, greeted the Bedouin, placed his turban on the Bedouin's head and insisted that the Bedouin ride on his conveyance. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, was told that the greeting he gave the Bedouin was more than enough as the Bedouin would have been greatly pleased at the fact that the great Companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with him, greeted him. Yet, Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, went much further than this and showed the Bedouin great respect. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, replied that he only did this because the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, once advised that one of the best ways a person can honour their parent is by showing love and respect to their parent's relatives and friends. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, added that the Bedouin's father was a friend of his father

the Commander of the Faithful, Umar Bin Khataab, may Allah be pleased with him.

This incident indicates the superiority of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. They completely submitted to the teachings of Islam. They not only fulfilled the obligatory duties and avoided all sins but completely fulfilled all acts which were recommended to them to the highest possible degree. Their submission caused them to put aside their own desires and only act to please Allah, the Exalted. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, could have easily ignored the Bedouin as none of the actions he done were obligatory yet, unlike many Muslims who would use this excuse, he completely submitted to the teachings of Islam and acted the way he did.

It is the lack of submission to the teachings of Islam which has weakened the faith of Muslims. Some only fulfil the obligatory duties and turn away from other righteous deeds, such as voluntary charity, which contradict their desires by claiming the actions are not obligatory. All Muslims desire to end up with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, in the hereafter. But how is this possible if they do not follow their path or way? If a Muslim follows a path other than theirs then how can they end up with them? To end up with them one must follow their path. But this is only possible if one completely submits to the teachings of Islam like they did instead of cherry picking the deeds which suit their desires.

Broken Relationships

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I pondered over the fact that many families, especially from the Asian community, become fractured and even broken over time. This is one of the biggest complaints relatives, such as parents, often have. They wonder why their children have become divided after being so firmly joined.

One of the main reasons the relationships between relatives become fractured is because someone has spoken negatively about a person's relative to them. This is often done by a family member. For example, a mother will speak negatively about her son to her other child. This leads to enmity between the two relatives and over time it builds up and creates a wedge between the two. Those who were once like one person become like strangers to one another.

It is important to understand that people are not Angels. Except for a very few, when a negative thing is said to a person about another they will get affected by it even if they do not desire this to occur. This enmity still occurs even if the initial person who spoke negatively about someone's relative does not intend to create a wedge between relatives. Some often act in this way out of habit and are not trying to damage relationships. For example, parents often adopt this habit and in most cases they do not desire the relationships of their children to become fractured or broken.

This attitude has such a serious impact on a person's mentality that it also affects relatives that very rarely see or converse with each other. For example, a person will mention negative things about a person's relative to them even though their relative may not even live in the same country as them. This behaviour implants enmity within their heart and with the passing of time they will find that they dislike their distant relative even though they barely know them.

This issue often occurs when two people discuss negative things about others in front of other people. For example, parents may discuss negative things about their relatives in front of their children. Even though, they are not telling their children directly none the less it still affects their hearts. If one truly reflected for a moment they will realise that the majority of the ill feelings they have towards others were not caused by what that person did or said to them directly. In most cases, it occurred because of a third party who mentioned something negative about that person to them.

In cases where one is trying to warn another of some danger then it is perfectly acceptable to mention another person in a negative way. If one is trying to teach another person a lesson for example, if a mother desires to teach one of her children not to behave as their sibling did they then should follow the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and mention the negative thing without naming the person. An example of this beautiful mentality is discussed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6979. Mentioning a negative thing without naming the person is good enough to teach someone a lesson.

To conclude, Muslims should ponder deeply before speaking negatively about their relatives or others, privately or publically. Otherwise, they may well find as time passes their family becomes separated and emotionally distant from one another.

Certainty of Faith

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the following verse of the Holy Quran: Chapter 41 Fussilat, verse 53:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...”

All Muslims have faith in Islam but the strength of their faith varies from person to person. For example, the one who follows the teachings of Islam because their family told them to is not the same as the one who believes in it through evidence. A person who has heard about something will not believe in it in the same way as the one who has witnessed the thing with their own eyes.

As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims. One of the reasons for this is that it is the best way a Muslim can strengthen their faith in Islam. This is important to pursue as the stronger one's certainty of faith the greater the chance they will remain steadfast on the correct path, especially when facing difficulties. In addition, having certainty of faith has been described as one of the best things one can possess in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3849. This knowledge should be obtained by studying the

Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, through a reliable source.

Allah, the Exalted, did not only declare a truth in the Holy Quran but He also provided evidence for it through examples. Not only examples which are to be found in the past nations but examples which have been placed in one's very own life. For example, in the Holy Quran Allah, the Exalted, advises that sometimes a person loves a thing even though it will cause them trouble if they obtained it. Similarly, they might hate a thing while there is much hidden good in it for them. 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.”

There are many examples of this truth in history such as the Pact of Hudaiba. Some Muslims believed this pact, which was made with the non-Muslims of Mecca, would completely favour the latter group. Yet, history clearly shows that it favoured Islam and the Muslims. This event is discussed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari, numbers 2731 and 2732.

If one reflects on their own life they will find many examples when they believed something was good when it was actually bad for them and vice versa. These examples prove the authenticity of this verse and help one's faith strengthen.

Another example is found in chapter 79 An Naziat, verse 46:

“It will be, on the Day they see it (Judgement Day) as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.”

If one turns the pages of history they will clearly observe how great empires came and went. But when they left they passed away in such a way as if they were only on Earth for a moment. All but a few of their signs have faded away as if they were never present on Earth in the first place. Similarly, when one reflects on their own life they will realise that no matter how old they are and no matter how slow certain days might have felt overall their life so far has passed in a flash. Understanding the truthfulness of this verse strengthens one's certainty of faith and this inspires them to prepare for the hereafter before their time runs out.

The Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, are full of such examples. Therefore, one should strive to learn and act on these divine teachings so that they adopt certainty of faith. The one who achieves this will not be shaken by any difficulty they face and will remain steadfast on the path which leads to the gates of Paradise.

Different Paths

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the countless people in this world and the countless different paths they are journeying down. This in itself is an indication of the infinite power of Allah, the Exalted. Even though, there are billions of people yet no two people walk the exact same path in life. Understanding these signs strengthens one's faith but this chapter will discuss something else.

Whenever a Muslim finds themselves on a lawful path they should firstly show true gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings He alone granted them in the way prescribed by Islam. The other important thing is that a Muslim should never look down on others believing that their path is somehow superior to the path of others especially those who are on a lawful path also. This only leads to pride which will lead one to Hell. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 266. Instead, they should firstly understand that they are unaware of the final outcome of their life or the lives of others. Someone on an unlawful path can easily sincerely repent and be saved before death.

Secondly, in the case of others on a lawful path a Muslim should understand that each person has been granted the best path for them which differs from the best possible path of others. For example, one Muslim may spend most of their time in a Mosque and another Muslim may spend most of their time on lawful worldly things, such as an occupation. The first Muslim is not better than the second as each person is on the best

path for them. If they swapped places it would most likely lead them to destruction. For example, if they swapped the one who now spends time in a Mosque could adopt pride and thus be destroyed. So it is better for them to be involved in lawful worldly things. On the other hand, the other Muslim who now dedicates most of their time to the material world could get lost in it and head towards the unlawful. So it would be better for this Muslim to spend most of their time in a Mosque.

Therefore, Muslims should never be jealous nor look down upon each other as each person is on the best possible path for them, as long as this path is lawful. This attitude will always lead to humility and mutual love for each other and according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2510, sincerely loving each other for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is a characteristic which leads one to Paradise. It is important to note, this discussion does not mean one should not try to improve themselves by acting on the teachings of Islam. It means they should be happy for others who are journeying down a lawful path.

Criticism and Praise

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over how some people become overly sad when they are criticised. A Muslim should always remember that there are two types of people. The first are rightly guided as their criticism of others is based on the criticism and advice found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This type will always be constructive and guide one to blessings and the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. These people will also refrain from over or under praising others. Over praising others can cause them to become proud and arrogant. Under praising others can lead them to becoming lazy and put them off from doing good. This reaction is often observed in children. Praising according to the teachings of Islam will inspire others to strive harder in both worldly and religious matters and it will prevent them from becoming arrogant. Therefore, the praise and constructive criticism of this person should be accepted and acted upon even if comes from a stranger.

The second type of person criticises based on their own desires. This criticism is mostly unconstructive and only shows one's bad mood and attitude. These people often over and under praise others as they act based on their own desires. The negative effects of these two were mentioned earlier. Therefore, the criticism and praise of this person should be ignored in the majority of cases even if it comes from a loved one as it will only cause one to become unnecessarily sad in cases of criticism and arrogant in cases of praise.

It is important to remember that a person who over praises others will often over criticise them too. The rule one should always follow is that they should only accept the criticism and praise based on the teachings of Islam. All other things should be ignored and not taken personally.

Hoping in People

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a common thing many people do namely, placing hope in people. The problem with this attitude is that as people are not Angels they are bound to make mistakes and fall short of people's expectations and hopes. In addition, as times change and each person progresses along their own path, which is separate from the path of all others, it will cause them to become preoccupied with their own things, such as their responsibilities. This change often causes them to let down the people who place hope in them even if they do not mean to do this. Hoping in people who are not perfect will generally lead to disappointment. A common example of this especially, in the Asian community, is when parents place hope in their children. They hope that their children will choose the path in life they advise them to and hope their children will make taking care of their parents their ultimate priority. Even though, children should definitely take care of their parents as this is their duty, parents should not place their hope in them as this can often result in disappointment. People should instead fulfil their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and towards people as Allah, the Exalted, has commanded, and then place hope in Allah, the Exalted. A Muslim should never forget that the source of all help is Allah, the Exalted, and the creation are only a means. The source can still help them even without the means they have in mind if He so chooses. But the means by themselves cannot help without the Source. If Muslims place their focus and hope on the means then they will be disappointed. But if they place it on the Source then nothing can prevent them from gaining the support of Allah, the Exalted.

So it is important for Muslims to place their hope in the correct place which must be supported by obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, then they will find the peace of mind and satisfaction they desire in both worlds.

Religion and World Hand in Hand

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Some Muslims often claim that one's faith and the material world need to walk hand in hand with each other without a person being extreme in either. It is strange how most of those who claim this and use this statement as a way to enjoy the lawful luxuries and pleasures of this world do not truly understand nor adhere to it. This statement is true but applies to those worldly and religious matters which are pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. For example, occasionally exercising in order to keep the body healthy which is a trust given to a person. It does not mean one can enjoy the lawful pleasures of this world in excess while neglecting following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, by gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge even if they fulfil the standard obligatory duties. As gaining knowledge in itself is a duty on all Muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

In addition, walking hand in hand would suggest that one dedicates equal attention, effort and time to each thing. How many Muslims can honestly say that they dedicate equal effort, energy and time to the material world and preparing for the hereafter? If they do not, and most do not, then how exactly are they fulfilling this statement?

A Muslim should not fool themselves as their time on Earth is limited and they will not be given a second chance once they depart from it. Therefore, they should honestly strive to fulfil this statement by at least dedicating equal

time, effort and energy to both the material world and preparing for the hereafter. It is important to note, that some would argue that treating a temporary abode and an everlasting abode equal is not wise.

Do Elders Know Best

I had a thought which I wanted to share. The elders of a family, especially parents, often use a statement which they believe indicates their right guidance namely, elders know best. To be honest this statement was true in the day of the righteous predecessors as the elders at that time used to strive in gaining and acting on beneficial knowledge. They put aside their own opinions and thinking and instead adopted the advice of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Because of their sincere efforts they were granted right guidance by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 69:

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways...”

Therefore, this statement applied to them and the youngsters in those days benefited if they acted on the advice of these elders. But unfortunately times have changed. In this day and age the majority of elders do not seek nor act on beneficial knowledge instead the vast majority act on their cultural practices which in most cases do not have a foundation in Islamic teachings. They flee from beneficial knowledge and are very content with these teachings based on made up cultural practices. Because of this ignorance elders are now sometimes right and sometimes wrong. Therefore, the statement elders know best no longer applies.

It is important to note this does not mean a Muslim should ignore or disrespect their elders as this completely contradicts the teachings of Islam. They should instead strive to gain correct beneficial knowledge, hear the advice of others, including their elders, and then make a choice which is indicated by Islam in all their matters even if it contradicts the opinions of others. A Muslim should not blindly follow their elders as this in most cases will lead them away from the teachings of Islam. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 116:

“And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah. They follow not except assumption, and they are not but misjudging.”

This is possible to do while maintaining respect for others especially one's elders. If Muslims do this then perhaps a day will come when this statement will once again be true.

