



An Islamic Treasury of Virtues

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	2
Foreword.....	34
1. god’s people.....	36
Those who show mercy will be dealt with mercifully	36
Whatever happens is the will of God	36
Remaining steadfast in the face of persecution	36
The most worthwhile work is preaching the word of God.....	37
The preacher of God’s word wishes people well, no matter how they treat him	37
A good deed is of no value if it makes one proud.....	38
Of all actions, the most sublime is remembrance of God.....	38
An able and righteous man – the most treasured asset	39
Qualities of leadership	40



Table of Contents

What those who sit with leaders should be like	41
Sycophantic subordinates portend disaster	42
Lip service is not proof of real attachment.....	42
Even self-sacrifice is of no value without total sincerity	43
It is wrong even to hint a partnership with God	43
Have trust in God right up till the end.....	44
Thinking of God in moments of crisis	44
On hearing the Hereafter mentioned, he waived his claim.....	46
Fear of God made the stick fall from his hand.....	47
Fearing God's punishment, even when one is dealing with the lowly	48
The greatest favour to seek from God is forgiveness	48
Avoiding anger	49
Knowing the world, but not the Hereafter.....	50
They will be of good cheer on meeting God	50
What really matters is the man within	51



Table of Contents

Extending unstinted support.....	52
In between two possibilities	52
The heart and the tongue: of all things the best and the worst.....	53
Obedience to the Prophet, come what may	54
Sincerity and piety the essence of Islam	54
True faith brings visions of unseen realities	55
The Qur'an is for admonition, not just for recital.....	56
Bear hardship with patience, and one's sins will be forgiven in the next world	57
The eminent should grieve for the lowly	57
2. What is Faith?	59
Lose all, gain all	59
Knowledge is more than just information.....	59
Affluence is the greatest trial.....	59
All man's sins, except pride, may be forgiven.....	60
The Prophet's way of giving advice.....	60
When evil lives on	61



Table of Contents

Remaining on speaking terms	61
Follow in the footsteps of the early Muslims: that is the only way to reform	61
Hoping for something is not enough. It must be worked for	61
Not hating even the direst of enemies	62
A true believer shows no hesitation in answering the call of the Almighty	62
The God-fearing treats others best	63
Bowing at the very name of God.....	63
Salvation is for those who tread the path of the Prophet and his Companions	64
Conversing with God more and with men less	65
Remembrance of God the greatest act of worship.....	65
God's own are those who accept the Qur'an	65
Liking criticism	66
Rising above love and hate.....	67
Patience and forbearance in the face of ignorance	68
Swallowing one's anger increases one's faith.....	71



Table of Contents

Immune to flattery	71
To praise someone to his face is to destroy oneself ...	72
Not letting praise go to one's head	72
Blessed are those who tolerate the severity of the righteous	73
Receiving praise, not with conceit, but with humility	74
Reject reproof and you reject what is good	75
Working in one's own sphere, and avoiding conflict with the government of the day	75
Fearing no one in giving admonishment	76
Reckon with oneself before being reckoned with.....	76
Learning from everything that happens.....	77
Meditation the greatest of activities	77
The Companions worshipped by thinking of God and the Hereafter	78
In everything there is a lesson to be learned	78
The nature of a true believer.....	78
3. Worship	80



Table of Contents

Worshipping God and not harming others.....	80
Knowing God is the greatest worship	80
Good Character-the very essence of religion	81
It is the spirit of worship that is important	81
Lodge God in one's heart: that is the best of states ...	82
Remembering God is a constant state of prayer	82
God looks after one who prays to Him	83
To help a Muslim in need is a great act of worship...83	
Truly destitute are those bereft of God's grace in the Hereafter	85
Hastening to pray in times of difficulty	85
Letting one's heart be moved by the Qur'an.....	87
Prayer places one under divine protection	87
Congregational prayer brings one closer to God.....	87
Self-seeking places one far from God	88
A show of piety is not reverence	88
Keeping within the bounds of propriety when fasting	89



Table of Contents

The state induced by prayer should be abiding	89
God can hear even the smallest whisper	90
Religion is worthless if its end is material gain	91
True worship entails meekness and humility before God.....	91
God loves the humble cry of His servant	92
How to be prudent	92
Mention what is good: pass over what is evil.....	93
Three all-embracing duties	93
True knowledge is that which induces fear of God ..	94
No one is exempt from danger of going astray	95
How saint-worship gradually turns into idol-worship	95
The law of God is applicable to everyone	96
When those bound for Paradise find their way barred	97
Only disinterested action is of moral value.....	99
Between hope and fear.....	99



Table of Contents

There is charity in forgiveness.....	100
The corrupting influence of power	101
Those who do not fear God cannot understand the state of mind of those who do	101
Sometimes the obscure are more amply rewarded than the famous	103
Preferring to be unostentatious.....	103
Living in fear of Doomsday	104
Setting no special value upon one sown actions	105
The worth of honest earnings.....	106
4. Sincerity.....	107
Being sincere means abstaining from what is forbidden	107
Weighing up one's actions before they are weighed up on the divine scales of justice.....	107
Do not regard knowledge as a means to personal prestige	107
Lust for fame the worst single danger-for man	108
Acting 'to be seen by men'	108



Table of Contents

Fearing God in one's dealings with men.....	109
Putting oneself in others' shoes and not entertaining suspicions	109
Rejoicing in the Muslims' prosperity.....	110
Avoiding retaliation for the sake of God.....	110
One who will be saved from Doom on the Day of Judgement	112
Hardness of heart comes from using religion for worldly ends	112
The Day of death will be the great awakening	112
Worldly attachment bars the gate to eternity	113
Standing on the brink of Hell-fire	113
Thinking nought of one's actions.....	114
The greatest deeds are the most difficult of all	114
Only the Muslim who is true to his faith can enter Paradise	115
Regarding one's deeds as of no special value.....	116
It is hypocrisy to join a movement because of its worldly success	116



Table of Contents

By performing small tasks a man does not demean himself117

Having bad relations with anyone is no reason to deny him his rights117

Being satisfied with God's bounty and always thirsting for knowledge.....118

By making no efforts, man loses what he hopes to gain.....118

Leave justice to God118

Being conscious of one's own faults, not of others..119

Bowing to the will of God and to His Messenger....119

He whose heart is free of hate will enter Heaven....120

Reforming others and being ready to be reformed oneself120

The least one can do is not harm anyone121

Worship is more than a set of rituals121

Why try to make a god of oneself?.....121

While worshipping God, respect the convenience of others122



Table of Contents

The simpler the ceremony, the greater the blessing 122

Choose the simpler, not the more difficult way123

Making things unnecessarily difficult for oneself does not constitute piety123

Religious leaders should have consideration for their congregations124

Rather than from outward actions, greatness comes from inward grace124

No rigidity in religion125

God looks not just at actions but at their motives ...125

5. Piety127

 Piety leads one to press onwards in spite of all obstacles.....127

 Giving oneself up to God and wishing others well.127

 The self-destructiveness of worldly greed128

 The true intellectual is a man of great piety.....129

 Showing no favouritism.....129

 Self-appraisal first and foremost130

 Taking no advantage of one's position.....131



Table of Contents

Justice, even towards enemies	131
The feelings inspired by faith are misinterpreted by the profane.....	132
Self-Reliance	133
Preferring God to riches	133
No affliction is worse than hardness of heart	133
Unwillingness to make sacrifices leads to self-destruction.....	134
Do not become unbalanced by love or hate	135
No Paradise without the sacrifice of life and property	135
Things asked for and things given freely are in two separate categories.....	136
Keeping out of the limelight	137
True knowledge is fear of God	138
Lost to the world.....	138
Conceit: the most evil trait	138
Fearing God in matters that concern the weak.....	139
Remaining detached from the material side of life .	140



Table of Contents

When pleasures seem empty	140
Man proposes, God disposes.....	141
Retribution here and now	141
When death is nigh.....	142
Salvation is all	142
The joys of a pious household	143
The call of paradise.....	143
Take what is gladly given; do not ask for more.....	144
Preoccupation with prestige can lead straight to perdition	145
Giving up this world for the next.....	146
Selflessness in worldly matters	146
No Islamic revolution without Islamic individuals	147
There are times to remain silent and times to speak freely	147
Two eyes that shall be saved from the Fire.....	148
One has to lose in order to gain.....	148



Table of Contents

Worldly attachment hinders acknowledgement of the truth.....149

Beyond the call of duty150

To live, one must come to terms with dying.....151

True religion brings about radical changes in one’s life.....152

Repentance is to be ashamed of what one has done152

Have dealings with men as if they were dealings with God.....152

6. Humility154

 Respect means something more than the making of gestures.....154

 Refraining from acquiring unnecessary tastes.....154

 Conceit takes one far from God.....154

 The bravest is the most in control of himself155

 Giving one’s best, but without conceit156

 Never considering oneself above serving God.....157

 Having regard for necessities rather than formalities158



Table of Contents

Kindness to animals	159
Accepting all food without demur.....	159
God does not like pride in His servants	160
Avoid functions whose sole purpose is ostentation	160
To humble oneself is to raise oneself	161
The Prophet did not allow his hand to be kissed	161
Heaping scorn on truth is an act of pride.....	161
Sitting among people with no thought for position	162
Having due regard for people who are of no special importance.....	162
The self-belittler is great in the eyes of God.....	163
Simplicity of Dress.....	163
Good manners at meal times	164
What it pleased the Lord to give to His Prophet	164
The secret of contentment is being happy with what one has	165
The parting of the ways	165
The servants of God must live in humility.....	166



Table of Contents

7. Trust In God.....	167
The Countless Blessings of God	167
Devotion to God: food for the soul	167
Constant fear of God	167
No limit to God’s mercy.....	168
All power is in the hands of God	168
Everything happens through the instrumentality of God.....	169
Even the most ordinary things are great blessings..	169
Islam: a practical guide to daily living	170
Meet your Lord with a clean record	170
It is only under stress that a man appears in his true colours.....	171
Being content with what God ordains.....	171
8. Manners In Speech	172
There is virtue in refusing to retaliate.....	172
Not being offended when criticized	172
Discord and the truth.....	173



Table of Contents

An oath is an oath	174
Halting in one's steps on hearing the Qur'an	175
Truth should be unclouded by prejudice	176
Appreciating criticism	178
Delivering justice regardless of rank	178
Public speaking and public silence	179
Answer, but do not rebuke	180
No response to vain words	182
Refraining from derision	182
Holding one's tongue: the key to righteousness.....	183
Never expressing disdain for food	184
Answering criticism calmly	184
Deferring to the better-informed	185
Speaking with caution	186
Criticise freely, but avoid wrangling	187
Criticise constructively. Avoid unjust accusation ...	187
A sign of true learning: the ability to take criticism	188



Table of Contents

Refrain from untruths	188
In shielding others one shields oneself	189
A liar is a hypocrite.....	190
Viewing statements from a particular standpoint...	190
Think before you speak.....	191
Speaking much is not a sign of great knowledge	191
Wrongful accusation is the worst of crimes	192
One who does not control his tongue is evil	192
Being sparing of words is a sign of sincerity	192
In the tongues of men are both Heaven and Hell....	193
Remaining silent is, in itself, a good deed	193
One who fears God holds his tongue	194
Most sins are committed by the tongue.....	194
Knowing when to speak and when to remain silent	194
Avoid looking askance at others	195
The cautious tone of one who fears God	195



Table of Contents

Openness to admonition: a sign of Islamic character	196
One who craves God’s mercy shows compassion to others	197
Both good and evil in what we say	197
Thankfully accepting one’s lot	197
Gauging one’s own strength before testing it on others	198
What a believer’s speech should be like	198
A good Muslim is one of good character	199
Vain talk in itself is a sin	199
9. Manners In Society	200
God will do unto you as you have done unto others	200
Returning good for evil	200
Patience the best armour	200
To wish others harm is to harm oneself	201
To collaborate in injustice is sinful	201
Justice for the weak and strong alike	202



Table of Contents

Granting forgiveness to one who seeks it.....202

Three types of vilification mentioned in the Qur'an202

How a believer should treat others.....203

Being sparing of words and not thinking ill of anyone
.....203

Being kind to adversaries.....204

Suppression of anger leads to a strengthening of faith
.....204

Worshipping God and living in harmony with others
.....205

Not acting on suspicion.....205

Confirming the truth of statements at their source .205

The evils of society stem from the evils in individuals
.....206

If the door is not opened for you, leave without taking
offence.....206

Putting one's parents before oneself207

How Muslims bring calamity upon themselves.....207

Being unperturbed by directness208



Table of Contents

No man is self-sufficient	209
Not allowing disagreement to sour a relationship ..	209
Remaining united and never being the first to attack	209
Hate whittles away a man's religion	210
Arguments over religious matters nullify piety	211
Dispute is the mark of decline.....	211
A believer is satisfied, not by giving vent to his anger, but by controlling it	211
Thriving on criticism	212
Remaining calm in the face of criticism.....	212
It is not for a Muslim to fight another Muslim	214
It is for God to judge.....	214
Not permitting disagreement to undermine mutual respect	214
Moderation in both friendship and enmity.....	215
Wisdom should go hand in hand with bravery.....	215
An oath of secrecy.....	216



Table of Contents

When it is prudent to make no reply217

Learning the facts by asking the right questions218

In dealings with others, good intentions by
themselves are not enough219

A believer should not involve himself in matters,
which he is unable to deal with effectively220

10. Giving For The Cause of God.....221

Wealth can be of use in this world and the next.....221

One's next of kin have the greatest right to one's
charity221

A believer had best earn his own living222

Extravagance is committed at the cost of worthwhile
expenditure223

Trusting in God, not wealth.....224

Building more for the Hereafter than for this world
.....224

Not even martyrdom cancels out an unpaid debt...225

Spending what one has in order to escape the Fire.225



Table of Contents

Muslims should be dearer to each other than money226

Spending for the cause of Islam in times of distress 226

Thrift, even in the midst of plenty227

Being punctilious in paying people their dues227

A piece of good advice is more precious than a material gift227

Considering a man inferior on account of his calling is a mark of ignorance228

Wealth and power breed hatred and enmity228

Prosperity the greatest trial.....229

Three things, which must remain inviolate230

One does not lose by giving.....230

One who gives receives.....230

11. Islamic Values231

 Look before you leap.....231

 Bearing with minor afflictions.....231

 Peace at any price232



Table of Contents

The laws of cause and effect applied to the Prophet's offspring just as they did to others.....	233
Tactful answers in delicate situations.....	234
Making straight for the hereafter and leaving the world by the wayside.....	235
Retreat and fight another day.....	236
The importance of learning in Islam.....	237
The cure for anger is silence	237
Dealing with matters in a tactful manner.....	238
Rigidity is not the sign of religion.....	239
Keeping one's demands within the bounds of reason	239
Showing tolerance and understanding.....	240
Being methodical	240
Speech is silver: Silence is golden	241
The price of preaching what is good.....	242
Refusing power to avoid dissension.....	242
Killing Muslims to gain power is to be abhorred....	243



Table of Contents

Man's greatest struggle is with his own desires	244
The devil in man	244
The actions most pleasing to God are those, which are persevered in.....	245
God stays with one who is failed by his fellow men	246
Grievances arising from misunderstanding.....	247
Speak no ill of the dead	247
Allowing for others' self-respect	248
Satan arouses suspicion	249
Charity is for everyone to give	250
God's favourite servants are those of the finest character	250
Paying others what is due to them.....	251
Justice for all.....	251
It is a wise man who fears God	252
12. Islamic Character	253
Suppressing one's anger is a sign of good character	253



Table of Contents

The actions, which will take us to heaven.....	254
Compassion for all creatures	254
How a preacher of the word of God should act	254
Four important pieces of advice.....	256
Being a humanitarian	256
Cheats are not true Muslims.....	257
The deeds dearest to the companions.....	257
Not indulging in vain talk or wishing anyone ill	258
The fine sensitivity taught by Islam.....	258
Pardoning a servant.....	259
Barbaric behaviour is to be abhorred at all times	259
Never delay the payment of wages	259
Praying for wrong-doers.....	260
To curse a Muslim is a great sin	260
To look down on another Muslim is to place Islam in jeopardy	261
A man's greatest weakness is his offspring	261



Table of Contents

The role of the head of a household.....	262
No Muslim should ever consider another Muslim inferior	262
Alarming a Muslim brother is a serious fault	263
A marriage without invitations.....	263
Caring for one's household is no less important than the holy struggle	264
Refraining from subjecting people to inconvenience	265
The polite way of seeking permission to enter a house	266
Who should be invited to share food.....	266
Doing one's family bidding is no mark of faith.....	267
A Muslim must suppress his desires	268
For one Muslim to sever relations with another Muslim is as bad as killing him.....	268
13. Justice.....	270
Parity before the law	270
Never sacrifice the truth to arrogance and jealousy	271



Table of Contents

Great and small weigh alike in the scales of justice	271
A good leader must ensure that his orders are effectively carried out.....	273
Impartial decision-making.....	274
Making the Qur'an one's greatest preoccupation ...	274
No adverse reaction to rude behaviour.....	275
When the elite prove trustworthy, others follow suit	276
Putting allegiance before controversy	276
What pleases and displeases God	277
14. Unity.....	279
In latter days fraternal strife will be the greatest destructive force.....	279
A spiritual bond should remain untarnished by personal differences.....	280
Restraining one's hand and one's tongue from attacking one's brethren.....	280
Remaining neutral in a fratricidal war	281



Table of Contents

It is a ruler's duty to reform others, but those others are responsible only for themselves.....	281
Bearing personal affronts with good grace	282
Unfailing obedience to one's commander	283
Offer a ruler advice in private—not in public.....	283
Communal sentiment belongs to the days of ignorance	284
Never stoop to controversy	285
A grievance at home should not mean desertion to the enemy.....	287
Fighting one's own people deprives one of God's succour.....	288
Declining power in the interests of unity	289
Worship, unity and good intentions.....	290
Keeping contention out of religious affairs.....	290
Good deeds are nullified by disputes over religious matter.....	291
Remaining with the flock.....	292
15. Divine Succour.....	293

Table of Contents

God cares for those who do their duty to Him	293
Wisdom: God's greatest gift	294
The danger of action without knowledge	294
Seeing the positive aspect of misfortune	294
Correcting a false impression even at the expense of one's own prestige	296
God helps those who help others.....	297
Insight comes with true faith.....	299
God's mercy for the merciful.....	300
With God's help a handful can conquer a multitude	300
Their greatest strength was Islam	301
Those who serve God alone shall be raised above other men.....	302
Secrecy is of the essence in launching an attack	304
16. Earning A Living	305
It is best to work for one's living.....	305
The breadwinner should not consider himself superior to others.....	305



Table of Contents

Running to another's assistance is a great religious duty	305
One's trust in God is one's greatest strength	306
Honest partners have a third partner in God.....	307
Acting as spokesman for the humble in position	307
God's generosity to the generous.....	307
The value of right action	308
The greatest charity is that bestowed upon the most ill-provided for.....	309
The greatest in intelligence is the least attached to the world.....	309
The best provision is that which has been earned ...	309
Avoiding condescension	310
17. Calling Mankind To The Truth	311
The message revealed to the Prophet	311
Admonishing in general terms.....	311
The power of the Qur'an to inspire faith.....	312
The Hereafter: all-important to the Prophet, but not so to his opponents.....	312



Table of Contents

Bringing Islam without condescension, to everyone
.....313

Unadulterated truth is pure anathema to many.....314

Speaking the language of one’s hearers315

Failure to reform should never elicit curses.....315

An Islamic Treasury of Virtues318



FOREWORD

One way of presenting Islam is by means of interpretation, that is, by scholarly additions and explanations which make Islamic teachings more understandable and, in consequence, more effective. This has always been, and always will be, a part of Islamic *daw'ah*.

But another way of presenting Islam is to translate it into another language without any alterations, additions or explanations. This is the method adopted in this book, in which the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, and his Companions have been collected and presented in a simple, straightforward style. The only additions are the separate headings under which the different sayings and incidents appear.

For centuries the lives of the Prophet and his Companions have served as models of a truly God fearing existence for all mankind, and will continue to do so until Doomsday. Hence God's preservation of this page of history with such exactitude that anyone who is sincere about learning from their

Foreword

example can know, even today, every detail of how they lived and died.

The present book, being a judicious selection from the deeds and saying which make up this model, gives an authentic picture of the Islamic way of life. With this book to throw light on the traditions of the Prophet and his Companions, one can pattern one's life in such a way as to be certain of receiving God's succour and blessings during one's life time, and His rewards in the Hereafter for the good deeds done in this life.

Besides being an aid to personal study and individual training, this book will be of great benefit when read out at gatherings and in mosques, providing, as it does, valuable material for congregational recitations.

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February 14, 1985

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1. GOD'S PEOPLE

THOSE WHO SHOW MERCY WILL BE DEALT WITH MERCIFULLY

“The Merciful One shows mercy to the merciful,” said the Prophet. “Be merciful with those on earth. The One in Heaven will be merciful with you.”

(AHMAD, ABU DAWUD, AL TIRMIDHI)

WHATEVER HAPPENS IS THE WILL OF GOD

When certain people offered to guard Ali (The fourth Caliph), the son of Abu Talib, the latter replied, “Destiny is man’s guardian.” According to another tradition, he said, “No man will taste the joy of faith until he realizes that he could never have escaped what has befallen him, nor enjoyed what escaped him.”

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

REMAINING STEADFAST IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION

During the Abbasid Caliphate the emergence of the



1. god's people

Mutazilite creed ¹ stirred up controversy among Muslims, as a result of which Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal had severe punishments inflicted upon him. Yet he refused to alter the position he had adopted. Hafiz ibn Hajar tells us that he was beaten so severely as to make "even an elephant flee."

Note:

1. Its adherents believe the word of God to have been created in *subjecto*, and to consist of letters and sound; copies thereof being written in books, to express or imitate the original.

**THE MOST WORTHWHILE WORK IS
PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD**

The Prophet said: "That God should grant guidance, through you, to just one person is better for you than everything on which the sun rises."

**THE PREACHER OF GOD'S WORD WISHES
PEOPLE WELL, NO MATTER HOW THEY
TREAT HIM**

The Prophet besieged Taif for more than twenty days. When it became difficult for the Muslims to



1. god's people

continue with the siege, he ordered them to withdraw. It was then suggested that the Prophet bring down a curse upon the heads of the Thaqeef tribe, but the Prophet merely raised both hands and prayed: "Lord, guide the Thaqeef, and bring them into the fold of Islam." The Prophet was likewise told of the contumacy and disbelief of the Daus tribe, and again it was suggested that he should invoke a curse upon them, but the Prophet's response was again to pray. "Lord, guide the Daus," he begged, "and bring them into the fold of the faithful."

A GOOD DEED IS OF NO VALUE IF IT MAKES ONE PROUD

Ibn Ataullah As-Sikandari wrote in his book, *Al-Hikam*: "A sin which makes one meek and humble is better than a good deed which makes one proud and arrogant."

OF ALL ACTIONS, THE MOST SUBLIME IS REMEMBRANCE OF GOD

Abu Darda reports the Prophet as asking his companions: "Should I not tell you of the action



1. god's people

that is best and most pure in the presence of your Lord; the action which will raise you up in the sight of God, and is better for you than great expenditure of gold and silver; better too than that you should meet your enemies in battle, striking their necks and they striking yours?" "Do tell us," the Companions replied, "It is remembrance of God," said the Prophet.

(AL-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

AN ABLE AND RIGHTEOUS MAN – THE MOST TREASURED ASSET

Zayd ibn Aslam reports, on the authority of his father, that Umar ibn Khattab asked some of his companions to tell him about their ambitions. "I would like to have this house full of money, so that I could spend it in the path of God," volunteered one. Another said that he would like gold-yet another mentioned pearls-so that their wealth could be spent in the furtherance of God's cause. "What I would like more than anything," said Umar, "would be to have this house full of men like Abu Ubaidah ibn al Jarrah, Muadh ibn Jabal and Hudhaifah ibn al



1. god's people

Yaman, so that I could use them for God's work."

(AL TARIKH AL-SAGHIR)

QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

In the context of his relationship with the Caliph Umar, Abdullah ibn Abbas says that he served him better even than the members of his own household, and that "he used to seat me next to him and showed me great respect." He relates how one day when he was alone with him in his home, he suddenly heaved such a deep sigh that it was as if he was about to surrender his soul. Abdullah enquired. "Is it because of some apprehension that you heave this sigh?" "It is, indeed," he replied, and asking Abdullah to come nearer, he told him that he did not know of anyone capable of taking on 'this work' by which he meant the caliphate. Abdullah ibn Abbas then mentioned six names, and asked the Caliph if he did not know them. Umar commented on each one of them in turn and then said: "One who is firm but not overbearing, soft but not weak, generous but not extravagant,



1. god's people

thrifty but not miserly – only such a person is fit for this task.” According to Abdullah ibn Abbas, only Umar ibn al Khattab himself possessed all these qualities.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

WHAT THOSE WHO SIT WITH LEADERS SHOULD BE LIKE

Abdullah ibn Abbas tells of how his father once said to him: “My boy, I see how the Commander of the Faithful, Umar ibn al Khattab, invites you to his meetings and takes you into his confidence. He also turns to you as well as to the other Companions for advice. I am going to give you three pieces of advice which are worth remembering: firstly, fear God, and never let it be said of you by Umar that you told a lie; secondly, keep his secrets well, and thirdly, never speak ill of anyone in his presence.” Amir says that each one of those pieces of advice was better than a thousand. “Better than ten thousand,” rejoined Abbas.

(AI-TABARANI)



SYCOPHANTIC SUBORDINATES PORTEND DISASTER

Aishah reports the Prophet as saying: “When God desires the good of someone in a position of power, he assigns to him an honest counsellor, one who reminds him of God’s word when he forgets it, and who assists him when he remembers it. And when he desires the opposite for anyone, He gives him an evil counsellor, one who does not remind him when he forgets and does not assist him when he remembers.”

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

LIP SERVICE IS NOT PROOF OF REAL ATTACHMENT

Jubair ibn Nufair relates how, as his father was sitting with Miqdad ibn Aswad one day, a passerby, on seeing a Companion of the Prophet said: “How fortunate are those two eyes that have seen the Prophet! By God, if only we could have seen what you saw and shared in your experiences!” Nufair said that he was impressed by the man’s words; he seemed to have spoken well. But Miqdad – may



1. god's people

God be pleased with him looked towards the man and said: "No one whom God has saved from being present at those hours should desire to have been there. Who knows how they would have acted in those circumstances? By God, many of whom God cast into Hell came to see the Prophet, such as did not accept what he said, or believe in his mission."

EVEN SELF-SACRIFICE IS OF NO VALUE WITHOUT TOTAL SINCERITY

A certain Muslim participated in the Battle of Uhud (3 A.H.) and died fighting. When his mother learnt of the death, she cried out for her "martyred" son. "Hold your peace," the Prophet told her "How do you know that he has been martyred? He used to indulge in vain talk and was miserly with things that it would have done him no harm to give away."

(At-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

IT IS WRONG EVEN TO HINT A PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD

"That which God wishes, and you wish, will come to pass," said a certain individual to the Prophet.



1. god's people

The latter showed his intense displeasure at this remark. "Have you set me up as a compeer with God?" he asked. "Say, rather, that which God alone wishes will come to pass."

HAVE TRUST IN GOD RIGHT UP TILL THE END

When the Prophet left Makkah on his emigration to Madinah, he spent the first three days in the Cave of Thur. The Quraysh, who were searching for him, eventually arrived at this cave. Abu Bakr, who was in hiding with the Prophet, said, "Prophet of God, look how close the enemy has come. If they were just to look at their feet, they would see us beneath them." "Abu Bakr," the Prophet replied, "What do you think of those two who have God as a third?"

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

THINKING OF GOD IN MOMENTS OF CRISIS

'Ali, the son of Abu Talib, related how Fatima, his wife and also daughter of the Prophet had to do all the housework herself. Her hands used to become blistered from working a millstone, her

1. god's people

clothes became dirty from sweeping the floor, and having to bring water from outside in a large leather bag had left a mark on her neck. On one occasion when the Prophet had had an influx of servants, 'Ali suggested to Fatima that she go and request her father to give her one of them to help her in her work. She duly went to see him, but there were many people gathered at his house, and she returned home, without having been able to meet him. The next day the Prophet came to the house of Ali and Fatima and asked what it was she had wanted to discuss with him, but Fatima remained silent. Then 'Ali told the Prophet the whole story. The Prophet did not, however, accede to their request for a servant. "Fear God," he said, "and fulfill your duty to the Lord. Continue to do your housework and, when you go to bed at night, glorify God 33 times, praise him the same number of times and exalt him 34 times. That makes 100 times altogether. That will do you more good than a servant will."

(AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB)



1. god's people

**ON HEARING THE HEREAFTER MENTIONED,
HE WAIVED HIS CLAIM**

Umm Salamah tells of how two of the Ansar brought a dispute before the Prophet about a long-standing issue of inheritance for which neither party could produce a witness. "You bring me your disputes," the Prophet said to them, "and, when no proper evidence is brought forward, I judge them according to my own way of thinking. I might, on the basis of partial evidence, make a settlement in favour of one of the parties, but in so doing, it may be that I take away from the other what is his rightful due. In that case, the one in whose favour I pass judgement should not accept what has been apportioned to him, for that would be like his accepting a firebrand which, on the Day of Resurrection, would stick on his neck." At these words, both the Ansar broke down and wept. "Prophet of God!" they both cried out, "he can have my rightful share!" "The Prophet then told them that in view of their changed attitude they should go and, seeking to do what was just and right, should divide the inheritance into two parts.



1. god's people

Then they should draw lots as to who should have which part. In this way, each would have the other's approval of the share he received.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

FEAR OF GOD MADE THE STICK FALL FROM HIS HAND

Abu Masud Ansari says that one day he became angry with his slave and began beating him with a stick. Just then he heard a voice from behind him "Abu Masud, realise ... ," but, in his fury, he was unable to recognize the voice. When the speaker came nearer, he realized that it was the Prophet of God. "You should realize," said the Prophet, "that God has more power over you than you have over this slave." On hearing this, Abu Masud let the stick fall from his hand. "Never again will I beat a slave," he vowed, "and seeking God's good pleasure, I hereby give this slave his freedom." "If you had not done this, you would have been touched by the flames of Hell," said the Prophet.

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)



1. god's people

FEARING GOD'S PUNISHMENT, EVEN WHEN ONE IS DEALING WITH THE LOWLY

Once when the Prophet was at home with his wife, Umm Salamah, he summoned the maidservant for some errand, but she seemed to take a long time in coming. Seeing signs of anger on the Prophet's face, Umm Salamah got up to see what had happened to the girl. She opened the curtain and saw her playing outside with the goat's kids. She called to her once again, and this time she came. The Prophet was holding a tooth-stick at the time, "If I had not feared the retribution of Judgement Day," he said to the girl, "I would have hit you with this tooth-stick".