Refocus Through Loss

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a specific wisdom why people face difficulties and the loss of blessings, such as health. Often when Muslims receive blessings especially, beyond their need, it distracts them from the hereafter and instead focuses their minds on this material world. So in this respect, the wisdom behind a difficulty is to refocus a Muslim's attention on what is truly important which is preparing for the hereafter. This is like a person who is so preoccupied with their phone that they cross a road without seeing an oncoming vehicle. Another person violently pulls them away from the oncoming car which causes them distress yet, saves their life. Even though being pulled violently causes distress and even pain but it is only done in order to refocus their attention on the life threatening danger namely, the oncoming car. Similarly, a Muslim faces emotional and physical difficulties in order to refocus their attention on more important things such as the hereafter. If a Muslim was left to only face times of ease without difficulties there is no doubt that they would become lost in enjoying the excess of this material world. This neglect in the long run would be disastrous for them. So they face a small difficulty in order to protect them from greater difficulties namely, the difficulties of the hereafter. Therefore, Muslims should remember this truth every time they face a difficulty so that they leave the difficulty refocused on more important things and act correctly over this blessing instead of demonstrating impatience and heedlessness to this vital benefit. This is in fact one of the biggest favours of Allah, the Exalted.

Is It Useful

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often complain about feeling disconnected from Allah, the Exalted, even though they attend religious gatherings and listen to religious lectures. One of the main reasons this occurs is because they have adopted the incorrect attitude which contradicts the attitude of the righteous predecessors. They take part in these activities looking for lawful entertainment. They do not intend to seek and act upon beneficial knowledge in order to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, which leads to the closeness of Allah, the Exalted. This was the attitude of the righteous predecessors who only intended the closeness of Allah, the Exalted, in all their activities. A good way to determine whether one is acting with the right attitude is by assessing themselves after taking part in the activity. If they gained useful knowledge or were reminded of useful knowledge which inspires them to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, then it is useful. If this does not occur then either the religious gathering or lecture has a fault in it or the listener has a fault in their intention. Either way they have not fulfilled the main purpose of religious gatherings or lectures. A Muslim should avoid gatherings and lectures which concentrate more on entertainment such as telling stories which may fascinate the crowd but have no beneficial lessons in them. Only through attending the correct gatherings with the correct intention will a Muslim achieve the closeness of Allah, the Exalted. Otherwise they are merely taking part in gatherings of entertainment which will not improve their character nor will they increase them in the obedience and closeness of Allah, the Exalted.

Balance is Best

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the importance of maintaining a balanced life whereby a Muslim fulfils their necessities and responsibilities in this world, prepares adequately for the hereafter and occasionally enjoys lawful pleasures. Even though, this is the best approach it is very difficult to fulfil just like walking a tight rope whereby a person can easily fall into either of the two extremes. One side is when one is too focused on the material world which prevents them from striving in preparing for the hereafter correctly. The other side is where one strives hard in preparing for the hereafter but struggles and even fails to fulfil their worldly duties. But it is important to note, that even though a perfect balance is best it is far better to incline towards the hereafter than this material world. As the one who favours the hereafter might find this world difficult but they are more likely to achieve eternal success in the hereafter. On the other hand, the one who inclines to the world more may find success therein but they are more likely to fail in the hereafter. In other words, inclining towards the hereafter is the safer option compared to inclining towards the material world. So if a Muslim struggles to find the perfect balance, which the vast majority do, they should be kind to themselves and incline more towards the hereafter so that they can obtain eternal success instead of temporary worldly success. Chapter 87 Al A'la, verses 16-17:

“But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring.”

Being Busy

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often claim that due to their busy lives they do not find time to perform voluntary righteous deeds or even gain further knowledge on Islam. In cases like this a Muslim should strive to donate as much charity as possible as this righteous deed does not take much time and it is a huge branch of faith. There are countless virtues of donating charity which have been mentioned in the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, the generous person is close to Allah, the Exalted, close to people, close to Paradise and far from Hell. Whereas, the stingy person is close to Hell, far from Allah, the Exalted, far from people and far from Paradise. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961.

In addition, as long as a Muslim benefits others through their charity even if they are preoccupied with worldly things Allah, the Exalted, will continue helping them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 225. This help from Allah, the Exalted, will extend to every aspect of one's life and in both worlds. It is important to note this charity does not need to be a huge amount of wealth. One should strive to give regularly and according to their means even if it is small in amount as Allah, the Exalted, does not observe quantity but quality. In addition, these Hadiths and others do not declare that the charity has to be a great amount either.

To conclude, ideally a Muslim should make time in order to fulfil all the different branches of faith. But if they are too preoccupied with the material world they should at least fulfil this important branch with the obligatory duties hoping through it Allah, the Exalted, will grant them salvation on the Last Day.

Ultimate Goal

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the different difficulties and times of ease people face throughout their lives. There are things which a Muslim can remember in order to maintain their focus on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. One of those things is to remember a fact which is supported by a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7088. It indicates that the person who ends up in Paradise will not be bothered by the difficulties they faced during their life on Earth. And the person who ends up in Hell will not feel better when they are reminded of the luxuries they enjoyed during their life on Earth.

A person should not be fooled into thinking the hereafter is like this world. In this world difficulties bother people even after the difficulties pass. And the moments when a person enjoyed luxuries can make them feel better even if they are in prison. But this is not the case in respect to the hereafter. So a Muslim should remember this fact when they are facing difficulties knowing it will not bother them at all if they end up in Paradise. And sins, vain things and the luxuries of this world will not make them feel better if they end up in Hell.

This attitude is a strong mechanism which encourages a Muslim towards the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, if they ponder on it often.

Fulfil Your Wish

I had a thought which I wanted to share. There are many Muslims who desire lawful things, such as a child and instead of being content with what Allah, the Exalted, chose for them they instead pursue their desires in lawful ways such as spiritual exercises based on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which is obviously permissible in Islam. Yet, after all this effort and stress they do not understand nor act on a simple but profound teaching of Islam which would aid them in their quest. In fact, they often act in certain ways which only reduces the chances of their request being fulfilled. For example, a Muslim does not need to be a scholar to understand that it is less likely for a Muslim to obtain what they desire if the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is removed from them. For Example, this can occur when one lies in order to make others laugh. In fact, this person has been cursed three times in one Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2315. A curse results in the removal of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. Some of these Muslims who desperately desire things from Allah, the Exalted, also backbite and slander others. This also leads to the removal of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 104 Al Humazah, verse 1:

“Woe to every scorner and mocker.”

There are many other examples which lead to the removal of the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, which in turn dramatically reduces the chances of one's request being fulfilled. Muslims should therefore act on this important

principle by seeking and acting on knowledge before seeking other means such as spiritual exercises in order to fulfil their lawful desires as these things will not aid them in fulfilling their requests until they correct their behaviour.

What Do You Seek?

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to recognize why their worship Allah, the Exalted, as this reason can be a cause for an increase in obedience to Allah, the Exalted, or in some cases it can lead to disobedience. When one worships Allah, the Exalted, in order to gain lawful worldly things from Him they run the risk of becoming disobedient to Him. This type of person has been mentioned in the Holy Quran. Chapter 22 Al Hajj, verse 11:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to unbelief]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.”

As they obey Allah, the Exalted, in order to receive worldly blessings the moment they fail to receive them or encounter a difficulty they often become angered which turns them away from the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. These people often obey and disobey Allah, the Exalted, according to the situation they are facing which in reality contradicts true servanthood to Allah, the Exalted.

Even though, desiring lawful worldly things from Allah, the Exalted, is acceptable in Islam yet, if one persists with this attitude they may become like those mentioned in this verse. It is far better to worship Allah, the Exalted, in order to be saved in the hereafter and obtain Paradise. This person is unlikely to alter their behaviour when encountering difficulties. But the highest and best reason is to obey Allah, the Exalted, simply because He is their Lord and the Lord of the universe. This Muslim, if sincere, will remain steadfast in all situations and through this obedience they will be granted both worldly and religious blessings which outstrip the worldly blessings the first type of person would ever receive.

To conclude, it is important for Muslims to reflect on their intention and if necessary correct it so that it encourages them to remain firm on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, in all situations.

Ties that Bind

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a mentality which many people especially, Asians possess. It is the extreme need in forcing people such as relatives to remain physically together. Even though, it is not an evil intention yet, in this day and age it often leads to more trouble than good. As people are not perfect they will make mistakes which upset others such as their relatives. But if this person only met and conversed with their relatives once in a while there is a much greater chance the mistake will be overlooked by others so that it does not become a point of argument. But if this same person was constantly around their relatives it would be much more likely their attitude and behaviour would lead to arguments and friction amongst their relatives. In other words, a person is less likely to argue and more likely to be tolerant with someone they only see once in a while than someone they are always around. This is a fact which everyone will understand if they ponder over it. Unfortunately, some people do not understand that it is better to be physically separated but be at peace with one another than be together in conflict and friction. Arguments only lead to mental separation which often has more of a negative effect on families than physical separation. Whereas, being physically separated does not lead to a mental separation. In fact, it often leads to greater mutual respect and appreciation. As the famous saying goes separation makes the heart grow fonder.

It is important to note, that it is the duty of a Muslim to uphold their ties of kinship irrespective of if they are physically with their relatives or not. But this discussion means that Muslims should not believe a bit of physical

separation between people is a bad thing. It in fact can be a cause for the bonds between them to strengthen.

Make Problems Small

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the great tests and difficulties the righteous predecessors faced during their lives and how they overcame them through patience and sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted. One of the ways of achieving this is by always comparing one's difficulty to harder and more severe difficulties. When one does this it will make their problem seem small and less significant. This change in focus can aid a Muslim to be patient and remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted. This can be explained through a worldly example. A person suffering from a severe migraine can be effected in such a way that it seems to them that the world is collapsing around them. But if this same person was on a ship which is about to hit an iceberg and sink in the middle of a freezing ocean then their severe migraine will not seem like a big deal. In fact, they would probably not even be effected by it at all as their whole focus would become shifted to the imminent life threatening danger namely, the sinking ship. This is how a Muslim should behave during difficulties. When they encounter a difficulty they should realise it could have been much worse and try to shift they focus on greater difficulties they could have encountered. This can be achieved by observing others who are in more difficult situations than them. For example, a person who suffers from back pain can ponder over the person who is physically disabled. Or they could ponder over much greater difficulties such as death and Judgment Day. This comparison will reduce the significance of their difficulty and its effects, which in turn will aid them in remaining patient and steadfast on the obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience.

Aim High

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a powerful weapon and trap of the Devil which can affect every Muslim irrespective of the strength of their faith. The Devil tries to convince Muslims to always observe those who are worse than them in behaviour in order to justify their lack of striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and improving their character and behaviour for the better. For example, a Muslim who offers their obligatory prayers once in a while will observe someone who does not pray at all in order to make themselves feel better. A thief will look at a murderer and convince themselves stealing is not so bad. The examples are endless. It is very strange how these Muslims so easily observe those who appear worse than them in order to justify their lack of effort in obeying Allah, the Exalted, but these same people will not observe those who are in a worse off position than them when they face difficulties. For example, the person who suffers from back pain will not observe the one who is physically disabled so that it prevents them from complaining. This attitude has specifically been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2513.

In addition, if observing those who appear worse in their behaviour does not save one from punishment in a worldly court, such as a thief being pardoned by a judge because there are many murderers in the world, how can one imagine this excuse will hold up in the court of Allah, the Exalted?

Muslims should therefore avoid this trap of the Devil by observing those who appear better than them so that they are inspired to improve their character and behaviour progressively for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This is what Allah, the Exalted, demands meaning, He does not demand perfection.

Key to Happiness

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Many people set the standards for their happiness according to the rules and desires of other people. The problem with this mentality is that one will become sad or happy depending on the desires of people. If they persist on this attitude than they reach a level where they love, hate, give, withhold and act according to the desires of people. This attitude will only lead to overall sadness in one's life as truly pleasing others is unattainable. People are not pleased with Allah, the Exalted, when He granted them countless blessings how can they possibly be pleased with people who innately gave them nothing? So living with the attitude of always aiming to please others will only result in sadness.

A Muslim should therefore strive to obtain the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, which is easily obtainable. This person will love, hate, give and withhold for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, which is an aspect of perfecting one's faith. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681. This is only achieved through sincere obedience to Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and being patient with destiny. This will lead to true happiness in both worlds and therefore it is the key to happiness.