(AL-ADAB AL-MUFRAD)

THE GREATEST FAVOUR TO SEEK FROM GOD IS FORGIVENESS

According to Anas ibn Malik, the Helpers (Madinan Muslims) suffered from not having enough camels to irrigate their land. They came, therefore, to the Prophet, hoping that he would be able to provide them with camels, or arrange for a canal to be dug, which would bring them an abundant supply of



1. god's people

water. The Prophet looked towards the Helpers and greeted them thrice. "Whatever you ask of me today, I shall certainly give you," he said. "And whatever I ask of God on your behalf, He will surely grant." At these words, the Helpers experienced a change of heart. "The greatest thing we can ask for is the Hereafter," they thought. "Why waste such a precious opportunity by asking for the world?" Then they said to one another, "Let us take advantage of this opportunity and ask for forgiveness." Addressing the Prophet they said, "Ask the Lord to forgive us." "Lord, forgive the Helpers," was the Prophet's immediate response. "Forgive their children: forgive their wives."

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)

AVOIDING ANGER

Abu Hurayrah tells of how a man came before the Prophet and asked him for some advice. "Do not be angry," said the Prophet. He asked for further advice, a second and a third time, and each time the Prophet repeated the words, "Do not be angry."

(AL-BUKHARI SAHIH)



1. god's people

**KNOWING THE WORLD, BUT NOT THE
HEREAFTER**

Abu Darda asked certain individuals, "How is it that I behold you full of food, but starved of knowledge?"

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-ILM)

**THEY WILL BE OF GOOD CHEER ON
MEETING GOD**

While still a young man, Talhah ibn Bara' came to the Prophet to swear allegiance to him and to accept Islam. "I am at your behest," he vowed to the Prophet. "I will do exactly as you command." "Even if I tell you to sever your relations with your parents?" the Prophet asked. (Talha used to look after his mother with great affection.) Talha ibn Bara' at once prepared himself to carry out the Prophet's command. "Talha," the Prophet said to him, "Our religion does not teach one to sever ties. I just wanted you to be absolutely certain of your faith."

Talha ibn Bara' came within the fold of Islam and



1. god's people

remained a fine Muslim till the day he died. When he was suffering his final illness, the Prophet came to visit him and found him in a state of unconsciousness. "I think that Talha's soul will be taken up tonight," he said. He departed then, asking to be informed when Talha regained consciousness.

It was midnight before he did so, and he said that the Prophet should not be disturbed at that late hour. "He might be bitten by some harmful creature, or some enemy might do him an injury if he comes out at night," he protested. Talha passed away that very night and the Prophet was not informed until after the morning prayer. The Prophet prayed, "Lord, meet him in such a way that both he and You are of good cheer on meeting each other."

(AL-TABARANI)

WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS THE MAN WITHIN

A complaint was made to the Prophet about the behaviour of Abdullah ibn Hudhaifah. It was said that he joked and played the fool too much.



1. god's people

“Let him be,” said the Prophet, “for, deep down, he has great love for God and His Prophet.”

(IBN 'ASAKIR)

EXTENDING UNSTINTED SUPPORT

Abu Bakr called together the Companions and told them of his intention to send an expedition to Syria. “God will surely grant the Muslims His succour,” he told them, “and exalt His word.” In the consultations that followed, some of the Companions opposed certain of Abu Bakr’s ideas. Even so, after brief discussions, all of them-without a single voice of dissent-urged Abu Bakr to do as he thought fit. “We shall neither oppose nor blame you,” they assured him.

(IBN 'ASAKIR)

IN BETWEEN TWO POSSIBILITIES

The Prophet often used to pray: “O turner of hearts, keep our hearts firm in faith.” Having heard him repeat this prayer on many occasions, Prophet’s wife, Aishah once asked him, “Prophet of God, why is it that you offer this prayer so often?” The



1. god's people

Prophet then explained to her, "Everyone's heart is in between two of God's fingers. When He wishes to set a man's heart straight, He does so, and when he wishes to set it awry, He does so."

THE HEART AND THE TONGUE: OF ALL THINGS THE BEST AND THE WORST

Luqman the Wise, an Abyssynian slave, was once asked by his master to slaughter a goat and bring him two pieces of its best meat. Luqman did as he was bid, then cooked the goat and brought his master its tongue and heart. A few days later, his master asked him to slaughter another goat and, this time, bring him two pieces of its worst meat. Luqman again did as he was bid, but presented his master with the same two parts of the animal-its tongue and its heart. His master then inquired as to why it was that he had brought him the same parts on both occasions. "If both these parts are sound," replied Luqman, "then there is nothing to compare with them. But if they are both defective, there is nothing worse."



1. god's people

OBEDIENCE TO THE PROPHET, COME WHAT MAY

When Mughirah ibn Shu'ba told the Prophet that he intended to marry the daughter of a certain person, the Prophet told him to go and see her first. He did as he was bade by the Prophet, informing the girl's parents of his intentions and the Prophet's injunction. The girl's parents were nevertheless reluctant to let their daughter appear before a stranger. The girl, however, who was in the next room overheard the conversation and said, "If the Prophet has given this order, then come and see me. If he has not, I implore you in God's name not to do so."

(IBN MAJAH, *SUNAN*)

SINCERITY AND PIETY THE ESSENCE OF ISLAM

Uthman ibn Affan tells of how the Prophet said that he knew which testimony would save one from the Fire, provided it was uttered from the depths of one's heart. Umar offered to explain the nature of such an affirmation to the Companions. He said



1. god's people

that it was the testimony of sincerity, which God had prescribed for the Prophet and his companions, and the testimony of piety, which the Prophet had pressed upon his uncle, Abu Talib, as the latter lay dying: it was, ultimately, the testimony that there is none worthy of being worshipped save God.

TRUE FAITH BRINGS VISIONS OF UNSEEN REALITIES

Malik ibn Anas tells of how Muadh ibn Jabal came before the Prophet and was asked by him, "How is your morning?" "Full of faith in God," replied Muadh. "Every statement applies to something in particular, just as every statement has an inner meaning. To what does your present statement apply?" asked the Prophet. Muadh then told the Prophet that he had never woken up in the morning thinking that he would live till the evening, and never gone to rest in the evening thinking that he would live till morning; nor did he even take one step without the thought crossing his mind that he might not be able to take another. "It is as though I see all those communities, down on their knees, being called to account for their actions. Along with



1. god's people

them are their prophets, and their idols, too, – those to which they used to appeal, as well as to God. It is as if I see, with my very own eyes, how the people in Hell are being punished and the people in Paradise are being rewarded.” “You have attained true realization,” the Prophet told him. “Now let there be no falling away from it.”

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

THE QUR'AN IS FOR ADMONITION, NOT JUST FOR RECITAL

Aishah, hearing of certain individuals who read the Qur'an all night, reading it right through once, or even twice in a night, remarked, “what is there in mere recitation?” I used to stay up all night with the Prophet and, in his recitations of the chapters entitled ‘Cow’, ‘Family of Imran’, and ‘Women’, whenever he came to a verse which contained a warning, he would pray to God and seek refuge with Him, and whenever he came to a verse bearing good tidings, he would pray to God and express his longing for what was mentioned in the verse.

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)



1. god's people

**BEAR HARDSHIP WITH PATIENCE, AND
ONE'S SINS WILL BE FORGIVEN IN THE NEXT
WORLD**

Abu Bakr once recited this verse of the Qur'an before the Prophet: "He that does evil shall be requited with it. There shall be none to protect or help him." (4:123) "How," he asked, "can things now turn out well for us, since we shall have to pay for the evil that we do?" "May God forgive you, Abu Bakr," the Prophet said, "don't you ever become ill, or feel fatigue or distress? Aren't you sometimes afflicted with hardship? Don't you fall into error now and then?" Abu Bakr said that he did indeed. "This then is the requital of your sins in this world," said the Prophet.

(KANZ AL- UMMAL)

**THE EMINENT SHOULD GRIEVE FOR THE
LOWLY**

It happened that a woman of Madinah, who used to clean the mosque, passed away. She was black-skinned and mentally deranged and there were few to perform her funeral. Those who came to it did



1. god's people

not think it proper to inform the Prophet. When he finally heard about it, he asked to be informed of the death of any Muslim in future, irrespective of his or her status.



2. WHAT IS FAITH?

LOSE ALL, GAIN ALL

The first Caliph, Abu Bakr, sent out Khalid ibn Walid on a military campaign. One of the pieces of advice he gave him was: "Desire of death you will be granted life."

KNOWLEDGE IS MORE THAN JUST INFORMATION

Malik, ibn Anas said: "Knowledge is enlightenment. It comes only to a humble, fearing, pious heart."

AFFLUENCE IS THE GREATEST TRIAL

Saad ibn Abu Waqqas tells of the Prophet saying; "I fear for you in the trial of worldly deprivation. But I fear for you even more in the trial of affluence. You have remained patient in the face of worldly oppression, but will you not be carried away by the sweetness and luxuriance of this world?"



ALL MAN'S SINS, EXCEPT PRIDE, MAY BE FORGIVEN

“There is hope of forgiveness for every sin that arises from carnal desire,” said Sufyan ath-Thauri, “but not for those that stem from pride. Satan sinned out of pride, while Adam erred due to carnal desire. Adam repented and was forgiven, but the sin of Satan excluded him forever from God’s gracious mercy.”

THE PROPHET’S WAY OF GIVING ADVICE

The Prophet once said of Khuzaim, one of the Companions, “What a fine fellow Khuzaim would be, if only his locks were not so long and his shawl did not drag on the ground (*Abu Dawud, Sunan*).” When Khuzaim heard what the Prophet had said of him, he took a knife and cut off his locks. In like manner, the Prophet said of another companion, Abdullah by name, what a fine fellow he would be “if only he prayed at night.” When Abdullah heard this, he immediately started praying at night, sleeping for only a very short time.

(AL-BUKHARI, SAHIH)



WHEN EVIL LIVES ON

A wise man once said: “Blessed are those whose sins die with them. Damned are those whose sins live on after them.”

REMAINING ON SPEAKING TERMS

Ata Ibn Hasid reports the Prophet as having said: “It is not right for anyone to break off ties with his brother for more than three days, with the two meeting and ignoring each other. He who greets the other first is the better of the two.”

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)

FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE EARLY MUSLIMS: THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO REFORM

Imam Malik once observed, “Latter-day Muslims can reform only by means of that which enabled early Muslims to reform.”

HOPING FOR SOMETHING IS NOT ENOUGH. IT MUST BE WORKED FOR

Ali, the son of Abu Talib, once exhorted the people:



2. What is Faith?

“People, I urge you-and myself-to be pious and obedient. Send good works before you and cherish no false hopes. For hopes will not compensate for it.

NOT HATING EVEN THE DIREST OF ENEMIES

At the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet had his teeth broken by a stone thrown at him by one of the enemy, and blood streamed from his mouth. Some of the Companions urged the Prophet to curse these enemies who wrought such havoc. (Among the many Companions who died in the battle was the Prophet’s own uncle, Hamzah.) The Prophet’s response to this was: “I have not been sent as a curser. I have been sent as a preacher and the bearer of God’s mercy.”

A TRUE BELIEVER SHOWS NO HESITATION IN ANSWERING THE CALL OF THE ALMIGHTY

The chapter entitled ‘The Table’ in the Qur’an contains this divine injunction:

“Believers, wine and games of chance, idols and divining arrows, are abominations devised by the devil. Avoid them, so that you may prosper. The



2. What is Faith?

devil seeks to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of wine and gambling, and to keep you from the remembrance of God, and from your prayers. Will you not abstain from them?" (5:90,91) When this verse of the Qur'an was revealed, the Prophet, as was customary on such occasions, recited it to the Companions. When he reached the end of the verse – "Will you not abstain from them?" – every one of the Companions shouted out: "We have abstained from them, Lord. We have abstained from them."

THE GOD-FEARING TREATS OTHERS BEST

Maamar, who belonged to the next generation after the Companions, tells us that the latter used often to say: "Your greatest well-wisher is he who fears God with regard to you."

BOWING AT THE VERY NAME OF GOD

The Prophet was in Aishah's chamber when he heard two men quarrelling at the tops of their voices outside. One of them had lent money to the other, who now wanted to pay back less than he had borrowed. But his creditor was adamant.



2. What is Faith?

“Never will I relent, by God!” he exclaimed. The Prophet then went out to see the quarrelling pair. “Who is this, swearing in God’s name that he will not do good?” he asked. At the Prophet’s words, the man mellowed immediately. “It was I, Prophet of God,” he owned up. Then he added, “He can have whatever arrangement he pleases.”

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

**SALVATION IS FOR THOSE WHO TREAD THE
PATH OF THE PROPHET AND HIS
COMPANIONS**

The Prophet said: “The Jews broke up into seventy-one sects and the Christians into seventy-two. This community will break up into seventy three, all of which will be in the Fire, except of one.” “Which one is that, Prophet of God?” the Companions asked him. “Those who follow my path and that of my Companions,” the Prophet replied.

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)



2. What is Faith?

CONVERSING WITH GOD MORE AND WITH MEN LESS

Thaur ibn Yazid tells of how in the course of his reading, he came across an interesting dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. "Converse with God more and with people less," admonished Jesus. "How can we converse with God more?" his disciples asked him, "By prayer and supplication to Him in private," answered Jesus.

(ABU NU'AYM)

REMEMBRANCE OF GOD THE GREATEST ACT OF WORSHIP

Abdullah ibn Abbas once said that he preferred discussing religious knowledge for a part of the night to staying up all night in worship of God.

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-ILM)

GOD'S OWN ARE THOSE WHO ACCEPT THE QUR'AN

Anas ibn Malik reports the Prophet as saying:



2. What is Faith?

“Some people belong to God.” Asked who they were, he said, “Those who adhere to the Qur’an.”

(AL-DARMI, *SUNAN*)

LIKING CRITICISM

The Caliph Umar once came to the drinking place of the Bani Harithah where he came upon Muhammad ibn Maslamah. “How do you find me?” he asked Muhammad. “By God, I find you just as I would like you to be and just as it would please any well-wisher to see you. You are good at accumulating wealth, I see, but you keep your hands clean of it yourself, distributing it equitably.

“But,” went on Muhammad ibn Maslamah, “If you adopt a crooked course, we will straighten you, just as we straighten swords by placing them in a vice.” At these words, Umar, the second Muslim Caliph, exclaimed: “Praise be to God, who has put me among a people who will straighten me when I become crooked.”

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)



RISING ABOVE LOVE AND HATE

When the Prophet emigrated from Makkah to Madinah, the keys of the House of God in Makkah were in the custody of one Uthman ibn Abu Talhah, they having remained in the keeping of his family for several generations. One day, the Prophet asked Uthman for the keys, but the latter refused to hand them over, and spoke rudely to him. The Prophet heard him out but all he said finally was: "Uthman, perhaps you will live to see the day when I shall have these keys in my hands. I shall then be in a position to give them unto whom I will." "It will be a day of disgrace and woe for the Quraysh when the keys of the Ka'bah are in the hands of one such as you" replied Uthman.

After the conquest of Makkah, God's Messenger reigned supreme there, and asked for the keys of the Ka'bah to be handed over to him. When the keys were actually in his hands, his own cousin and son-in-law, Ali ibn Abu Talib, arose and asked for them to be given to him. The Prophet, however, did not respond, Instead, he summoned Uthman ibn Talhah, when he stood before him, the Prophet



2. What is Faith?

handed him the keys, saying, “Here are your keys, Uthman. This is a day of righteousness and fulfillment of promises.”

(IBN QAYYIM, *ZAD AL-MA'AD*)

PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE IN THE FACE OF IGNORANCE

Zayd ibn Sa'ana, a Jewish scholar, who later accepted Islam, recounts how, when he saw the Prophet, he recognized the signs of Prophethood in his face. There were two things at that time which he had yet to see – his patience and his forbearance. He was soon to learn from his personal experience that the ignorance of another actually intensified this latter quality of the Prophet.

One day Zayd ibn Sa'ana saw the Prophet and his cousin Ali approaching and, from another direction a man, apparently a bedouin, riding up to them on a camel. The man explained to the Prophet that he was one of a group of people in a certain town who had accepted Islam, having been told by him that if they became Muslims, they would be abundantly provided for by God. Now a drought had set in



2. What is Faith?

there, and he was afraid that his people might forsake Islam out of greed, for it was greed, which had made them become Muslims in the first place. "If you think fit," he suggested to the Prophet, "You could send them some assistance." The Prophet looked enquiringly at Ali who, realizing what the Prophet's glance meant, pointed out that such funds were all exhausted. Zayd ibn Sa'ana then approached the Prophet and offered to give him some money in return for dates. The Prophet agreed, and Zayd ibn Sa'ana handed over eighty *mithqals*² of gold, all of which the Prophet gave to the bedouin, saying, "Help them and distribute this justly amongst them."

A day had been fixed for Zayd ibn Sa'ana to be given the dates owed to him, but two or three days beforehand, he went to the Prophet who happened to be sitting in the shade of a wall along with several of his Companions, and, catching hold of him by the clothes, he said to him in a most peremptory fashion, "Why don't you pay me what you owe me? By God, from what I know of the Banu Muttalib, they are always putting off repaying their debts!" Umar, who was sitting with the



2. What is Faith?

Prophet at the time, was inflamed at the Jew's words and burst out, "Enemy of God, don't think that I can't hear what you are saying to God's messenger. By the One who holds sway over my soul, it is only out of deference to him that I do not cut off your head with my sword!" The Prophet, however, continued to gaze tranquilly at Zayd ibn Sa'ana. Then, turning to Umar he said, "Umar, this man and I both deserved different treatment from you. You might have told me to be quicker at paying my debts and him to be less exacting in demanding them. Go and pay him whatever is due to him, Umar, and give him twenty *sa'as*³ extra for having alarmed him."

(AL-TABARANI, IBN MAJAH)

Note:

2. An Arabic weight. Richardson gives it at a dram and three-sevenths.
3. The *Qamus* explains *suwa* as a certain vessel from which one drinks, and *Sai*, a measure of capacity. Its invariable measure being, according to ancient authorities, four times the



2. What is Faith?

quantity of corn that fills the hands of a man of moderate size.

SWALLOWING ONE'S ANGER INCREASES ONE'S FAITH

Abdullah ibn Abbas records the Prophet as saying: "The draught of one who swallows his anger is dearer to God than any other. God fills with faith one who swallows his anger for God's sake."

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

IMMUNE TO FLATTERY

A group of individuals, addressing themselves to Umar ibn Khattab as Caliph, swore that they had not seen anyone more just, more truthful or more severe on hypocrites than he was. "Next to the Prophet, you are the greatest of men." Auf ibn Malik happened to be present at the time. He swore an oath that these people had lied: "We have seen better than Umar since the time of the Prophet." "Who was that?" they asked him. "Abu Bakr," Auf replied. Umar's response to this was to say that Auf was right and that they were wrong. "By God," said



2. What is Faith?

Umar, “Abu Bakr was purer than pure musk, while I am more wayward even than my household camels.”

(ABU NU’AYM)

TO PRAISE SOMEONE TO HIS FACE IS TO DESTROY ONESELF

A certain individual came before Umar and began extolling the latter’s virtues. “You are destroying me and destroying yourself,” was Umar’s reply.

NOT LETTING PRAISE GO TO ONE’S HEAD

Dhiba ibn Mohsin recounts how he once told Umar that h was a better man than Abu Bakr. On hearing such praise Umar broke down, and said, “Just one day and one night in the life of Abu Bakr are worth more than the whole of my life!’ Then he asked, “Shall I tell you which day and which night I am referring to?” “Please do, Commander of the Faithful,’ replied Dhiba. “The night I am referring to was when the Prophet fled from his adversaries in Makkah. Abu Bakr was the only man to go with him. The day I am referring to was the day of the



2. What is Faith?

Prophet's death. That day, many Arabs went back on their pledge to Islam, saying that they would pray but would not pay the poor-due went to Abu Bakr and advised him to be lenient with these people. He said to me, "Umar, in the old days of ignorance, (that is, prior to Islam) you were a brave man. Now, in Islamic times, you have become a coward. As for myself, I will wage war on them, by God, so long as I am strong enough to hold a sword in my hand, even if they withhold so much as a piece of string!"

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO TOLERATE THE SEVERITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Abu Saeed relates how an Arab desert-dweller came to the Prophet to demand the repayment of a debt. "I will make life difficult for you if you do not repay what you owe," he said. The Companions reprimanded him. "Shame on you," they said to him, "do you not realize to whom you are speaking?" He replied that he was only demanding what was rightfully his. Then the Prophet spoke up. "Why do you not take the side

2. What is Faith?

of the lender?" He then sent a man to Khaulah bint Qays, to ask her to lend him some dates if she had any. "We shall repay you when we receive some," he told her. Khaulah bint Qays then sent some dates to the Prophet, who not only handed them over to the Arab, but also gave him a meal. "You have been faithful and true," said the Arab to the Prophet. "May God be faithful and true to you." "The best people are those who carefully pay others their rightful due," said the Prophet. "God does not bless a community in which the weak cannot take from the strong what is rightfully theirs without fear or reprisal."

(IBN MAJAH, *SUNAN*)

RECEIVING PRAISE, NOT WITH CONCEIT, BUT WITH HUMILITY

According to Naafi someone launching into extravagant eulogies to Abdullah ibn Umar, addressed him as "most noble of men, son of the most noble, "Neither am I the most noble of men, nor am I the son of the most noble," replied Ibn Umar. "I am just one of God's servants; in Him do I



2. What is Faith?

have hope, and Him do I fear. By God, you are bent on destroying a man with such praise.”

(*HILYAT AL-AULIYA*)

REJECT REPROOF AND YOU REJECT WHAT IS GOOD

Adi ibn Hatim once said: “What is acceptable to you today, was abhorrent to us yesterday; and what is abhorrent to you now will become acceptable to future generations. You will be following the true path so long as you continue to recognize what is abhorrent and refrain from rejecting what is acceptable; and so long as a learned man can stand up amongst you to admonish you without having scorn heaped on his head.”

(IBN ‘ASAKIR)

WORKING IN ONE’S OWN SPHERE, AND AVOIDING CONFLICT WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY

The Prophet asked Abu Dhar Ghefari what he would do when the leaders, or rulers started taking more than their fair share. “I will take to the sword,



2. What is Faith?

Prophet of God,” ventured Abu Dhar. “Rather than take to the sword, it would be better to be patient until you meet me in the hereafter,” said the Prophet. Abu Dhar never ceased to proclaim the truth, but never-right till the moment he left this world-did he take up the sword against the government of the day.

**FEARING NO ONE IN GIVING
ADMONISHMENT**

One who finds himself in a situation in which he is morally bound to proclaim the truth should not refrain from doing so because he feels his own position to be weak. One who hesitates in this way will be in a sorry state on the day of Judgement. God will ask him why he did not speak the truth. He will reply, “For fear of men.” But God will say to him, “Was not God before you to be feared?”

**RECKON WITH ONESELF BEFORE BEING
RECKONED WITH**

According to Thabit ibn Hajjaj, Umar ibn Khattab once said: “Weigh up your actions before they are



2. What is Faith?

weighed, and reckon with yourselves before you are reckoned with; for today's reckoning will be easier than tomorrow's. And prepare yourselves for the great appearance (of Judgement Day)."

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

LEARNING FROM EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS

A cart pulled by two oxen, drove past Abu Darda. He watched as one of the oxen carried on pulling while the other stopped. "There is a lesson even in this," said Abu Darda. "The one that stopped was whipped, while the other was left alone."

(SAFAWAT AL-SAFAWAH)

MEDITATION THE GREATEST OF ACTIVITIES

Abdullah ibn Utbah once asked Darda's mother how her husband had spent most of his time. "In meditation, and learning a lesson from everything that happened," she replied.

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)



2. What is Faith?

**THE COMPANIONS WORSHIPPED BY
THINKING OF GOD AND THE HEREAFTER**

When Abu Dhar died, a certain man rode from Basra to Madinah just to find out from his wife what the nature of her late husband's worship had been. "He used to spend the whole day alone, engrossed in thought," she told him.

(*HILYAT AL-AULIYA*)

**IN EVERYTHING THERE IS A LESSON TO BE
LEARNED**

Darani used to say that whenever he went out of his house, whatever he saw would give him a glimpse of some divine blessing and instruct him in some manner.

(*IBN KATHIR, TAFSIR*)

THE NATURE OF A TRUE BELIEVER

The scripture, which was revealed to Abraham, contained the following passage:

"A person of discernment should have certain



2. What is Faith?

special moments: of communion with God; of self-examination; of reflection upon the mysteries of creation. There should also be times, which he sets aside for food and drink. And this person of discernment should engage in activity for only one of three purposes: to accumulate (good actions) for the next world; to make a living for himself; to enjoy whatever pleasures are not prohibited. He should also be an observer of his times, a minder of his own affairs and the custodian of his tongue. His actions should be accompanied by a minimum of words and he should speak at length only on weighty matters of proper importance." This is related as a tradition of the Prophet on the authority of Abu Dharr.

(IBN HIBBAN)



3. WORSHIP

WORSHIPPING GOD AND NOT HARMING OTHERS

Abdullah ibn Masud says that when he asked the Prophet what the best of all actions was, the latter replied: "Prayer at the proper time." "And what is the next best," asked Ibn Masud, "Sparing people the harm your tongue can do," was the Prophet's reply.

(AL TABARANI)

KNOWING GOD IS THE GREATEST WORSHIP

A man came to the Prophet one day and asked him what the best of all actions was. "The realization of God," replied the Prophet. The man repeated his question, but the Prophet gave him the same answer. "Prophet of God," the man said, "I am asking you about actions, whereas you speak of knowledge." "With knowledge, the smallest action brings greater benefit," the Prophet told him, "while the greatest of actions brings no benefit, if it is

3. Worship

carried out in ignorance.”

(*JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM*)

GOOD CHARACTER-THE VERY ESSENCE OF RELIGION

Abdur Rehman ibn Harith ibn Abi Mirdas As Sulami recounts what happened one day when he was in the presence of the Prophet, along with a group of people. The Prophet asked for some water to be brought, then dipping his hands into it, he performed his ablutions. Whatever water was left was drunk by the people present. “What made you do this?” enquired the Prophet. “Love of God and the Prophet,” they replied. “If you wish to be loved by God and His Prophet,” God’s messenger told them, “be faithful when trusted and honest in your speech; and be a good neighbour to others.”

(AL-TABARANI)

IT IS THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP THAT IS IMPORTANT

According to Ibn Umar, the Prophet once said that a man might pray, pay the poor due and go



3. Worship

on pilgrimage – and he went on to mention all the virtuous actions-but that he would be rewarded only according to the degree of his intellectual awareness of what he did.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

LODGE GOD IN ONE’S HEART: THAT IS THE BEST OF STATES

When Abu Darda was told that Abu Saad ibn Munabbih had freed a hundred slaves, his comment was: “Certainly, this is a great act. But let me tell you one that is even greater: faith which encompasses night and day, and, on one’s tongue, the constant remembrance of God.”

(*HILYAT AL-AULIYA*)

REMEMBERING GOD IS A CONSTANT STATE OF PRAYER

Abdullah ibn Maud once observed that a man of knowledge was always at his prayers. His listeners asked him to explain this. “Thoughts of God are always in his heart and on his tongue,”



3. Worship

said Ibn Masud.

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

GOD LOOKS AFTER ONE WHO PRAYS TO HIM

Salman Farsi once went to Abu Bakr to ask for advice. The latter's advice to him was to fear God. "You know, Salman, there will soon be conquests, and your share will be whatever you need for your food and clothing. You should also know that if you pray five times a day, you will be under God's protection night and day. Kill not any of God's servants, for, to do so would be to cut oneself off from the protection of God, thus causing oneself to be cast into hell."

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

TO HELP A MUSLIM IN NEED IS A GREAT ACT OF WORSHIP

Abdullah ibn Abbas was in retreat (*i'tikaf*)⁴ in the Prophet's mosque in Madinah, when a man came and greeted him and sat down beside him. "You appear sad and downcast," remarked Ibn Abbas.



3. Worship

“True,” replied the man, explaining that he owed a sum of money to someone. “By the one who lies buried here, I do not have the means to repay it.” “Shall I speak to them on your behalf?” enquired Ibn Abbas. “If you would please,” replied the other. Abdullah ibn Abbas put on his shoes and was on the point of setting off when his companion said, “Perhaps you have forgotten that you are in retreat.” “No, I have not forgotten,” replied Ibn Abbas, “but I heard the words of the Prophet—that one who goes out to do his brother a good turn, and accomplishes it, is better than one who sits in retreat for ten years.”

(*AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TAHEEB*)

Note:

4. *I'tikaf*: Seeking retirement in a mosque during the last ten days of the Fast of Ramadan; during which time the worshipper does not leave the place, except for emergencies. The time is spent in reciting the Qur'an, in prayer and in remembrance of God.



3. Worship

**TRULY DESTITUTE ARE THOSE BEREFT OF
GOD'S GRACE IN THE HEREAFTER**

Abu Hurayrah relates how one day he and some Companions were sitting in the presence of the Prophet when he asked them if they knew who the destitute ones were. "Those who have neither cash nor capital to their credit," suggested the Companions. But the Prophet corrected them: "The destitute one among my followers is he who comes on the Day of Judgement with prayer, fasting and charity to his credit, but having at the same time abused others, taken possession of their property, shed their blood and inflicted cruelty upon them. His good deeds will be measured up against his wrong-doing until, finally, there is nothing good left to his credit, and many debts still to be repaid. The bad deeds of others will then be heaped up upon him and he will be cast into fire."

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

**HASTENING TO PRAY IN TIMES OF
DIFFICULTY**

It was the time of the Battle of Trench, and,



3. Worship

according to Hudhayfah, there were three hundred Muslims under siege. Recalling what a hard night it was, he recounts how they were surrounded by Abu Sufyan's army on one side and the Banu Qurayzah on the other, both posing a threat to the safety of the Muslim families. "The cold was already quite intense and, when a storm blew up, there was thunder and lightning everywhere and stones hurtling and crashing in the wind. It was almost impossible to see anything. Just then the Prophet came and asked me to cross the trench and penetrate the enemy camp to collect information. It was essential to know if they were planning to prolong the siege or return to Makkah. I was the most timid of men and was extremely sensitive to the cold. Still, on receiving the Prophet's command, I immediately arose, he prayed for my safety, and I set off. I went hither and thither in Abu Sufyan's camp and was able to bring back the news that they were discussing plans to leave. On my return, I found the Prophet covered in his sheet, praying. Whenever the Prophet was confronted with some arduous task, he would begin to pray."

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)



3. Worship

LETTING ONE'S HEART BE MOVED BY THE QUR'AN

Abu Hamzah once told Abdullah ibn Abbas that he was quick at recitation. "I have sometimes completed the whole Qur'an once or twice in a single night." "I prefer to read just one chapter," said Ibn Abbas. "Would you recite, you should do so in such a way that your ear hears and your heart assimilates what you are reciting. You should pause at its places and wonderment to let your heart be moved by it. Your aim should not be just to reach the final chapter.

PRAYER PLACES ONE UNDER DIVINE PROTECTION

Part of a long tradition by Muadh ibn Jabal goes like this: "Do not omit to offer an obligatory (*farz*) prayer, for one who makes this omission renders himself unfit for God's protection."

(AL-TABARANI)

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER BRINGS ONE CLOSER TO GOD

Before the emigration to Madinah, the Prophet sent

3. Worship

written instructions to Musab ibn Umair concerning congregational acts of worship. One of the clauses ran as follows: “When, on Fridays, the midday sun begins to decline, seek proximity to God by praying two rakahs.”