Sharing Problems

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering about a certain mentality which some Muslims have adopted. It is when a person tells many people about their problems. The issue with this attitude is that when one tells too many people then sharing their problems and seeking advice becomes a means of complaining about their difficulties which is a clear sign of their impatience. In addition, this attitude will only cause one to become confused as the advice they receive will be varied which will cause them to become more and more uncertain of the correct path. Whereas, consulting a few wise people will only cause one's certainty to increase. Repeating one's problems over and over again to many people also causes them to focus too much on their problem which makes it appear bigger and more significant than it really is, even to the point that it causes them to neglect their other duties which only leads to more impatience.

Therefore Muslims, should only consult a few people in respect to their difficulties. They should select these few people according to the advice of the Holy Quran. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 43:

“...So ask the people of the message if you do not know.”

This verse reminds Muslims to consult those who possess knowledge. As consulting an ignorant person only leads to further trouble. Just like a person would be foolish to consult a car mechanic over their physical health a Muslim should only share their problems with those who possess knowledge about it and the Islamic teachings linked to them.

In addition, a Muslim should only share their problems with those who fear Allah, the Exalted. This is because they will never advise others to disobey Allah, the Exalted. Whereas, those who do not fear or obey Allah, the Exalted, might possess knowledge and experience but they will easily advise others to disobey Allah, the Exalted, which only increases one's problems. In reality, those who fear Allah, the Exalted, possess true knowledge and only this knowledge will guide others through their problems successfully. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

Saving You

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Parents often take away things or prevent their children from obtaining certain things such as unhealthy food in order to protect them. This behaviour often causes the child to become sad or angry as they are completely unaware of the wisdom behind the actions of their parent. This parental behaviour is something which is widely accepted in society and is rightfully believed to be a characteristic of a good and responsible parent. Similarly, in life people often lose or are prevented from obtaining certain worldly things by Allah, the Exalted. A Muslim must understand that the same way parents keep harmful things away from their children even though their children do not understand the reason behind their choice similarly Allah, the Exalted, acts in this manner according to His infinite wisdom and knowledge in order to protect His servants even if people do not understand the wisdom behind His choices. Therefore, every time a Muslim finds themselves in this situation they should reflect on this simple example, which no one would reject irrespective of their faith, so that they are inspired to remain patient and show gratitude for the divine protection Allah, the Exalted, has granted them. They should not act like an immature child by becoming angry and impatient as adults are meant to behave better than children. In fact, children are excused from behaving in such a manner as they lack knowledge and experience whereas adults should not lack this and will therefore be held accountable for their behaviour in both worlds.

Expectations

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims in all aspects of their life to always set realistic expectations as setting unrealistic expectations always leads to disappointment, sadness, grief and depression which are the ingredients for impatience and the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This only leads to further trouble in both worlds. For example, Muslims should reject the fantasy created by Bollywood by believing their marriage will be like a fairy-tale. This is a ridiculous and unrealistic expectation which will only lead to disappointment. Whereas, if one understands that marriage has difficulties but is willing to work through them then they are more likely to achieve happiness and peace of mind.

In addition, a Muslim should set realistic expectations according to their own situation and life meaning, they should not observe others and set their expectations according to their standards. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2513.

In reality, a true Muslim will not set expectations in respect to people as they would only rely and trust in Allah, the Exalted. But this is a high and rare status to achieve. Therefore, if a Muslim must set expectations in respect to people they should make them realistic otherwise they will only lead to disappointment, grief and depression.

Fear of Losing

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is part of normal behaviour to fear losing one's possessions. In fact, generally speaking the more one possesses the more they will fear losing them and the less they possess the less they will fear. This is just like the person who goes out in the middle of the night while possessing many valuable things, such as an expensive phone and tablet. This person will obviously have more fear of losing their possessions than the one who leaves their home in the middle of the night while carrying nothing valuable. Muslims should therefore understand the reality of this in respect to this temporal world and the eternal hereafter. The one who possesses much worldly things which will not benefit them in the hereafter, such as excess wealth they have hoarded will always fear leaving this world through death and the troubles of this world more than the one who possesses less worldly things. This fear removes the very aim of these possessions which is to achieve peace of mind and body. In fact, achieving peace of mind and body is the very reason people strive in this material world. But in order to remove this fear a Muslim does not need to become physically empty handed. They only need to detach from their possessions spiritually. This is achieved when one only takes from this material world in order to fulfill their necessities and the necessities of their dependents and then dedicates the rest of their worldly blessings towards the hereafter by using them as prescribed by Islam. This will ensure that they truly own their possessions instead of their belongings possessing them. This will also remove the fear of losing their possessions as they have already sent them forward to the hereafter for safe keeping. This will allow them to achieve peace of mind and body in this world and in the next.

Missing Things

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to firmly believe that they will not intensely miss anything they give up for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, whether the thing is unlawful or lawful but unnecessary. One should not fall for the whisperings of the Devil by believing otherwise as he has made it his mission to misguide people. For example, whenever a Muslim is inspired to donate charity the Devil quickly warns and frightens them with poverty which in many cases causes a Muslim to change their mind even though they fully believe they will not become poor donating some of their wealth. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 268:

“Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”

A Muslim should act on the other half of this verse and instead trust that Allah, the Exalted, will replace the thing they give up for His sake with something much better. Those who have experienced this know the truth of this statement but those who have not must review history and observe how those who gave things up for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, succeeded in both worlds. For example, the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, namely, Imam Hasan Bin Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, gave up authority in order to save the lives of countless people for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. His action had

in fact been prophesied in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3629. In exchange Allah, the Exalted, granted him blessings and reward far beyond any position of authority could give him. For example, he has been declared the leader of the youth of Paradise in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3768. It is as if he gave up leadership in this world and was granted a greater authority in the next world.

As long as a Muslim is sincere in their action Allah, the Exalted, will replace what they give up for His sake with something much better. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 245:

“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?...”

Moulding Life

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often question how they can mould their life to fit their faith instead of moulding their faith in order to fit their worldly life. One of the ways of achieving this is by always performing the obligatory prayers as soon as they occur for women and to offer the obligatory prayers at the Mosques for men. As establishing the prayers is the main pillar of Islam, which has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2616, when one performs it as described it forces them to arrange their worldly activities so that they fit around their obligatory prayers. Whereas, when one either offers their obligatory prayers late or at home instead of the Mosque it becomes easy to fit the obligatory prayers around one's worldly time table which in turn causes them to mould their faith around their worldly life. The correct attitude will also prevent one from indulging in unnecessary and vain activities, such as visiting the shopping centres unnecessarily, as these often prevent a Muslim from offering their obligatory prayers on time or at the Mosque. Avoiding these unnecessary things and activities allows one to mould their life around their religion.

In addition, as offering the obligatory prayers on time is one of the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted, according to a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 611, a Muslim should adhere to this habit and not postpone offering their obligatory prayers without an extremely good reason which only occurs very rarely. If one desires to mould their life around their faith then they must fulfil their obligatory prayers on time as soon as they happen for women and men should fulfil them at the Mosque

with congregation. This will ensure they prioritise preparing for the hereafter without becoming distracted by the excess of this material world.

Seeking Good

I had a thought which I wanted to share. According to an incident which has been recorded in Imam Asfahani's, Hilyat Al Awliya, number 510, the great Companion Abu Darda, may Allah be pleased with him, refused to give his daughter's hand in marriage to a rich and powerful person. He advised that he only did this as he feared his daughter would get lost in the excess and luxuries of this world which would undoubtedly damage her faith.

It is strange how the majority of Muslims have adopted the opposite mindset to this. And often seek rich and influential people in order to join ties with. They are often less concerned about the strength of their faith and therefore fail to connect with families for this reason which has been specifically advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 3635. Even though, a family should not marry in to a family which cannot financially support their relative but at the same time they should not set wealth and social status as their only benchmark for finding a suitable spouse for their relative.

This incident shows the importance of always seeking good for others by considering faith in all situations and circumstances. Meaning, one should only get into situations when they firmly believe their faith will either strengthen through it or at least not become damaged because of it. If they suspect this may occur they should avoid it at all costs as all worldly things come and go but the strength of one's faith is the thing that will define their

ultimate and permanent destination in the hereafter therefore, it should always be protected.

Spiritual High

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often have periods within their lives where they exert themselves by increasing the amount of worship they perform. This often happens in the Holy month of Ramadan where Muslims decide to change their lives around by striving much harder than normal. The issue with exerting too much effort in a short period of time is that it often leads to one giving up and returning back to normal. First of all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned Muslims in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 43, not to over burden themselves and only perform voluntary deeds which they can handle. He concluded by declaring that the most beloved of deeds to Allah, the Exalted, are the ones done regularly irrespective of their size. Muslims should therefore adhere to this advice as it is more likely they keep up their obedience over a longer period of time.

In reality, the important time is not the period where one feels a spiritual high and exerts extra effort. The important time is when one returns back to normal as spiritual highs very rarely last. Muslims must ensure that no matter how much they return from a spiritual high they must continue fulfilling their obligatory duties. Then they should dedicate some time to learning and acting on the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Changing step by step like this is much better than exerting extra effort over a short period of time and there is a greater chance that one will maintain their improved obedience to Allah, the Exalted, in the long term if they change gradually, step by step. No one is demanding Muslims to become saints overnight. Improvement takes time but this means that one should not stand still and actually take small but regular steps to improve their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by

fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Rejected Advice

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important to note that one should react correctly whenever their advice is not acted upon. When the person seeking advice chooses an unlawful decision which contradicts the advice given to them the advisor should show dislike towards their choice as this is a branch of faith. In fact, disliking something for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, is an aspect of perfecting one's faith according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4681. But even then they must stay within the limits of Islam when showing their dislike.

If the choices are between two lawful options and their advice is not acted upon then they should not become annoyed at the one seeking advice as they chose a lawful choice. They should instead respect their decision and not harbour any ill feelings for them nor outwardly show any signs of annoyance, such as telling them they told them so if their decision does not work out for them. People are not Angels they will make mistakes so it is best to be kind to others even if they reject advice. One should instead hope for reward by fulfilling their duty from Allah, the Exalted, by giving good and sincere advice to another.

In addition, the one seeking advice should not ask for advice if they have already made their mind up before hand as this only opens the door for a potential argument if they seek someone's advice only to reject it as it contradicts their pre-determined choice.

Single Heart

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important to understand that Allah, the Exalted, has only given one heart to each person. Therefore, two opposite things cannot be contained within it at the same time just like fire and ice cannot come together in one container. This is similar to how a traveller heading east will inevitably move further away from the west. Similarly, the hereafter and the material world are two opposites. They therefore cannot be contained at the same time in a single person's heart. The more one loves and practically strives for the excess of the material world the less they will love and practically strive for the hereafter. This is an unavoidable reality. A Muslim should not fool themselves into believing it is possible. The two can never come together in a single heart. One will always overcome the other. Even if one believes they can indulge in the lawful excess of this material world they should realise that first of all, this will distract them from preparing for the hereafter. Secondly, it will cause them to be that much closer to the unlawful as indulging in lawful things is usually the first step to the unlawful. The one who avoids this mentality will protect their faith and honour. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1205. Chapter 87 Al A'la, verses 16-17:

“But you prefer the worldly life. While the Hereafter is better and more enduring.”

Being on Guard

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important to understand that no matter how much religious knowledge one obtains or how much worship and righteous deeds they perform they will never be safe from the attacks and traps of the Devil. This is because the Devil attacks each person according to how much knowledge they possess and how much righteous deeds they perform. For example, he will try to convince the Muslim who is strict in offering their obligatory prayers not to offer them in congregation at the Mosque or by convincing them to delay their obligatory prayers beyond their starting times as he knows he will not be able to convince them to completely abandon the obligatory prayers. Whereas, in respect to the Muslim who is struggling to establish their obligatory prayers he will attempt to convince them that they are too difficult to establish therefore they should only offer them when they are completely free. He tries to convince those who perform many voluntary righteous deeds not to gain and act on Islamic knowledge in order to improve their character so that they continue to destroy their good deeds through bad characteristics such as, lying and backbiting.

The Devil aims to prevent a person from reaching a higher level if he cannot convince them to fall in rank through disobedience to Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, Muslims should always be on guard against his attacks and traps by persistently striving to increase in rank, improve their character and avoid acts of disobedience which is all achieved by gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge.

Easy or Difficulty Journey

I had a thought which I wanted to share. If a person had to cross a country and was presented different paths to choose from such as, a path through a dangerous jungle or over a mountain or through an underground cave an intelligent person would certainly choose the simplest and easiest path. This would allow them to reach their destination safely while achieving peace of mind and body. Only a fool would choose a difficult and dangerous path thereby, unnecessarily burdening themselves.

In reality, each person is on a journey through this world and their destination is the hereafter. Therefore, an intelligent Muslim should choose the path through this world which is easy and straight forward in order to reach the hereafter safely. This path consists of 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, and only taking from this material world in order to fulfil their necessities and the necessities of their dependents without waste, excessiveness or extravagance. This would allow them to reach the hereafter safely while obtaining peace of mind and body. But the more one indulges in the excess of this material world and unnecessarily devotes themselves to people and their desires the more difficult their journey will become. This attitude will only deprive them of peace of mind and body and reduce the chances of them reaching the hereafter safely.

To conclude, Muslims must understand that life is a journey so they should therefore be kind to themselves and choose the simple and easy path in order to reach the hereafter safely thereby obtaining peace of mind and body in both worlds.

Eliminate Jealousy

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is obvious that envy has affected many Muslims. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned this would occur in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2510. It leads to many other negative characteristics and problems. For example, it prevents Muslims from fulfilling the important duty of supporting good irrespective of who does it as the jealous person does not desire to aid others as they believe the other person's rank in society will increase beyond their own.

A Muslim must take steps to remove jealousy from their character. One thing which can aid in this goal is to become content with what a person possesses. Allah, the Exalted, does not give people according to their desires as this might lead to their destruction. He instead gives what is best for each person's faith. Understanding this can eliminate jealousy over what others possess. How many Muslims obtained wealth which destroyed their faith? And how many Muslims will be forgiven on Judgment Day because of the tests they endured patiently? 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.”

The other thing to understand is that as this material world is limited it is easy to become jealous over the things within it. But if a Muslim aims for the hereafter and prioritises it over the excess of this material world it would remove jealousy from them. This is because the blessings of the hereafter are unlimited therefore, there is no need to be jealous as there are plenty of blessings to go around in fact, they will never end. But the more one aims and desires the limited things found within the world the more jealous they will become.

Make Things Useful

I had a thought which I wanted to share. In reality, in most cases nothing in this material world in itself is good or bad, such as wealth. What makes a thing good or bad is the way it is used. It is important to understand that the very purpose of everything which was created by Allah, the Exalted, was for it to be used correctly according to the teachings of Islam. When something is not used correctly it in reality becomes useless. For example, wealth is useful in both worlds when it is used correctly such as being spent on the necessities of a person and their dependents. But it can become useless and even a curse for its bearer if it is not used correctly, such as being hoarded or spent on sinful things. Simply hoarding wealth causes wealth to lose value. How can paper and metal coins one tucks away be useful? In this respect, there is no difference between a blank piece of paper and a note of money. It is only useful when it is used correctly.

So if a Muslim desires all their worldly possessions to become a blessing for them in both worlds all they have to do is use them correctly according to the teachings found in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. But if they use them incorrectly then the same blessing will become a burden and curse for them in both worlds. It is as simple as that.

Reliance on Allah (SWT)

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is strange how some Muslims have adopted an attitude whereby they use reliance on Allah, the Exalted, as an excuse to be lazy on those matters which contradict their desires. For example, when these Muslims are told to gain and act on Islamic knowledge so that they correctly obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience, they boldly reply that Allah, the Exalted, is All Merciful and All Forgiving so they hope He will forgive them even if they do not strive in His obedience. Even though Allah, the Exalted, is All Merciful and All Forgiving He has set a system in this universe which requires one to act if they desire to achieve success.

In addition, if they are so certain on the divine attributes of mercy and forgiveness why do they fail to show the same level of reliance on His divine attribute of being the Provider? Meaning, the One who has allocated the provision to the entire creation over fifty thousand years before He created the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748. Why do they not relax at home without claiming benefits or earning through a job in order to obtain their provision and simply rely on Allah, the Exalted, to provide for them the same way they rely on His forgiveness without striving for it? This cherry picking attitude proves their laziness and real incorrect intention. They do not rely on Allah, the Exalted, at all. This attitude must change before one's time comes so that they instead actively obey Allah, the Exalted, and rely internally on His forgiveness and mercy. Only then will a Muslim achieve true success in both worlds.

Superiority and Success

I had a thought which I wanted to share. 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.

Use Your Means

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Unfortunately, some Muslims have adopted a weak characteristic which only hinders them from improving for the better. Namely, they compare their situation and circumstances to others who are facing easier circumstances and use this as an excuse not to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, a person who works full time excuses their lack of striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by comparing themselves to someone who works part time and simply claims it is easier for them to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, as they have more free time. Or a poorer Muslim turns away from giving any form of charity by observing those who possess more wealth and claims that the wealthy person can more easily give charity than them. They fail to understand that these excuses may make their souls feel better but it does not aid them in this world or in the next. Allah, the Exalted, does not desire people to act according to the means of others. He only desires people to act in His obedience according to their own means. For example, a person who works full time can dedicate whatever free time they possess in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, even if that is less than someone who works part time. In this respect what the part timer does has no effect on the one who works full time so using them as an excuse not to strive harder is simply a lame excuse. The poor Muslim should simply donate according to their means even if that is much less than the wealthy person as Allah, the Exalted, will judge them on what they do and He will not judge them according to what other Muslims do.

Muslims should give up these useless excuses and simply obey Allah, the Exalted, according to their own means.

Times of Ease

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, such as attending the Mosques for the congregational prayers or reciting more spiritual exercises in times of difficulty. But in times of ease they often relax and become lazy. But it is important to note, that generally it is more important to be more on guard and increase one's obedience during times of ease than times of difficulty. This is because one often sins more during times of ease than difficulty, such as abandoning their obligatory duties. If one reviews the different misguided people in history, such as Pharaoh and Quroon they will observe that their sins only multiplied during times of ease. Someone who is facing a difficulty where they are stuck and have no option but to patiently wait for relief is less likely to sin as they desire to be relieved of their difficulty. Whereas, a person experiencing times of ease will be in a better position to enjoy and over indulge in worldly things which often leads to sins. For example, a person facing poverty is less likely to sin as many sins require wealth. Whereas, a wealthy person is in an easier position to commit those sins, such as purchasing alcohol or drugs. Therefore, Muslims should take note of this and ensure they maintain or even increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, during times of ease so that they do not fall into sins and disobedience.

In addition, the one who is obedient to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands and refraining from His prohibitions during times of ease will gain the support of Allah, the Exalted, during their times of difficulty which will aid them to overcome them successfully. Chapter 47 Muhammad, verse 7:

“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”

Your Job

I had a thought which I wanted to share. If a person was hired for a specific job, such as painting a house, they are highly unlikely to receive their wages if they decide to do another duty, such as hoovering the house. Even though what they decided to do is not bad but as they have chosen to do a job they were not hired for they will undoubtedly displease their employer. This is simple to understand and accept. Similarly, a Muslim has been commanded to fulfill the commands set out in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, but if they decide to do something else and neglect this duty irrespective of if the thing they decide to do is lawful, such as pursuing the excess of this material world beyond their needs, doing actions which are different from what have been prescribed in the two divine sources or simply unlawful they should not expect to please Allah, the Exalted, as He has made it clear what Muslims should be doing. The same way an employee who decides to do something different should not expect to receive their wages neither should a Muslim who decides to strive for anything other than what they have been told to strive for by Allah, the Exalted. The wages in the case of the Muslim include blessings, mercy and the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. Simply put, if a Muslim desires to obtain these wages they must do their job and not busy themselves with other things which either contradicts their duty or things which are different from their duty.

Useful Time

I had a thought which I wanted to share. There are many Muslims who dedicate much of their time, effort and wealth on things which are neither righteous deeds nor sins meaning, they are vain things. Vain things can also include acquiring unnecessary things, such as beautifying one's home beyond their necessities. Even though, they might be correct in their claim that they are not committing sins it is important to understand a fact. Namely, time is a precious gift from Allah, the Exalted, which cannot be gained once it departs. All other things can be acquired, such as wealth, all other things except time. So when one dedicates their time as well as other blessings such as wealth to unnecessary and extra things meaning, vain things, it will only lead to a great regret on Judgment Day. This will occur when they observe the reward given to those who made use of their time and performed righteous deeds. Time wasters may have avoided sins which save them from punishment but as they wasted time on vain things they may face criticism. And they will surely lose out on the reward they could have gained if they utilised their time and other blessings correctly.

In addition, it is important to understand that the more one indulges in vain things the closer they are to falling into extravagance and waste both of which are blame worthy. For example, those who waste blessings are considered the siblings of the Devil. And it can be argued when one dedicates their time to vain things they have in fact wasted the precious blessing of time. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 27:

“Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils...”

Make Things Easy

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the behaviour of some who always strive to extract their full rights and more from others. In this day and age due to ignorance it has become more difficult to fulfil the rights of people, such as one's parents. Even though a Muslim has no excuse but to strive to fulfil them it is important for Muslims to be merciful with each other. As advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6655, Allah, the Exalted, shows mercy to those who are merciful to others.

One aspect of this mercy is for a Muslim not to demand their full rights from others. Instead, they should use the means such as their physical or financial strength to help themselves and make things easy for others. In some cases, when a Muslim demands their full rights from others and they fail to fulfil them it may lead to their punishment. In order to be merciful to others they should therefore only demand their rights in some cases. This does not mean a Muslim should not strive to fulfil the rights of others but it means they should try to overlook and excuse the people they have rights over. For example, a parent can excuse their adult child from a particular house chore and do it themselves if they possess the means to do so without troubling themselves, especially if their child returns home from work exhausted. This leniency and mercy will not only cause Allah, the Exalted, to be more merciful to them but it will also increase the love and respect people have for them. The one who always demands their full rights is not a sinner but they will lose out on this reward and outcome if they behave in this manner.

Muslims should make things easy for others and hope Allah, the Exalted, will make things easy for them in this world and in the next.

Advise Others Differently

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering about the important duty on all Muslims to command good and forbid evil. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 110:

“You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah...”

Even though, this is an important duty on each Muslim yet they will encounter people who do not seem to listen nor act on the advice given to them. This is quite obvious especially in this day and age. In cases like this it is best not to give up but to consider changing one's technique. Advising others through words is one way of commanding good and forbidding evil but a better way is to advise others through one's actions. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was the greatest teacher as he advised others through his words and actions. This leading by example technique is important to adopt as it is more likely to affect others in a positive way. But those who still fail to accept this technique of commanding good and forbidding evil should be left alone. One should continue showing a practical example but perhaps take a step back from verbally advising them as continuously advising others who do not pay attention can cause both parties to become irritated and angered. This contradicts the very attitude a Muslim should possess when they advise others towards good. It is a sad truth that one should not bother verbally imposing themselves on people who do not care what they have to say. But

they should continue advising others through their actions. In this way one not only helps themselves by refining their own character but also fulfills their duty in commanding good and forbidding evil. Chapter 31 Luqman, verse 17:

“...enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] resolve.”

Step Back and Assess

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the following verse of the Holy Quran: chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 38:

“...And Satan had made pleasing to them their deeds and averted them from the path...”

As mentioned in this verse the Devil fools people into committing sins and making wrong decisions by beautifying the incorrect choice for them. This occurs in situations when a person must make a choice between two or more options. It also occurs when the choice is between the lawful and unlawful and even between two lawful options. If the Devil cannot guide someone to a sin then he attempts to guide them to the inferior option, even if it is lawful, hoping it will lead to some sort of a sin, such as a person complaining about life and destiny. The Devil beautifies a choice by causing one to focus on its apparent benefit to such a degree that they lose focus on the bigger picture and the consequences of the choice. An adult then behaves like a child who makes choices without reflecting over the consequences of their actions. This is one of the main reasons why people commit sins. In reality, if one truly reflected on the punishment of sins they would never commit them.

Something which helps in situations like this is to mentally take a step back and assess the options by comparing their long-term benefits and harms. Only when the lawful benefits of something outweighs the harm should a person proceed. The other thing which helps is to deeply reflect on the consequences of the potential options. Some choices might be lawful but if one goes ahead with them it may make their life difficult in the long run. For example, sometimes people rush into marriage with someone they apparently love. They base their decision solely on their feelings instead of reflecting on other more important aspects, for example, if their potential future spouse will make a good life partner or a good parent and if they will help them in their obedience to Allah, the Exalted. Many marriages have ended in divorce because the couple did not reflect on the long term implications of a potential marriage. Many people often claim their spouse was very different before they got married but in most cases they have not changed at all. The truth is that before marriage they did not spend so much time with them so they did not observe certain characteristics which became obvious after marriage.

Some often rush into action and later have regrets as their choice caused them more trouble and in many cases the issue was not a big deal in the first place. This type of action can only be avoided when one reflects on the situation and observes the bigger picture meaning, the wider and long-term implications and consequences of taking a step forward.