(AL-DARAQUTNI)

SELF-SEEKING PLACES ONE FAR FROM GOD

Self-seeking religious scholars are the subject of one tradition in which the Prophet records these words of God: “The least I will do to them is extinguish the joy of prayer in their hearts.”

(JAMI' BAYAN AL 'ILM)

A SHOW OF PIETY IS NOT REVERENCE

One day Aishah noticed a man walking along in a manner that very obviously suggested he was bowed down in submission to God. “Why is he walking in that feeble manner?” she enquired. She was told that he read extensively from the Qur'an and was constantly worshipping and imparting knowledge. On hearing this, Aishah said: “Umar used to read the Qur'an more than anyone, but he

3. Worship

had a strong gait, talked in a forceful tone and would beat forcefully too.”

KEEPING WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF PROPRIETY WHEN FASTING

Anas ibn Malik relates how two women sat together, ostensibly on a fast, but indulging in slander and giving vent to their grudges. When the Prophet heard of this, he said: “They cannot be said to have fasted. How can they have fasted when they have been eating the flesh of their fellows?”

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

Another account records the Prophet as saying: “They have abstained from that which God has made lawful. What broke their fast was indulgence in that which God has prohibited. One sat with the other and they started biting into the skins of others.”

(*AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB*)

THE STATE INDUCED BY PRAYER SHOULD BE ABIDING

Abu Ramtha recounts how, when he was praying



3. Worship

along with the Prophet, and the latter had just pronounced the salutations marking the end of the prayer, a man who had participated in the prayer from the start, arose, and began offering voluntary prayers.

Umar sprang to his feet and seizing the man by the shoulders, said, “Don’t you know that the People of the Book did not have a gap between their prayers and that was their undoing?” The Prophet looked up, and addressing Umar, said: “Ibn Khattab, through you God has communicated what is true and correct.

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

GOD CAN HEAR EVEN THE SMALLEST WHISPER

Certain individuals once asked the Prophet whether God was close enough for them to make whispered supplications to Him, or whether he was so far away that they should call His name out loud. This verse of the Qur’an was revealed in reply to their question: “When my servants question you concerning Me, tell them that I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls Me ...” (Quran, 2:186)



3. Worship

Abu Musa Al-Ashari relates how on certain journeys there were a few people who raised their voices in prayer. "Do not strain yourselves," the Prophet told them. You are not calling upon a Being who is deaf or absent. You are calling upon One who hears and is close to you, closer to anyone of you than the neck of his mount."

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

RELIGION IS WORTHLESS IF ITS END IS MATERIAL GAIN

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying: "A person who, for the sake of worldly aggrandizement, seeks that knowledge which should be sought with the sole aim of seeking God's good pleasure, will not savour the fragrance of Paradise on the day of Judgement."

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

TRUE WORSHIP ENTAILS MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

During the days of ignorance that preceded Islam, there was an extremely generous and hospitable



3. Worship

man called Abdullah ibn Judaan. A cousin of the Prophet's wife Aishah, he died before the commencement of the Prophet's mission. Aishah once mentioned to the Prophet that Abdullah ibn Judaan had rendered immense services to humanity and had always been a generous host. She wondered whether these acts would benefit him on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet replied in the negative: "For never once did he pray: Lord, forgive my sins on the day of Retribution."

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

GOD LOVES THE HUMBLE CRY OF HIS SERVANT

When a servant of God calls upon his Lord, and his call is pleasing to God, He orders Gabriel not to hasten the fulfillment of His servant's prayer, for He likes to hear the voice of one making supplication to Him."

(JAMI' AL-ULUM WA AL-HIKAM)

HOW TO BE PRUDENT

Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz maintained that in



3. Worship

matters where the path of right guidance is clear, one should follow it. Where it was clear that advancing along a certain path would be to one's detriment, one should avoid doing so. "As for matters about which one is in two minds, they should be left to God."

MENTION WHAT IS GOOD: PASS OVER WHAT IS EVIL

Abu Harun tells of how he once went to Abu Hazim, and after invoking God's mercy upon him, asked him how one could offer thanks for one's two eyes. "When you behold good, make mention of it and when you behold evil, pass over it," replied Abu Hazim. Then Abu Harun asked him how one could offer thanks for one's ears. "When you hear something good, pass it on," said Abu Hazim, "and when you hear something evil, make no mention of it."

THREE ALL-EMBRACING DUTIES

The mother of Anas once asked the Prophet to give her good counsel. "Forsake sin, for that is the best emigration; and observe your obligatory duties, for



3. Worship

that is the best crusade; and remember God frequently, for there is nothing more pleasing to God than that one should remember Him much," said the Prophet.

(AL-TABARANI)

TRUE KNOWLEDGE IS THAT WHICH INDUCES FEAR OF GOD

Once, when some of the Prophet's companions were sitting with him, he looked up to the heavens and said: "The time is coming when knowledge will be taken away." One of the Ansar, who went by the name of Ziyad ibn Labeed, asked the Prophet how knowledge would be taken away from them, when they were in possession of the Book of God, and taught it to their wives and children. "I always thought of you as the most intelligent man in Madinah," the Prophet told him, "don't you see how the Jews went astray, even though they were in possession of the Book of God?" The narrator of this tradition, one Jubayr ibn Nufayr, went to Shaddad ibn Aus and went into the details of the tradition with him. "Do you know how knowledge will be taken away?" Shaddad asked him. Jubair



3. Worship

replied that he did not. “By its vessel taken away,” said Shaddad, and he went on to ask; “Do you know which knowledge will be taken away?” When Jubayr once again replied in the negative, Shaddad explained that it was the fear of God that would be taken away. “There will not be a God-fearing man to be seen.”

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

NO ONE IS EXEMPT FROM DANGER OF GOING ASTRAY

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying: “For a time this community will practice the teachings of the Book of God. Then for some time they will adhere to the path of the Prophet. Then they will start acting on the strength of their own opinions. And when they do this, they will go astray.”

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

HOW SAINT-WORSHIP GRADUALLY TURNS INTO IDOL-WORSHIP

Several idols which were worshipped by Noah’s people – Wud, Suwa, Yaghuth, Yauq and Nasr – are

3. Worship

mentioned in the Qur'an. Ibn Jareer al Tabari has related a tradition on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Qays to the effect that these idols were named after certain saints of ancient times. These were pious men who had lived in the period between Adam and Noah. They had many followers in their lifetime, and when they died these followers said if they were to construct images of their heroes, it would inspire them in their worship of God. They then proceeded to do so. When the next generation made its appearance, Satan introduced another idea: that their forefathers had not just been using these statues as a focus of worship-they had actually been worshipping them as idols. It was these idols who made the rain fall and, in fact, accomplished everything. That was how idol worship started.

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

THE LAW OF GOD IS APPLICABLE TO EVERYONE

It is written in the chapter of the Qur'an entitled, "The Table Spread," that those who do not judge in accordance with God's revelations are



3. Worship

unbelievers, transgressors and evil, doers, the reference being to the Children of Israel. Someone suggested to Hudhaifah, a companion of the Prophet, that as these verses had been revealed with regard to the Children of Israel, they did not apply to Muslims, and that what they meant was that those of the Jews who did not judge in accordance with God's revelations were unbelievers, transgressors and evildoers. "What good brothers you have in the Children of Israel that they should accept all that is sour, leaving all that is sweet for you in life," replied Hudhaifah. "It cannot be as you say, "God knows, you are bound to follow in their footsteps."

WHEN THOSE BOUND FOR PARADISE FIND THEIR WAY BARRED

Jabir ibn Abdullah tells of how, when he learnt of a companion of the Prophet who had actually heard the Prophet's words of wisdom, he bought a camel, saddled it, and set off for Damascus. It took him a whole month to reach this city, where he betook himself to the house of Abdullah Ibn Unays. There he told the gate-keeper to inform



3. Worship

the master of the house that Jabir was at the door. "Is that Jabir the son of Abdullah?" enquired the gate-keeper. On hearing that this was so, he summoned his master, who appeared at the doorway and embraced him. "It came to my knowledge," said Jabir "that you had heard one of the sayings of the Prophet, and I was afraid that I might die before hearing it." Abdullah ibn Unays then told him that what he had heard the Prophet say was that, on the Day of Judgement, people would make their appearance naked, uncircumcised and destitute. God would proclaim in a voice audible to the far and near alike that He was the Sovereign Lord; that it was He who would mete out justice on this day. "No one bound for Paradise will be able to take up his abode there if he has wronged one in Hell who seeks redress for the wrong done to him. Even if, in any case, one is bound for the Fire, one shall first have to make amends for any wrong one has inflicted on another of its inmates who seeks redress for the wrong done to him." "How will it come to pass", asked Jabir, "as God will raise us up in a naked and destitute state?" "The redressal will be made on the basis of our good and evil



3. Worship

deeds,” replied Abdullah ibn Unays.

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)

ONLY DISINTERESTED ACTION IS OF MORAL VALUE

Abu Umamah relates how a man came to the Prophet to ask him about one who did battle with material rewards and fame as his objectives. He wanted to know what his reward would be. “Nothing,” replied the Prophet. The man repeated his question three times and each time the Prophet gave him the same reply. “The only actions acceptable to God are those carried out in absolute sincerity and solely for the sake of God,” added the Prophet.

(ABU DAWUD, NASAI)

BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR

Umar once said that if a voice from heaven announced that everyone would enter heaven except for one single person, he would be afraid of being that person, “And if a voice from heaven were to announce that everyone, except for one



3. Worship

single person, would enter hell, I would be hopeful of being that person.

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

THERE IS CHARITY IN FORGIVENESS

Abu Abbas ibn Hibr relates that one day the Prophet exhorted people to donate something towards the struggle for God's cause, and people gave according to their means. One of the Prophet's Companions Ulbah ibn Zayd ibn Haritha, did not, however, have anything to give. He arose that night and, weeping before God, prayed to Him: "Lord I have nothing to give to charity. Instead Lord, I forgive whoever has brought me dishonour." In the morning when the Companions had gathered, the Prophet asked them, "where is the one who gave something to charity last night?" When no one arose, the Prophet repeated his question. Still no one answered. Then, when the Prophet had repeated his question for the third time, Ulbah ibn Zayd Haritha arose. "Rejoice," said the Prophet, "for your gift to charity has been accepted."

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)



THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCE OF POWER

The Prophet once sent Miqdad ibn Aswad off on a mission. When he returned a few days later, the Prophet asked him how things had gone. “People kept on putting me on a pedestal, to the point where I began to think of myself as superior to them,” replied Miqdad. “That is the way with leadership. You can either take it or leave it.” said the Prophet. “By the one who has sent you with the truth,” replied Miqdad, “I will never again accept leadership – not even of two people.”

(AL-BAZZAR)

THOSE WHO DO NOT FEAR GOD CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE STATE OF MIND OF THOSE WHO DO

The expedition of Tabuk was conducted under extremely difficult conditions. Abdullah ibn Abbas tells of how the Prophet exhorted the Muslims to make contributions towards it, and people started giving what they could. It was Abdul Rahman ibn Auf, with his donation of 200 ounces of silver, who made the largest contribution. When the Prophet



3. Worship

asked him if he had left anything for his family, he said that he had. The Prophet then asked him what he had left for them and he said, "Something of greater value and more excellent than what I have donated." The Prophet then enquired as to the exact value. "Whatever provision and good fortune God and His Prophet have promised" was Abdul Rahman ibn Auf's reply. Abu Aqeel Ansari, however, had brought only one *sa 'as* of dates. He told of how he had spent the whole night hauling water for a Jew, for which he earned two *sa'as* of dates. One *sa 'a* he had left for his household. The other he had brought with him. He felt ashamed of his paltry contribution and excused himself on the grounds that he had nothing else to give. Such was the open-hearted sincerity of the true Muslims. There were hypocrites of Madinah, however, who used to decry the contributors of substantial sums as being ostentatious. They scoffed likewise at those who donated small amounts: "They are more in need of their *sa 'as* than anybody."

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)



3. Worship

SOMETIMES THE OBSCURE ARE MORE AMPLY REWARDED THAN THE FAMOUS

One day when Umar was sitting with a group of people, he asked them, “Who will gain the greatest reward?” Some said it would be those who fasted, while others thought it would be those who prayed. Some said that the reward of the Commander of the Faithful would be the greatest. Everyone made different suggestions, but Umar dismissed them all. “Shall I tell you who will have the greater even than that of the Commander of the Faithful?” They all asked him to explain who he meant. “It is one who, clinging on to the reins of his horse, and watching over the Muslim army in the far off land of Syria, has no idea whether he will be devoured by some wild beast, bitten by some poisonous insect or attacked by some foe. Such a man will receive a greater reward than any of those you mentioned, greater even than the Commander of the Faithful.

(IBN ‘ASAKIR)

PREFERRING TO BE UNOSTENTATIOUS

At the end of a long journey on camel back,



3. Worship

Umar arrived in Palestine along with a group of emigrants and helpers. The long garment, which he had been wearing for so many days, had torn at the back, and he gave it to the Bishop to be washed and mended. The Bishop did as he was told and when he brought the garment back mended, he brought along another one made out of fine cloth. Umar looked at it and asked him what this was that he had brought. "Your garment," replied the Bishop. "I have washed and patched it. The other one is a gift from me." Umar examined it, running his hand over it. Then he put on his own garment and gave the other one back to the Bishop. He explained that the old one absorbed sweat better.

(AL-TABARI)

LIVING IN FEAR OF DOOMSDAY

Abu Bakr, seeing a bird sitting on a tree, exclaimed, "Oh bird, how fortunate you are. If only I could be like you-sitting on trees eating their fruit, then flying away. No reckoning or doom awaits you. By God, I would like to be a tree by the wayside, and have a passing camel take in its mouth, chew me,



3. Worship

swallow me and then dispose me as dung.”

(AL-BAIHAQI, *AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

**SETTING NO SPECIAL VALUE UPON ONE
SOWN ACTIONS**

Umar once asked Abu Musa al-Ashari if he would like to have only those actions attributed to him which he had performed in the presence of the Prophet, with everything else that he had done to be completely nullified, so that neither his good nor his bad deeds were of any account and he would be neither punished nor rewarded. Abu Musa said that he would not. “When I came to Basra,” he explained, “oppression was rife among the people. I taught them the Qur’an and acquainted them with the teachings of the Prophet. I undertook campaigns for the cause of God along with them. This being so, I hope for the grace of God.” “For my part,” said Umar, “I should like my actions to be disassociated from me in such a way that neither good nor evil deeds were of any importance. Neither sin nor good deed would then stand to my account. All that would stand to my credit would be what I

3. Worship

had done in the presence of the Prophet.”

(IBN ‘ASAKIR)

THE WORTH OF HONEST EARNINGS

According to Hasan, a certain individual once said to Uthman: You rich people far surpass others in righteousness. You are able to give charity, go on pilgrimages and spend for God’s cause.” “Are you envious of us?” enquired Uthman. “Indeed, we are,” said the man. “By God,” Uthman told him, “One dirham spent from money made through honest endeavour is better than ten thousand dirhams spent out of a great mass of wealth.”

(*AL-BAIKHAQI, AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)



4. SINCERITY

BEING SINCERE MEANS ABSTAINING FROM WHAT IS FORBIDDEN

Zayd ibn Arqam records the Prophet as saying: “Whoever says with sincerity that there is no god save God shall enter Paradise.” When asked what this sincerity was, he replied, “Let his very oath bar him from what God has forbidden.”

(AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB)

WEIGHING UP ONE’S ACTIONS BEFORE THEY ARE WEIGHED UP ON THE DIVINE SCALES OF JUSTICE

“Reckon with yourselves,” said Umar, “before you are reckoned with in the next world; and weigh your own actions before they are weighed on the divine scales of justice; and prepare yourselves for the great appearance before God.

DO NOT REGARD KNOWLEDGE AS A MEANS TO PERSONAL PRESTIGE

Ubayy ibn Kaab said: “Acquire knowledge and use



4. Sincerity

it. Do not acquire it in order thereby to enhance yourselves. Otherwise a time will come when learning will be used as an adornment in the manner of clothes.

LUST FOR FAME THE WORST SINGLE DANGER-FOR MAN

On his deathbed Shaddad ibn Aus said to those around him: "What I fear most for this community is ostentation and the harbouring of secret desires." The meaning of "secret desires" was explained by Sufyan Thauri: "It is the fondness of praise for one's good deeds." When the Prophet himself was questioned on this subject, he said that "secret desires" were harboured, for example, by those who sought knowledge because the idea that people would then come and sit at their feet was pleasing to them.

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

ACTING 'TO BE SEEN BY MEN'

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as having exhorted his followers to seek refuge from the Pit of

4. Sincerity

Grief. When asked what this Pit of Grief was, he said it was a gorge in Hell from which Hell itself sought refuge four hundred times a day. The Prophet was then asked who would enter that Pit. "Those scholars who act to be seen by men," he replied.

(AT-TIRMIDHI, IBN MAJAH)

FEARING GOD IN ONE'S DEALINGS WITH MEN

The Prophet once came across Abu Masud Ansari beating his slave. "You should know, Abu Masud," he said, "that God has more power over you than you have over this slave." Abu Masud trembled on hearing these words of the Prophet. "Messenger of God," he said, "I am freeing this slave for God's sake." "If you had not acted thus, the flames of Hell would have engulfed you," the Prophet told him.

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

PUTTING ONESELF IN OTHERS' SHOES AND NOT ENTERTAINING SUSPICIONS

The Prophet's wife Aishah was once slanderously

4. Sincerity

accused of misconduct. While the rumours were at their height, Abu Ayub Ansari's wife mentioned to her husband what people were saying about Aishah. Abu Ayub refused on principle to believe it and replied that those who said such things are liars. "Can you imagine yourself doing such a thing?" he asked his wife. "Certainly not," she answered. "Well, how much more chaste and pure Aishah is than you. Why should such actions be attributed to her?" asked Abu Ayub of his wife.

REJOICING IN THE MUSLIMS' PROSPERITY

Abdullah ibn Abbas once said: "Whenever I hear that rain has fallen on a Muslim town I am happy; even though I myself have no cattle grazing there."

(AT-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

AVOIDING RETALIATION FOR THE SAKE OF GOD

While the Muslims were returning from the Bani Mustaliq campaign, Aishah was detained by the loss of a necklace. She eventually found the necklace, but having lost trace of the Muslim party,

4. Sincerity

she went to sleep at the place where they had set up their camp the night before. There she was spotted by a Companion, who seating her on his camel and himself holding the reins, brought her back to Madinah. When they reached home, there were certain hypocrites who used this episode to spread false scandals about Aishah. One of the scandalmongers was Mistah, a relative of Abu Bakr who received a monthly stipend from his wealthy kinsman. When Abu Bakr discovered Mistah's role in the slandering of his daughter, Aishah, he swore an oath that he would stop giving any money to Mistah. Then this verse of the Qur'an was revealed: "Let not the honourable and the rich among you swear not to give to their kindred, the poor, and those who have emigrated for the cause of God. Rather let them pardon and forgive, Do you not wish God to forgive you? He is Forgiving, Merciful." (24:22) On hearing the revelation of this verse, Abu Bakr said, "I would certainly like God to forgive me."

(IBN HISHAM, *AL-SIRAH AL-NABAWIYYAH*)



4. Sincerity

ONE WHO WILL BE SAVED FROM DOOM ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

“On the Day of Resurrection, God will save from Hell-fire one who has saved his brother from humiliation in this world.” These words were spoken by the Prophet Muhammad.

HARDNESS OF HEART COMES FROM USING RELIGION FOR WORLDLY ENDS

“A learned man is punished by having his heart to die,” said Hasan al-Basri. Asked what was meant by the dying of the heart, he replied that it came from seeking the world through actions whose sole direction should be towards eternity.

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

THE DAY OF DEATH WILL BE THE GREAT AWAKENING

“People are asleep; when they die, they will awaken.” Thus spoke the Prophet.



WORLDLY ATTACHMENT BARS THE GATE TO ETERNITY

“There will come a day when you will be as insignificant as the flotsam carried away by a flood,” the Prophet once said to his Companions. They asked him why that would be. He then told them that something he termed *wahan* would develop within them, and when they asked what that meant, he explained that it is to love worldly things, and be reluctant to face death.”

STANDING ON THE BRINK OF HELL-FIRE

In the first sermon the Prophet gave on his arrival in Madinah, after his emigration from Makkah, he said to the people, “Send good deeds before you; you will surely realize their worth. Truly, there will come a time when each one of you will be thunderstruck, and shepherds, in dismay, will leave their flocks unguarded. And the Lord will address you-and there will be no interpreter or obstacle to bar the way-’ Did not My prophets visit you? Did they not communicate My message unto you? bestowed wealth upon you and showered you with great bounty. Now, what have you sent before you,



4. Sincerity

for the good of your own selves?’ You will look to your right and your left and you will see nothing. You will look ahead and you will see only the Fire of Hell. So save yourself from the Fire, be it with but a morsel of a date. Whoever does not possess even that trifling thing should set himself to utter sweet words, for they too have their rewards. Good deeds are rewarded from ten to seven hundred fold. Peace be upon you, and God’s mercy and His blessing.”

(IBN HISHAM, *AL-SIRAH AL-NABA WIYYAH*)

THINKING NOUGHT OF ONE’S ACTIONS

Saeed ibn Jubayr, a companion of the Companions of the Prophet, was asked who was the greatest worshipper. “One who has sinned then repents,” came the reply. “Then when he recalls his sins, he sets no great value upon his good deeds either.”

(*SAFAWAT AL-SAFAWAH*)

THE GREATEST DEEDS ARE THE MOST DIFFICULT OF ALL

“Three actions are the most difficult,” the Prophet once remarked: “Being fair with others on matters



4. Sincerity

concerning oneself; helping others by giving from one's own possessions; and remembering God at all times."

ONLY THE MUSLIM WHO IS TRUE TO HIS FAITH CAN ENTER PARADISE

Abu Hurayrah tells the story of a man who fought with all his strength in the Battle of Khaybar. The news spread that he had died on the field of battle and people began to extol his bravery. They were agreed that he must surely have attained the status of martyrdom. When the Prophet heard what the people were saying, he said, "He is destined for the Fire." But the daredevil valour of this man caused people to cast doubt upon the words of the Prophet, so the latter bade them go and find out how he had died. It turned out that he had fallen down wounded and lay in that state until nightfall, when unable to bear the pain of his wounds, he killed himself. Far from being a case of martyrdom, his had been a case of suicide. When the Prophet was informed of the outcome of their investigations, he said, "I bear witness that I am God's servant and His Messenger." He then bade Bilal go and tell the



4. Sincerity

people that only a Muslim who was true to his faith would enter Paradise; but that God also aided the cause of His religion through sinners.

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)

REGARDING ONE'S DEEDS AS OF NO SPECIAL VALUE

“You have rendered great services to the Islamic cause,” someone once told Umar. “You must have great rank in the eyes of the Lord.” “Suffice it that there should be nothing for me or against me,” was Umar’s reply.

IT IS HYPOCRISY TO JOIN A MOVEMENT BECAUSE OF ITS WORLDLY SUCCESS

When the Prophet emigrated to Madinah, Abdullah ibn Ubayy and his followers put all kinds of obstacles in the Prophet’s path, doing all they could to sabotage his mission. Then came the Battle of Badr, when the great leaders of the Quraysh were slain. “There is no stopping Islam now,” agreed Abdullah ibn Ubayy and his companions. They then put up a facade of entering Islam, but,



4. Sincerity

insincere in their path, they soon took to plotting against Islam.

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

BY PERFORMING SMALL TASKS A MAN DOES NOT Demean HIMSELF

The Caliph of Islam, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, was talking to someone late one night when the lamp started flickering. "I will wake up the servant," ventured his companion. "He can put some oil in the lamp." Umar told him not to do so. Then he got up and put the oil in the lamp himself. "I was Umar ibn Abdul Aziz before I put oil in the lamp, and I am still Umar ibn Abdul Aziz," said the Caliph.

(*SIRAT UMAR IBN ABDUL AZIZ*)

HAVING BAD RELATIONS WITH ANYONE IS NO REASON TO DENY HIM HIS RIGHTS

Umar ibn Khattab once told a certain person that he had no love for him. "But will you deprive me of my rights?" asked the man. Umar said that he would not. "That is enough for me, it is only women who need to be loved," replied the man.



4. Sincerity

BEING SATISFIED WITH GOD'S BOUNTY AND ALWAYS THIRSTING FOR KNOWLEDGE

Abu Qilabah was once asked who the richest man was. "He who is satisfied with what God has given him," was Abu Qilabah's reply. And the most knowledgeable? "He who increases his knowledge through that of others."

BY MAKING NO EFFORTS, MAN LOSES WHAT HE HOPES TO GAIN

"I have seen nothing the equal of Paradise that the very people who seek it should have gone to sleep. Nor I have seen anything like Hell that the people who would flee from it are slumbering." So said the Prophet Muhammad.

LEAVE JUSTICE TO GOD

Imam Zayn ul-Abidin (38-94 AH), the son of Imam Husain, was the only member of the latter's family to survive the slaughter of Karbala. Informed that some individual had slandered him and made accusations against him, the Imam asked to be taken to see him. On entering, he greeted him and



4. Sincerity

said: “If what you say about me be true, I pray for God’s forgiveness; and if it be false, may He forgive you.”

**BEING CONSCIOUS OF ONE’S OWN FAULTS,
NOT OF OTHERS**

Although Rabi’ ibn Khaythama never used to speak ill of anybody, he once remarked upon people’s extraordinary habit of fearing God with regard to other people’s sins, but not with regard to their own.

(IBN SA’D *TABAQAT*)

**BOWING TO THE WILL OF GOD AND TO HIS
MESSENGER**

Abu Huzayfah was a man who liked good food. One day having eaten his fill, he entered into the presence of God’s Messenger, where he felt constrained to belch. The Prophet heard him and said: “The most satiated in this world will be the most starved on the Day of Resurrection.” These words made such an impression on Abu Huzayfah that he never ate his fill again.



4. Sincerity

HE WHOSE HEART IS FREE OF HATE WILL ENTER HEAVEN

Sitting with his companions one day, the Prophet said: "There is a man coming from the hills just now who will be the one of the Companions of the Garden." Just then, this Muslim appeared, and they greeted him and asked him what superior virtue his actions had that the Prophet had promised him Paradise. "Nothing in particular," replied the man. "The only point, I can think of is that I bear no grudge against any Muslim."

REFORMING OTHERS AND BEING READY TO BE REFORMED ONESELF

The following is part of the address delivered by Abu Bakr on being elected Caliph: "My people, your affairs have been entrusted to me, although I am no better than you. The weak among you to me, will be the strongest until I have ensured that they receive what is rightfully theirs. The strong among you I will look upon as the weakest, until I have made sure that they pay their due. I am just like anyone of you. When you see that I am proceeding correctly, follow me; and when you see me waver, set me straight.



4. Sincerity

THE LEAST ONE CAN DO IS NOT HARM ANYONE

Yahya ibn Muadh Al-Razi once observed that if one cannot do anything to benefit one's Muslim brother, at least one should do him no harm.

WORSHIP IS MORE THAN A SET OF RITUALS

The Prophet was addressing his followers one day when he saw a man standing in the sun, praying. He asked about this man and was told that he was Abu Israel Ansari. He was fasting and had made a vow that neither would he go into the shade nor would he sit down; he would remain standing in the scorching sun. Furthermore, he would not talk to anyone, but would maintain a strict silence. The Prophet's response to this was to send him word that he should talk, go into the shade, be seated and complete his fast in usual way.

(AL-QURTUBI, *TAFSIR*)

WHY TRY TO MAKE A GOD OF ONESELF?

Hamdun Nishapuri, who lived in the third century



4. Sincerity

Hijri, when asked who God's true servant was, answered: "One who worships and has no desire for people to worship him".

WHILE WORSHIPPING GOD, RESPECT THE CONVENIENCE OF OTHERS

The Prophet was once in retreat in the mosque when he was disturbed by the sound of loud recitation. Raising the curtain, he said to the worshippers, "Look, you are all intent on beseeching God, but in so doing you must not trouble others. Don't raise your voices to outdo each other while reciting the Qur'an.

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

THE SIMPLER THE CEREMONY, THE GREATER THE BLESSING

Aishah reports the Prophet as saying: "The marriage which is most blest is that which has been least burdensome."

(AL-BAIHAQI *AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

4. Sincerity

CHOOSE THE SIMPLER, NOT THE MORE DIFFICULT WAY

It happened once that a Companion of the Prophet found himself in a wide open area when the time for prayer came round. Still clutching the reins of his horse, he duly said his prayers. A watching Kharijite expressed his doubts about the propriety of this action, but other companions told him that the Prophet habitually favoured the simpler way in all matters. The Companion whose behaviour had been called in question then pointed out that if he had let go of the horse, it would have run away” and I was in no position to walk; I would have been creating difficulties for myself for no good reason.”

MAKING THINGS UNNECESSARILY DIFFICULT FOR ONESELF DOES NOT CONSTITUTE PIETY

While on a journey, the Prophet caught sight of a cluster of people crowding around a man to shade him from the sun. When the Prophet asked what was the matter with him, it was explained to him that he was fasting. “There is



4. Sincerity

nothing pious about fasting on a journey,” said the Prophet.

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

**RELIGIOUS LEADERS SHOULD HAVE
CONSIDERATION FOR THEIR
CONGREGATIONS**

Mu’adh, leading the congregation for the evening prayer one day, recited two chapters of the Qur’an, Al-Baqarah and An-Nisa which were very lengthy. When the Prophet heard about this, he said: “Mu’adh, are you one to put people to the proof? Are not short chapters like At-Tariq and Ash-Shams sufficient for you?”

(NASA’I, *SUNAN*)

**RATHER THAN FROM OUTWARD ACTIONS,
GREATNESS COMES FROM INWARD GRACE**

Commenting on the Caliph Abu Bakr’s outstanding greatness, Abu Bakr Muzani observed that it was not because he fasted or prayed more than others; it was because of something in his heart. Ibn Aliyya, explaining this statement of Abu Bakr Muzani, said

4. Sincerity

that what he had in mind was love of God and kindness of his creatures.

(JAMI' AL-ULUM WA AL-HIKAM)

NO RIGIDITY IN RELIGION

When Aishah was questioned by Udhayf ibn Harith as to whether the Prophet used to bathe at nightfall or at daybreak, she replied, "He used to bathe at any time of night, sometimes as night fell and sometimes as day broke." "Praise be to God who has made His religion flexible," said Udhayf.

(NASA'I, SUNAN)

GOD LOOKS NOT JUST AT ACTIONS BUT AT THEIR MOTIVES

Umar ibn Khattab once heard the Prophet say: "Actions are judged by the doer's intentions. Whatever a man has set his heart on, he shall have it. So he who emigrates for God and His Messenger will be led by his emigration to just that destination. And he who emigrates for worldly reasons-to enrich himself or to marry-



4. Sincerity

will be led to just those objectives.”