One should not only assess if something is lawful or unlawful before making a decision. Even though, this is the most important thing to consider yet, it is not the only thing. As many lawful incorrect choices, which are beautified by the Devil, can lead to trouble further on in life.

To sum up, before making any choice a person must take a step back and reflect deeply over its lawfulness and its potential long-term benefits and harms under the guidance of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Whoever acts like this will rarely make a wrong choice they later regret.

Paranoia

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a common problem found amongst Muslims. When some face difficulties instead of firstly observing themselves and their behaviour to assess whether they need to change for the better and remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, patiently waiting for relief they instead turn to uneducated and inexperienced people who claim to fix worldly things through spiritual means. These people only cause a Muslim to adopt an illness which is far worse than their initial problem namely, paranoia. These people convince Muslims that their problems have either been caused by supernatural creatures, such as jinns, or by black magic which someone has used against them. Even though jinns do exist it is very rare for them to affect people in their worldly matters. This incorrect advice causes Muslims to become severely paranoid and superstitious over petty things and it even causes them to grow suspicious over their friends and relatives. This only leads to enmity and fractured relationships. This attitude will also damage one's faith in Allah, the Exalted, as they will be advised in many cases to do things which are not advised in the Holy Quran or the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

It is important for Muslims to strengthen their faith through gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge. This will prevent them turning to such foolish people who cannot even fix their own problems let alone fix the problems of others. Strong faith will prevent paranoia affecting them as they will fully rely on Allah, the Exalted, in all situations. Strong faith allows a Muslim to understand that even if the entire creation desired to harm them they will not be able to do so unless Allah, the Exalted, allowed it. Similarly, the

entire creation cannot benefit them unless Allah, the Exalted, wills it. And every case and situation only occurs according to a set and unchangeable plan namely, destiny. This has been advised throughout the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, such as the far reaching Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2516.

To conclude, a Muslim when encountering a problem should firstly assess their own behaviour and rectify it if necessary and then remain obedient to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience and avoid further problems in the form of paranoia by avoiding people who claim to fix worldly problems in spiritual ways.

Helping Others

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Since the passing of the righteous predecessors the strength of the Muslim nation has weakened dramatically. It is logical that the greater the number of people in a group the stronger the group will become yet Muslims have somehow defied this logic. The strength of the Muslim nation has only decreased as the number of Muslims have increased. One of the main reasons this has occurred is connected to chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2 of the Holy Quran:

"...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression..."

Allah, the Exalted, clearly commands Muslims to aid each other in any matter which is good and not support each other in any matter which is bad. This is what the righteous predecessors acted on but many Muslims have failed to follow in their footsteps. Many Muslims now observe who is doing an action instead of observing what they are doing. If the person is linked to them for example, a relative, they support them even if the thing is not good. Similarly, if the person has no relationship with them they turn away from supporting them even if the thing is good. This attitude completely contradicts the traditions of the righteous predecessors. They would support others in good irrespective of who was doing it. In fact, they went so far on acting on this verse of the Holy Quran that they would even support those they did not get on with as long as it was a good thing.

The other thing connected to this is that many Muslims fail to support each other in good as they believe the person they are supporting will gain more prominence than them. This condition has even affected scholars and Islamic educational institutes. They make lame excuses not to aid others in good as they do not have a relationship with them and they fear their own institution will be forgotten and those they help will gain further respect in society. But this is completely wrong as one only needs to turn the pages of history to observe the truth. As long as one's intention is to please Allah, the Exalted, supporting others in good will increase their respect within society. Allah, the Exalted, will cause the hearts of the people to turn to them even if their support is for another organisation, institution or person. For example, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, departed this world Umar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, could have easily challenged for the Caliphate and would have found plenty of support in his favour. But he knew the right thing to do was to nominate Abu Bakkar Siddique, may Allah be pleased with him, as the first Caliph of Islam. Umar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, did not worry about being forgotten by society if he supported another person. He instead obeyed the command in the verse mentioned earlier and supported what was right. This is confirmed in the Hadiths found in Sahih Bukhari numbers 3667 and 3668. The honour and respect of Umar Bin Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, within society only increased by this action. This is obvious to those who are aware of Islamic history.

Muslims must reflect on this deeply, change their mentality and strive to aid others in good irrespective of who is doing it and not hold back fearing their support will cause them to be forgotten within society. Those who obey Allah, the Exalted, will never be forgotten in both this world and the next. In fact, their respect and honour will only grow in both worlds.

Company of the Greats

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the fact that every Muslim openly declares that they desire the companionship of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon him them, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, in the hereafter. They often quote the Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 3688, which advises that a person will be with those they love in the hereafter. And because of this they openly declare their love for these righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted. But it is strange how they desire this outcome and claim love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, yet they barely know him as they are too busy to study his life, character and teachings. This is foolish as how can one truly love someone they do not even know?

In addition, when these people are asked for proof of their love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on Judgment Day what will they say? What will they present? The proof of this declaration is studying and acting on the life, character and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A declaration without this evidence will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious as no one understood Islam better than the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did and this was not their attitude. They declared love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and supported their claim through actions by following in his footsteps. This is why they will be with him in the hereafter.

Those who believe love is in the heart and does not require it to be shown through actions is as foolish as the student who hands back a blank exam paper to their teacher claiming that knowledge is in their mind so they do not need to practically write it down on paper and then still expects to pass.

The one who behaves in such a manner does not love the righteous servants of Allah, the Exalted, only their own desires and they have undoubtedly been fooled by the Devil.

Finally, it is important to note that members of other religions also claim love for their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them. But as they failed to follow in their footsteps and act on their teachings they will certainly not be with them on Judgment Day. This is quite obvious if one ponders over this fact for a moment.

Supporting People

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the things which prevent a person from changing for the better. Unfortunately, some people experience tests and times of ease yet, do not change their character in a positive way. Even though, there are many possible causes only one will be discussed in this chapter.

In some cases, people do not change for the better because the people around them do not encourage them to do so. In fact, many people have this habit of only patting others on the back and telling them what they want to hear. They somehow believe this is the character of a good companion and friend. They falsely believe acting in this way is a sign of their deep love and respect for others. But this is completely incorrect as this behaviour only encourages one to continue with their attitude without improving it. There is nothing wrong with providing emotional comfort to others but a good friend will always kindly point out the ways in which their friend or relative can improve their character. This will in fact improve the quality and condition of their companion's life in this world and in the next. While merely patting others on the back will only provide temporary comfort to them but in no way will it improve the situation or their character. The correct attitude is possible to achieve without disrespecting others. This is the duty of a person towards others especially, their relatives. In reality, if a person's friend or relative dislikes their good advice then they do not value their relationship with them. A person should never let anything, such as a person's age, prevent them from speaking the truth and kindly advising them to change their attitude for the better. Even if it is one's own parents they should still fulfil this duty as this behaviour is the essence of treating them kindly. Simply staying quiet just because they are one's parents

should not be the attitude of a person unless they know advising them will only lead to further problems for everyone.

A shoulder to cry on is only really useful when it leads to a person changing for the better. Even if a person's attitude in a particular situation is correct none the less there are always lessons they can learn from the situation, which should be pointed out to them by others.

To conclude, one must advise others to do good and turn away from evil and not only provide emotional support by simply patting others on the back. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

"...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression..."

Pleasing Everyone

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a common problem most people encounter during their lives. People often complain that no matter how hard they try they cannot seem to please everyone. No matter what situation they are in someone always seems to be displeased with them. This is a reality which all experience whether it is in their family life, work life or with friends. A Muslim should always remember a few simple things which would prevent them from stressing over this issue.

Firstly, the majority of people are not pleased with Allah, the Exalted, even though He granted them countless blessings without being asked to. How then can these people be truly happy with another person who in reality gave them nothing? Their lack of pleasure with Allah, the Exalted, is quite evident from their complaining and the lack of gratitude they show Him.

Secondly, no matter how much a person improves their character they will never reach the sublime character possessed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, yet they were still disliked by some people. If this is the case with them how can a normal person achieve the pleasure of everybody during their life?

A Muslim should also remember that as people were created with different mind-sets they will always find people who disagree with their attitude and behaviour. Because of this there will always be some people who are not pleased with a person at any given point in time. The only one who can come close to pleasing everyone is the two-faced person who changes their attitude and beliefs depending on who they are dealing with. But eventually even this person will be publicly disgraced by Allah, the Exalted.

Therefore, obtaining the pleasure of all people is unattainable and only a foolish person will strive to achieve something which cannot be obtained. A Muslim should therefore strive to prioritise the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, above all else by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This does not mean a Muslim should not be respectful to others as this contradicts the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It means a Muslim should understand that if they obey Allah, the Exalted, He will protect them from the negative attitude and effects of people even if this protection is not obvious to them. But if they prioritise pleasing people they will not achieve it and Allah, the Exalted, will not protect them from the displeasure and negative effects of people.

Things Change with Time

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a thing which people generally complain about, especially parents. During a person's youth due to a lack of responsibilities and sharing a common daily schedule, such as attending the same school, people form strong and close bonds with others, such as siblings or friends. But with the passing of time as the responsibilities of people increase and differ and due to changes in their daily schedule people adopt different characteristics. This causes the bonds between them to weaken and in some cases they become quite distant from one another.

This is often observed in homes which have many siblings or amongst friends. It is important to understand that Allah, the Exalted, created each person with their own unique path in life, which is different from others. This is a sign of His infinite power. Billions of people yet, no two paths are the same. The differences in these paths are the main cause why people drift apart from each other. Best friends become friends only by name. Close siblings become emotionally distant from one another. This is a part of destiny and is truly inevitable. It is important to understand this point as some people can become ungrateful to Allah, the Exalted, because of it. They dislike the changes in their lives which lead to the changes in their relationships with others. But these changes in their lives are something Allah, the Exalted, chose so disliking them is disliking the choice of Allah, the Exalted. A Muslim should instead see things in a positive way. Meaning, they should have hope that one day in the hereafter the strong fellowship they once shared with someone will once again be forged but to a much higher and unbreakable level. This hope should inspire a Muslim to

be more obedient to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience knowing that this outcome will only be granted to His obedient servants. In addition, it will cause a Muslim to desire and supplicate for their companion to also strive harder in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is a righteous deed according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1534. They will also be rewarded for acting on the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515. It advises that a person cannot be a true believer until they love for others what they love for themselves. So adopting this mentality will help a Muslim to avoid ingratitude, strive harder in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted and gain more reward all the while hoping they will once again be blessed with a strong bond they once shared with their companion. Chapter 15 Al Hijr, verse 47:

“And We will remove whatever is in their breasts of resentment, [so they will be] brothers, on thrones facing each other.”

Being Honest when Advising Others

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a strange attitude many people have adopted. When they are questioned about things they are unaware of instead of admitting the truth they give a reply which has little or no foundation in the truth. This can become a serious issue especially in matters connected to Islam. A Muslim may get punished for giving incorrect information which others act on. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351. This is because they ignorantly attributed things to Allah, the Exalted, or the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Because of these people strange beliefs and customs have become attached to Islam which is a great deviation from the truth brought by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. In fact, many of the cultural customs Muslims have adopted believing them to be a part of Islam occurred because of this ignorant mentality.

These people believe that if they simply admit they do not know something they will appear foolish to others. This mentality in itself is extremely foolish as the righteous predecessors would stress the importance of admitting one's ignorance so that others do not become misguided. In fact, the righteous predecessors would only count the person who behaved in this manner as an intelligent person and counted the one who answered every question posed to them a fool.

This attitude is often observed in elders who often advise their children on issues relating to the world and religion instead of admitting their ignorance and directing them to someone who knows the truth. When elders act in this way they fail their duty in rightly guiding their dependents which has been indicated in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928.

Muslims should therefore, gain correct knowledge, whether worldly or religious, before advising others and in cases they are unaware of something they should admit it as this will not reduce their rank in anyway. If anything Allah, the Exalted, and people will appreciate their honesty.

The Material World and the Hereafter

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the material world and the amount of effort most people dedicate to it compared to the effort dedicated to one's religion. If one observes the material world, such as the movie industry, they will find that the people involved dedicate a large amount of effort in order to achieve success. For example, not only do people spend countless hours and millions of pounds making a film but after its completion they dedicate more effort and money publicising it. Celebrities travel around the world for the sake of a meeting or interview which lasts less than hour just to promote their work.