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)



5. PIETY

PIETY LEADS ONE TO PRESS ONWARDS IN SPITE OF ALL OBSTACLES

“What is piety (*taqwa*)?” Abu Hurayrah was once asked. “Have you ever passed along a thorny path?” was his rejoinder. “Why, yes,” replied the questioner. “And what did you do?” “I watched out for the thorns, kept clear of them and went on my way.” “Well then,” said Abu Hurayrah, “That is what is meant by piety.”

GIVING ONESELF UP TO GOD AND WISHING OTHERS WELL

When Jarir came to accept Islam, the Prophet said, “Jarir, give me your hand,” and he bade him swear his allegiance. “To what am I swearing allegiance?” asked Jarir. “That you will surrender yourself to God, and show goodwill towards all Muslims,” replied the Prophet. Then as Jarir was actually swearing allegiance, he added, “In so far as I am able, Messenger of God.” Afterwards everyone was granted this concession.



5. Piety

(AL-TABARANI)

THE SELF-DESTRUCTIVENESS OF WORLDLY GREED

The Prophet sent Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah to Yemen for the purpose of collecting taxes. When he had done so, he returned to Madinah with a large sum of money. Hearing of his arrival, the Ansar joined the Prophet for morning prayer in his mosque, and when he had completed the prayer, they came before him. Seeing them there, the Prophet smiled, "I think you must have heard that Abu Ubaydah has brought some-thing from Bahrain," he said to them. "Yes, we have," replied the Ansar. "Rejoice, and look forward to good tidings," was the Prophet's rejoinder. "By God, it is not poverty that I fear for you. I fear for you abundance in worldly things and that you should strive enviously towards their attainment, as those who went before you did. Then you will be destroyed just as they were.

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)



THE TRUE INTELLECTUAL IS A MAN OF GREAT PIETY

When Hasan ibn Ali relinquished the Caliphate in favour of Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, he spoke in the mosque of Kufa explaining his reasons for abdicating. On this occasion, he said, amongst other things, “The wisest of the wise is he who is most pious, the most vulnerable of all is the sinner.”

(IBN ABDIL BARR)

SHOWING NO FAVOURITISM

According to Aslam, Abdullah ibn Arqam came before Umar ibn Khattab one day and said to him: “Commander of the Faithful, there are some ornaments and silver dishes among the articles that have come into the treasure from Jalula. Please look at them and tell us what to do with them.” “Remind me of this when you see that I am free,” replied Umar. A few days later, Abdullah ibn Arqam did so when the Commander of the Faithful appeared to have nothing to occupy his attention. Umar ibn Khattab then went to the Treasury and had the ornaments and dishes brought before him. The



5. Piety

moment he saw them, he recited the fourteenth verse of the Chapter Al-Imran: "Men are tempted by the love of women and offspring, of hoarded treasures of gold and silver, of splendid horses, cattle and plantations. These are the comforts of this life, but far better is the return to God." "We cannot help but rejoice in something that has been made tempting to us. Lord, may we spend it aright; protect us from its evil." Just then, one of Umar's own sons, Abdul Rahman, came along and asked his father for a ring. "Go to your mother. She will feed you barley soup." It was thus that Umar gave him nothing.

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)

SELF-APPRAISAL FIRST AND FOREMOST

A certain individual asked Abdullah ibn Masud for some advice. "You should stay at home, hold your tongue and remember your faults," was the advice he gave him.

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)



TAKING NO ADVANTAGE OF ONE'S POSITION

Once, when a messenger of Caesar's came before Umar, the latter's wife borrowed a *dinar* and bought some perfume which she poured into phials and sent as a gift to Caesar's wife. When the Roman Empress received the gift, she emptied the phials and filled them with jewels, telling the messenger to take them to the wife of Umar ibn Khattab. The latter received the jewels, and extracting them from the phials, placed them on her bedding. When Umar came home, he asked where they had come from. His wife told him the whole story, whereupon Umar took the jewels away and sold them. From the proceeds he gave one *dinar* to his wife and the rest he put in the Treasury.

(AL-DAINA WARI)

JUSTICE, EVEN TOWARDS ENEMIES

"If someone disobeys God in matters that concern you, the best thing to do in return is to obey God in matters that concern him." So said Umar ibn Khattab.

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)



THE FEELINGS INSPIRED BY FAITH ARE MISINTERPRETED BY THE PROFANE

Abu Salma and Abu Hurayrah tell of one occasion when the Prophet, intending to despatch a force, urged the people to offer their contributions. A merchant, Abdur Rahman ibn Auf, who was among them, spoke up: "Messenger of God, I have four thousand. Two thousand are for my household. The other two I lend to God." "God bless you in what you have given and in what you have kept," said the Prophet. Abu Aqeel Ansari, on the other hand, was a poor man, who had spent his whole night working in an orchard, for which he was paid just two *sa'a* of dates. One *sa'a* he kept for his household, the other he presented to the Prophet. The Messenger of God prayed for blessings upon these two. As far as Abdur Rahman ibn Auf was concerned, they said he was just being ostentatious. And as for Abu Aqeel, they said, "Couldn't God and the Prophet have done without his one *sa'a*?"

(AL-BAZZAR)



SELF-RELIANCE

The Prophet once asked: “Who will pledge to me that he will never ask anything of anyone?” Thauban said that he would; and from then on, he truly never asked anything of anyone.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

PREFERRING GOD TO RICHES

An angel of God once visited the Prophet and brought him greetings from God. “If you wish the rocky tracts of Makkah to be converted into gold, it will be done,” said the angel. The Prophet raised his face to heaven and said, “No, Lord, I prefer to eat my fill one day and go hungry the next. When I go hungry, I humble myself before You and remember You. When I have my fill I offer thanks and praise you.”

(AL- TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

NO AFFLICTION IS WORSE THAN HARDNESS OF HEART

“There is no affliction worse than hardness of heart,” observed Malik Ibn Deenar.



UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE SACRIFICES LEADS TO SELF-DESTRUCTION

Abu Imran, who went on an expedition commanded by Abdur Rahman ibn Khalid ibn Walid, tells of how an individual Muslim soldier single-handedly broke the ranks of a large Byzantine army, which was advancing upon the Muslims. Some of the Muslims commented that he had put himself in danger of his own volition, referring to the verse of the chapter Al-Baqarah in which Muslims are warned not to cast themselves, of their own volition, into destruction. Abu Ayyub Ansari, however, said: “We Ansaries can better appreciate the meaning of that verse, because it was revealed with reference to us.” He went on to explain that when God had helped the Prophet and made Islam dominant, some of the Ansar had said to one another: “Come let us remain with our properties now, and consolidate our wealth,” that was when this verse was revealed: “Give for the cause of God and do not with your own hands cast yourself into destruction.” (2:194) “What, in fact, was meant by casting ourselves with our own hands into destruction was our sitting on our



5. Piety

properties, consolidating them and forsaking the struggle for God's cause."

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

DO NOT BECOME UNBALANCED BY LOVE OR HATE

Umar once cautioned: "Do not become mad with love for anyone, nor seek to destroy with your dislike." Aslam asked Umar that what this meant. "It means that when you love anyone, there is the danger of falling head over heels, like a child, and when you dislike someone, you become bent upon destroying him."

(AL-ADAB AL-MUFRAD)

NO PARADISE WITHOUT THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE AND PROPERTY

When Bashir ibn Khasasiyah went to the Prophet to swear his allegiance, he asked him on what conditions it must be given. The Prophet stretched out his arm and said, "Bear witness that there is no God save God, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, pray five times a day at the



5. Piety

appointed times, pay *zakat*, fast during Ramadan, make a pilgrimage to the House of God and carry on the holy struggle.” Bashir replied, “I shall do everything. But there are two things, which are beyond my capacity. One is *zakat*. The truth is, I have just ten she camels. Their milk provides food for my household and they are our only means of travel and transportation. Secondly, there is the holy struggle. I am a faint-hearted man. It is said that those who turn away from the field of battle bring down upon themselves the wrath of God. I am afraid that if I have to do battle, I shall be overcome with fear and run away, thus incurring the wrath of God.” The Prophet withdrew his hand, saying: “Bashir, without giving alms or taking part in the holy struggle how will you enter heaven?”

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

**THINGS ASKED FOR AND THINGS GIVEN
FREELY ARE IN TWO SEPARATE CATEGORIES**

The Prophet sent a gift to Umar, which he returned. Asked by the Prophet why he had done so, Umar replied: “Messenger of God, did you not tell us that we had best not take anything from anyone?” The

5. Piety

Prophet then explained, “That is when you ask for something. When you have not asked for anything, what you receive is God’s bounty.” Umar then swore an oath: “By the one who has control over my soul, never will I ask anyone for a single thing. But if something is given to me without my asking, I shall not refuse it.”

(MALIK MUWATTA)

KEEPING OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT

In his later days, Saad ibn abi Waqqas took to grazing goats. One day he was far from Madinah with his goats, when his son Amr ibn Saad came riding up. “Does it make you happy that you have turned yourself into a Bedouin with your goats while affairs of State and government are being discussed in Madinah?” his son asked him. Saad smote his son on the chest: “Be quiet! I have heard the words of the Prophet: God loves such of His servants as are God-fearing, detached and retiring.”

(MUSLIM SAHIH)



5. Piety

TRUE KNOWLEDGE IS FEAR OF GOD

According to Abdullah ibn Masud “Knowledge does not consist of the memorizing of large numbers of traditions: Knowledge is to fear God.”

LOST TO THE WORLD

“I have seen people among the Prophet’s companion to whom the world meant less than the dust under their feet.” Thus spoke Hasan Basri to his awed contemporaries. He was well qualified to judge, for he had met a large number of them, seventy of whom had fought at Badr. He told them of how they wore simple, homespun camel hair garments, and were so preoccupied with righteous living that they seemed lost to the world. “Were they to see the best among you, they would think: “These people do not believe in the Day of Judgement.”

CONCEIT: THE MOST EVIL TRAIT

Speaking of three saving graces and three destructive traits, the Prophet observed that the former were “fear of God both in public and in



5. Piety

private; speaking the truth whether calm or angry; and moderation whether one is rich or poor.” The three destructive traits he mentioned as being the satisfaction of one’s own desires, miserliness and conceit. “And the last one, that is the worst of all,” he said.

(AL-BAIHAQI, *AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

FEARING GOD IN MATTERS THAT CONCERN THE WEAK

After the Battle of Badr (624 AD) seventy idolaters were taken prisoners and brought to Madinah, one of them being Suhayl ibn Amr. The Prophet was told that Suhayl indulged in fiery oratory in which he used to give vent to his antagonism for the Prophet, and it was suggested that his teeth be broken. “My own teeth would be broken by God if I were to do such a thing, even though I am His Prophet,” was the rejoinder of God’s Messenger. The captives were looked after in the homes of the Companions and the Prophet issued instructions to care for them well.” One of them, Abu Aziz by name, said that the Ansar in whose house he stayed used to serve him bread morning and evening,



5. Piety

while he himself made do with dates. When Thumamah ibn Uthal, chieftain of the Yamamah tribe was taken prisoner, he was given fine food and milk on the orders of the Prophet.

(IBN HISHAM, *SIRAH*)

REMAINING DETACHED FROM THE MATERIAL SIDE OF LIFE

One day, when Umar came to see Abu Ubaydah, he found him lying on a piece of the sacking used to saddle camels, with a bundle for a pillow. “So you have not done as your companions did?” Umar remarked, and Abu Ubaydah replied: “Commander of the Faithful, this is enough to take me to my final resting place.”

(*HILYAT AL-AULIYA*)

WHEN PLEASURES SEEM EMPTY

Abu Darda was a trader by profession, but, after accepting Islam, his commercial activities came to an end “By the One who has control over Abu Darda’s soul,” he once said, “I would not even like to have a shop at the door of the mosque, where I



5. Piety

would not miss a single congregational prayer. No, not even if I made a profit of forty dinars a day and gave it all away in charity.” Abu Darda was asked what had made him feel this way. “The rigours of the Day of Reckoning,” was his reply.

(IBN ‘ASAKIR)

MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES

When Abdullah ibn Masud had built himself a house, he asked Ammar ibn Yasir to come and have a look at what he had built. So Ammar went and saw the house. “You are planning a long way ahead, but soon you will die,” was his only comment.

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

RETRIBUTION HERE AND NOW

Uthman ibn Affan, the third Caliph, said one day to his slave, “Once I twisted your ear. Now take your revenge.” The slave caught hold of Uthman’s ear and the latter told him to twist it as hard as he could. “How good that retribution should be meted out in this world and not left to the next world,” said the Caliph.



WHEN DEATH IS NIGH

Bilal ibn Rubah's household gathered to lament his imminent death. "There is no cause for grief," Bilal told them. "How good to think that tomorrow I will meet my friends Muhammad and his Companions."

When death drew near Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph of Islam, he exclaimed, "I shall consider myself successful if everything balances out and I receive neither punishment nor reward."

SALVATION IS ALL

One day the Prophet heard his wife, Umm Habibah, utter the following prayer: "Lord, long may I be blessed by the shadow of my husband, the Prophet of God, my father, Abu Sufyan, and my brother, Muawiyah." "Umm Habibah," said the Prophet, "life-spans are all decided by God. When you pray to God, you had best ask for salvation from Hell-fire."

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)



THE JOYS OF A PIOUS HOUSEHOLD

Miqdad, explaining the state of affairs in the Prophet's time, told of how, in a single household, there would be some who accepted Islam and some who did not. A believer would see his father, his son or his brother in a state of faithlessness and this would cause him great distress. With his own heart having been opened to faith by God, he felt certain that were his kith and kin to remain in a state of unbelief, they would be doomed to Hell-fire. It, therefore, gave no joy to believers to see certain of their relatives remain unbelievers. It was with reference to this predicament that the following verse of the Qur'an was revealed: "Lord give us joy in our wives and children, and make us an example to those who fear you." (25:74)

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

THE CALL OF PARADISE

Bashir relates that when the Muslims of Makkah first emigrated to Madinah, the water of their new dwelling place did not agree with them. There was a well, however, known as Beir Rumah, owned by



5. Piety

one of the Bani Ghefar tribe, the water of which was to the liking of the emigrants. The owner used to sell them a flask-full in exchange for one *mudd* (half bushel) of grain. The Prophet suggested to the owner that he should sell it to him “in exchange for a spring in Paradise.” “I and my household have no other source of livelihood,” the man explained. “I can’t just give it away to you like that.” Hearing of this incident Uthman ibn Affan bought the Well of Rumah from its owner for 35,000 dirhams, then came to the Prophet. “Shall I also have a spring in paradise in exchange for this well”, he asked. “You will indeed!” said the Prophet. Uthman then donated the well to the Muslims.

(AL-TABARANI)

TAKE WHAT IS GLADLY GIVEN; DO NOT ASK FOR MORE

After the Battle of Hunayn, the Prophet gave Hakim ibn Hizam part of the spoils. But Hakim was not satisfied with his share, so the Prophet gave him still more. “Which of your gifts was better?” asked Hakim. “The first,” replied the Prophet and then he added, “O Hakim, the material things of this world

5. Piety

are very attractive, but he who takes such things out of greed and uses them badly will not be blessed therein. He will be like a man who eats, but is never filled. It is only he who takes a thing with a pure heart and uses it well who will be blessed. And remember that the hand that gives is better than the hand that receives. “Even in your case, Prophet of God?” asked Hakim. “Yes, even in my case,” was the Prophet’s reply.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

PREOCCUPATION WITH PRESTIGE CAN LEAD STRAIGHT TO PERDITION

Muawiyah, the first Umayyad Caliph went over to where Abdullah ibn Amir and Abdullah ibn Zubayr were seated. Abdullah ibn Amir got to his feet on seeing Muawiyah approach, but Abdullah ibn Zubayr remained seated. ‘I recall these words of the Prophet,’ remarked Muawiyah: “One who likes people to stand up for him might as well build for himself a home in the Fire.”

(AL-ADAB AL-MUFRAD)



GIVING UP THIS WORLD FOR THE NEXT

When it was time to give a meal to some visitors from Iraq, Umar, the second Caliph brought them a bowl of food-some coarse bread and olive oil-and requested them to eat. Slowly reluctantly-they complied. Seeing what tiny morsels they were taking, Umar said to them, "You know, if I wished, I could also prepare for myself fine, rich food of the kind to which you are accustomed. But it is our practice here to be sparing of things in this world so that we may receive them in the next. Have you not seen how Almighty God has chastised a people for having received good things in their worldly life?" By another account, Umar asked them what they wanted: "Things which are sweet and spicy, hot and cold? Whatever you eat will go to waste in your stomachs."

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

SELFLESSNESS IN WORLDLY MATTERS

Younus ibn Maysirah once observed: "Denying oneself lawful things is not the essence of abstinence. Neither is it ridding oneself of wealth.



5. Piety

What is meant by abstinence is relying less on what one has oneself and more on what God has; it means preserving the same attitude whether beset by adversity or not; it is to be impartial in all matters of justice, making no distinction between those who praise and those who blame.

(JAMI' AL-ULUM WA AL-HIKAM)

NO ISLAMIC REVOLUTION WITHOUT ISLAMIC INDIVIDUALS

There was once a brave warrior-albeit an idolater-who asked the Prophet Muhammad for permission to join in the Battle of Badr along with the Muslims. Before giving his assent, the Prophet asked him if he believed in God and His Prophet. The man said that he did not. "I cannot accept the assistance of an idolater," said the Prophet. The man then swore his allegiance as a Muslim and joined in the battle along with the rest of the Muslims.

THERE ARE TIMES TO REMAIN SILENT AND TIMES TO SPEAK FREELY

The Prophet Muhammad once observed: "Blessed is



5. Piety

he who keeps superfluous words to himself, but expends whatever superfluous wealth he has.”

TWO EYES THAT SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE FIRE

“There are two eyes that the Fire shall not touch,” said the Prophet Muhammad. “One is an eye that has wept in fear of God, and other is an eye that has spent the night keeping a vigil in the path of God.”

ONE HAS TO LOSE IN ORDER TO GAIN

Kaab ibn Ujrah relates how one day he came before the Prophet and, noticing the marks of strain on his face, he asked him what was troubling him. The Prophet replied that for three days his stomach had had nothing to fill it. Kaab then went out and found employment with a local Jew. He had to give water to the Jew’s camel and in return for each bucketful, he received one date. When he had a collection of dates he came before the Prophet, who asked him where he had found them. After he had explained how he came by them, the Prophet said, “Kaab, tell me, have you any love for me?” Kaab’s answer was that he would sacrifice his own dear father and



5. Piety

mother for the sake of the Prophet. “Do you know the fate of one who loves God and His Prophet?” asked the Prophet. “Poverty, which will overtake him even more swiftly than flood waters streaming down a hillside.”

(AL-TABARANI)

**WORLDLY ATTACHMENT HINDERS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRUTH**

A party of Christians from the Yemen visited Madinah ten years after the Muslim emigration to that town. Their group was led by one Abu Harithah ibn Alqamah, a priest. On the way back to Yemen, he was riding on a mule, when the animal stumbled, throwing him to the ground. His brother, Karz ibn Alqamah, who happened to be present at the time, exclaimed, “Damn that wayward one!” (meaning the Prophet Muhammad.) “Damn your mother!” retorted Abu Harithah. “Why do you say that?” asked his brother in astonishment. “By God, well, do we know that this is the Prophet we have been waiting for, the one prophesied in our Scriptures,” replied Abu Harithah. “If that is so,” said Karz, “Why do you not proclaim your belief in

5. Piety

the Prophethood of Muhammad.” Abu Haritha, attempting to explain himself, said, “These kings have showered upon us much wealth and honour. If we were to believe in Muhammad, they would take everything away from us.”

(AL-TABARANI)

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Along with his Companions, the Prophet set forth for the field of Badr. Reaching a place called Rauha, he addressed the Muslims and asked them for their views. Abu Bakr spoke up, but the Prophet did not give him his attention. Again he asked them what they thought. And when Umar spoke his mind, the Prophet paid him no attention either. Once again he put the question. This time Saad ibn Muadh Ansari arose. “Perhaps your question is directed at us,” he said, to which the Prophet replied in the affirmative. The reason for the Prophet’s concern was that the Ansar had sworn what was known as the Protection Oath, according to which it was incumbent upon them to protect the Prophet within the walls of Madinah. Their oath did not, however, oblige them to travel



5. Piety

to far-off places in order to fight the Prophet's enemies. Miqdad ibn Amr then reassured the Prophet by saying: "Messenger of God, do as God has shown you. We will not say unto you as the children of Israel said unto Moses: 'Go, you and your Lord, and fight; we will stay here'." (5:24) To this Saad ibn Muadh added, "We have sworn oaths to you, which bind us to hear and obey. Therefore, do as you will, Messenger of God, and we are with you. By Him who has sent you with the truth, if you bade us cross the sea and plunge into it, we would do just that. Not one man of us would stay behind." The Prophet was extremely pleased at hearing this from the Ansar. "Onward!" he said. "God has decreed that victory and succour shall be yours!"

TO LIVE, ONE MUST COME TO TERMS WITH DYING

Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam, once offered this piece of advice to a Muslim commander, by the name of Khalid ibn Walid: "Khalid, be desirous of death. That way, you will find life."



5. Piety

TRUE RELIGION BRINGS ABOUT RADICAL CHANGES IN ONE'S LIFE

Abu Hurayrah tells of how the Prophet addressed these words of wisdom to him: "Abu Hurayrah, be abstemious, and you will be the most devout of men. Be content with what you have and you will be the one most thankful to God. Desire for others what you desire for yourself, and you will be a man of faith. Be good to your neighbour and you will be a true Muslim. Laugh less, for too much laughter deadens the heart."

(IBN MAJAH *SUNAN*)

REPENTANCE IS TO BE ASHAMED OF WHAT ONE HAS DONE

"Shame is the stuff of repentance," said the Prophet.

HAVE DEALINGS WITH MEN AS IF THEY WERE DEALINGS WITH GOD

One day when Abu Masud Badari was beating his slave with a stick, he suddenly heard a voice behind him, calling him by name. According to Abu Masud, he was so furious that he failed to recognize



5. Piety

the voice. But when the man came closer, he saw that it was none other than the Prophet. “Abu Masud,” he said, “You should know that God has more power over you than you have over this slave.” Hearing this, Abu Masud was gripped with fear, and the stick fell from his hand. “Prophet of God,” he said, “from today, this slave is free.” “If Abu Masud had not done this he would have been engulfed by the fire,” said the Messenger of God.

(MUSLIM, *SAHIH*)



6. HUMILITY

RESPECT MEANS SOMETHING MORE THAN THE MAKING OF GESTURES

Anas ibn Malik says: “No one was dearer to us than the Prophet Muhammad. But when he came into our presence, we never used to stand up, for we knew that he did not like us to do so.”

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

REFRAINING FROM ACQUIRING UNNECESSARY TASTES

Having heard this story from his grandfather, Abdullah ibn Shurayk tells of what happened when some *faluda* was brought before Ali ibn Abi Talib. “It certainly smells good, looks good and tastes good,” remarked Ali. “But I prefer not to acquire new habits by indulging in things to which I am not accustomed.”

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

CONCEIT TAKES ONE FAR FROM GOD

Aishah tells of how one day she put on a new

6. Humility

garment and, as she looked at it in delight, her father Abu Bakr said, “What are you looking at? God is not looking at you.” At this reminder, Aishah asked her father why he rebuked her. “Why, don’t you know that when one of God’s servants becomes conceited over some worldly adornment, he brings down upon himself the displeasure of the Lord; he has then to cast off that adornment if he is to regain the Lord’s good pleasure.” explained Abu Bakr. Aishah says that she took off the garment and gave it away to charity. “Perchance this charity will count as your penance,” said Abu Bakr.

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

THE BRAVEST IS THE MOST IN CONTROL OF HIMSELF

Abdullah ibn Masud records the Prophet as asking his companions: “Whom do you consider brave?” “One who triumphs in a wrestling match,” suggested some of the companions. “Not so,” the Prophet corrected them. “It is rather one who controls himself when he is angry.”



6. Humility

GIVING ONE'S BEST, BUT WITHOUT CONCEIT

Struck down by the dagger of Abu Lulu, a Magian slave of Mughirah ibn Abi Shuaba, Umar ibn Khattab, the second Caliph lay mortally wounded. So quickly was he losing blood that when he drank some milk, its whiteness flowed from his wounds. It was then that these words came to his lips: "Lord, did I but have a world full of gold, I would use it to escape the Lord's punishment before it descended upon me." Abdullah ibn Abbas then spoke up, reminding Umar of the time in Makkah, when "the Prophet prayed to the lord that he might strengthen Islam through you. The Muslims at the time were in an abject state. Then you became a Muslim and a source of strength for Islam. Through you, Islam achieved great glory. You emigrated with the Prophet and were by his side in every battle. When the Prophet died, he was well pleased with you. And so was Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam whom you served so faithfully as assistant and advisor. Then, after him, you became Commander of the Faithful. It was through you that God brought great cities within the Islamic Empire, and



6. Humility

with them came great wealth. The enemies of Islam were put to flight at your hand, and you were destined to die a martyr. Blessed are you." "You lead one astray with your misleading talk," said Umar, then added, "But Abdullah! Will you testify on my behalf on the Day of Resurrection?" Abdullah ibn Abbas said that he would. At this point Umar's head lay in the lap of his son, who was also called Abdullah. Umar said he would like his head to be on the ground. Abdullah ibn Umar raised his father's head from where it rested and laid it on his ankle. "Let my cheek touch the ground," insisted Umar. Abdullah did as his father told him. Then Umar said to himself, "Woe betide you, and woe betide your mother, if God does not forgive you." Whereupon he breathed his last.

(AL-TABARANI)

**NEVER CONSIDERING ONESELF ABOVE
SERVING GOD**

Abdullah ibn Masud relates that in the Battle of Badr there was one camel to every three Muslims, and that they used to take it in turn to ride. The Prophet of God fared no better than the rest. He too



6. Humility

had to share a camel with Abu Lubabah and Ali ibn Abu Talib. Both of them had asked the Prophet to ride on the camel while they walked alongside, but the Prophet had replied, “Neither of you is stronger than I am, and I am no less in need of God’s reward than you.”

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)

HAVING REGARD FOR NECESSITIES RATHER THAN FORMALITIES

When the Prophet Muhammad first emigrated from Makkah to Madinah, he stayed in the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari, occupying the ground floor, while Abu Ayyub and his family moved upstairs to a room at the top of the house. Abu Ayyub felt uneasy about being on top while the Prophet remained below him, so he requested the Prophet to take the upper portion while he and his family would move downstairs. The Prophet told him that he need not worry about that. “It is better for me to stay downstairs. It makes things easier for visitors.

(IBN KATHIR, TAFSIR)



KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

Abdullah ibn Masud related how once, when he accompanied the Prophet on a journey, they set up camp in a place where there was a bird with two nestlings. “We seized the nestlings,” recounts Ibn Masud, “and the mother bird started crying and fluttering her wings.” When the Prophet heard about this, he asked who had troubled the mother in this way and said that the nestlings should be returned. The Prophet also noticed that an ant’s nest had been burnt. He asked who had burnt it, and when we told him that we had done so, he said: “Only the Lord of Fire is entitled to punish by fire.”

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

ACCEPTING ALL FOOD WITHOUT DEMUR

According to Ayman, when Jabir had some guests one day, he gave them bread and vinegar to eat, telling them of how he had heard the Prophet say what a good condiment vinegar was. The Prophet also said: “Woe betide those who pour scorn on a dish that has been brought



6. Humility

before them.”

(AL-BAIHAQI, AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA)

GOD DOES NOT LIKE PRIDE IN HIS SERVANTS

Aishah recounts how a poor woman who came to see her one day wanted to give her some gift, but how, out of pity for her circumstances, she preferred not to accept it. The Prophet later told Aishah that she should have accepted it, and then given her something in return. “I think you were looking down on her. Be humble, Aishah, for God likes those who are humble, and has the greatest aversion for those who are proud.”

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

AVOID FUNCTIONS WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS OSTENTATION

Invited to a feast, Umar ibn Khattab and Uthman ibn Affan were on their way there, when Umar said to Uthman: “We have accepted this invitation, but I would prefer not to be going.” “Why is that?” asked Uthman. “I am afraid it is all just for show,” said



6. Humility

Umar-meaning the invitation they had been given.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

TO HUMBLE ONESELF IS TO RAISE ONESELF

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying: “No possession is too lowly to be given as charity; God gives greater honour to one who forgives, and He raises one who humbles himself.”

(MUSLIM, *SAHIH*)

THE PROPHET DID NOT ALLOW HIS HAND TO BE KISSED

Abu Hurayrah tells of how, when the Prophet had bought some clothes from a shopkeeper, and was about to rise, the latter made to kiss his hand. The Prophet withdrew his hand, saying: “That is how the Persians behave towards their kings. I am not a king. I am just one of you.”

HEAPING SCORN ON TRUTH IS AN ACT OF PRIDE

The subject of pride came up for discussion with the



6. Humility

Prophet and he had some harsh words to say about it. He recited the verse of the Qur'an, which ends with the words: "God does not love arrogant and boastful men" (4:36). One of the companions told him of the pleasure he took in the whiteness of his newly washed clothes, the thonging of his sandals and the way his horsewhip hung by his side. "That is not pride," said the Prophet. "Pride means having no regard for the truth and despising other people."

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

**SITTING AMONG PEOPLE WITH NO
THOUGHT FOR POSITION**

Abdullah ibn Amr relates how, when the Prophet came to see him one day, he offered him a bark-filled leather cushion to sit upon. The Prophet, however, sat down on the ground, leaving the cushion lying between himself and his host.

(AL-ADAB AL-MUFRAD)

**HAVING DUE REGARD FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE
OF NO SPECIAL IMPORTANCE**

Abu Rifaah Tameem ibn Usayd made a journey



6. Humility

from his own country to see the Prophet. When he arrived, the Prophet was delivering a sermon. "Prophet of God," he said "I have come from afar to seek knowledge of religion, for I know nothing of its teachings." The Prophet left off his sermon, approached Abu Rifaah and seating himself next to him, he began to tell him about what he had learnt from God. When the Prophet had finished talking to him, Abu Rifaah arose and went on his way. Only then did the Prophet continue his sermon.

THE SELF-BELITTLER IS GREAT IN THE EYES OF GOD

Tafsir ibn Kathir records the Prophet as saying: "Whosoever humbles himself before the Lord will be raised by Him on high: he may think little of himself, but he will be great in the eyes of men.

SIMPLICITY OF DRESS

According to Waqdan, when Abdullah ibn Umar was asked what sort of clothes should be worn, he told the questioner to dress in such a manner as would be neither ridiculed by the ignorant nor frowned upon by the serious. When asked what



6. Humility

sort of clothes those were, Ibn Umar replied: “Those costing between five and ten dirhams.”

GOOD MANNERS AT MEAL TIMES

Amr ibn Abu Salamah says that one day, when he was eating with the Prophet, he kept taking meat from all sides of the dish. Noticing this, the Prophet said: “Eat from the side closest to you.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

WHAT IT PLEASSED THE LORD TO GIVE TO HIS PROPHET

According to Ata Khurasani, the houses of the Prophet’s wives were built of the branches of date palms, with sacks made of black hair serving as doors. A time came when the governor of Madinah received an ordinance from the Caliph Walid ibn Abdul Malik to the effect that he was to rebuild the mosque of the Prophet. The area where these houses stood was included in the new plan, and that meant that they should have to be demolished. On hearing this order, the people of Madinah wept. “These dwellings should be left as they are,” said



6. Humility

Abu Umamah. They would act as a deterrent when, people wanted to build themselves grand mansions, for then people would see what it had pleased the Lord to give to His Prophet; and he could have granted the Prophet all the wealth in the world.”