Unfortunately, it is quite obvious that most Muslims do not even dedicate a fraction of this effort in their religious affairs, such as strengthening their own faith or spreading the word of Islam. Social media is full of worldly things which people have dedicated much time and money to which is obvious to anyone who observes it. Whereas, the money and effort dedicated to Islamic education on social media is only a fraction of this. Islam does not teach Muslims to completely abandon the world as it is required in order to gather one's lawful provision. But if a Muslim honestly assesses their own life and daily activities it will be obvious to them that the majority of their effort, wealth and time is dedicated to the material world. It is very rare to observe someone who dedicates the majority of their time to Islam and preparing for the hereafter. If people can dedicate so much effort and money on worldly things, such as making movies, even though these are temporal things Muslims should work even harder for the eternal hereafter. These worldly people dedicate much effort to their worldly projects and therefore obtain success. If Muslims desire real success in this

world and in the next they too must dedicate time and energy in preparing for the hereafter. It is simply foolish to believe that a Muslim can obtain the blessings of this world and the next by either exerting minimal effort or no effort at all in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and facing destiny with patience. If worldly success cannot be achieved without effort how can a Muslim believe they will obtain religious success without effort? Chapter 87 Al A'la, verses 16-17:

“But you prefer the worldly life. While the Hereafter is better and more enduring.”

United Family

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over a problem which affects most Muslim families. With the passing of time they become divided and lose the strong connection they once had with one another. There are many causes of this but a major cause is the foundation on which their connection was formed by their parents and relatives. It is commonly known that when the foundation of a building is weak the building will either get damaged over time or even collapse. Similarly, when the foundation of bonds connecting people are not correct the bonds between them will eventually weaken or even break. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, brought the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, together he formed the bonds between them for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. Whereas, most Muslims today bring people together for the sake of tribalism, brotherhood and to show off to other families. Even though, the majority of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were not related but as the foundation of the bonds connecting them was correct namely, for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, their bonds grew from strength to strength. Whereas, many Muslims nowadays are related by blood yet, with the passing of time become separated as the foundation of their bonds was based on falsehood namely, tribalism and similar things.

Muslims must understand that if desire for their bonds to endure and to earn reward for fulfilling the important duty of upholding the ties of kinship and the rights of non-relatives then they must only forge bonds for the sake of Allah, the Exalted. The foundation of this is that people only connect with one another and act together in a way which is pleasing to Allah, the

Exalted. This has been commanded in the Holy Quran. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

“...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...”

Effects of Intention

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over one of the main reasons why people who do good things, such as buying gifts for others, do not receive the same level of respect and love from people than some who do not do these things. This outcome occurs as a result of their intention. When these people perform righteous deeds in respect to people, such as visiting the sick, they do so either for the sake of people meaning, to please them or they mix this intention by also aiming to please Allah, the Exalted. First of all, the one who acts for the sake of people will gain no reward from Allah, the Exalted. They will be told to gain their reward from the people they acted for on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154. Scholars are divided on whether those who mix their intention by aiming to please Allah, the Exalted, and people will receive a partial reward or none at all. In order to be on the safe side a wise Muslim should only act for the sake of Allah, the Exalted.

On the other hand, the other people who gain more respect and love from others do so because they solely act for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. When they treat others kindly they do not do it for the sake of people. Because of their sincerity Allah, the Exalted, places more love and respect in the hearts of the people compared to those who do more acts of kindness to people but are less sincere in their deeds.

So if people desire reward from Allah, the Exalted, and respect from people they should correct their intention and only perform righteous deeds for the

sake of Allah, the Exalted. One sign of this correct intention is that this person will aim to please Allah, the Exalted, even if it displeases people. Meaning, they do not pay attention to the attitude and reactions of people.

Not a Controller

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to understand an important point in respect to advising others. It is the duty of Muslims to advise others towards good and forbid evil but a Muslim should not behave as if they have been put in charge as controllers over others. This attitude only leads to anger and bitterness especially, when others do not follow their advice. It is best for Muslims to discharge their duty by advising others but they should avoid stressing over the outcome of their advice meaning, whether the person acts on their advice or not. If Allah, the Exalted, advised the greatest teacher and guide of mankind namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, not to stress over the outcome in many places of the Holy Quran how can a Muslim claim or behave as if they have been put in charge of others. Chapter 88 Al Ghashiyah, verses 21-22:

“So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller.”

The Muslim who behaves as a controller will not only become bitter when people fail to follow their advice but it can lead them to giving up advising others which is a duty on all Muslims according to their ability.

In addition, this attitude will also cause Muslims to neglect themselves and their own duties as they are too busy concerning themselves with the duties of others. Therefore, Muslims should remain firm in commanding good and forbidding evil but refrain from observing and bothering about the outcome of their advice.

Worldly Knowledge

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to understand that their worldly knowledge irrespective of how much they possess is not enough to gain success in their religious life. Even though, gaining useful worldly knowledge is praiseworthy according to the teachings of Islam as it is an excellent means for one to obtain lawful provision for themselves and their dependents yet, it is not enough to safely guide them through their religious life. For example, in most cases, worldly knowledge will not teach someone how to safely journey through a difficulty or a test in a way which pleases Allah, the Exalted, so that they gain reward in both worlds. The obligatory duties and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, cannot be acted on by a Muslim who only possesses worldly knowledge. In fact, religious knowledge has the power to guide one to success in both worlds whereas worldly knowledge will only aid someone in this world. The one who possesses religious knowledge will adhere to the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, which will result in such blessings and grace that they will find success in both worlds. Whereas, worldly knowledge will inspire one to deduce their own path in religion instead of acting according to the teachings of the rightly guided namely, the righteous predecessors. Religion is not about creating one's own path it is simply to adhere to Islamic teachings.

Unfortunately, many Muslims who possess worldly knowledge do not realise this important point which only reduces their chances of achieving success in both worlds. Therefore, Muslims should strive to obtain and act on both religious and useful worldly knowledge if they desire success in

both worlds. This is why gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all Muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

How to Win

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to understand a simple yet profound lesson namely, they will never succeed in this world or the next in worldly or religious matters through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. Since the dawn of time to this age and till the end of time no person has ever achieved true success nor will they ever through the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. This is quite obvious when one turns the pages of history. Therefore, when a Muslim is in a situation which they desire to achieve a positive and successful outcome from they should never choose to disobey Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how tempting or easy it may seem to be. Even if one is advised by their close friends and relatives to do so as there is no obedience to the creation if it means disobedience to the Creator. And in truth they will never be able to protect them from Allah, the Exalted, and His punishment in either this world or the next. The same way Allah, the Exalted, grants success to those who obey Him He removes a successful outcome from those who disobey Him even if this removal takes time to witness. A Muslim should not be fooled as this will occur sooner or later. The Holy Quran has made it extremely clear that an evil plan or action only encompasses the doer even if this punishment is delayed. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 43:

“...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...”

Therefore, no matter how difficult the situation and choice Muslims should always choose the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, in both worldly and

religious matters as this alone will lead to true success in both worlds even if this success is not obvious immediately.

Eternal Rest

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important to understand that even though people strive in this material world in order to achieve peace of mind it is not possible to achieve in this world as it has not been placed in the material world. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."

Even though this fact eludes many it is quite obvious that the more one strives in this material world the more doors they open to the material world. Fulfilling one worldly task leads to ten others. So a person moves from one preoccupation to another with the no end in sight until they depart this world. The only way to obtain some peace in this world is through the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This Muslim will be granted peace of mind by Allah, the Exalted. But even then it is important to understand that true lasting peace of mind is only found in the hereafter. This is because no matter how good someone's life is even if they reach a point where they have no worldly or religious responsibilities as they have discharged them all and they have no other things to deal with even then, the reality of death, the grave and Judgment Day will prevent them from obtaining true lasting peace. Therefore, a Muslim should understand this reality as it helps one to remain patient when dealing with life and what it brings and it encourages a Muslim to strive in preparation for the hereafter

so that they can achieve true lasting peace by obtaining the gardens of refuge and an eternal resting place.

Agree to Disagree

I had a thought which I wanted to share. As all people have not been created the same they are bound to disagree on certain things. In matters related to religion and those which differentiate between lawful and unlawful things a Muslim must remain steadfast on the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of who challenges or disagrees with them. But in matters where the choice is between lawful worldly options a Muslim is entitled to offer their opinion to others when they are requested to. But they should not waste their time nor stress if others disagree with their opinion. When one holds onto these disagreements over time they can cause enmity to build up between people which can lead to fractured and broken relationships. This can even result in the sin of severing ties with people. So in cases like this it is important for Muslims to let things go and not harbour a negative feeling towards someone who disagrees with their opinion and choice. They should instead push themselves to agree to disagree and move on from the situation without any ill feelings. The one who fails to do this will find themselves always arguing and possessing enmity for others as they are bound to disagree with others on certain topics and issues due to a difference in their characteristics and mentality. Understanding and acting on this advice is a branch of finding peace in this world.

Giving Advice

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to offer advice correctly and sincerely as this is an aspect of Islam according to a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4204. In lawful matters an aspect of this is that a Muslim should give advice based on the character of the one seeking the advice instead of basing it on their own character. This is in fact a tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who gave different advice when questioned about the same thing from different people. This is important as people are different and what one person finds bearable another might not so it is best to give advice based on the questioner's character. This attitude will reduce the chances of one giving a biased opinion which is tailored to their own character and way of life.

In addition, in lawful matters in most cases it is best not to directly advise people what to do instead they should be advised and aided in putting together a list of pros and cons to each possible choice and then make an informed decision based on this list. This will most likely lead to a better and satisfactory outcome and it prevents a person blaming their advisor in the future as they did not advise them directly by telling them to choose a specific option.

Finally, a person should never be ashamed of admitting they are unsure about a matter and should advise others to seek advice from someone more qualified if necessary.

Avoiding Bitterness

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is important for Muslims to fulfil the rights people have over them, such as their parents, according to the teachings of Islam. But they should not do this for the sake of people nor should they go overboard in their duties by crossing the limits set by Allah, the Exalted. One should instead act only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and stay within the limits set by Him when fulfilling their duties to others. For example, they should not disobey Allah, the Exalted, in the process of pleasing people. The problem with dedicating one's life and efforts to people, even if no sins are committed, is that a day will certainly come when this person will realise that they dedicated so much effort to people but in return obtained nothing significant from them, such as gratitude. This attitude leads to bitterness towards life and people. If one persists on this attitude they will eventually fail in their duties towards Allah, the Exalted, and especially those duties towards people. On the other hand when one acts for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, irrespective of how little gratitude people show them they will not become bitter as they acted for and hope reward from Allah, the Exalted. If one's intention is sincere this will prevent bitterness as they seek payback for their efforts from Allah, the Exalted, not people. People might let them down through a lack of gratitude whereas Allah, the Exalted, will reward them beyond their expectations.

True Mercy

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Throughout the Holy Quran and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, Muslims have been advised to be merciful to others. For example, a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1924, advises that those who show mercy to the creation will be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted.

It is important to note, that showing mercy is not only through one's actions, such as donating wealth to the poor. It in fact encompasses every aspect of one's life and interaction with others, such as one's words. This is why Allah, the Exalted, warns those who show mercy to others by donating charity that failing to show mercy through their speech, such as counting their favours done to others, only cancels their reward. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 264:

“O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders [of it] or injury...”

True mercy is shown in everything: one's facial expression, one's glance and the tone of their speech. This was the full mercy shown by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and is therefore how Muslims must act.

In addition, showing mercy is so important that Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear in the Holy Quran that even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, possessed countless beautiful and noble characteristics yet, the one which attracted the hearts of people towards him and Islam was mercy. Chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 159:

“So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you...”

It clearly warns that without mercy people would have fled from the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. If this was the case in respect to him even though he possessed countless other beautiful characteristics how can Muslims, who do not possess such noble characteristics, expect to have a positive impact on others, such as their children, without showing true mercy?

Simply put, Muslims should treat others how they wish to be treated by Allah, the Exalted, and others, which is undoubtedly with true and full mercy.

In Your Hands

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Islam teaches Muslims that every blessing they possess, such as wealth or children, should be contained in their hand not their heart. An excellent way of achieving this is that each blessing should be used according to the commands of Allah, the Exalted, not one's own desire. For example, one should strive to only spend their wealth on things commanded and recommended by Islam, such as a person's own necessities and on the necessities of their dependents while avoiding waste, extravagance and excessiveness. This attitude will prevent one from becoming attached to the blessing meaning, it will ensure the blessing remains in their hands instead of their heart. This is an important concept to understand and act on as it prevents one from becoming too attached to the blessing. As each worldly blessing is bound to pass away this attitude will prevent one from becoming overly sad meaning, becoming grieved and depressed when it eventually does. Keeping the blessing in one's hand might lead to sadness when one eventually loses it but this sadness is acceptable in Islam and does not lead to impatience and mental disorders, such as depression, which severe sadness namely, grief, leads to.