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT IS BEING HAPPY WITH WHAT ONE HAS

Saad's advice to his son was that if he desired wealth, he should remain content once he had acquired it, for without that feeling of contentment, no amount of wealth would ever be sufficient.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

Muslim ibn Bashir relates that when Abu Hurayrah was seen weeping during his final illness, and was asked the cause of his grief, he said: “It is not this world of yours for which I weep. Rather it is the length of the journey ahead of me, and the paucity of my provisions. I have come to the top of a hill. Ahead of me are two roads, which lead down: one



6. Humility

to the Garden, the other to the Fire. I do not know where I shall be led.”

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

THE SERVANTS OF GOD MUST LIVE IN HUMILITY

Avaadh ibn Himar records the Prophet as saying: “God has revealed it unto me that one should be humble; one should refrain from oppressing others.”



7. TRUST IN GOD

THE COUNTLESS BLESSINGS OF GOD

Ibn Asakir records this saying of Abu Darda: “He who fails to realize that God has blessed him, not only with regard to food and drink, but in many other ways, has understood but little; such a man stands on the brink of eternal damnation.”

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

DEVOTION TO GOD: FOOD FOR THE SOUL

The Prophet Muhammad is recorded as having said: “When I pass the night in vigil, I have a Sustainer and a Nourisher to provide me with food and drink.”

CONSTANT FEAR OF GOD

The second Caliph of Islam, Umar ibn Khattab once wrote a letter to Abu Musa Ash’ari, offering him this advice: “Remain ever in fear of God; and learn the Book of God, for it is the source of all knowledge; for weary hearts, it is the freshness of spring.

(AL-DHAHAK)



NO LIMIT TO GOD'S MERCY

Muhammad ibn Kaab al Qurazi records this saying of Ali ibn Abu Talib: "Once God has opened the gates to thanksgiving, He will not close the gates to abundance. When God opens the gate to prayer, He will not close the gates to acceptance of it. And if He throws wide the gates to repentance, He will never close them to forgiveness.

(IBN MAJAH, *SUNAN*)

ALL POWER IS IN THE HANDS OF GOD

The Prophet sent Dhamam ibn Thalabah to the latter's own tribe-Banu Saad ibn Bakr-with instructions to tell them about the monotheism of Islam. Dhamam then came before his people and urged them to renounce idol worship. "How wicked the worship of Lat and Uzzah," he said, Lat and Uzzah being the names of the idols of saints that his people worshipped. They warned him not to speak in this way; he would fall a prey to leprosy or madness; he should be careful. Dhamam's answer to them was: "Woe betide you! By God, there is nothing that Lat or Uzzah



7. Trust In God

can do to anyone by way of good or evil.

(IBN HISHAM, *AL-SIRAH AL-NABA WIYYAH*)

EVERYTHING HAPPENS THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF GOD

When it was suggested to Ali ibn Abu Talib, the fourth Caliph, that he should have a bodyguard, he said, “Man’s destiny is his bodyguard.” According to one account, he said, “One who does not realize that whatever befell him was inescapable and that whatever escaped him was beyond his grasp, has not experienced true faith.”

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

EVEN THE MOST ORDINARY THINGS ARE GREAT BLESSINGS

This statement is attributed to Aishah: “Whenever a servant of God drinks plain water and then has no difficulty in either digesting or discharging it, it is his duty to thank God for it.”

(IBN ASAKIR)



ISLAM: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DAILY LIVING

Hamid Ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Auf relates how a man came to the Prophet and said to him, "Please give me some words of wisdom by which my daily living may be guided; but not too many, lest I fail to remember them." The Prophet's answer to him was: "Do not become angry."

(MALIK, *MUWATTA*)

MEET YOUR LORD WITH A CLEAN RECORD

A certain individual once wrote to Abdullah ibn Umar to ask him what true knowledge was. The latter replied that there was more to true knowledge than could be written about in a letter, but that, very briefly, he would ask him, if it was possible, to refrain from besmirching the honour of Muslims, spilling their blood or seizing their property; to develop a firm attachment for the Muslim community, and only then to go and meet his God.



7. Trust In God

IT IS ONLY UNDER STRESS THAT A MAN APPEARS IN HIS TRUE COLOURS

“It is only in moments of anger that forbearance can come to the fore.”

(IBN ABDUL BARR)

BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT GOD ORDAINS

Anas records the Prophet as repeating these words of Al-mighty God: “Certain of my servants are firm in their faith either because of poverty or because of affluence; because of sickness or because of health. Were I to reverse the conditions of their lives, their faith would be shaken to its very foundations. Certain of my servants seek to serve me in particular ways. This I prevent, lest pride taint their worship. I know what is in the hearts of My servants, and I ordain their affairs accordingly.”

(AL-TABARANI)



8. MANNERS IN SPEECH

THERE IS VIRTUE IN REFUSING TO RETALIATE

Certain individuals, who held Abu Bakra to be in the wrong about something, set upon him and flung him to the ground. His son, Abdul Aziz came running, but Abu Bakr told him to hold off, swearing an oath in the name of God, that if any soul were to be taken away from this world, it had best be his own. When his son asked him why, he replied: "Because I fear that I shall live to see a time when I am unable to command good and forbid evil. When that day comes, there will be no-good in the world."

(AL-TABARANI)

NOT BEING OFFENDED WHEN CRITICIZED

When Umar ibn Khattab became Caliph, he removed Khalid ibn Walid from the leadership of the Muslim forces in Syria. According to Nashirah ibn Sahmi, Umar gave a sermon in Jabiya, explaining his decision to remove Khalid from his post. "It was my command that wealth should be



8. Manners In Speech

kept for poor emigrants but he distributed it among people who were high in status and refined in speech. That is why I relieved him of his duties and appointed in his place Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah." A relative of Khalid, Abu Amr ibn Hafs, who was present at the time, promptly sprang to his feet and said to Umar, "By God, this is no justification for removing one who was appointed by the Prophet himself, nor is it any reason to sheath a sword already drawn by the Prophet, nor lay low a banner raised by him. You have treated your own kinsman with vindictiveness." Umar listened to everything that Abu Amr had to say. Finally, he replied in a gentle tone: "You are a relative of Khalid and still young; you have taken offence on behalf of this man simply because he is your uncle's son."

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)

DISCORD AND THE TRUTH

Abu Bakr used to give equal allowances to everybody, irrespective of rank or class. It was suggested to him that the Muhajirs and Ansar be given more than others, but Abu Bakr dismissed this, saying: "They have their rank with God. This is



8. Manners In Speech

a matter of worldly livelihood, in which it is better to be even-handed.” Umar differed on this matter and when he became Caliph, he introduced a system by which some received larger allowances than others: 5000 dirhams were allotted to the Emigrants and the Helpers; other Muslims were given 4000. According to this allocation, Usamah ibn Zayd received 4000 dirhams, while to his own son, Abdullah, Umar gave only 3000. Abdullah ibn Umar asked his father why he had been given less than Usamah. “What rank does he or his father have that I do not have?” Umar told his son: Usamah’s father was dearer to the Prophet than your father, while he himself was dearer than you. According to one tradition, Umar came round to Abu Bakr’s point of view later in his life, admitting that it was more practical.

(AHMAD, BAZZAR)

AN OATH IS AN OATH

At the outset of the Battle of Hunayn, the Muslims were forced back, leaving the Prophet and a few others to hold their ground. The Prophet called for the others to join him, but his voice was drowned

8. Manners In Speech

by the din of battle. He turned, therefore, to Abbas, who had a voice of exceptional power and told him to shout: "O companions of the Tree¹! O Companions of the Acacia!" to remind them of their oath of allegiance to the Prophet to fight unto death. Immediately the summons was answered from all sides—"Labbayk!" ("Here at your service!") as Emigrants and Helpers rallied to his side. Abbas later recalled that they ran to the Prophet as calves run to their mothers.

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

HALTING IN ONE'S STEPS ON HEARING THE QUR'AN

Abdullah ibn Abbas tells of how Uaynah ibn Hisn came to Madinah, where he stayed with his nephew, Hur ibn Qays. His youth notwithstanding, the latter numbered among those who were close to the Caliph Umar, for he was learned in the Qur'an and, whether young or old, those who were well-versed in the Qur'an were given a special place in Umar's discussions and council meetings. Uaynah, therefore, asked his nephew to use his good offices with the Caliph to obtain permission for an

8. Manners In Speech

audience. Umar then agreed to meet Uaynah who, addressing the Caliph as “son of Khattab,” said to him, “No riches do you bestow upon us, neither do you treat us justly.” At this, Umar became angry and was about to descend upon Uaynah, when Hur ibn Qays said to him:

“Commander of the Faithful, God told His Prophet to ‘show forgiveness, enjoin justice and turn away from the ignorant.’ (7:199) Truly, this man is ignorant.” Abdullah ibn Abbas relates how, upon hearing this verse, Umar did not advance by so much as an inch. It was his way to halt in his steps whenever he heard a recitation from the Qur’an.

(AL-BUKHARI, SAHIH)

**TRUTH SHOULD BE UNCLOUDED BY
PREJUDICE**

A few years before the Muslims had emigrated to Madinah, Mus’ab ibn Umayr was sent there by the Prophet. On reaching Madinah, he quietly began communicating the teachings of Islam to its inhabitants by reciting the Qur’an to them. Saad ibn Muadh, who was at that time chieftain of the Banu

8. Manners In Speech

Abd al-'Ashhal tribe, became incensed over Musab ibn Umayr's activities. So one day, armed with a spear, Saad went in search of Musab. Near a well on the outskirts of the town he found the Muslim from Makkah talking to a crowd of people about Islam. Approaching the group, Saad ibn Muadh asked in an angry tone: "Who has brought this foreigner here so that he may lead the weak members of our society astray? Do you want something we revile to take root in our households? After today, I do not wish to see you here again." One Asad ibn Zararah, who had accepted Islam and belonged to the tribe of Sa ad ibn Muadh, then spoke up. "My cousin," he began, "listen to what this man has to say. If it is unreasonable, you can reject it, and if it appears reasonable, you may accept it." Saad ibn Muadh then mellowed somewhat and asked what it was that Musab taught. In reply, Musab recited the first part of the Quranic chapter al-Zukhruf. Saad's anger melted away on hearing the Qur'an recited, his whole frame of mind changed and in a few days he was led to accept Islam. Now he himself began to preach Islam among the Banu Abd al-Ashhal. The following is part of what he said to them: "If anyone, young or old, male or female, is in doubt



8. Manners In Speech

about his religion, let him bring us better guidance so that we may accept it. By God, we must bow our head to what we have now received.

(ABU NU'AYM)

APPRECIATING CRITICISM

“God bless the man who makes me a gift of my own shortcomings,” said Umar.

DELIVERING JUSTICE REGARDLESS OF RANK

Ali ibn Abu Talib lost a coat of armour in the Battle of Jamal. One day when he was walking in the market place, he saw a Christian selling coats of armour, one of which he recognized as his own. He pointed it out to the Christian, telling him that the matter would have to be brought before a Muslim judge. Ali, who was Commander of the Faithful at the time, asked his chief Justice, Shurayh, to settle the dispute between himself and the Christian. Shurayh then asked Ali to put forward his case. “This coat of armour is mine,” replied Ali “And what do you have to say?” asked the judge, turning to the Christian, who accused the Commander of the



8. Manners In Speech

Faithful of falsifying the facts. "It belongs to me," he asserted. The judge thereupon asked Ali who his witnesses were and Ali produced his son, Hasan, and a slave, Qambar. The judge then told him that he would have to bring another witness in place of Hasan. "Do you reject the testimony of Hasan?" asked Ali, to which Shurayh replied, "That is besides the point. You yourself have taught me that a son's evidence in support of his father is not acceptable."

(AL-SHA'BI)

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PUBLIC SILENCE

Describing the gatherings of the Prophet, Ali ibn Abi Talib said, "While the Prophet was speaking, they all kept their heads bowed as if they had birds perched on top of them. Only when he had finished what he was saying would the others speak up, and no one ever quarrelled about anything in his presence. While one person was speaking, the others would listen quietly until he had finished what he had to say. In this way, everyone was given an equal opportunity to have his say.

(AI-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMAIL*)

ANSWER, BUT DO NOT REBUKE

At the outset of his mission, the Prophet was able to continue with his work, because he had the protection of his uncle, Abu Talib. But, in the tenth year of his mission, his uncle died, and the People of Makkah, now able to take action against the Prophet, cut him off from the tribal brotherhood, thus forcing him to search for a new patron. Accompanied by his uncle Abbas, the Prophet went to the fair of Ukaz, where he visited the tents of various tribes to ask them to extend their patronage to him, so that he could continue his preaching work. But, for fear of the Quraysh, no one was willing to do this. The next year, the Prophet once again visited Arab fairs in search of a patron. This time he met six men of the Aus and Khazraj tribes of Yathrib (Madinah) whom he talked to about Islam. When they asked him about the nature of the revelation he had received, the Prophet recited some Quranic verses from the chapter of "Abraham" to them. It took only this to melt the hearts of these men from Madinah, and they accepted Islam. It was nighttime and their voices were overheard by Abbas ibn Abd al Muttalib as he passed nearby. Recognizing the Prophet's voice, he



8. Manners In Speech

came up to the group and asked his nephew (the Prophet) who it was he was talking to. The Prophet told his uncle that they were from Yathrib and that he had given them the same message that he had given to the other tribes. "They accepted it and believed. They are willing to take me to their own town." Abbas alighted from his camel and came over to the group. He warned the men of Aus and Khazraj that there was no one dearer to him than this nephew of his. "You have taken his teaching to heart and believed in him, but if you wish to take him to your own land, I must first make a covenant with you and only then will my mind be at ease. You must promise not to disgrace or deceive him. There are Jews in your neighbourhood and the Jews are his enemies; not for a moment do I consider him immune from their plotting." The leader of the Yathribian party, Asad ibn Zararah, became offended at this, feeling that what Abbas had said cast aspersions on the character of his people. He asked the Prophet for permission to answer Abbas. The Prophet said that he might do so, but "without rebuking him."

(ABU NU'AYM)



NO RESPONSE TO VAIN WORDS

After the conquest of Makkah, Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind bint Utbah came to offer her allegiance to the Prophet as a Muslim. The Prophet recited to her the words of the oath to which she repeated. When the Prophet came to the words, "You will not kill your own offspring," Hind retorted, "You have killed them all on the field of Badr; you have left us none to kill." The Prophet did not react in any way to Hind's rebuke; he simply accepted her allegiance.

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

REFRAINING FROM DERISION

In the year 9 AH the Prophet led an expedition to Tabuk. On reaching there, he noticed that Kaab ibn Malik was missing from the Muslim party. "What is Kaab about?" he asked. One of the Banu Salmah suggested that Kaab had difficulty in getting up from under his sheet; he was too busy admiring his own shoulders. Muadh ibn Jabal took offence at this remark. "That is a foul thing to say," he commented, then, addressing the Prophet, he said,



8. Manners In Speech

“Messenger of God, we know nothing of Kaab but good.”

(*AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH*)

**HOLDING ONE’S TONGUE: THE KEY TO
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

While on a journey with the Prophet, Muadh ibn Jabal asked him to show him how to behave so that he should go straight to Heaven and be saved from the Fire. “What you ask is of very great importance,” replied the Prophet, “but it is not difficult for one for whom God has made it easy. Simply serve God, ascribing to Him no partner; say your prayers, pay zakat, fast and perform the pilgrimage to the House of God.” then he continued, “Shall I tell you of the gate to all goodness? It is fasting, which is like a shield, and charity, which washes away sin in the way that water douses a fire; and rising and saying one’s prayer in the stillness of the night. And shall I tell you of the foundation, pillars and roof of the edifice of religion?” Muadh showed his eagerness for the Prophet to tell him. “The foundation is Islam, the pillars are prayers, and roof the struggle for God’s



8. Manners In Speech

cause,” said the Prophet. Then he asked Muadh, “Shall I tell you what the key to all this is?” Again Muadh expressed his desire to know. The Prophet put out his tongue and, holding it between thumb and the forefinger, said, “Control this.” “Shall we be taken to task for what we say?” enquired Muadh “Your own mother should despair of you,” answered the Prophet. “What will it be if not people’s own tongues which will cause them to be thrown head first into the fire?”

NEVER EXPRESSING DISDAIN FOR FOOD

Whatever the dish brought before the Prophet, he would never say anything disparaging about it. According to Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet was never in the habit of finding fault with food. If he liked something, he ate it; if not, he left it.

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

ANSWERING CRITICISM CALMLY

A woman of the Banu Asad came before Abdullah ibn Masud and said to him, “I hear that you curse both the tattooer and the tattooed. But I have read



8. Manners In Speech

the Qur'an from beginning to end, and nowhere do I find any reference to this. And besides, I wager that members of your own household have tattooing done." Abdullah ibn Masud told her to go to his house and see for herself. She did so, but found no trace of tattooing on anyone. When she returned, Abdullah ibn Masud said to her:

"Have you not read in the Qur'an that you must accept whatever the Prophet gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids?" The lady said that she had. "Well, this is something the Prophet forbade," said Abdullah ibn Masud.

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

DEFERRING TO THE BETTER-INFORMED

Abdullah ibn Umar tells of how, after the death of the Prophet, people in both Arabia and Persia started breaking their pledges to Islam. They claimed that, with the Prophet dead, there was no point in continuing to follow Islam, for it had only been because of him that Muslims received divine succour. Using this argument, they won over the people of Nihawand, with whom they



8. Manners In Speech

forged an alliance. The Prophet's successor, Abu Bakr, called together the Emigrants and Helpers, and told them that the Arabs were turning away from Islam and had stopped paying zakat on their goats and camels. As for the Persians, they intended to attack the Muslims along with their new allies from Nihawand. "They say that now that the Prophet has gone, God will not assist the Muslims. What advice do you have to give me" I am just an ordinary man like anyone of you. In fact, I am the least able to bear the burden of the Caliphate."

There was a long interval of silence after Abu Bakr had finished speaking. This was finally broken by Umar, who then offered the Caliph his advice.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

SPEAKING WITH CAUTION

In the Battle of Siffin in 657 AD, Muslims fought Muslims. When Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was asked if those who died in this battle would be among the damned or the saved, he replied: "God has kept my

8. Manners In Speech

hand from their blood. May my tongue never be stained by it.”

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

CRITICISE FREELY, BUT AVOID WRANGLING

When Taus met Wahab ibn Munabbih one day, he addressed him as Abu Abdullah and informed him that a grave accusation was being made against him, namely that he had said it was God himself who had caused the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to practice homosexuality. All that Wahab said in reply was, “God forbid,” and no argument ensued.

(JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM)

CRITICISE CONSTRUCTIVELY. AVOID UNJUST ACCUSATION

Abdullah, son of Umar ibn Khattab, completely disassociated himself from the civil wars, which followed upon the assassination of Ali. When his contemporaries accused him of not participating in the *jihad* he explained his stance by asking, “How can it be permissible for one Muslim to spill the

8. Manners In Speech

blood of another?" He also maintained that he did not consider this war a *jihad*, but murder and bloodshed among Muslims. His antagonists, dissatisfied with this explanation, continued to level accusations at Abdullah ibn Umar, saying that his real motive was to let the companions of the Prophet kill each other off, so that when only he remained, finally, people will swear their allegiance to him as Commander of the Faithful. All these accusations were made in spite of the fact that Abdullah ibn Umar's sincerity, piety and acumen were well established.

(ABU NUAYM)

A SIGN OF TRUE LEARNING: THE ABILITY TO TAKE CRITICISM

According to Saeed ibn Abu Aroobah, one who does not listen to criticism is not to be counted among the learned.

(IBN ABDIL BARR)

REFRAIN FROM UNTRUTHS

A Bedouin came to the Prophet and asked him to



8. Manners In Speech

tell him of a deed, which would take him to Heaven. The Prophet replied: “Free the bonded, and give your milk-camel to others, so that they may partake of its milk; foster ties with those who sever them; feed the hungry; slake the throats of the thirsty; command good and forbid evil. And if you are unable to do all these things, at least tell nothing but the truth.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

**IN SHIELDING OTHERS ONE SHIELDS
ONESELF**

Abu Ayyub Ansari had heard a saying of the Prophet, but later felt doubtful about its actual wording. One of those who had also been present when the Prophet spoke was Uqbah ibn Amir, who had later settled in Egypt. In quest of the proper wording, Abu Ayyub acquired a camel and set off from Madinah for Egypt. He succeeded in reaching Uqbah’s home and immediately after the two men had greeted each other, he asked Uqbah to repeat the words of the Prophet on the concealment of a Muslim’s faults, because, as he said, besides themselves, there was no one still living who had

8. Manners In Speech

heard this saying of the Prophet. Uqbah complied with Ayyub' s request, saying, "On the day of Judgement, God will conceal the faults of one who has himself saved a believer from humiliation in this world."

(AL-ADAB AL-MUFRAD)

A LIAR IS A HYPOCRITE

When the Prophet was asked if it was possible for a believer to be a coward, he replied that it was. When asked whether a believer could possibly be miserly, he again replied in the affirmative. But when he was asked whether a believer could be a liar, he said that he could not. According to Hudhaifah, when anyone told a lie in the days of the Prophet, that was tantamount to being a hypocrite. "And now," he remarked, "I hear all of you telling lies ten times a day."

VIEWING STATEMENTS FROM A PARTICULAR STANDPOINT

A companion of the Prophet was once heard to pray: "Lord'; have mercy on me and on

8. Manners In Speech

Muhammad; and do not include in Your mercy anyone besides us.” Looked at in a certain light this statement could be interpreted to mean that this Companion harboured contempt for his own brethren. Why else would he seek to exclude them from God’s mercy? But one might view his prayer in another light and agree with Maulana Shah Fadhl ar-Rahman Ganj Muradabadi that, the Companion’s prayer stemmed, not from hate, but from an excess of love.

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

According to Abdullah Tastari, whoever added anything new to religion would be questioned about his addition on the Day of Judgement. “If it agrees with the teachings of the Prophet, he will be saved; if not, he will be fuel for Hell fire.”

(JAMI’ BAYAN AL-‘ILM)

SPEAKING MUCH IS NOT A SIGN OF GREAT KNOWLEDGE

According to ibn Uaynah, it is those who have the



8. Manners In Speech

least knowledge who are the most brazen in passing verdicts on religious matters.”

(*JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM*)

WRONGFUL ACCUSATION IS THE WORST OF CRIMES

According to Ali ibn Abu Talib the very worst thing one can do is make a wrongful accusation against an innocent person.

ONE WHO DOES NOT CONTROL HIS TONGUE IS EVIL

“Shall I tell you who the evil ones are?” asked the Prophet of his Companions one day. They requested him to do so, and he said, “They are those who spread slander, who sow the seeds of dissension among friends, and who seek to lay blame upon the innocent.”

(*AHMAD, MUSNAD*)

BEING SPARING OF WORDS IS A SIGN OF SINCERITY

Abdullah ibn Abbas observed that there was no



8. Manners In Speech

one better than the Companions of the Prophet. Until the day the Prophet died, they asked him about only thirteen matters, all of which are dealt with in the Qur'an. "They asked about things which were of genuine relevance to them," he said

IN THE TONGUES OF MEN ARE BOTH HEAVEN AND HELL

According to Abu Darda, there is no part of a believer's body, which is dearer to God than his tongue. For it is with his tongue that he upholds truth, thereby entering Paradise. And there is no part of a disbeliever's body, which is more hateful to God than his tongue. For it is with his tongue that he denies truth, thereby entering the Fire.

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

REMAINING SILENT IS, IN ITSELF, A GOOD DEED

"Keep silent unless you have something good to say," said the Prophet.



ONE WHO FEARS GOD HOLDS HIS TONGUE

On being asked to give someone good advice, Abdullah said, “Be content with what you have in your house, hold your tongue and shed some tears when you recall your sins.”

(HILYAT AL-AULIYA)

MOST SINS ARE COMMITTED BY THE TONGUE

“Most of man’s sins come from his own tongue,” said the Prophet.

KNOWING WHEN TO SPEAK AND WHEN TO REMAIN SILENT

“Learn how to remain silent, just as you learn how to speak,” observed Abu Darda, “for silence requires great restraint. And be more eager to listen than to speak; especially avoid speaking about that which does not concern you. Do not turn into the kind of person who laughs insensitively, or who travels where he has no objective.”

(IBN ‘ASAKIR)



AVOID LOOKING ASKANCE AT OTHERS

When the Prophet's wife Safiyyah first arrived in Madinah from Khaybar, she was lodged in one of the houses of Harithah ibn Numan. Wishing to see her co-wife, Aishah, fully veiled, entered the house of Harithah along with the throng of people who had come to visit the bride. As she was leaving, the Prophet, who had recognized her, followed her out and asked, "O Aishah, what did you think of her?" "I saw a Jewess," replied Aishah, "Say not so" said the Prophet, "for she has entered Islam and has made good her faith."

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

THE CAUTIOUS TONE OF ONE WHO FEARS GOD

Once when Caliph Umar ibn Khattab was delivering a sermon, after praising and glorifying God, he told the members of the congregation not to be too extravagant in the dowries they gave on the occasion of marriage. "If I hear of anyone exceeding the 400 dirhams given as a dowry by the Prophet, I will confiscate the excess amount and deposit it in



8. Manners In Speech

the treasury.” While Umar was still standing on the pulpit, a woman of the Quraysh arose and said, “Commander of the Faithful, are we to do what the Book of God says, or what you say?” “What the Book of God says,” replied Umar, and asked her the purpose of her question, “You have just forbidden dowries exceeding a certain amount. But the Qur’an says: “Do not take from her the dowry you have given her, even if it be a talent of gold.” “Everyone knows better than Umar,” said the Caliph, repeating these words a second and a third time. Then he again addressed the people: “I have just told you not to be extravagant in your marriage dowries,” he said and then, modifying his earlier statement, he continued, but it is for you to decide how much you give; just think if dowries were indicative of high rank in hereafter, surely the daughters and wives of the Prophet would have been more deserving of them.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

OPENNESS TO ADMONITION: A SIGN OF ISLAMIC CHARACTER

Adi ibn Hatim once observed: “So long as you are

8. Manners In Speech

able to recognize evil and do not abhor what is good, and so long as a learned man may stand up and admonish you with impunity, you will continue to follow the path of righteousness.

(KAANZ AL-UMMAL)

ONE WHO CRAVES GOD'S MERCY SHOWS COMPASSION TO OTHERS

The Prophet invoked God's mercy upon those who showed consideration for others in their business dealings, and in the exacting of their dues.

BOTH GOOD AND EVIL IN WHAT WE SAY

Said the Prophet: "When you speak, do so in a good cause. That will serve your interests. And refrain from harmful speech. In that way, you too will be saved from harm."

(AL-TABARANI)

THANKFULLY ACCEPTING ONE'S LOT

Abu Ayub Ansari, once questioned about the nature of the Prophet, replied that the Prophet never asked



8. Manners In Speech

for any special type of food to be made for him: nor did he ever complain about the food he was given.

(WAFAL-WAFAL)

GAUGING ONE'S OWN STRENGTH BEFORE TESTING IT ON OTHERS

Abdullah ibn Umar relates how once, when he was listening to a sermon preached by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, he took objection to something Hajjaj had said, and was just about to air his own views on this, when he recalled what the Prophet had once said that it did not befit a believer to disgrace himself. Abdullah ibn Umar had asked the Prophet what was meant by disgracing oneself, and the Prophet had replied: "It means attempting to deal with a problem which is quite beyond one's capacities."

WHAT A BELIEVER'S SPEECH SHOULD BE LIKE

The Prophet said: "A true believer does not insult or curse people: neither does he use foul or vulgar language."

(Al-Tirmidhi, *Shama'il*)



A GOOD MUSLIM IS ONE OF GOOD CHARACTER

The Prophet was once asked who the best Muslim was. "One from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe," was his reply.

(ALBUKHARI, MUSLIM)

VAIN TALK IN ITSELF IS A SIN

The Prophet Muhammad once observed that the most sinful people are those who indulge in the most vain talk. A group of people, who once came to visit a Companion of the Prophet who lay dying, noticed that his face was radiating light, and they asked him how this came to be. "There are only two aspects of my behaviour which I feel certain will explain this, he replied. "One was that I used to avoid vain talk, and the other was that I harboured no ill-feeling in my heart towards other Muslims."

(JAMI' AL-ULUM WA AL-HIKAM)



9. MANNERS IN SOCIETY

GOD WILL DO UNTO YOU AS YOU HAVE DONE UNTO OTHERS

Caliph Muawiyah was reminded by Amr ibn Murrah of this saying of the Prophet: “The ruler who closes his door to the poor and needy will find that in his own greatest time of need, God has closed the gates of heaven to him.”

(AL-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL

The best way to have your revenge on one who has disobeyed God in some matter concerning you, is to obey God in whatever concerns him,” said Umar.

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

PATIENCE THE BEST ARMOUR

Ahnaf ibn Qays belonged to the generation, which came after that of the Prophet’s companions. He once remarked, “One who cannot tolerate one single unpleasant remark will have to listen to



many. Frequently I have suppressed my anger for fear of something worse befalling me.”

TO WISH OTHERS HARM IS TO HARM ONESELF

When Abul Ayna mentioned to Ahmed ibn Abu Dawud that certain people had attacked him, the latter quoted this verse of the Qur’an to him: “The hand of God is above their hands.” (48:10) “But they are many and I am alone,” continued Abul Ayna. To this Ahmad replied: “Many a small band has, by the grace of God, vanquished a mighty army.” (2:249) “They are plotting against me,” added Abul Ayna. “Evil shall recoil on those that plot evil,” (35:43) was Ahmad ibn Abu Dawud’s response.

TO COLLABORATE IN INJUSTICE IS SINFUL

Wasilah ibn Asqa once asked Prophet what constituted bigotry. “Collaborating with your own people in wrongdoing,” answered the Prophet.

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)



JUSTICE FOR THE WEAK AND STRONG ALIKE

Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan once asked Dharar Sadai to tell him about Ali. Dharar said, amongst other things, that “he lived among us like any of us. No one, however strong he might be, hoped to receive any aid from him in his unjust cause, while the weak had no reason to despair of receiving justice from him.”

GRANTING FORGIVENESS TO ONE WHO SEEKS IT

The Prophet Muhammad is recorded by Abu Hurayrah as having said, if one’s Muslim brother comes to ask forgiveness for something, he should be excused, whether or not he speaks the truth. One who does not do so will not reach me, to be given water by me at the pond of plenty on the Day of Judgement.”

(AL-HAKIM)

THREE TYPES OF VILIFICATION MENTIONED IN THE QUR’AN

Three kinds of defamation are mentioned by Hasan



Basri, all of which appear in the Qur'an: "There is the malicious revelation of unwelcome truths, *ghibat*, irresponsible rumour-mongering (*ifk*) and deliberate misrepresentation (*buhtan*).

HOW A BELIEVER SHOULD TREAT OTHERS

Describing the Prophet's qualities, Ali ibn Abu Talib said: "Three things-quarrelling, arrogance and vain pursuits-he eschewed as far as he himself was concerned. And three things he eschewed as far as others were concerned. He did not find fault, lay blame or seek to expose anyone's weak points. Only when there was hope of reward from God would he hold forth."

(AL-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

BEING SPARING OF WORDS AND NOT THINKING ILL OF ANYONE

When visitors to a Companion (*Sahabi*) who lay dying saw that his face was shining, they asked him the reason. He replied that he had two habits, which had stood him in good stead: "I used not to speak about matters that were no

9. Manners In Society

concern of mine, and my heart remained well-intentioned toward Muslims.”

(JAMI' AL-ULUM WA AL-HIKAM)

BEING KIND TO ADVERSARIES

The Prophet once asked his companions: “Shall I tell you a something which will raise you up in the eyes of God?” “Yes Prophet of God,” they replied, and the Prophet said, “Be patient with those who behave foolishly towards you; forgive those who wrong you; give unto those who deny you; and strengthen your ties with those who break away from you.”

(AL-TABARANI)

SUPPRESSION OF ANGER LEADS TO A STRENGTHENING OF FAITH

The Prophet said: “He who suppresses his anger when he could well give vent to it, will have his heart filled with peace and faith by the Almighty.”



WORSHIPPING GOD AND LIVING IN HARMONY WITH OTHERS

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying: "There are three actions which are especially pleasing to God: worshipping Him and acknowledging none as His peer; adhering firmly to your faith in God and letting nothing divide you; remaining well-intentioned towards those who are responsible for your affairs."

NOT ACTING ON SUSPICION

The Prophet said: "When your suspicions are aroused, do not attempt to get at their root."

CONFIRMING THE TRUTH OF STATEMENTS AT THEIR SOURCE

Abu al-Aliyah, one of the generation which succeeded that of the Prophet's companions, tells of how, when in Basrah (Iraq's capital at that time) they used to hear statements which were attributed to the Companions, but that in order to be certain of their authenticity, they would travel to Madinah to hear them from the

Companions themselves.

(AL-KHATIB AL-BAGHDADI)

THE EVILS OF SOCIETY STEM FROM THE EVILS IN INDIVIDUALS

There is a verse of the Qur'an, which says, "When we resolve to annihilate a people, We first warn those of them that live in comfort. If they persist in sin, We rightly pass Our judgement and utterly destroy them." (17:16) Abdullah ibn Abbas's comment on this verse was: "This means that people elect as their leaders such as do not follow God's law. For this, God punishes them and they are destroyed."

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

IF THE DOOR IS NOT OPENED FOR YOU, LEAVE WITHOUT TAKING OFFENCE

Anas ibn Malik says that the Prophet used to ask for permission to enter a house just by thrice greeting the occupants, then, if he was asked in, he would enter; if not, he would go away.

(AL-BAZZAR)



PUTTING ONE'S PARENTS BEFORE ONESELF

Abu Hurayrah, a man who used to look after his mother with great devotion, went one day, early on in the Madinan period, to the mosque of the Prophet. There he found a number of other people, who asked him why he had come there. "Hunger," he replied. They told him that they had come there too for that very reason. Then they all arose and went to see the Prophet. "What has brought you here?" asked the Prophet. When they told him, he sent for a dish full of dates, from which he gave them two dates each. "Eat them, and drink some water afterwards," he told them. "That's enough for you for today." When Abu Hurayrah ate one date and put the other in his pocket, the Prophet wanted to know why he had done so. "It's for my mother," replied Abu Hurayrah. "Eat it," said the Prophet. "You can have another two for your mother."

HOW MUSLIMS BRING CALAMITY UPON THEMSELVES

One night, the Prophet went out, and, entering an Ansari settlement called Banu Muawiyah, he offered two rakats in the mosque there and



9. Manners In Society

followed this with an exceptionally long prayer. Khabbab, who was present at the time, said, "I have never seen you utter such a prayer as you did tonight" The Prophet concurred. "It was a prayer of hope and fear," he explained. "I asked the Lord for three things. Two He granted, one He denied. I asked Him not to destroy us as He destroyed the nations of old. This He granted. Then asked Him to prevent any external enemy from gaining ascendancy over us, and this too He granted. But when, finally, I asked God to let us not be split up in groups, with some suffering at the hand of others, the Almighty denied me this."

(AL-TIRMIDHI, *SHAMA'IL*)

BEING UNPERTURBED BY DIRECTNESS

The second Caliph, Umar ibn Khattab, once asked his congregation to rectify any of his transgressions, which came to their notice. On hearing this, a member of the congregation stood up and swore by God that any such transgression would be set right by their swords. Umar then thanked God for having placed among the followers of Muhammad-people who would set Umar right with their swords.



NO MAN IS SELF-SUFFICIENT

Abu Darda reports the Prophet as saying: “If in a town or a desert, there are three people who live together but do not pray together, Satan takes possession of them. The importance of forming a congregation should be realized. Just as the wolf eats the sheep that walks alone, so does Satan lie in wait for man: when he finds a man all alone, he devours him.”

(AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB)

NOT ALLOWING DISAGREEMENT TO SOUR A RELATIONSHIP

Khalid ibn Walid and Saad ibn Waqqas once had a disagreement after which someone wished to speak ill of Khalid in Saad’s presence. Saad immediately asked him to desist. “The disagreement between us does not affect the bond of our faith,” he said.

(AL-TABARI)

REMAINING UNITED AND NEVER BEING THE FIRST TO ATTACK

In the year 9 AH, the Prophet sent Khalid ibn



9. Manners In Society

Walid to Yemen with the message of Islam. When he returned to Madinah, he was accompanied by certain members of the Banu Harith ibn Kaab who had accepted Islam. When they met the Prophet, the latter asked them how it was that they had always emerged victorious from wars which had been waged during the time of ignorance. We never set out to conquer anyone," they explained. "True," agreed the Prophet, but you were always able to beat back those who attacked you." "Messenger of God," said these men from the Banu Harith ibn Kaab, "We used to get the better of those who attacked us, because we stayed together. We never became disunited and it was never we who wronged another first." "What you say has the ring of truth," remarked the Prophet

(IBN HISHAM, *SIRAH*)

HATE WHITTLES AWAY A MAN'S RELIGION

"The razor" – that is what the Prophet called hate. "It is not the kind that shaves off hair, but the kind that pares away one's faith," he said. "By the Master of my soul, you shall not enter heaven until you

believe, you shall not believe until you love one another.”

(*JAMI' BAYAN AL-ILM*)

ARGUMENTS OVER RELIGIOUS MATTERS NULLIFY PIETY

Awam ibn Hawshab advised people to avoid arguing over religious matters; otherwise their good deeds would be nullified.

(*JAMI' BAYAN AL-ILM*)

DISPUTE IS THE MARK OF DECLINE

When a people fall to disputing the teachings of religion instead of putting them into practice, it is a sign of God's displeasure.

(*AL-IMAM AUZA'I*)

A BELIEVER IS SATISFIED, NOT BY GIVING VENT TO HIS ANGER, BUT BY CONTROLLING IT

Said Umar: “For a servant of God, there is nothing sweeter than the swallowing of his own anger.

Neither milk nor honey can be compared to it.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

THRIVING ON CRITICISM

Addressing Abu Ubaidah and Muadh, the second Caliph, Umar ibn Khattab said: “Keep a watch on me: I am ever in need of your vigilance.”

REMAINING CALM IN THE FACE OF CRITICISM

During the caliphate of Umar, Muslims began, with their increasing affluence, to settle huge dowries (*mahr*)⁵ on their daughters. In his capacity as Caliph, Umar ordered, one day, in the course of a sermon, that these should not exceed four hundred dirhams, and that anything in excess of this would be confiscated and deposited in the Treasury. When he had come down from the pulpit, on the completion of his address, a tall, flat-nosed old woman stood up and declared: “The Qur’an has set no restrictions on this matter: Umar has no right to set an upper limit to the dowers.” She also recited a verse of the Qur’an to back up her contention: “If



9. Manners In Society

you decide to take one wife in place of another, do not take from her the dowry you have given her, even if it be a talent of gold.” (4:20) Umar’s immediate reaction on hearing this was to say: “A woman has quarrelled with Umar and has bested him.”

According to another account, Umar said, “May God forgive me. Everyone knows better than Umar. Even this old woman.”

Umar returned to the pulpit. Addressing the people, he withdrew the restriction he had previously imposed on dowries. It was for individuals to decide how much was to be given. But he tempered this permission with the admonition that if large dowries were a sign of honour and eminence, the Prophet would have been the first to give his approval to them, whereas, in fact, he gave only up to four hundred dirhams.

(AHMAD, AL-TIRMIDHI)

Note:

5. The dowry or settlement of money or property on the wife, without which marriage is not legal.



**IT IS NOT FOR A MUSLIM TO FIGHT
ANOTHER MUSLIM**

“Whoever takes up arms against us is not one of us,” observed the Prophet.

IT IS FOR GOD TO JUDGE

Abdullah ibn Umar was one of those who swore allegiance to Yazid after the death of Muawiyah. “If good comes of it, (i.e., the Caliphate of Yazid) we shall be well pleased,” said he, on swearing his allegiance, “and if not, we shall be patient.”

**NOT PERMITTING DISAGREEMENT TO
UNDERMINE MUTUAL RESPECT**

The civil wars, which took place after the death of Uthman, were unfortunate episodes in Islamic history. Yet they were waged, not by base, ignoble individuals, but by people of the highest character. Many incidents, which took place in the heat of battle, testify to the chivalry of the combatants. During the war between Ali and Muawiyah, for instance, it was common for the two armies to fight one another during the day, then help in burying



9. Manners In Society

each other's dead by night. Similarly, while Imam Husayn's army was engaged in hostilities against the forces of Yazid, the two armies would join one another for prayer at the appointed time. Usually, Imam Husayn would lead the prayer and be followed both by his own men and those of the opposing army.

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

MODERATION IN BOTH FRIENDSHIP AND ENMITY

The Prophet said: "Exercise moderation in your friendship, for one day your friend may become your enemy. And be moderate also in your enmity, for one day your enemy may turn into a friend.

WISDOM SHOULD GO HAND IN HAND WITH BRAVERY

Khalid ibn Walid was one of the greatest warriors and leaders of the Muslim army in its early days. Yet, in the year 17 AH, while he was still riding high after his mighty conquests, he was removed from his post by the second Caliph Umar. Khalid

was a brave and extremely daring commander. But there were times when his bravery would lead him into hasty decisions. A case in point was siege of Hims, (16 AH) when the Roman Emperor Heraclius, alongwith his North African troops, attacked the forces of Khalid and besieged them within the town. Contrary to orders from the Caliphate, Khalid immediately sallied forth to do battle with the attacking forces, without waiting for the arrival of reinforcements. On this particular occasion, the Muslims, by the sheer grace of God, were victorious. But Umar considered that Khalid had been hasty and imprudent in this action. Shah Waliullah comments: "Courage is not everything in the field of battle. Patience to await the necessary assistance is also a virtue, otherwise courage, on its own, can lead one straight to defeat.

(*SHAH WALIULLAH, IZALA AL-KHAFA*)

AN OATH OF SECRECY

Abu Bakr accompanied the Prophet when he emigrated from Makkah to Madinah. An idolater of the Banu Al-Dayl tribe – Abdullah ibn Urayqit by name – who was well acquainted with the Hijaz

countryside, was engaged by them as a guide. As was usual according to Arab custom, Abdullah ibn Urayqit dipped his fingers into a glass of water and pleaded himself to secrecy. Then avoiding the frequented thoroughfares, he guided the Prophet and Abu Bakr by a coastal route to Madinah.

(Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*)

WHEN IT IS PRUDENT TO MAKE NO REPLY

Aishah relates that when the Muslim army scattered after the Battle of Uhud, Abu Sufyan, the then leader of the Quraysh, came close to a group of Muslims and shouted: "Is Muhammad there among you?" "Do not answer," the Prophet ordered his followers. Once again Abu Sufyan called out: "Is Ibn abu Qahafah there among you?" Again the Prophet told his Companions to remain silent. "And what about Ibn Khattab? Is he there?" Shouted Abu Sufyan a third time, while the Prophet still urged reticence on those around him. When Abu Sufyan received no reply to all three of his questions, he said, "They must all be dead. If not, they would surely have answered." Umar could no longer contain himself. "Enemy of God!" he cried out, "We

are not dead! And may God keep you alive so that you may have the taste of humiliation. “

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)

LEARNING THE FACTS BY ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

When the Muslims were on their way from Madinah to the field of Badr, they came across two men, one a Qurayshite and the other a slave. They gave chase to them but were only able to capture the slave, whom they interrogated. But when asked the strength of the Quraysh army that was advancing upon Madinah, the slave—even under pressure—would only say:

“They are many, and their strength is great.” When the Prophet put the same question to him, his answer was the same. Efforts were made to make him be more explicit about numbers, but to no avail. So the Prophet rephrased the question, “How many camels do they slaughter in one day?” he asked, and was told, “Ten camels,” “So the enemy must number one thousand,” concluded the Prophet, “One camel being sufficient for one hundred men.”



IN DEALINGS WITH OTHERS, GOOD INTENTIONS BY THEMSELVES ARE NOT ENOUGH

The battle of Jamal (36 AH) was raging with full force and, on both sides, Muslims were being slain. The Prophet's widow, Aishah, who was present on the scene, but at some distance from the battle, was distressed at the amount of Muslim blood that was being spilled. It was then that Kaab ibn Thaur came before her and suggested that it might have a beneficial effect if the Mother of the Faithful were to ride on her camel on to the field of battle. Perhaps, on seeing her mount, the combatants would lay down their arms and peace would become a possibility. Aishah, in her distress at the slaughter, which was taking place, agreed to this proposal. Coats of armour were placed around her, *howdah*⁶ to protect her, and she was led to a place where she could be seen by both armies. This gesture, however, had the reverse effect. Instead of stopping the battle, it redoubled its fury. The combatants thought that the Mother of the Faithful had herself been encouraged to take part in the fighting and that that was why she had been brought into the

9. Manners In Society

thick of it. They were so encouraged by this that Aishah' s camel became the focal point around which further slaughter took place. Eventually, Ali gave orders for the camel to be cut down, for that was the only way the fighting would cease.

Note:

6. A litter used on an elephant or camel, in which the ladies travel.

A BELIEVER SHOULD NOT INVOLVE HIMSELF IN MATTERS, WHICH HE IS UNABLE TO DEAL WITH EFFECTIVELY

The Prophet once said: "It is not for a believer to humiliate himself," "How does one humiliate oneself?" The Prophet was asked and to this he replied, "By falling foul of a situation from which one cannot extricate oneself."



10. GIVING FOR THE CAUSE OF GOD

WEALTH CAN BE OF USE IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

Umar entrusted some official duty to Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah, for which he gave him one thousand *dinars*. The latter returned this sum, saying: “Ibn Khattab, I did this work, not for you, but for the sake of God; I will not, therefore, accept any payment.” Umar then said to Abu Ubaydah: “When the Prophet used to send us on errands, he would recompense us, and if we showed reluctance to accept what he gave, he told us we ought not to demur as it would be of assistance to us in matters pertaining both to our worldly affairs and to our religion.” On hearing this, Abu Ubaydah accepted what Umar offered him.

(AL-BAYHAQI, *AL SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

ONE’S NEXT OF KIN HAVE THE GREATEST RIGHT TO ONE’S CHARITY

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying: “By the one who sent me with the Truth, God will not

10. Giving For The Cause of God

accept charity from one whose kinsfolk go in want because he spends on others instead of on them.” According to another account, the Prophet said that God would not look with favour upon such a person on the Day of Resurrection.

(AL-TABARANI)

A BELIEVER HAD BEST EARN HIS OWN LIVING

Anas ibn Malik recounts how a Muslim from the Helpers once came begging to the Prophet. The latter asked him what possessions he had at home. “Just a simple sheet in which I wrap myself and a cup out of which I drink,” replied the Helper. The Prophet told him to bring the cup and, when he had done so, the Prophet asked those present to put a price on it. One person offered one dirham, then another, raising the price to two dirhams, bought the cup. The Prophet gave the Helper the two dirhams, telling him to spend one on his household, and to buy an axe blade with the other and to bring it to him. When he did so, the Prophet himself fitted a handle to the blade, telling the Helper to go and

10. Giving For The Cause of God

fetch wood from the forest, and not to come back for another fifteen days. The Helper started work, hewing wood from the forest and then carrying it to the town to sell it. Two weeks later he reappeared before the Prophet, and in the account he gave him of what he had spent and what he had earned, it turned out that he had saved ten dirhams after meeting all his expenses. The Prophet was well pleased and said: "This is more fitting than that on the Day of Resurrection, you should have the mark of the beggar upon you.

(ABU DAWUD, IBN MAJAH)

EXTRAVAGANCE IS COMMITTED AT THE COST OF WORTHWHILE EXPENDITURE

The Prophet is reported to have said: "For every act of extravagance, a righteous cause is left by the wayside." This means that when anyone is extravagant, he is at one and the same time neglecting to spend on a worthy cause. For every opportunity that there is to be extravagant, there is a parallel opportunity to give where it is really needed.



TRUSTING IN GOD, NOT WEALTH

During the Caliphate of Umar, some revenue arrived from Iraq. Umar began to distribute it, and appeared to be on the point of exhausting it completely when Abd ar Rahman ibn Auf suggested to Umar that he should keep some of it back in order to deal with any enemy attack or calamity that might befall them. At this, Umar was indignant. "Be done with you; you play the devil's advocate. No, by God, for the sake of tomorrow, I will not disobey God today."

BUILDING MORE FOR THE HEREAFTER THAN FOR THIS WORLD

A Muslim of Madinah had just built himself a house, and was spreading mud on the roof when the Prophet passed by. "What are you doing?" the Prophet asked him. "Applying some mud," came the reply, to which the Prophet said: "The Hour is nigh; closer than that which you apply."



NOT EVEN MARTYRDOM CANCELS OUT AN UNPAID DEBT

The Prophet, admonishing his followers, told them that the struggle for God's cause, and faith in Him were the greatest of all actions. A man arose and asked, "If I am slain while I am about God's business, will all my sins be forgiven?" The Prophet replied, "If, in the patient pursuance of your purpose, pressing ever onwards, but at the same time seeking God's pleasure, you are slain in His path, your sins will indeed be forgiven." After a pause the man, at the Prophet's request, repeated his question. "Does this mean that if I am slain while I am about God's business, all my sins will be forgiven?" The Prophet gave the same answer to this but added: "But not if you are in debt. That is what I have been told by Gabriel."

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

SPENDING WHAT ONE HAS IN ORDER TO ESCAPE THE FIRE

Adi ibn Hatim heard the Prophet say: "Save yourselves from the Fire, be it with a piece of a date,



10. Giving For The Cause of God

and if you do not have that, then with a kind word.”

(AL BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

MUSLIMS SHOULD BE DEARER TO EACH OTHER THAN MONEY

Abdullah ibn Umar is reported to have said: “There was a time when not one of us would have set his dirhams and dinars above his Muslim brothers. Now, a time has come when we put our dirhams and dinars first and our Muslim brothers second.”

(AL TABARANI)

SPENDING FOR THE CAUSE OF ISLAM IN TIMES OF DISTRESS

When Abu Bakr first became a Muslim, he possessed forty thousand dirhams, all of which wealth he devoted to the cause of Islam. At that time Islam was going through a difficult period. For this reason the Prophet said: “No one’s wealth has benefited me so much as Abu Bakr’s.” (As related by Hisham ibn Urwah who heard this from his father.)



THRIFT, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY

The Prophet once passed by Saad while the latter was pouring water over himself from a large vessel to perform his ablution. “What is this extravagance, O Saad?” said the Prophet. “Prophet of God,” said Saad, “Can there be extravagance even if you are standing on the banks of a river?” “Yes, “ replied the Prophet.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

BEING PUNCTILIOUS IN PAYING PEOPLE THEIR DUES

Abdullah ibn Umar records the Prophet as saying: “Pay a labourer his wages before his sweat has dried.”

(IBN MAJAH, *SUNAN*)

A PIECE OF GOOD ADVICE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN A MATERIAL GIFT

According to Iban ibn Salim, it is better if your brother gives you some advice rather than a material gift. “While wealth might corrupt you,



advice will set your feet on the right path.”

(*JAMI' BAYAN AL-'ILM*)

CONSIDERING A MAN INFERIOR ON ACCOUNT OF HIS CALLING IS A MARK OF IGNORANCE

Abu Jahal was in command of the Qurayshite forces that faced: the Muslims on the field of Badr, when, two young brothers, Muawidh and Muadh resolved to slay him. Throwing themselves in the enemy ranks, at the immense danger to themselves, they found Abu Jahal and killed him. As he lay dying, (according to Abdullah ibn Masud) he learned that it was men from Madinah who had struck him down. With his dying breath, he gasped out these words: “If only it had been some other who had slain me!” The people of Madinah were mostly farmers and it was on this account that Abu Jahal felt scornful of them.

WEALTH AND POWER BREED HATRED AND ENMITY

When spoils of war arrived from Qadsiyah (Iran) Umar was seen to weep as he examined them. Abdar, Rahman, enquiring as to what had caused

10. Giving For The Cause of God

the Commander of the Faithful such grief, observed, “God has granted you victory over your enemies, giving you possession of their riches so that you may be joyful.” To this Umar replied that he had heard the Prophet say: “Whenever worldly riches are showered upon a people, God stirs up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection.” “That is what I fear,” explained Umar.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

PROSPERITY THE GREATEST TRIAL

Saad ibn abi Waqqas records the Prophet as saying: “More than the affliction of hardship, it is the affliction of prosperity that I fear on your account. When you were afflicted by hardship, you showed great forbearance; but as for the world, it is overly sweet and luscious.”

According to Auf ibn Malik, the Prophet also said: “You will be showered with worldly riches, so much so that if you stray, it will be precisely because of them.”

(AL TABARANI)

THREE THINGS, WHICH MUST REMAIN INVIOLOATE

“A Muslim’s honour, property and blood: no Muslim should violate these things.”

(HADITH)

ONE DOES NOT LOSE BY GIVING

Abu Hurayrah reports this saying of the Prophet: “Charity does not decrease anyone’s wealth while forgiveness only increases a man’s honour; God raises up one who abases himself before his Lord.”

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

ONE WHO GIVES RECEIVES

“Everyday, two angels visit the servants of God on earth. One of them prays: “Lord, reward those who spend,” while the other prays, “Lord, destroy the wealth of those who withhold.’

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)



11. ISLAMIC VALUES

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

Abdullah ibn Umar found that he disapproved of certain aspects of an address delivered by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, and resolved to refute what Hajjaj had said. But then, recalling a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, he remained silent. What the Prophet had said was: "It does not befit a believer to disgrace himself." When Abdullah ibn Umar had asked in what way a believer could disgrace himself, the Prophet had replied: "By taking upon himself such a task as he has not the strength to face."

(AL-BAZZAR)

BEARING WITH MINOR AFFLICTIONS

Umayr ibn Hubayb admonished his son: "Avoid the company of fools and bear with them when they strew your path with difficulties; for one who cannot bear their trifling misdeeds, will soon find that he has to bear far greater, affliction. "

(AL-TABARANI)



PEACE AT ANY PRICE

When the treaty of Hudaibiyah was being drawn up, the Prophet told Ali, to whom he was dictating the terms of the treaty, to write: "In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful." The representative of the Quraysh, Suhayl ibn Amr said that he had no idea what the word "Rahman" – the Beneficent-meant. "Write, 'In Your Name, O God' as we are accustomed to." The Muslims were loath to accede to Suhayl's demand, but the Prophet commanded Ali to write as Suhayl wished, then continued to dictate the terms of the treaty to him. "This is the accord entered into by Muhammad, the Messenger of God." Again Suhayl objected. "If we had considered you to be the Messenger of God, we would not have barred you from the House of God, neither would we have fought against you; write instead 'Muhammad, son of Abdullah'." Ali had already written 'The Messenger of God.' The Prophet told him to strike out these words, but he said he could not. So the Prophet himself struck them out, then he told Ali to write in their place, 'the son of Abdullah,' which he did. The Prophet continued: "The Quraysh will not prevent us from



11. Islamic Values

visiting the House of God.” Again Suhayl objected: “No, this year you must return; next year, you may come and visit God’s House.” The Prophet accepted this demand of the Quraysh also. Next, Suhayl laid down that the Muslims would return any of the Quraysh who had joined them in Madinah, but that the Quraysh would not have to return any of the Muslims who happened to have come to them. Much as it infuriated the Muslims, the Prophet acceded to this demand too. He accepted all the demands of the Quraysh, thus securing a ten-year truce with them.

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

THE LAWS OF CAUSE AND EFFECT APPLIED TO THE PROPHET’S OFFSPRING JUST AS THEY DID TO OTHERS

The Prophet’s daughter Zaynab was left behind in Makkah when her father emigrated to Madinah, from which place he sent Zayd ibn Harithah to fetch her. On the latter’s arrival in Makkah, he obtained a camel for Zaynab and they set out for Madinah. Two men of the Quraysh, who had been pursuing Zayd and Zaynab, caught up with them a short way



11. Islamic Values

out of Makkah, overcame Zayd and frightened Zaynab's camel so that she fell to the ground. Zaynab, with child at that time, had a haemorrhage as a result of the fall, and miscarried. She was taken to the house of Abu Sufyan, where she was visited by some women of the Banu Hashim, Zaynab's own kinsfolk, into whose care Abu Sufyan confided her. After a few days, she set forth once again on the journey of emigration. She did succeed in reaching Madinah, but her misadventure had had such a grievous effect upon her health that in the year 7 AH, she finally succumbed to the injuries she had sustained on that day.

(AL-TABARANI)

TACTFUL ANSWERS IN DELICATE SITUATIONS

During the journey of emigration, the Prophet and Abu Bakr stayed in the Cave of Thur for three days, then both riding on camels proceeded to Madinah by a little-known coastal route.

Sometimes Abu Bakr would go on ahead of the Prophet and sometimes he would drop behind.



11. Islamic Values

“Why is it,” asked the Prophet, “that you sometimes ride ahead of me and sometimes behind?” “When I think of pursuers,” replied Abu Bakr, “I ride behind you, but when my thoughts turn to those who may be lying in ambush, I go on ahead.”

Abu Bakr was a well-known, widely traveled merchant, and when he met any of his acquaintances on the way, they would ask him who his companion was. Then Abu Bakr would reply: “A guide to show me the way.”

(AL-TABARANI)

**MAKING STRAIGHT FOR THE HEREAFTER
AND LEAVING THE WORLD BY THE WAYSIDE**

An ironsmith of Makkah, Suhayb Rumi by name, having accepted Islam, emigrated to Madinah some time after the Prophet had gone there. On leaving Makkah, he was pursued and detained by a number of the Quraysh. “You had nothing when you came to us, Suhayb,” they reminded him, “and, by God, we will not let you take away all your earnings with you!” “Will you let me go if I hand over my earnings to you?” asked Suhayb. They agreed to

11. Islamic Values

this and upon his handing over the small amount of gold he had with him, he was allowed to continue on his way to Madinah. When the Prophet heard of what had befallen Suhayb, he said, several times, "Suhayb has made a good profit!"

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)

RETREAT AND FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

It was at Muthah, a village situated in present-day Jordan, that a battle took place in 8 AH between the 3,000-strong Muslim and Byzantine forces, numbering 100,000. Three commanders of the Muslim army were slain one after another, whereupon the standard of the Muslims was handed over to Khalid ibn Walid, who took a command and knit the ranks together. The enemy advance was so firmly checked that they drew back enough for the Muslims to beat an orderly retreat. Considering it unwise to advance again, Khalid then returned to Madinah with the one thousand troops who had survived. As they entered Madinah, crowds of men and women lined the route, jeering and throwing dust in their faces as they passed.



11. Islamic Values

“Runaways!” they shouted. “No” said the Prophet; “they are not runaways but soldiers who will return to the fight if God wills it so.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING IN ISLAM

Seventy idolaters were taken captive by the Muslims at the Battle of Badr, some of whom were unable to pay ransom. It was decided, therefore, that they should earn their freedom by teaching ten of the Helpers to write. That was how Zayd ibn Thabit learned to write, after which he became the Prophet’s amanuensis. In later life he learned many other languages besides Arabic, and it is said that he knew six languages altogether.

THE CURE FOR ANGER IS SILENCE

Abdullah ibn Abbas records the Prophet as saying: “When anyone of you becomes angry, he should remain silent.” This the Prophet repeated three times.

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)



DEALING WITH MATTERS IN A TACTFUL MANNER

Abu Sufyan, who had not yet accepted Islam was standing by the roadside with the Prophet's uncle Abbas, when Sa'd ibn Ubadah, the Commander of the Helpers' squadron at the conquest of Makkah approached the city. As Sa'd ibn Ubadah came closer to the two men, he called out: "O Abu Sufyan, today is the day of the slaughter! The day when the inviolable shall be violated. The day of the abasement of the Quraysh by God Almighty!" Abu Sufyan protested to the Prophet about Saad's remarks, whereupon the Prophet said: "No, this is the day of mercy, the day on which God will exalt the Quraysh and glorify the Ka'bah."

(IBN HAJAR AL-'ASQATANI, *FATH AL-BARI*)

The Prophet then took the standard from Saad and handed it to the latter's son, Qays, Saad did not feel discountenanced, for, after all, it was his own son who now bore the standard aloft.

(IBN QAYYIM, *AL-MA'AD*)



RIGIDITY IS NOT THE SIGN OF RELIGION

Aishah says of the Prophet: “Whenever he had to chose between two paths, he would always take the easier of the two, so long as this entailed nothing sinful; he, more than anyone, would stay away from sin.

(MUSLIM, *SAHIH*)

KEEPING ONE’S DEMANDS WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF REASON

When the Prophet sent a letter to the people of Najran, inviting them to accept Islam, they conferred amongst themselves and decided to send three envoys, Shurahbil ibn Wadaah, Abdullah ibn Shurahbil and Jabbar ibn Faydh, to assess the situation in Madinah. When they had done so, they discussed the seriousness of their predicament: “If he is really a Prophet, and we reject him, we shall, of all the Arabs, become his worst enemies; he and his companions will not then forgive us.” Abdullah and Jabbar asked Shurahbil for his opinion. “I believe we should discuss peace terms with Muhammad,” he replied, “for I see him to be a man



11. Islamic Values

who never makes unreasonable demands of anyone.”

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

SHOWING TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

Abu Hurayrah recounts how a villager, on entering the Prophet’s mosque in Madinah, started urinating. People came running to give him a beating, but the Prophet told them to desist, and said that the place, which had been defiled, should be cleaned by pouring water over it from a vessel. “You have been sent, not to make things difficult for people, but to make things easy.”