In addition, this attitude prevents one from misusing the blessing which often occurs when it is within one's heart instead of their hands. For example, unnecessarily hoarding wealth and greedily amassing more. This concept has been indicated in chapter 57 Al Hadid, verse 23:

“In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...”

Keeping things in one's hand instead of their heart will ensure they always remember that the blessing belongs to Allah, the Exalted, and not them. This again prevents impatience when one eventually loses it. This has been indicated in chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 156:

“Who, when disaster strikes them, say, “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.”

So a Muslim must strive to use each blessing according to the teachings of Islam thereby, ensuring it remains in their hands instead of their heart which in fact should contain only the love of Allah, the Exalted.

Dependency

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is quite common for people to become dependent on others, such as their family. Even though, having hope in people is not a sin but as they are imperfect a Muslim always runs the risk of being let down, in fact it is inevitable. They should instead strive to rely on Allah, the Exalted. This is only achieved through his obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as a Muslim who is disobedient will not depend on Allah, the Exalted. They should then fulfil their duties in respect of the creation without expecting or hoping in anything in return from them. This will aid in eliminating their dependency on them. Allah, the Exalted, has made it crystal clear that whoever correctly depends on Him through His sincere obedience will be sufficed from all issues they might face in both worlds. Chapter 65 At Talaq, verse 3:

“...And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him...”

As Allah, the Exalted, is firm on His promises when one depends on Him they too will become steadfast and firm when facing difficulties. But if they rely on people who are prone to change with the passing of time they will become fickle and fail to remain steadfast.

The stronger one's helper and refuge the stronger they will become. If a Muslim seeks refuge with Allah, the Exalted, who has power over all things, through sincere obedience, they will become empowered to overcome all difficulties. But if they seek refuge and depend on people, who by their nature are weak, they too will become weak in the face of difficulties. This is like a person who seeks refuge in a strong fortified castle during a storm and another who seeks refuge in a straw hut. It does not take a genius to determine who is more likely to overcome the difficulty of the storm successfully.

Life is Like a Holiday

I had a thought which I wanted to share. When people, irrespective of their faith, go on holiday they only pack the things they need and maybe a little extra but they try to avoid over packing. Even the amount of money they take with them they limit in respect to their stay abroad. When they arrive they often stay in a hotel which usually has the main necessities of living with a few extras. If they believe they will never return to the same destination in the future they will never buy a house as they will claim their stay is short and they will not return. They do not get a job during their holiday claiming that their stay is short so they do not need to earn more money. They do not get married nor have children claiming the holiday destination is not their homeland where they would get married and have children. Generally speaking, this is the attitude and mind-set of holiday makers.

It is strange how Muslims truly believe they will depart from this world soon meaning, their stay in the world is temporary just like being on holiday, and they believe their stay in the hereafter will be permanent yet, they do not adequately prepare for it. If they truly realised the short time they have, similarly to a holiday, they would not dedicate too much effort on their homes and instead be content with a simple home just like the traveller who is content with a simple hotel. So in reality, this world is like the holiday destination in the example yet, Muslims do not treat it like one. Instead, they dedicate the majority of their efforts in beautifying their world while neglecting the eternal hereafter. It is sometimes hard to believe some Muslims actually believe in the permanent hereafter when one observes the amount of effort they dedicate to the temporal world. Muslims should

therefore strive in preparing for the hereafter by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience while being pleased with obtaining and utilising the necessities of this world. It is why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised Muslims to live in this world as travellers in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6416. They should not take this world as a permanent home and instead treat it like a holiday destination.

Building Trust in Allah (SWT)

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often question how they can build up and strengthen their trust in Allah, the Exalted, especially during difficulties. One of the main ways of doing this is through the sincere obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. This is because the one who is disobedient to Allah, the Exalted, will always believe Allah, the Exalted, will not help them which in turn weakens their trust in Him. Whereas, the obedient Muslim will firmly believe that as they have fulfilled their duties Allah, the Exalted, will definitely respond to them in their moment of need which in turn strengthens their trust in Allah, the Exalted.

In addition, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7405, advises that Allah, the Exalted, responds to a person according to their perception of Him. The disobedient person will always have negative thoughts about Allah, the Exalted, because of their disobedience. Whereas, an obedient Muslim will always have positive thoughts about Allah, the Exalted, because of their obedience. This thinking can weaken or strengthen a Muslim's trust in Allah, the Exalted. The obedient Muslim trusts that if they fulfilled their side of a business contract their business partner would do the same. Similarly, an obedient Muslim trusts that as they through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, have fulfilled their duties Allah, the Exalted, will fulfil His promises by aiding them throughout their life especially, through difficulties. Whereas, the one who does not fulfil their side of a business contract would not trust or hope that their business partner will fulfil their side. Similarly, a disobedient person would not trust that Allah, the Exalted, would aid them as they failed to fulfil their duties.

To conclude, having and building trust in Allah, the Exalted, is directly linked to His obedience. The more one is obedient the more they will trust in Him. The less they are obedient they less they will trust in Him.

Special Days

I had a thought which I wanted to share. It is commonly observed that in the special days and nights of the Islamic year, such as the night of power, which is considered to be on the 27th night of the Islamic month of Ramadan according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 1386, Muslims come out in droves and inhabit the Mosques or pray more at home. Even though, this is a good thing it is important to understand that a Muslim should not only behave in this manner on the special days and nights of the Islamic year. They should instead respect each day and night throughout the whole year by fulfilling their duties in them without neglect. They should never believe the worship of one day or night in the year will make up for their neglect of the rest of year as this is completely untrue and a trick of the Devil. Being a Muslim is a 24/7 duty it is not a duty which extends only on certain days and nights. Meaning, a Muslim must fulfil their duties in respect to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions, face destiny with patience and fulfil the rights of people every day of their life according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Cherry picking certain days and nights is a major reason why Muslims feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted, as they only turn to Him occasionally. The truth is simple, what Muslims dedicate to Allah, the Exalted, is what they will receive in return. If they only dedicate a few days or nights in the year to Him then they should not expect a great return. Islam does not demand one to pray all night instead it demands Muslims to fulfil their obligatory duties and as much of the established traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as possible. This does not take much time up and leaves one with plenty of time to do other things as well.

In reality, the one who does not respect every day and night by fulfilling their duties in them will find that even the special days and nights are just ordinary days and nights for them. But the one who respects every day and night will find that every day and night is like the special days and nights, like the night of power, for them. Meaning, Allah, the Exalted, will bless them just like He blesses them on the special days and nights in the Islamic year.

Teaching and Learning

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Even though the amount of Islamic scholars, lecturers and Islamic educational material has increased over time yet, the strength of Muslims has only decreased. There are many factors for this. One of the main reasons is that many scholars have not adopted the correct intention when teaching others. Instead of following in the footsteps of the righteous predecessors by teaching only for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, they taught for other reasons such as to gain popularity and worldly things. For example, they often strive to be in the spotlight of gatherings and events and are not pleased with a seat which is to one side they instead desire a central seat. When their intention became like this Allah, the Exalted, removed the positive effect of their speeches and therefore they have little positive influence over their listeners.

Another factor is that the intention of the listeners is not correct. They attend lectures not for sake of Allah, the Exalted, and changing for the better instead many only attend lectures searching for a spiritual high just like a music concert. They seek entertainment not reformation. They please themselves by claiming they are working hard in order to act on Islamic teachings by attending many events and gatherings yet, because of their attitude they do not change for the better by acting on the lessons they have heard. They believe merely listening is good enough to please Allah, the Exalted, and to succeed. It is why some attend lectures for decades yet do not change at all for the better.

Finally, many of the scholars failed to act on what they preach. For example, they teach others to unite yet they are disconnected from other scholars and fail to aid other scholars and institutions in good as they fear they will be forgotten if they do so. They advise others to turn away from the material world yet, they are the most engrossed in it. Even though, they claim to be detached in their hearts, which in most cases is not true, they still have deviated from the tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who was the most detached from this world both outwardly and inwardly. They should have shown a practical example instead of saying one thing and doing another. This caused their teachings to become ineffective.

When Others Depart

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Every day people lose their loved ones. It is an inevitable outcome. A Muslim can remember and act on many things which can aid them during this difficulty. One thing is to observe the situation in a positive way. Meaning, instead of being sad over what one has lost they should concentrate on the good things that they gained through the person who has departed, such as their good advice and guidance. When one reflects on this they will understand that it was better to know the person before losing them instead of not knowing them at all. It is similar to the statement, it is better to have loved and lost than not loved at all. Though in most cases, this statement is taken out of context and misused but when used in this way it is correct and helpful.

In addition, a Muslim who undoubtedly believes in the hereafter should always remember that people do not meet in this world only to leave each other. But instead they only leave this world in order to meet again in the next world. This attitude can aid one in remaining patient during such a difficulty. And it should inspire them to increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience so that they can reunite with their loved one in their final resting place in the gardens of refuge, forever.

Be Neutral

I had a thought which I wanted to share. Muslims often claim that as they are very busy in their worldly activities they find it difficult to do voluntary righteous deeds especially, those related to people, such as physically supporting someone. Even though Muslims should strive to perform as much voluntary righteous deeds as possible as it will benefit them in both worlds whereas, their worldly activities will only benefit them in this world none the less, the least these Muslims should do is adopt a neutral mentality towards others. This means that if a Muslim cannot help others they should not hinder them in their lawful and good activities. If they cannot make others happy they should not make them sad. If they cannot make others laugh they should not make them cry. This can be applied to countless scenarios. This is important to understand as many Muslims might do good to others, such as provide them emotional support, but at the same time they destroy their good deeds by being negative towards people. It is important to note, if a Muslim is excessive in being negative towards others it may cause them to be hurled into Hell on Judgment Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. Having a neutral mentality is actually a good deed when done for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 250.

To conclude, it is best to treat others in a positive way which is a sign of a true believer according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2515. But if they cannot do this the least they should do is treat others in a neutral way. As treating others in a negative way may well lead to one's destruction.

Three Types of Muslims

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over the different types of Muslims in this world and their behaviour. According to this thought Muslims can be split into three groups. The first group are the best and consist of the Muslims who hand their lives and possessions over to Allah, the Exalted, thereby fulfilling the purpose of their creation. They only take from the material world in order to fulfil their necessities and responsibilities and dedicate the rest of their efforts in gaining and acting on knowledge so that they can strengthen their faith and gain the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in both worlds. Outwardly they may seem as if they do not enjoy life in this world but in reality they obtain more peace in it than the other types of Muslims. Their reckoning on Judgment Day will be easy through the mercy of Allah, the Exalted.

The second group consists of those Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties and whatever traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they come across without putting extra effort in obtaining or acting on Islamic knowledge. They dedicate the majority of their efforts to gaining and enjoying the lawful pleasures of this world. As they avoid the unlawful it is hoped they will gain the forgiveness of Allah, the Exalted, in the next world. But as they indulged in the material world their accountability will be long. And as warned by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6536, whoever has their deeds scrutinised will be punished. Standing and witnessing the horrors of the Day of Judgment for an extremely long time because of one's enjoyment in the world is a form of punishment.

The final group of Muslims are the worse type as they do not dedicate their lives to Allah, the Exalted, like the best group but neither do they enjoy the lawful pleasures of the material world like the second group. These people instead hoard the worldly things they obtain without fulfilling their lawful desires. This attitude causes them to stand between the two other groups meaning, they will not enjoy the lawful things of this world nor will they have an easy reckoning on the Day of Judgment because of the worldly things they obtained.

It is therefore important for Muslims not to belong to this final group as this is a clear loss. A Muslim should try to belong to the best group but if they really cannot manage this then they should at least join the second group by fulfilling their obligatory duties, enjoy only the lawful pleasures of this world and hope for the forgiveness and mercy of Allah, the Exalted.

Saying Goodbye

I had a thought which I wanted to share. I was pondering over how the human heart was created in such a way that it must have something in it, it can never be empty. Meaning, it must attach to and love something. This is quite obvious if one reflects on this point for a moment. Some people love other people, some love animals, some their career and others love other things. But no matter how much a person loves something eventually a day will come where they will have to say goodbye. Whether this is done voluntarily for example, a person retiring from their career, or forcefully such as death cutting one off from their beloved. It is the reason why some of those who separated from what they loved while they were alive, such as an athlete retiring from their sport, became bitter as their heart and mind continued being attached to their beloved thing but their body could no longer keep up with it. They become bitter as their moment in the spotlight passes and they are forced to move on from their love. This is a universal principle which applies to all irrespective of one's belief or social status. But the only love which strengthens with time and in death is the sincere love for Allah, the Exalted. There is no goodbye for the one who possesses this love only anticipation for the destined meeting which is beyond words to describe. This love only strengthens with the passing of time while all other bonds weaken and eventually break. Therefore, a Muslim should fulfil their duty and responsibilities in respect to the creation but only truly love Allah, the Exalted, through sincere obedience to Him which involves fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. The one who achieves this will never need to say goodbye. Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verses 27-28:

"[To the righteous it will be said], "O reassured soul. Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]."