(AL-BUKHARI, SAHIH)

BEING METHODICAL

During the caliphate of Umar, Abu Hurayrah brought 800,000 dirhams from Abu Musa Ashari to Madinah. After the morning prayer, Umar informed the Muslims about this new intake of revenue. “In all of Islamic history, we have not, till now, received such a sum of money. In my opinion,



11. Islamic Values

it should be divided into equal portions and distributed among the people.” When he asked the gathering what they thought, Uthman offered his opinion: “In order to give to everyone, a considerable amount of money will be needed. If people are not counted, it will be impossible to tell who have received their share and who have not. This will result in confusion.” Hearing this, Walid ibn Hisham said, “Commander of the Faithful, when I was in Syria, I saw that the rulers there had compiled registers for this purpose, and had appointed people to maintain them. You might do likewise.” Umar accepted this advice and delegated the task of compiling registers to Aqil ibn Abu Talib, Makhramah ibn Nawfal and Jubayr ibn Mutim.

(IBN SA‘D, *TABAQAT*)

SPEECH IS SILVER: SILENCE IS GOLDEN

“Learn how to remain silent, just as you learn how to speak,” said Abu Darda, “for silence is an act of great forbearance. And be more eager to listen than to speak; particularly avoid speaking about that which does not concern you. Do not allow yourself

11. Islamic Values

to turn into the kind of person who laughs insensitively, or who travels without any objective.

(IBN ASAKIR)

THE PRICE OF PREACHING WHAT IS GOOD

Admonishing his son, Umayr ibn Hubayb ibn Hamashah said: “Anyone who wishes to command what is good and forbid what is evil should have trust in God’s reward, for he shall have to remain patient in the face of persecution; persecution will not harm one who trusts in God’s reward.”

(AL-TABARANI)

REFUSING POWER TO AVOID DISSENSION

It was suggested to Abdullah ibn Umar, the son of Caliph Umar, that everyone would be pleased if he were to stand for the Caliphate. “Will you tell me if even one person opposes me in the east?” Asked Ibn Umar, “Anyone who opposes you will be killed,” he was told, “and what is one death when the betterment of the entire Muslim community is at stake?” “By God,” replied Ibn Umar, “even if you were to give me all the world, I should not like a



11. Islamic Values

single Muslim to be killed by a spear whose shaft was wielded by the followers of Muhammad and the tip held by me.”

A man came to Ibn Umar and accused him of being the worst of all Muslims. “God knows,” said Ibn Umar, “that I have not shed the blood of Muslims, nor have I divided or weakened them. So why do you accuse me in this way?” The others explained to him that if he wished, no two Muslims would disagree over him, meaning thereby that they wish him to stand for the Caliphate. But Ibn Umar said that he would not like to be Caliph without having everyone’s wholehearted support.

(IBN SA’D *TABAQAT*)

KILLING MUSLIMS TO GAIN POWER IS TO BE ABHORRED

Abu Areef was one of the vanguard of the Imam Hasan’s 12,000-strong army, which, led by Abu Umar Taha, faced Muawiyah on the battlefield. He recalls how, with their swords still dripping with the blood of the Syrians, they were overcome by fury when Hasan made peace with Muawiyah.



11. Islamic Values

“When Hasan came to Kufa, one of our number—a man by the name of Abu Amir Sufyan ibn Layl—went up to him and greeted him as the humiliator of the Muslims. “Do not say that, Abu Amir,” said Hasan. “I have not humiliated the Muslims. I would hate to kill Muslims in order to gain power, and I have simply lived up to that principle.”

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

MAN’S GREATEST STRUGGLE IS WITH HIS OWN DESIRES

According to Jabir, when the Muslims returned from an expedition, the Prophet said to them: “You have returned from a minor struggle (*Jihad*) to a major one.” They asked him what that major struggle was. “The struggle engaged in by a servant of God to control his own desires,” replied the Prophet.

(JAMI’ AL-ULUM WA AL-HIKAM)

THE DEVIL IN MAN

Sulaym ibn Hanzalah once went to hear some words of advice from Ubayy ibn Kaab. Ubayy arose

11. Islamic Values

and walked away, leaving Hanzalah and his companions to follow him. On their way, they met Umar ibn Khattab, who said to them, “Do you not see how trying it is for one who is followed, and how humiliating it is for one who follows?”

(IBN ABI SHAYBAH)

THE ACTIONS MOST PLEASING TO GOD ARE THOSE, WHICH ARE PERSEVERED IN

According to Aishah, the Prophet possessed a mat, which he used to sit on during the day and pray on by night. The number of people who came to sit and pray with him increased considerably. To them the Prophet said, “You can do only as much as you are able to. God does not tire so long as you do not tire. The actions most pleasing to God are those, which are persevered in, no matter how inconsiderable they are. Another tradition has it that when the Prophet’s household did anything, they did it with the utmost regularity.

(AL BUKHARI, MUSLIM)



GOD STAYS WITH ONE WHO IS FAILED BY HIS FELLOW MEN

The Prophet said that on the Day of Judgement, God would thus address mankind: "I was sick and you did not visit Me." God's servant would say: "Lord God of all creation, how could I have visited You?" The Lord would answer: "Did you not see that My servant was sick and yet you failed to visit him?" Had you visited him, you would have found Me there with him." Once again the Lord would address mankind: "I asked you for bread and you did not give it to Me." "Lord, how was I to give You bread?" God's servant would ask. "Did not My servant ask you for bread, and yet you failed to give it to him? Had you granted his request, you would have found Me there with him." Again the Lord would address mankind: "I asked you for water and you did not give Me any." "Lord, how was I to give you water?" God's servant would ask, adding "You are Lord of all creation." "My servant asked you for water," the Lord would reply, "and you did not give it to him. If you had done so, you would have found Me there with him."

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)



GRIEVANCES ARISING FROM MISUNDERSTANDING

During the reign of Muawiyah, a man came before Suhayl ibn Saad and told him that the Amir (Governor) of Madinah, Marwan ibn Hakam, was abusing Ali “What does he say?” asked Suhayl. “He calls Ali ‘Abu Turab’ (father of the earth),” replied the man. Suhayl laughed and said: “The Prophet himself gave Ali that name; it was the Prophet’s favourite name.

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)

SPEAK NO ILL OF THE DEAD

After the conquest of Makkah, Umm Hakim bint al Harith ibn Hisham, wife of Ikremah ibn Abu Jahal, became a Muslim. She told the Prophet that her husband had fled to the Yemen in fear of his life, and she begged the Prophet to grant him immunity. He agreed to do so, although Ikremah was still at war with him. Taking her Byzantine slave with her, Umm Hakim went in search of her husband. He had just reached the shores of Tahamah and was about to cross the Red Sea when she caught up with

11. Islamic Values

him. She told him that she had just come from seeing the greatest of all men, the Prophet Muhammad. It was not easy to persuade him to return with her, instead of risking his life at sea, but when he heard that the Prophet had guaranteed his safety in Makkah, he fell in with her wishes. When the two were approaching Makkah, the Prophet told his companions that Ikremah was coming to them as an emigrant and a believer: “Do not speak ill of his father, for, although speaking ill of the dead cannot hurt the dead, it hurts those who are alive.”

(IBN HISHAM, *SIRAH*)

ALLOWING FOR OTHERS' SELF-RESPECT

When the Prophet neared Madinah, at the end of his journey of emigration from Makkah, people hurried out of their houses to welcome him. Crowds of men, women and children could be seen on the roads and rooftops of Madinah, praising God for his arrival. The helpers, for their part, vied with each other as to who should have the honour of accommodating him, but because the Prophet had some relatives of his



11. Islamic Values

maternal grandmother staying in Madinah, he chose to spend his first few days with them, thus publicly honouring them. He said, "At present, I am going to stay with the Banu Najjar, the family of Abd al Muttalib's maternal uncle, so that they should be shown due respect." The first few months were spent with a member of the same family, Abu Ayub Ansari, whose full name was Khalid ibn Zayd Najjari Khazraji. When rooms were built around the Prophet's mosque, the Prophet moved into them."

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

SATAN AROUSES SUSPICION

Safiyyah bint Huyy, one of the Prophet's wives, went to see the Prophet one night while he was in retreat in the mosque. She talked to him for a while then arose to leave. The Prophet also arose to see her off. Just then, two of the helpers passed by. Seeing the Prophet with a lady, they made to pass by quickly, but the Prophet called to them: "Do not hurry, this is my wife Safiyyah." "Glory be to God, Messenger of God!" the two men exclaimed. "Satan runs in man's veins like blood," said the Prophet. "I

11. Islamic Values

was afraid that he might put some wicked thoughts about me into your hearts.”

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

CHARITY IS FOR EVERYONE TO GIVE

The Prophet said: “Everyday, when the sun rises, every joint of the human body has its act of charity to perform. To make a just settlement between two men is an act of charity. So is the helping of a man on to his mount, or the unloading of his baggage, or just saying a kind word. Every obstacle removed from another’s path is an act of charity.”

GOD’S FAVOURITE SERVANTS ARE THOSE OF THE FINEST CHARACTER

Usamah ibn Shurayk tells of how the companions were sitting so silently in the presence of the Prophet that it was as if they had birds perched upon their heads. Just then, certain people came and asked the Prophet which of God’s servants was dearest to him. “The one who has the finest character,” replied the Prophet.

(AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB)



PAYING OTHERS WHAT IS DUE TO THEM

A few days before his death, the Prophet delivering an unusually lengthy sermon, at the end of which he said: "I wish to be able to give a perfect account of myself to God. If I have forgotten to repay a debt or if I have hurt anyone in body or in mind, he should either claim his dues or forgive me." On completing his sermon, the Prophet waited for some time, but no one spoke up. Then the hour came for the early afternoon prayer, which the Prophet offered in congregation. When it was over, he repeated his earlier question. This time, a man stood up and said: "Messenger of God! You owe me five dirhams." The Prophet immediately gave instructions for the man to be repaid, and this was promptly done.

JUSTICE FOR ALL

Muawiyah asked Dharar Sadai to tell him about Ali. Amongst other things, Dharar told him that he lived among them just like anyone of them. "If a powerful man were in the wrong, he could not hope

11. Islamic Values

to sway Ali, but if a weak person sought justice, he could certainly hope to have it.”

IT IS A WISE MAN WHO FEARS GOD

“Wisdom comes from fear of God,” said Abdullah ibn Masud. Commenting on the verse of the Qur’an, “He grants wisdom unto whom He will,” Abul Aliyah said that here wisdom meant fear of God, for true wisdom could come only from fear of God.”

(IBN KATHIR, *TAFSIR*)



12. ISLAMIC CHARACTER

SUPPRESSING ONE'S ANGER IS A SIGN OF GOOD CHARACTER

When the Prophet was once asked which action was best, he said that there was nothing better than good character. The questioner then approached him from the right and put the same question to him. Again the Prophet answered: "Good character." Then, approaching from the left, the man once again addressed the Prophet and asked him which virtue was best. The Prophet told him for the third time that good character excelled all other actions. When the man came from behind and asked the Prophet once again which virtue was best, the Prophet replied: "How is it that you do not understand what is meant by good character? As far as you are able, you should not become angry: that is what is meant by having a good character."

(MUHAMMAD IBN NASR AL-MARWAZI)



THE ACTIONS, WHICH WILL TAKE US TO HEAVEN

When Anas ibn Malik lay sick, he had some visitors. "Bring something for our companions, even if it be just a piece of bread," said Anas to his maid-servant, "for I have heard the Prophet say that a good deed is something which will take one to heaven.

(AL-TABRANI)

COMPASSION FOR ALL CREATURES

The Prophet once passed by a camel that was so emaciated that there was nothing in between its belly and its back. "Fear God in your treatment of these dumb animals," he said. "Ride them properly and feed them properly."

(ABU DAWUD, SUNAN)

HOW A PREACHER OF THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD ACT

Hearing that a prophet had made his appearance in Makkah, Amr ibn al-Murrah al-Juhani set out for



12. Islamic Character

that city on his camel. On reaching Makkah he met the Prophet, who addressed him thus: "O Amr ibn al-Murrah, I am God's messenger to all mankind. I call on all men to submit to God, I teach them to refrain from shedding one another's blood, to give kinsfolk their due, to worship One God, to forsake idols, to perform a pilgrimage to the House of God and to fast during the month of Ramadan. Paradise awaits those who accept these things, while for those who reject them, there will be the punishment of Hell. Believe, O Amr, and God will save you from the torments of Hell."

Amr ibn al Murrah was won over by the Prophet at this first meeting. "I bear witness that there is no god besides God and that you are His messenger," he said. "I believe in all the commandments that you have brought concerning that which is lawful, or unlawful, even if they are not to the liking of the majority." He then asked God's Messenger to send him among his own people. "It may be that, through me, God will show them His Mercy, as He has shown me His mercy through you," he said. The Prophet then said to him "Always be gentle and to the point in what you say. Never be severe,



12. Islamic Character

proud, or envious of others.” And having given him this advice, he sent him on his way to preach Islam among his people.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

FOUR IMPORTANT PIECES OF ADVICE

Abu Dharr Gheffari recounts how, on six successive days, the Prophet informed him that he was about to be told something of the utmost importance. On the seventh day, the Prophet said: “I admonish you to fear God, both in your private and in your public life; when you sin, atone for it by doing good; do not ask anyone for anything; even if your whip has fallen to the ground, do not ask another to pick it up for you; and do not appropriate things, which have been entrusted to your safekeeping. “

(AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB)

BEING A HUMANITARIAN

According to Abu Hurayrah, a desert Arab came and urinated in the Prophet’s mosque. People then came running to beat him. The Prophet, restraining them from doing so, said, “Pour a vessel of water



12. Islamic Character

over the place where he has urinated. You have been sent to make things easy for people, not to make things difficult.”

(ALBUKHARI, SAHIH)

CHEATS ARE NOT TRUE MUSLIMS

Passing through the marketplace, the Prophet noticed a man selling from a heap of grain. The Prophet ran his fingers through the grain whereupon his fingers became wet. “How is it that your grain is wet?” he asked the owner, who said that it was because of the rain. “Then why not put the wet portion on top, so that people can see it,” said the Prophet, adding: “Those who deceive others do not belong with us.”

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

THE DEEDS DEAREST TO THE COMPANIONS

Abdullah ibn Abbas said that he would prefer to provide sustenance for a Muslim for one month, or one week, or as long as God pleased, rather than perform pilgrimage after pilgrimage; also, he would prefer to give his brother before God a present of



12. Islamic Character

one penny than spend a large amount in the cause of God.

(*HILYAT AL-AULIYA*)

NOT INDULGING IN VAIN TALK OR WISHING ANYONE ILL

When people came to visit Abu Dujanah as he lay on his deathbed, and saw that despite his sickness, his face was shining, they asked him how it was that his face was so radiant. Abu Dujanah replied: "I place reliance on two things more than on any others. For one, I did not indulge in vain talk; for another my heart was free from ill feeling towards Muslims."

THE FINE SENSITIVITY TAUGHT BY ISLAM

Abdullah ibn Abbas relates how a man laid a goat on its side preparatory to slaughtering it, then started sharpening his knife. Noticing this, the Prophet asked, "Are you bent on prolonging its agony? You should have sharpened your knife first, before you laid it down on its side."

(*AL-TABARANI*)



PARDONING A SERVANT

A desert Arab once came before the Prophet and asked how many times a day he should pardon his servant. "Seventy times," replied the Prophet.

(AL-TIRMIDHI, ABU DAWUD)

BARBARIC BEHAVIOUR IS TO BE ABHORRED AT ALL TIMES

Suhayl ibn Amr was one of those taken captive by the Muslims at the Battle of Badr. A famous orator of the Quraysh he had been wont to make vehement attacks on the Prophet. Umar asked the Prophet for permission to break Suhayl's front teeth so that in future he would be deterred from making such speeches. This the Prophet refused, saying: "I will not disfigure him; if I were to do so, God would disfigure me, even though I am His messenger."

(AKHLAQ AN-NABI)

NEVER DELAY THE PAYMENT OF WAGES

Abdullah ibn Umar records the Prophet as saying,



12. Islamic Character

“Pay a labourer his wages before his sweat is dried.”

(IBN MAJAH, *SUNAN*)

PRAYING FOR WRONG-DOERS

A drunkard was once brought before the Prophet, who gave orders that he should be whipped. When the man had left,” some of those present fell to cursing him and praying that God should lay him low. “Do not give voice to such sentiments,” said the Prophet. “Do not join forces with Satan against your brother. You should rather say: ‘Lord, forgive him; Lord guide, him.’ ”

(IBN JARIR)

TO CURSE A MUSLIM IS A GREAT SIN

Salmah ibn Akwah says that in the days of the Prophet, if anyone was heard cursing his Muslim brethren, he would be considered to have entered one of the gates of mortal sin.

(AL-TABARANI)



**TO LOOK DOWN ON ANOTHER MUSLIM IS
TO PLACE ISLAM IN JEOPARDY**

Urwah recounts how, while on a pilgrimage, the Prophet was waiting for one Usamah ibn Zayd, who happened to be black and flat-nosed. When he arrived, some Yemenese who were with the Prophet at the time, remarked scoffingly, “Just look at what sort of person we were detained for!” According to Urwah, the mass apostasy that took place in Yemen during the caliphate of Abu Bakr could be traced to this comment.

(IBN SA‘D, *TABAQAT*)

**A MAN’S GREATEST WEAKNESS IS HIS
OFFSPRING**

The Prophet once picked up his grandson, Hasan ibn Ali, held him in his arms and kissed him. Looking towards his companions, he said: “It is children who make misers, fools and cowards of us.”

(AL-HAYTHAMI)

In Tabarani’ s account these words are added:



12. Islamic Character

“May God destroy the devil,” said Abdullah ibn Umar. “Children are a sore trial for man.”

THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF A HOUSEHOLD

Umar ibn Khattab having asked for the hand of Ali’s daughter, Umm Kulthum, who was considerably his junior, Ali instructed his sons, Hasan and Husayn, to make arrangements for their sister’s marriage to their uncle Umar. “She is a woman no different from others,” they replied, “She can look after her own affairs.” At this, Ali became angry and was about to walk out, but Hasan caught hold of his cloak. “Father,” he said, “we could not bear it if you left us.” Hasan and Husayn then made the arrangements for their sister’s marriage to Umar.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

NO MUSLIM SHOULD EVER CONSIDER ANOTHER MUSLIM INFERIOR

Hasan, the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, tells of how, once, when a group of Muslims came to Abu Musa Ash’ari, who was governor during caliphate of



12. Islamic Character

Umar, he distributed largesse to those who were Arabs, but gave nothing to those who were not. On learning of this, Caliph Umar wrote to Abu Musa Ash'ari, "Why did you not make an equal distribution between Arabs and non-Arabs? When a man considers certain of his Muslim brethren to be inferior, that is proof enough of his being evil."

ALARMING A MUSLIM BROTHER IS A SERIOUS FAULT

A desert Arab, who once came and prayed along with the Prophet, had his horn taken away from him while he was at prayer. The prayer over, he was alarmed to discover that his horn had disappeared. When he asked what had happened to it, the Prophet spoke warningly to his companions: "One who believes in God and Last Day should never give another Muslim cause for alarm."

(AL-HAYTHAMI)

A MARRIAGE WITHOUT INVITATIONS

When Abd ar-Rahman ibn Auf emigrated to Madinah, the Prophet made him the brother of Saad

12. Islamic Character

ibn Rabi Ansari. Saad confided to Abd ar-Rahman that he was the richest man in Madinah: "You can see what I have and take half of it for yourself. I have two wives; whichever of the two you like, I will divorce and you can marry her." Abd ar-Rahman replied by praying for God's blessings on Saad ibn Rabi's family and property, and then asked to be shown the way to the market place. There he began trading and made a considerable sum of money. A few days later, Abd ar-Rahman ibn Auf came to see the Prophet. Noticing a trace of saffron on his clothes, the Prophet asked him in Yemenese dialect how it came to be there. "I have married," replied Abd ar-Rahman ibn Auf. "What dowry did you settle?" asked the Prophet, to which Abd ar-Rahman replied, "The weight of a date's kernel in gold." The Prophet then told him to hold a marriage feast, even if it were with just one goat.

(AHMAD, MUSNAD)

CARING FOR ONE'S HOUSEHOLD IS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE HOLY STRUGGLE

A woman once came before the Prophet, saying that she had come on behalf of certain other women.



12. Islamic Character

“Each one of us, whether known to you or not wishes to ask you this selfsame question. Both men and women have the same God, and you are God’s Prophet to both men and women. For men, God has ordained the holy struggle, and if they are successful in it, they will have their reward; if they are slain, they will be raised up in God’s presence, where they will be abundantly provided for. But what has been ordained for us women?” The Prophet replied: “For you, obedience to your husbands and acknowledgement of their rights are equal to the holy struggle. But those of you who do this are few in number.”

(AL-TARGHEEB WA AL-TARHEEB)

REFRAINING FROM SUBJECTING PEOPLE TO INCONVENIENCE

During a pilgrimage, Umar ibn Khattab saw a leprous woman going round the Ka’bah. “Maiden of God,” he said, “it would be better if you were to sit at home; people would not be troubled by your presence” (Malik). The woman did as she was bade, and sat at home. After some time, a passerby told her of the death of Umar, who had been the one to

12. Islamic Character

advice her to stay at home. "Now," said the man, "You can go out." The woman replied, "I did not obey him while he was alive only to disobey him now that he is dead."

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

THE POLITE WAY OF SEEKING PERMISSION TO ENTER A HOUSE

Safinah relates how he was with the Prophet one day when Ali came and asked if he might enter. He knocked very quietly at the door and the Prophet asked for the door to be opened to him. On another occasion Saad ibn Ubadah came to see the Prophet, and, after asking permission to enter, he stood in front of the door so that he could see right inside. The Prophet signed to him to stand to one side, then, after a suitable interval, invited him to come in. "The actual reason for asking permission to enter is to avoid seeing inside the house," said the Prophet.

(AL-TABARANI)

WHO SHOULD BE INVITED TO SHARE FOOD

Abdullah ibn Umar was never in the habit of



12. Islamic Character

inviting any man of status who happened to be passing to join him in eating the food he had prepared but his son and nephew did exactly that. Abdullah ibn Umar, on the contrary, would invite any poor man who passed by while his son and nephew would not. "They invite those who are in no need of the food," commented Abdullah ibn Umar, "but not those who are."

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

DOING ONE'S FAMILY BIDDING IS NO MARK OF FAITH

Jabir ibn Abdullah had just bought one dirham's worth of meat and was taking it home, when he met Umar ibn Khattab. The latter asked him what he was carrying and Jabir told him, "Something that my family want very badly; I have bought them a dirham's worth of meat." Umar went on repeating the words. "Something that my family want very badly," so often that Jabir wished he had lost the dirham before buying the meat, or else that he had not met Umar. According to another tradition, Umar said: "What, whenever they want something, do

12. Islamic Character

you buy it for them? Have you forgotten this verse: ‘You squandered away your precious things in your earthly life and took your fill of pleasure.’” (46:20)

(AL-BAYHAQI, *ALSUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

A MUSLIM MUST SUPPRESS HIS DESIRES

Hasan ibn Ali recounts how, once, when Umar entered his son’s house, he found some meat there and asked how it came to be there. His son, Abdullah said that he had felt an urge to eat some meat that day. “So, everything that you have an urge for, you eat, do you?” asked Umar. Then admonishing his son, he said, “A man has to do no more than partake of everything he desires to be counted among the extravagant.”

(*KANZ AL-UMMAL*)

FOR ONE MUSLIM TO SEVER RELATIONS WITH ANOTHER MUSLIM IS AS BAD AS KILLING HIM

Abu Kharash Al-Sulami heard this saying of the Prophet: “To sever relations with one’s Muslim



12. Islamic Character

brother for a whole year is as bad as spilling his blood.”

(ABU DAWUD, *SUNAN*)

13. JUSTICE

PARITY BEFORE THE LAW

A woman by the name of Fatimah, belonging to the Banu Makhzum tribe, once committed a theft. Her kinsfolk, fearing that her hand would be amputated, sent Usamah ibn Zayd to intercede with the Prophet on her behalf. When the Prophet had heard their case, signs of anger appeared on his face. "Are you trying to sway me as to the limits laid down by God?" he asked. Usama ibn Zayd immediately admitted his mistake and begged the Prophet to pray on his behalf for forgiveness. The Prophet then preached a sermon to those assembled there, in which he said: "Communities of old came to grief because of the leniency shown to those in high positions when they committed a theft, which was in contrast to the punishment meted out to any thief of humble origin. By the one who has control over my soul, if my own daughter Fatimah were to steal, I would have her hand cut off!"

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)



**NEVER SACRIFICE THE TRUTH TO
ARROGANCE AND JEALOUSY**

Prior to the Battle of the Trench, certain Madinan Jews, amongst whom were Hayy ibn Akhtab and Kaab ibn Ashraf, betook themselves to Makkah where they succeeded in inciting the Quraysh to attack Madinah, assuring them of the local support of the Jewish community. The chieftains of the Quraysh pointed out to the Jews that they were the custodians of the Ka'bah and served those who made the pilgrimage to Makkah. They wanted to know if their religion was better, or that of Muhammad. The Jewish scholars said that the religion of the Quraysh was the better; that they followed a truer path.

(IBN HISHAM, *SIRAH*)

**GREAT AND SMALL WEIGH ALIKE IN THE
SCALES OF JUSTICE**

An Egyptian came before Umar ibn Khattab, seeking refuge from oppression. Umar granted his request, and then the Egyptian explained what had befallen him. "The son of the governor of Egypt,

13. Justice

Muhammad ibn Amr ibn al-Aas, ran a race with me and I won it. He became so incensed at this that he started lashing me with a whip and shouting, 'I am a nobleman's son! Take that!' On hearing this, Umar immediately wrote to Amr ibn al-Aas to bring his son to Madinah. When they arrived, Umar summoned the Egyptian, handed him a whip and told him to start lashing Muhammad, the son of Amr ibn al-Aas. When the Egyptian had given the son a good whipping, Umar told him to start whipping the father, because, in the first place, it was the father's power that had made it possible for Muhammad ibn Amr ibn al-Aas to subject the Egyptian to a beating. "I have beaten the one who beat me," said the Egyptian. "Now I need not beat anyone else." If you had beaten him, we would not have stopped you," said Umar. "But if you yourself let him go, that is your choice." Then turning to Amr ibn al-Aas, he asked: "Since when have you been enslaving people who were free when their mothers bore them?"

(IBN ABDIL HAKAM)



A GOOD LEADER MUST ENSURE THAT HIS ORDERS ARE EFFECTIVELY CARRIED OUT

“Suppose I appoint someone who appear to be a good leader and command him to make justice his ideal,” said Umar, “tell me – will I have discharged my responsibilities?” Those assembled replied that he would have done all that could be expected of him. “Not so,” replied Umar. “I should also have to see to it that he does as I command.”

(AL-BAYHAQI, IBN ASAKIR)

Whenever Umar appointed a new governor, he would make enquires about him from envoys from the land he ruled over. Was he a ruler who cared about his subjects, did he visit slaves and walk in funeral processions? Was he accessible to his people and sympathetic towards those who came to his door? If the answers were that he heard cases sympathetically and looked after slaves well, Umar would permit his rule to continue, but otherwise he would promptly appoint another governor to relieve him of his post.

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)



IMPARTIAL DECISION-MAKING

Juadah ibn Hurayrah once came to Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, and asked him what he would do if two men were ever to come before him, one of whom was so fond of him that he would put him before his own self, while the other hated him so much that, given the chance, he would cut his throat. Would Ali decide in favour of the first and against the second? "If the decision were truly in my hands, I should please myself. But it is not. It is in the hands of God."

(KANZ AL-UMMAL)

MAKING THE QUR'AN ONE'S GREATEST PREOCCUPATION

Whenever officials were to be despatched on missions, Umar would make them promise not to ride on Turkish horses, eat fine flour or wear silken clothes, and not to close their doors to the needy. He warned them that if they fell into any of these errors, they would be punished. Then, having extracted this promise from them, he would send them off. If Umar had to relieve some official of his



13. Justice

duties, he would say to him:

“I did not appoint you to lord over the Muslims so that you could indulge in carnage and despoil them of their honour and their property. I appointed you to establish prayer, to distribute the spoils of war and to make just decisions concerning them.”

(AL-BAYHAQI, *AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

Abu Hasin relates how Umar used to tell newly appointed officials to make the Qur'an their greatest pre-occupation and to place less emphasis on relating the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad: “And I am with you,” he would add.

(AL-TABARANI)

NO ADVERSE REACTION TO RUDE BEHAVIOUR

Anas ibn Malik tells of how, once, when he and the Prophet, who was garbed in a thick-bordered Abyssinian shawl, were walking along together, they came across a man of rustic appearance, who came up to them and caught hold of the Prophet's shawl. He pulled at it with such force that marks

13. Justice

appeared on the Prophet's neck. "O Muhammad, give me some of God's wealth which is in your keeping," said the man. Quite unaffected by the man's rudeness, the Prophet smiled and gave orders for him to be provided for from the Treasure according to his needs.

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

**WHEN THE ELITE PROVE TRUSTWORTHY,
OTHERS FOLLOW SUIT**

On receiving the Persian emperor's precious sword, his belt, jewels and ornaments, Umar said: "The men who have handed over these things have proved themselves truly trustworthy." "Your own honesty has had its effect upon your subjects," remarked Ali

(IBN JARIR)

**PUTTING ALLEGIANCE BEFORE
CONTROVERSY**

While on their pilgrimage, the Prophet Muhammad and his successors, Abu Bakr and Umar, used to shorten their prayers to two rakats during their stay



13. Justice

in Mina. Uthman did likewise in the early days of his Caliphate, but later returned to the normal four rakats. When Abdullah ibn Masud heard of this change, he registered his disapproval by saying, "We belong to God and unto Him will we return." He then arose and prayed four rakats himself. When questioned about having expressed his disapproval, only to do the very thing of which he disapproved, Ibn Masud explained, "It would be wicked to go against the Caliph." Abu Dharr was equally indignant at Uthman's action, but he, too, prayed the full four rakats. When asked why he emulated the very action for which he condemned Uthman, Abu Dharr said: "It would be much worse to go against him."

(QATADAH)

WHAT PLEASES AND DISPLEASES GOD

Abu Hurayrah records the Prophet as saying:

"There are three things which please God and three things which displease Him. It pleases Him when you worship Him and do not ascribe to Him any partners, and it pleases him when you cling to his

13. Justice

rope with one accord, always in perfect harmony. It also pleases Him when you feel well-intentioned towards one whom he has entrusted with the control of your affairs. The three things which displease Him are wrangling, being over-inquisitive and squandering one's wealth."

(MUSLIM, *SAHIH*)



14. UNITY

IN LATTER DAYS FRATERNAL STRIFE WILL BE THE GREATEST DESTRUCTIVE FORCE

Eight years after the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet visited the site of the battle and prayed for the martyrs. His prayer was as one about to leave the land of the living. Then he ascended the pulpit and said: "I shall be the first to reach the *hauz* ⁷ I bear witness before you that we shall meet at the *hauz*, which I can see from this very place. By God, I do not fear that when I am gone you will set up others beside God. What I do fear is that greed for worldly things will make you fight among yourselves: that is what will destroy you as it destroyed those ⁸ before you.

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)

Note:

7. A reservoir of water in the Heaven for the believers.
8. People of the Book.



14. Unity

**A SPIRITUAL BOND SHOULD REMAIN
UNTARNISHED BY PERSONAL DIFFERENCES**

Two of the Prophet's companions, Khalid and Saad, had a disagreement over something. At that time, someone came to Saad and started to talk against Khalid. "Stop!" exclaimed Saad. "Our personal differences do not encroach upon our religion."