Prophetic Life

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. When one observes the blessed life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will clearly see that he was tested every step of his life, even though he was the most beloved creation of Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, a test and difficulty is not a curse or a sign of a wretched life. It is in fact an opportunity for a person to shine and accumulate an abundant reward. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 10:

"...the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e., limit]."

One must bear this in mind whenever they face tests and difficulties so that they can remain patient and grateful, like he did.

Furthermore, even though the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, faced continuous difficulties and tests yet throughout every stage his heart was at peace. This peace was obtained as he persistently used the blessings he was granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace."

And chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”

But the one who fails to imitate him will find nothing but a dark and suffocating life, even if they have the world at their feet. Chapter 20 Taha, verse 124:

“But whoever turns away from My Reminder will certainly have a miserable life...”

Therefore, using the blessings one has been granted correctly is the difference between obtaining peace of mind and a miserable life, even if one faces difficulties or times of ease.

In addition, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, dedicated his life to guiding mankind towards the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. It is important for Muslims to follow in the footsteps of his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, who remained steadfast on his teachings after his passing. All Muslims desire his company in the hereafter but they will only receive it if they follow his path. A person will

not end up with their companion who journeyed along a specific path if they journey down a different path. Similarly, Muslims will not join the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in the hereafter if they walk a path other than his. This is only achieved by learning and acting on his blessed life and teachings. This is the reason why none of his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, simply declared belief with their words and refrained from practically following him, as they knew this attitude would prevent them from joining him in the hereafter. This was in fact the attitude of the other nations who claim to love their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, yet fail to practically follow them. This is why they will not join their Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, in the hereafter.

Also, when observing the blessed life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and by extension the lives of his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, one understands that the only way a person can have a meaningful, valuable and purposeful existence is by fulfilling the purpose of their creation. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

This is only achieved when one practically obeys Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Him, which is explained by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Simply declaring faith verbally without supporting it with physical actions is like a vase which looks beautiful outwardly but is hollow inside. This will not lead to a meaningful existence in this life, even if one ends up in

Paradise in the hereafter. This is hinted in a Hadith found in At Tabarani's, Al Mu'jam Al Kabir, Hadith 182, Volume 20, which warns that the only thing a person will regret in Paradise are the times during their life on Earth when they did not remember Allah, the Exalted. Meaning, the times during their life they did not fulfil their purpose of creation by correctly using the blessings they were granted. This is the reason why many Muslims, who only fulfill the basic obligatory duties, still feel a void in their lives, a void that nothing can fulfill except embracing one's purpose completely and practically.

In addition, generally speaking, people become pleased when they inherit worldly things, such as wealth from others. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not leave behind wealth for people to inherit. He, like the other Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, left behind knowledge. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 223. Therefore, Muslims must take a share of this inheritance if they desire to be his true heirs.

Finally, the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the perfect example of how a Muslim must fulfil their duties to Allah, the Exalted, and to the creation. He is the practical representation of the Holy Quran.

Therefore, Muslims must study and act on his blessed life in order to fulfil their duties correctly. Success is not possible without this. Chapter 33 Al Ahzab, verse 21:

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”

And chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 31:

“Say, [Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...””

And chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 80:

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...”

And chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 7:

“...And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from...”

The Final Divine Revelation

I had a thought, which I wanted to share. Countless lessons which effects a Muslim's religious and worldly life can be learned from the Holy Quran. But the first thing to note is that it will only benefit someone who fulfils its three aspects with sincerity. The first aspect is sincerely reciting it correctly and regularly. The second aspect is to understand it. And the final aspect is to sincerely act on its teachings according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

One of the main teachings of the Holy Quran is for people to understand and strive to fulfil the purpose of their creation namely, to prepare for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted on Judgment Day.

In respect to a non-Muslim, when one fails to recognize this purpose they will not understand why they were created and placed on this Earth. This will cause them to incorrectly prioritize the things and people in their life. They will give importance to things which are not so important. They will end up dedicating their lives to things, which in respect to the bigger picture, are pointless. Their eating, drinking, happiness and sadness will revolve around these things. Some will reach such a low level that even other non-Muslims will declare that their life is aimless and has no real purpose or meaning. For example, many dedicate their lives and their efforts to drama, entertainment, sports, animals, plants and their careers. Even though dedicating one's efforts towards a lawful career is a good thing yet it must never become one's ultimate aim in life. This type of

person will not fulfil their purpose and instead lead an aimless and empty life. They will misuse the blessings they have been granted which prevents them from obtaining peace of mind and body. This is one of the main reasons why people who have obtained much worldly success end up depressed and suicidal. The one who believes their life is valuable and has meaning will never contemplate suicide. This contemplation in itself is proof that the lives of these types of people are aimless, even if they obtained much worldly success, as they did not understand nor fulfil the purpose of their creation. Chapter 59 Al Hashr, verse 19:

“And be not like those who forgot Allāh, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.”

And chapter 20 Taha, Verse 124:

“But whoever turns away from My Remembrance will certainly have a miserable life...”

In respect, to Muslims who only fulfil the basic obligatory duties of Islam without dedicating any effort towards studying and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will fail to truly understand their purpose of creation and their purpose on this Earth, as this cannot be understood through the basic obligatory duties. As a result they will dedicate less than

an hour of a day to preparing for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted, as the obligatory duties do not take long to complete. Even this, in most cases, is based on blind imitation of others such as their family. They will not truly understand why they fulfil these duties because of a lack of knowledge and weakness of faith.

Without the Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, their focus will be solely on this world and enjoying its blessings, as they see nothing except this world. Then in this respect, there is not much difference between them and non-Muslims as their aspirations, hopes, fears, desires, aims and purpose will be the same. This is obvious when one observes these types of Muslims and their activities in between their obligatory duties. This does not mean they will go to Hell. In fact, as they fulfilled their obligatory duties and avoided the major sins it is hoped they will obtain Paradise. But because of this attitude, meaning, failing to understand and work towards their purpose, they will never find true peace in this world as they will not use their worldly blessings in the correct way, even if they use them in lawful ways, as their whole focus is solely on this world and its enjoyments, as they see nothing except this world. Chapter 20 Taha, Verse 124:

“But whoever turns away from My Remembrance will certainly have a miserable life...”

This remembrance involves using the blessings one has been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted. This is only possible when one

understands their own purpose and the purpose of the worldly blessings they have been granted.

Failing to behave in this manner is the main reason why many Muslims who fulfil their obligatory duties often complain about mental problems such as depression, as they have not remembered Allah, the Exalted, in the correct way, which leads to peace in both worlds. Chapter 13 Ar Ra'd, verse 28:

“...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”

Even if these Muslims end up in Paradise, because of their behaviour they completely missed the point of why they were put on this Earth. Their example is that of students who are set a mock exam by their teacher. Some students work diligently to prepare for it, whereas other students do not take it seriously and barely revise for it. Even if both types of students pass the exam the teacher will only be pleased with those who prepared for it, as they alone have understood the purpose of the mock exam. Its purpose was to put the students in the right frame of mind so that they are ready to tackle their real exams. Those who failed to prepare for their mock exams might have passed but they completely missed the point and purpose of the mock exam. This is the example of the Muslims who fail to understand the purpose of being on this Earth but through blind imitation of others they end up in Paradise. They are like a beautifully decorated vase which is hollow inside. Due to their lowly worldly aspirations they do not achieve the great station and purpose they were granted by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 95 At Tin, verses 4-6:

“We have certainly created man in the best of stature. Then We return him to the lowest of the low. Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds...”

This prevents them from obtaining peace in this world, as the one who possesses lowly aspirations will stress over petty and unimportant things. They will dedicate most of their efforts to worldly gain, which will not benefit them in either this world or the next. Chapter 18 Al Kahf, verses 103-104:

“Say, “Shall we inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.””

In respect to those who strive to study and act on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. They will be granted a special perception in which to look at the world and their existence in it. This perception will allow them to see the purpose of their creation and their purpose on this Earth. Namely, to prepare for their meeting with Allah, the Exalted, on Judgment Day. This perception will make them understand that this world and the blessings in it are only a means to which they can reach the hereafter safely. Meaning, the world and the things in it are not an end in itself. This will encourage them to use every blessing they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the

Exalted, as they understand that peace and success in both worlds lies only in this. Chapter 16 An Nahl, verse 97:

“Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life...”

They will prioritize everything and everyone within their life correctly according to Islamic teachings. They will give value to what is valuable and disregard what should be disregarded. Their example is of a librarian who organizes their great library of books in the correct order so that they can easily find the book they desire without any stress. Whereas, the one who does not prioritize things and people in their life correctly, according to the teachings of Islam, is like the librarian who arranges their large collection of books in a random order. As a result finding a single book becomes a nightmare and source of stress for them, as they misplaced all their books. Similarly, the one who misplaces the worldly blessings, such as wealth and people, they have been granted will find nothing but stress from them. This is the one who does not understand the purpose of their creation and their purpose on this Earth. This is the one who does not perceive the hereafter, even if they fulfil the basic obligatory duties.

As mentioned earlier, the perception the Holy Quran grants a person will make them understand that all the worldly blessings they have been granted are a means to an end and not an end in itself. Therefore, they will never be adversely affected by what they gain, lose or fail to obtain in this world, as all things are only a means. The means are not important, only the end is. Unlike those who fail to adopt the correct perception, through

understanding and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they will not be bothered with the things they do not obtain in this world as they understand that anything they do not obtain in this world will be granted to them in the hereafter in a perfect and permanent way. This perception will allow them to observe the world as if it is a drop compared to the endless ocean of the hereafter, just like the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4108. Therefore, they will not care if they lose the drop as they are literally standing at the shore of an ocean, meaning, the hereafter. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 77:

“...Say, "The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allāh...”

This does not mean that this type of person abandons the world. Rather, they use the blessings they have been granted in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, thereby obtaining peace and success in both worlds.

In reality, it is this perception, which is rooted in gaining and acting on Islamic knowledge, that made the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the best of all creation, as they understood why Allah, the Exalted, created them and worked hard to fulfil it. The great Companion Abdullah Bin Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, confirmed that the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were the best because they were more detached from the material world

than anyone else and they desired the hereafter more than anyone else. This has been discussed in Imam Abu Na'im Al-Asfahani's, *Hilyat Ul Awliya Wa Tabaqat Al Asfiya*, Narration 278. This attitude was due to the perception they were granted.

Through this perception and understanding their lives became complete, purposeful and meaningful. Through their perception their aspirations touched the highest Heavens and as a result they became great as they understood and strived to fulfil the purpose of their creation. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 162:

"Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allāh, Lord of the worlds.""

Whereas, those whose vision was restricted to this lowly world became lowly, even if they obtained it all. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 24:

"The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought."

It is this perception and understanding the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, grants the one who sincerely strives to understand and act on them. The one who misses out on this has failed to understand the purpose of their creation and the purpose of being on this Earth, even if they obtain Paradise in the Hereafter.

The three types of people discussed above has been summarized in the Holy Quran as well. Chapter 56 Al Waqi'ah, verses 1-11:

“When the Occurrence occurs...And you become [of] three kinds. Then the companions of the right - what are the companions of the right? And the companions of the left - what are companions of the left? And the forerunners, the forerunners. Those are the ones brought near [to Allāh].”

Finally, one should always bear in mind that the teachings of the Holy Quran are summarized in chapter 1 Fatihah. And the summary of chapter 1 Al Fatihah is that each person has been given blessings by Allah, the Exalted. The one who uses these blessings in ways pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, will obtain peace and success in both worlds. Whereas, the one who misuses them will obtain divine anger and ultimately lose in both worlds. When one adopts the correct perception through the Islamic teachings this lesson becomes clear. Chapter 1 Al Fatihah, verses 6-7:

“Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”

So strive to catchup to the forerunners through adopting this perception and understanding by learning and acting on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, for time in this world is limited and the call to depart is at hand. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 45:

“And on the Day when He will gather them, [it will be] as if they had not remained [in the world] but an hour of the day...”

And chapter 3 Alee Imran, verse 185:

“Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]. And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.”

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