(AL-TABARANI)

**RESTRAINING ONE'S HAND AND ONE'S
TONGUE FROM ATTACKING ONE'S
BRETHREN**

Muhammad ibn Maslamah says that the Prophet gave him a sword and said, "Use this sword in the path of God, O Muhammad ibn Maslamah. But when you behold two groups of Muslims fighting among themselves, strike your sword upon a rock until it breaks; then stay your hand and hold your tongue until you die, or are done to death."

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

REMAINING NEUTRAL IN A FRATRICIDAL WAR

When hostilities broke between Ali and Muawiyah over the murder of the third Caliph, Uthman, Muawiyah summoned Wael ibn Hajar who belonged to the royal family of Hadhramaut. "Why do you not take my side in this affair?" he asked. Begging to be excused, Wael said that he had heard these words from the Prophet: "Evil has come upon you like the murkiest hours of the night!" At such a time, what should be done?" Wael had asked the Prophet. "O Wael," the Prophet had replied, "when two swords clash and they both belong to Muslims, keep away from both of them."

(AL-TABARANI)

IT IS A RULER'S DUTY TO REFORM OTHERS, BUT THOSE OTHERS ARE RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR THEMSELVES

A man once came before Umar and asked what was the better course of action: to be unmindful of reproach in doing his duty to God, or to concentrate on improving himself rather than others. "Whoever

14. Unity

is appointed to manage the affairs of the Muslim community,” replied Umar, “should not neglect his duty towards others, that is to say that he must carry out his duty even in the face of criticism. But those not in authority should concentrate upon themselves. They may nevertheless offer good advice at the same time to those in a position of authority.”

(AL-BAYHAQI, *AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

BEARING PERSONAL AFFRONTS WITH GOOD GRACE

Having decided to accept Islam, Wathilah ibn Asqa left his home and set out for Madinah, reaching there while the Prophet was at prayer. He joined the rear rank of the congregation and, when the prayer was over, he swore allegiance at the hand of the Prophet. Besides the usual testimony to the oneness of God, certain clauses were added; obedience would be incumbent upon him whether he were rich or poor, whether this pleased him or not, and even if it meant others being given preference over him.

(*KANZ AL-UMMAL*)

UNFAILING OBEDIENCE TO ONE'S COMMANDER

The Prophet once sent a military unit led by Amr ibn al-Aas, to Dhat as-Salasil, Abu Bakr and Umar being of its number. When they had advanced as far as the site of the battle, they pitched camp, whereupon Amr ibn al-Aas gave orders that no fires should be lit. Angered at what struck him as an unnecessary inconvenience, Umar got up to go and see Amr ibn al-Aas about it, but Abu Bakr stopped him, saying: "The Prophet appointed him commander over you for the simple reason that his knowledge of military tactics is greater than yours.

(AL-BAYHAQI, *AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA*)

OFFER A RULER ADVICE IN PRIVATE—NOT IN PUBLIC

When Ayadh ibn Ghanam al-Ashari conquered the city of Dara (Persia), he inflicted severe punishment on its ruler. He was then reminded by Hisham ibn Hakim of the Prophet's words: "He who was most severe in his punishment of others in this world is the one who shall be punished most severely on the



14. Unity

Day of Judgement.” Then, keeping up his diatribe against Ayadh, Hisham went on his way.

A few days later the two men met again. “O Hisham,” said Ayadh ibn Ghanam, “we too have heard the words that you have heard, and have seen what you have seen and have had the company of the Prophet just as you did. Did you not hear the Prophet say, ‘O Hisham, that he who has advice to give to a ruler should not offer it in public, but should take him by the hand and communicate it to him in private. If the ruler accepts his advice, well and good; and if not, the giver of the advice will at least have discharged his responsibility and have done all that he was entitled to do.

(AL-HAKIM)

**COMMUNAL SENTIMENT BELONGS TO THE
DAYS OF IGNORANCE**

Jabir ibn Abdullah recalls being on an expedition along with some other Muslims when one of the Makkan Emigrants struck a Madinan Helper on the back. Enraged, the Helper shouted to his own

14. Unity

kinsmen for help, while the Emigrant did likewise. The two groups confronted one another, then started a skirmish, but were soon separated by some people who came between them. When the Prophet heard about this incident, he asked how it was that people were reverting to the call of ignorance⁹. People began narrating how one of the Emigrants had struck one of the Helpers, but the Prophet told them to refrain from talking about it, because such talk was so unsavoury.

(MUSUM, AHMAD AL-BAYHAQI)

Note:

9. The pre-Islamic times were known as the period of ignorance.

NEVER STOOP TO CONTROVERSY

Certain individuals, who had brought gifts for Abu Dharr Ghefari, were told on reaching Rabdhah, the latter's home town, that he had gone on pilgrimage, so they followed him to where the pilgrims were gathered at Mina. They were sitting with Abu Dharr, when he received



14. Unity

the news that Caliph Uthman, along with the pilgrims in Mina had prayed the full four rakats. He was greatly upset by this news, and expressed his strong opposition to the Caliph's action. "I prayed along with the Prophet here in Mina," he said, "and he prayed only two rakats. And I prayed the same two rakats along with Abu Bakr and Umar." Having said this, Abu Dharr arose and prayed the full four rakats. "But it was for just this that you criticized the Commander of the Faithful" exclaimed those around him. "Why do you do the same thing yourself?" "It would be worse to go against him," explained Abu Dharr.

(AHMAD, *MUSNAD*)

Abdullah ibn Masud likewise criticized the Caliph for praying four rakats, but then proceeded to do the same thing himself" When asked about this, he said: "It would be wicked to contradict the Caliph."

(QATADAH)



14. Unity

**A GRIEVANCE AT HOME SHOULD NOT MEAN
DESERTION TO THE ENEMY**

Kaab ibn Malik, having failed to join in the expedition to Tabuk, explains that the Prophet announced the expedition just when the dates were ripening and it was a great pleasure to sit in the shade. "I was lethargic in my preparations, but it occurred to me that having all the necessary means at my command I could set out whenever I pleased. The time came for the army to set out, but I was still not ready to go. I met the Prophet on his return from Tabuk and he asked me why I had failed to join the campaign. Unable to tell a lie, I admitted that I had no excuse; I had been quite capable of making the journey. The Prophet then gave orders that no one was to speak to me, nor to Hilal ibn Umayyah and Murarah ibn Rabie. This state of affairs went on and on for fifty days. The Qur'an described the agony of those days: "... when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them and their own souls were straitened for them till they knew there was no refuge from God except in Him." (9:118) Kaab recalls how, at



14. Unity

that time a Nabataeian, who had come from Syria to Madinah on business, met him in the streets and gave him a letter from Ghassanid chieftain. The letter, enveloped in a silken cloth, read: "I have learned how you are being oppressed by your master. May God release you from a place where you are in disgrace and your talents are wasted. Come to us and we will give you a place of honour. Kaab ibn Malik promptly threw this letter into the fire without replying to it. After fifty days, Almighty God accepted his repentance and forgave him.

(AL-BUKHARI, SAHIH)

FIGHTING ONE'S OWN PEOPLE DEPRIVES ONE OF GOD'S SUCCOUR

There was one occasion, reports Khabbab ibn al-Arat, when the Prophet prayed an unusually long prayer. When asked about it, he said it was a prayer of hope and fear. "I asked my Lord for three things, two of which he granted and one of which he refused. I prayed that my entire community should not be destroyed by drought; this request was granted. Then I prayed that they should not be



14. Unity

totally annihilated by any enemy; this too was granted. But when I prayed that they should not fight among themselves, this was denied me.”

DECLINING POWER IN THE INTERESTS OF UNITY

The Caliph Muawiyah sent Amr ibn al-Aas to Abdullah ibn Umar to find out whether he intended to fight for the caliphate or not. “What prevents you, O father of Abd ar-Rahman,” asked Amr ibn al-Aas from declaring this publicly so that we may swear allegiance to you? You are a companion of the Prophet and son of the Commander of the Faithful; you have a greater right than anyone to be caliph,” Abdullah ibn Umar asked whether all, without exception, were in agreement with what amr ibn al-Aas had said. “They are,” replied Amr ibn al, Aas “except for a tiny minority. “ To this Abdullah ibn Umar replied that even if just three fat Persians from Hajar demurred, he would no longer feel the urge to be Caliph.

(IBN SA'D, *TABAQAT*)

14. Unity

WORSHIP, UNITY AND GOOD INTENTIONS

According to Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet enumerated three things required of man by God; that he should give Him his undivided worship; that he should hold fast to His rope without becoming divided from his fellowmen; that he should be well-intentioned towards one whom God has entrusted with control of his affairs.

(Muslim, *Sahih*)

A similar tradition has been recorded by Jubayr ibn Matam. While on a pilgrimage, the Prophet delivered a sermon in Mina in which he mentioned three virtues, which the believer would unerringly translate into action: sincerity for the sake of God alone; good intentions towards rulers; firm adhesion to the Muslim community.

KEEPING CONTENTION OUT OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

After the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, peace was established and people were able to travel freely on the highroads of Arabia. In the month of Dhu



14. Unity

al-Hijjah, shortly after the signing of the treaty, in the year 6 AH, the Prophet gathered his companions around him and drew their attention to the task of propagating the message of Islam. "God has sent me to bring mercy to the whole world," he said. "It is for you to spread the message you have heard from me to all nations of the world on my behalf. Do not be contentious, as the Children of Israel were with Jesus, son of Mary." The companions assured the Prophet that they would not dispute with him in anything.

"Just tell us what to do," they said, "and send us where you will."

(HADITH)

**GOOD DEEDS ARE NULLIFIED BY DISPUTES
OVER RELIGIOUS MATTER**

Awam ibn Hawshab records the Prophet as saying: "Beware of disputes in matters of religion, for they are liable to undo your good deeds."

(IBN ABDIL BARR)



REMAINING WITH THE FLOCK

Abu Darda records the Prophet as saying that any three people – whether in a village or in the desert – who lived together but did not regularly pray together, would be overcome by Satan. “Stay, therefore, with the community, said the Prophet. “You know the sheep that strays from the flock is eaten by the wolf. Just as wolf is to sheep, so Satan is to man.



15. DIVINE SUCCOUR

GOD CARES FOR THOSE WHO DO THEIR DUTY TO HIM

Aishah tells of how the Prophet remained awake one night while he was staying in her chamber. When she asked him why he was so restless, he sighed, "If only one of my righteous companions keep watch for me at night!" Just then the clank of weapons could be heard from outside. "Who is it?" exclaimed the Prophet. "It is Saad ibn Malik," came the reply. "What has brought you here?" enquired the Prophet. "I came to keep watch over you, O Messenger of God," explained Saad. Soon after this, says Aishah, she heard the sound of the Prophet's deep breathing. He had fallen asleep.

In another tradition, Aishah says that after emigration to Madinah a regular watch used to be kept over the Prophet, but that when the verse containing the words, "God will protect you from men," (5:67) was revealed, the Prophet looked through an aperture and told his watchmen to go



15. Divine Succour

on their way, “for God has given me His protection.”

(Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*)

WISDOM: GOD’S GREATEST GIFT

Wisdom and learning are lights by which God guides whom he wills,” said Imam Malik. “They do not stem from an understanding of many theological issues.”

(*JAMI’ BAYAN AL-‘ILM*)

THE DANGER OF ACTION WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

“One who acts in ignorance will cause more harm than good,” said Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz.

(*JAMI’ BAYAN AL-‘ILM*)

SEEING THE POSITIVE ASPECT OF MISFORTUNE

During the wars in Persia, a band of Muslims visited the Court of the Iranian King, Yazdagird, only to have scorn heaped upon them by the King.



15. Divine Succour

“I cannot think of a people who are scantier in number, or more ill fated or disunited than you are. Even our villagers would be a match for you if I handed you over to them.” Mughira ibn Shuabah replied on behalf of the Muslims: “What you say is true. We used to live in a wretched state having no home but the face of the earth. The clothes we wore were fashioned from goat and camel hair. Our religion led us to hate and kill one another. We even used to bury our daughters alive for fear that they might eat away our stocks of food. But then God sent to us one who was well known to us, and who was, indeed, the best of us all. He invited us to follow him, but, at first, only one of us-Abu Bakr-went with him. As for the rest of us we denied him. But, as everything he said came to pass, faith entered our hearts and we followed him. Through His Prophet, God has promised us that whomsoever of our number is slain shall enter heaven, while those who survive shall be granted succour in the face of the enemy.” Incensed, Yazdagird gave orders for a basket full of earth to be perched on the head of the noblest of the Muslims and for them all to be chased away beyond the land of Madain. The Muslim so singled out for



15. Divine Succour

humiliation, Asim by name, left the court in this condition and rode on on his camel until he met his Commander, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas. When Saad learned of the degrading treatment to which Asim had been subjected, he said; "Do not be unhappy! Surely God has given us the keys to their land." *

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

Note:

* He meant that the 'gift' of earth was a token that the entire land of Iran would yield to the Muslims.

CORRECTING A FALSE IMPRESSION EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF ONE'S OWN PRESTIGE

During the Battle of Yarmuk, an Iranian chieftain, by the name of Jurjah, left the ranks of his own army and expressed a desire to meet Khalid ibn Walid. The latter also left his ranks and rode up so close to Jurjah that the necks of their horses were touching. "O Khalid," said Jurjah, "Tell me-and a free man does not lie, so tell me the truth-did God truly send a sword down from Heaven for His

15. Divine Succour

Prophet? And did the Prophet hand that sword over to you, with the result that you defeat whomsoever you fight against?" When Khalid said that this was not so, Jurjah asked why Khalid was called the "Sword of God." "God sent His Prophet among us," replied Khalid. "Some of us believed, while others disbelieved. I was among the disbelievers. Then God captured our hearts and granted us His guidance. As I was swearing allegiance to the Prophet, he said to me, 'You are one of God's swords that he has unleashed against the idolaters.' He prayed that I should have God's succour. Since then I have been called the 'Sword of God'."

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP OTHERS

One night, in 610 AD, Muhammad ibn Abdullah was in retreat in the cave of Hira, when he was visited by an angel of God. "Read!" said the angel. "I do not know how to read," Muhammad replied. The angel then clasped him in tight embrace until the pressure became too much for him. Releasing him, the angel again said, "Read!" Again



15. Divine Succour

Muhammad begged to be excused, saying that he did not know how to read. Then the angel took hold of him and exerted such pressure upon him that Muhammad could bear it no more. Releasing him, the angel said, "Read!" "I cannot read," pleaded Muhammad. And the angel said: "Read in the name of your Lord, who created you from a clot of blood. Read: your Lord is most bounteous." This was the first verse of revelation to the Prophet Muhammad.

After this experience, the Prophet came home to his wife Khadijah in Makkah. Trembling, he cried out to her, "Cover me up, put a blanket over me!" Khadijah then made the Prophet lie down. When he had recovered from his shock, he explained the entire episode to his wife who, being older, was more experienced. "I feared for my life," said the Prophet. "That could never be," said Khadijah, "For you are one who cultivates the bonds of kinship. You help the needy and enable the destitute to earn their living; you are hospitable to guests; you offer assistance to those in distress. Is it possible that God would put you to shame? By God, that could never happen!"

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)



INSIGHT COMES WITH TRUE FAITH

When Umar emigrated from Makkah to Madinah, one Ayash ibn abi-Rabiyah accompanied him, and on reaching Madinah, they went to stay with the family of Amr ibn Auf. In the meantime, Abu Jahal and Harith, who were close relatives of Ayash, set out from Makkah in search of their kinsman. (During this period, the Prophet was still in Makkah.) On reaching Madinah, Abu Jahal and Harith met Ayash and had a talk with him. "Your mother has sworn that, until she sets an eye on you, she will not comb her hair or take shelter from the sun," they said, in an attempt to persuade Ayash to return with them to Makkah. Seeing that pity for his mother was beginning to soften him, Umar warned him: "These two men want to turn you away from your faith. Beware of them! You can rest assured that when lice start biting your mother, she will surely comb her hair, and when the heat becomes too intense, she will betake herself into the shade." But Ayash insisted on freeing his mother from her oath; he had also to collect some possessions he had left in Makkah. He assured Umar that he would return, but, on reaching Makkah, Ayash was tied up



15. Divine Succour

by his relatives and subjected to all kinds of torment. Finally, he rejected Islam and reverted to his ancestral religion.

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

GOD'S MERCY FOR THE MERCIFUL

The Prophet said: "God will not show mercy to one who does not show mercy to his fellow-men."

**WITH GOD'S HELP A HANDFUL CAN
CONQUER A MULTITUDE**

Among the Quraysh, there was a rumour monger by the name of Jamil ibn Maamar al-Jamhi who, when he heard of Umar's acceptance of Islam, positioned himself at the gate of the Ka'bah and said in a loud voice: "I will have you know that Umar, son of Khattab, has become an infidel!" The Quraysh were sitting grouped around the Ka'bah at that time, and Umar was also present, "The man is lying," said Umar. "The truth is, I have accepted Islam, bearing witness that there is no god besides God, and Muhammad is His messenger." On hearing this, people closed in on Umar and he



15. Divine Succour

fought with them until the sun was high in the sky. When the combatants became too exhausted to fight any longer, Umar said to them, 'Do as you will. If we Muslims could be as many as just three hundred, as God is my witness, we would either leave this land to you, or you should have to leave it to us.'

(AL-BIDAYAH WA AL-NIHAYAH)

THEIR GREATEST STRENGTH WAS ISLAM

In the face of unrelenting oppression by the Quraysh, a group of some eighty Muslims emigrated, under the leadership of Jaafar ibn abi-Talib, from Makkah to Abyssinia in the fifth year of the Prophet's mission. The Quraysh sent their envoys to the Christian king of Abyssinia to seek the Muslims' return, but the King had been so impressed by the Muslims' way of speaking and behaving that he refused the Quraysh's request, and promised the Muslims a safe refuge in his land. "If anyone insults you, he shall be punished," he assured them. "I will not wrong anyone of you, even in return for a mountain of gold. "You can remain here as long as you please." He gave orders



15. Divine Succour

for the Muslims to be provided with food and clothing, and asked them whether they were having to suffer any ill-treatment. When they said that they were, he issued a proclamation to the effect that anyone ill-treating a Muslim would have to pay him (the Muslim) a fine of four dirhams. "Is that sufficient?" he asked the Muslims. When they said that it was not, he doubled the sum.

When the Muslims emigrated from Makkah to Madinah, the Muslims who had settled in Abyssinia also moved there; they were given mounts and provisions for their journey by the King.

**THOSE WHO SERVE GOD ALONE SHALL BE
RAISED ABOVE OTHER MEN**

In the beginning, Abu Talib had provided his nephew, the Prophet Muhammad, with the patronage necessary to the continuance of his public mission. But as Abu Talib lay on his death-bed, a group of Qurayshite chieftains gathered around him with a request. "You well know the position you hold among us," they began, "but now, as all men must, you have reached the end of your days. You know the matter still at issue between your



15. Divine Succour

nephew and ourselves. We wish you to take a covenant both from him and from us, that he will not interfere with us and we will not interfere with him. If he leaves us to our religion, we shall leave him to his own religion.” Abu Talib called the Prophet and told him that these chieftains had come to offer him a pledge for a pledge. “What is it that you want of them?” asked Abu Talib. “Just one thing,” replied the Prophet, then, turning to the assembled chieftains, he said: “If you accept this one thing, you will become lords over Arabia; all Asia shall yield to you.” Abu Jahal then swore an oath by the Prophet’s father that they would accept more by far than just one demand on the part of Muhammad, but, when he heard that the Prophet demanded that they bear witness to there being no god besides God, and forsake all that they worshipped besides Him, he wrung his hands in dismay and left, saying as he went: “Should we forsake our gods for one God? What an extraordinary demand to make! This man is not going to give anything away, so come, let us adhere to our religion until God settles this between him and us.”



SECRECY IS OF THE ESSENCE IN LAUNCHING AN ATTACK

When the Quraysh broke the terms of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, the Prophet issued instructions to his people to make ready for departure; the Prophet's own household were also to make their preparations. At that time Abu Bakr visited Aishah, his daughter and wife of the Prophet, while she was packing the latter's belongings. "Has the Prophet told you to prepare for a journey?" asked Abu Bakr. When Aishah said that he had, Abu Bakr asked her where she thought the Prophet intended to go." "I do not honestly know," replied his daughter.

(IBN HISHAM, *AL-SIRAH AN-NABA WIYYAH*)

16. EARNING A LIVING

IT IS BEST TO WORK FOR ONE'S LIVING

The Prophet, once questioned on the best way to earn a living replied, "By manual labour."

THE BREADWINNER SHOULD NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF SUPERIOR TO OTHERS

Of two brothers who lived in the time of the Prophet, one used to sit with the Prophet, while the other used to busy himself earning a living for his family. The latter complained of his brother to the Prophet: "He does nothing, leaving me to do all the work." "Perhaps it is because of him that you find sustenance," replied the Prophet.

(*RIYADH AS-SALIHIN*)

RUNNING TO ANOTHER'S ASSISTANCE IS A GREAT RELIGIOUS DUTY

Abdullah ibn Abbas was once in retreat (*i'tikaf*) in the Prophet's mosque in Madinah, when a man, who was clearly in trouble, came and sat beside him. When Abdullah ibn Abbas asked him what



16. Earning A Living

was the matter, he said, "I owe a man some money, and by him who lies in this grave, I am unable to pay him back." "Shall I speak to your creditor on your behalf?" asked Abdullah ibn Abbas. The man approved of this suggestion, and Abdullah ibn Abbas at once set off. "Perhaps you have forgotten you are in retreat," the man called after him. "No, I have not forgotten," replied ibn Abbas, "but I have heard the words of the one who lies buried here-and it seems just like yesterday that he uttered them. I heard the Prophet say that running to the assistance of one's brother and doing one's utmost to help him is better than remaining twenty years in retreat.

(AL-BAYHAQI, AL-SUNAN AL-KUBRA)

ONE'S TRUST IN GOD IS ONE'S GREATEST STRENGTH

"He who would be strongest of men should put his trust in God."

(SAYINGS OF SAINTS)



16. Earning A Living

**HONEST PARTNERS HAVE A THIRD PARTNER
IN GOD**

The Prophet said: "So long as two partners working together do not deceive each other, they have a third partner in God, but when one deceives the other, God departs from them and the devil comes between them."

**ACTING AS SPOKESMAN FOR THE HUMBLE
IN POSITION**

Abdullah ibn Umar spoke in praise of anyone who kept rulers informed of humble men's needs, when the latter had no access to those in power. God will make him sure of foot on the bridge," said he, meaning the bridge over hell, "Where many feet will slip, and many will fall into the abyss."

(RAZIN, AL-BAZZAR)

GOD'S GENEROSITY TO THE GENEROUS

These words are attributed to Almighty God in one of the Prophet's sayings: Mankind, spend in God's cause; it shall be you who shall receive."

(AL-BUKHARI, MUSLIM)



THE VALUE OF RIGHT ACTION

Umar once said that at night he had read a certain verse from the Qur'an and had been unable to sleep for the rest of the night. From the chapter, 'The Cow,' the verse read: "Would anyone of you like to have a garden of palm trees and vines. ... (2:266)" Umar asked those around him the meaning of this verse, and while some suggested that it was a parable relating only to palm-trees and vines, others said that its meaning was a mystery known only to God. Abdullah ibn Masud, one of those present at the time, was heard to say something, but shyness prevented him from raising his voice. "Speak up, nephew," said Umar, to encourage him, and urged him to have the courage of his convictions. Abdullah ibn Masud then said that the verse was about actions. "In what way?" asked Umar. "It was just something which came to mind," said Abdullah ibn Masud, "and I said it." "Nephew, you have spoken the truth." replied Umar, "for the verse is about actions. A man has greatest need of his orchard when he has grown old; man will have the greatest need of his good deeds when he is raised from the dead."

(IBN KATHIR *TAFSIR*)



16. Earning A Living

THE GREATEST CHARITY IS THAT BESTOWED UPON THE MOST ILL-PROVIDED FOR

Suraqah ibn Malik recalls the Prophet asking him if he wished to know the greatest act of charity. Suraqah said that he did. "It is to be kind to a daughter of yours who (having been widowed or divorced) returns to your home with no one to look after her but yourself."

(IBN MAJAH, *SUNAN*)

THE GREATEST IN INTELLIGENCE IS THE LEAST ATTACHED TO THE WORLD

"If one were to leave a will for his property to be given to the most intelligent of men, it should be handed over to the one who is least attached to worldly things."

(IMAM SHAFI'I)

THE BEST PROVISION IS THAT WHICH HAS BEEN EARNED

"Man has not partaken of any provision more blessed than that for which he has worked with his



16. Earning A Living

own hands. That is what the Prophet David used to do. He lived on what he had earned.”

(AL-BUKHARI, *SAHIH*)

AVOIDING CONDESCENSION

“Craftsmen are not to be looked down on,” said the Prophet Muhammad. “for Zakariyah-himself a Prophet-was a carpenter.”

(MUSLIM, *SAHIH*)



17. CALLING MANKIND TO THE TRUTH

THE MESSAGE REVEALED TO THE PROPHET

Abu Nujaih Amr ibn Absah recounts how, even in the pre-Islamic period, he felt that the idolatrous religion practised in Arabia was misguided and far from the True Path. "Then I heard of the appearance in Makkah of a man who uttered inspired words. I mounted my camel and travelled to Makkah, where I found the Prophet quietly giving his message to the people, while they, for their part, went to extremes in taking liberties with him. I asked him who he was. 'I am God's Prophet,' he replied. When I asked him what a Prophet was, he said, 'One sent by God,' 'for what reason?' I asked, and the Prophet replied: 'He has sent me to unite kinspeople, to break idols and to make people regard God as One, and without any partners.'"

(MUSLIM, SAHIH)

ADMONISHING IN GENERAL TERMS

According to Aishah, when the Prophet was

17. Calling Mankind To The Truth

displeased with the way someone had acted or spoken, he would express his disapproval of people who act or speak in such a manner, without indicating which particular individual he meant.

(KITAB ASH-SHIFA)

THE POWER OF THE QUR'AN TO INSPIRE FAITH

Abdullah ibn Abbas, a great Quranic scholar, was possessed of an uncanny ability to fathom the profundities of the Qur'an. One day, he gave an explanation of the chapter al-Baqarah, which prompted one of his hearers to exclaim: "If the pagans of Daylam were to hear this, even they would believe."

THE HEREAFTER: ALL-IMPORTANT TO THE PROPHET, BUT NOT SO TO HIS OPPONENTS

When the Prophet was commanded by God to commence his public mission he ascended the hill of Safa and called the people together. "I have been sent," said the Prophet, "to warn you of a dreadful doom." "May misfortune dog your footsteps the



17. Calling Mankind To The Truth

whole day!” burst out Abu Lahab. “Have you called us together to hear only this?”

(IBN KATHIR, *SIRAH*)

**BRINGING ISLAM WITHOUT
CONDESCENSION, TO EVERYONE**

Severely wounded, the Prophet was returning from Taif, and, on the way, took refuge in a vineyard belonging to Utbah and Shaybah, sons of a Makkan chieftain. Both Utbah and Shaybah, being in the vineyard at the time, saw the state the Prophet was in and sent their Christian slave, Addas, to him with some grapes. As the Prophet began to eat them, he recited the words: “In God’s name.” Addas expressed his surprise at the Prophet having made such a dedication, and the Prophet asked him where he came from. “From Nainevah,” replied Addas. “Oh, from the town of the good Jonah, son of Matthew,” said the Prophet. And Addas was even more surprised to hear that the Prophet knew about Jonah, whereupon the Prophet recited to him that portion of the Qur’an which had been revealed to him concerning Jonah. “The Prophet,” writes Abu Nuaim, “did not behave with condescension



17. Calling Mankind To The Truth

towards anyone to whom his message was to be communicated.”

(DALA'IL AN-NUBUWWAH)

**UNADULTERATED TRUTH IS PURE
ANATHEMA TO MANY**

When the Prophet received his first revelation, he came back home in a state of fright to his wife, Khadijah. “I feared for my life,” he told her. Khadijah then took the Prophet to see a relative of hers, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who being a convert to Christianity, had studied prophetic and biblical history. After hearing the Prophet’s story in detail, he said, “By the Master of my soul, you are the Prophet of this nation. The angel who visited you is the one who appeared to Moses. Your people will deny you; they will persecute you and expel you from the land; they will fight against you.” “Will they truly expel me?” asked the Prophet. Waraqah said this was certain. “People have turned against whomsoever has taught the message now brought by you.”

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF ONE'S HEARERS

Salman Farsi, commander of a Muslim army that fought in the Persian wars, was asked by his soldiers why he did not give them the order to attack the fort to which they had laid siege. He replied that he first wanted an opportunity to invite his opponents to accept Islam, for that was as the Prophet had done. Addressing the occupants of the fort, Salman Farsi said, "I am a Persian like yourselves, yet you can see how I am obeyed by these Arabs. Accept Islam and you shall have the same rights and responsibilities as we have. You may adhere to your religion if you agree to pay the tax. If not, we will fight against you." According to Abul Buhtari, Salman said all this in Persian, the language of those he was addressing.

FAILURE TO REFORM SHOULD NEVER ELICIT CURSES

Tufayl ibn Amr Ad-Dawsi, who had come to Makkah on the pilgrimage to the Holy Ka'bah, was addressed by some members of the Quraysh, who said, "You, who have come to our town, must be



17. Calling Mankind To The Truth

told that there is a man here” – by whom they meant the Prophet – “who has left our religion and divided our community. His words have a spell-binding effect, separating father from son, and brother from brother. We do not wish him to do with you as he has done with us. Do not speak to him or listen to what he says.” Tufayl says that he went to the Ka’bah with cotton in his ears, so that he would be unable to hear anything Muhammad said. Then he thought: I have a mind of my own; I am able to judge what is said, whether it is good or bad, why should I not listen to him? If what he says seems sound, I will accept it; if not, I will have nothing to do with it. He went, therefore, to see the Prophet, who recited to him some verses from the Qur’an. “Truly,” said Tufayl, “I have never heard anything so beautiful or so balanced.” He then accepted Islam and went back to his people in order to communicate to them the message of Islam: but only one of them, Abu Hurayrah, became a believer. Tufayl went back once again to Madinah, where he told the Prophet of the obstinacy of his people. He asked the Prophet to curse them, but the Prophet just prayed for their guidance:



17. Calling Mankind To The Truth

“Lord, guide the people of Daws.” “That was not the prayer I meant,” cried Tufayl. “Go back to your people,” the Prophet told Tufayl. “Communicate to them the message of Islam and be gentle with them. You will find many amongst them like yourself.”

(IBN ABDIL BARR)



AN ISLAMIC TREASURY OF VIRTUES

The traditions—sunnah—of the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, and the lives of his companions and those closely associated with them, serve as a major source of religious enlightenment in theory and in practice. This book endeavours to present these ideas in the simplest and most direct way. In that it culls from authentic sources the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and those inspired by him, it brings to us a complete and, above all, human picture of true Islamic behaviour.