

THERAPY FROM THE
QURAN AND SUNNAH SERIES **3**

Recognising & Changing Destructive Behaviours



العلاج من القرآن والسنة
إدراك وتغيير السلوكيات المدمرة

Dr. Feryad A. Hussain

دار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي





IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

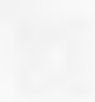


**Recognising and Changing
Destructive Behaviours**



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL HELP

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Dr. Feryad A. Hussain



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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.

2. It is essential to ensure that all entries are supported by appropriate documentation and receipts.

3. Regular audits should be conducted to verify the accuracy of the records and to identify any discrepancies.

4. The second part of the document outlines the procedures for handling any irregularities or discrepancies.

5. It is important to investigate any irregularities promptly and to take appropriate corrective action.

6. The third part of the document provides a detailed description of the accounting system used by the organization.

7. This system is designed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the financial data.

8. The fourth part of the document discusses the role of the accounting department in the overall management of the organization.

9. The accounting department is responsible for providing accurate and timely financial information to management.

10. The fifth part of the document outlines the responsibilities of the accounting department in the preparation of the annual financial statements.

11. It is important to ensure that all financial data is accurate and complete before the statements are prepared.

12. The sixth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of financial information.

13. All financial data should be kept secure and access should be restricted to authorized personnel only.

14. The seventh part of the document provides a summary of the key points discussed in the document.

15. It is important to ensure that all financial data is accurate and reliable, and that the accounting system is designed to ensure this.

16. The eighth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.

17. It is essential to ensure that all entries are supported by appropriate documentation and receipts.

18. Regular audits should be conducted to verify the accuracy of the records and to identify any discrepancies.

PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLITERATION CHART

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
ا	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
آ - إ	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i>)	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell, rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap, mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when uninterrupted	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing, maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam, ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ħ
خ	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in <i>do, muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this, father</i> and <i>smooth</i>	dh






Arabic script	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw</i> , <i>arid</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled 'r', as pronounced in Spanish	r
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo</i> , <i>easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so</i> , <i>messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship</i> , <i>ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	s
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /d/ farther back in the mouth	d
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /t/ farther back in the mouth	t
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	<u>dh</u>
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	'
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill</i> , <i>effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in <i>king</i> , <i>buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap</i> , <i>halo</i> ; in the word Allah, it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men</i> , <i>simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net</i> , <i>ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
هـ - ه - ح	/h/ as in <i>hat</i> ; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in <i>wet</i> and <i>away</i>	w
و	long 'u', as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yard</i> and <i>mayo</i>	y
ي	long 'e', as in <i>eat</i> , <i>beef</i> and <i>see</i>	ee
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of <i>butter</i> : <i>bu'er</i> , or the stop sound in <i>uh-oh!</i>	(omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
أو، أو	long 'o', as in <i>owe</i> , <i>boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw
أي، إي	long 'a', as in <i>aid</i> , <i>rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (tashkeel)

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
 fathah	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
 kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
 dammah	shorter version of oo	u
 shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	double letter
 sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	absence of vowel



ARABIC HONORIFIC SYMBOLS

- (سُبْحَانَ) *Subhânahu wa Ta'âlâ* The Exalted
- (سَلَامٌ) *şalla Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* Blessings and peace be upon him
- (سَلَامٌ) *'alayhi as-salâm* May peace be upon him
- (رَضِيَ) *rađiya Allâhu 'anhu* May Allah be pleased with him
- (رَضِيَ) *rađiya Allâhu 'anhâ* May Allah be pleased with her
- (رَضِيَ) *rađiya Allâhu 'anhumâ* May Allah be pleased with both of them
- (رَضِيَ) *rađiya Allâhu 'anhum* May Allah be pleased with all of them
- (رَضِيَ) *rađiya Allâhu 'anhunna* May Allah be pleased with all of them (females only)



HADITH GRADE TERMS

Sound: *ṣaḥeḥ*

Reliable: *ḥasan*

Weak: *ḍa'eef*

Odd: *ghareeb*

Authentic: includes sound, reliable, or any grade in between

Acceptable: *sakat 'anhu*; the grader of the hadith did not comment on it, meaning that he found nothing unacceptable in it



ABOUT THE WORD 'LORD'

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler', and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the lord of the mansion' or 'Lord So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God – Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah – not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty, the All-Merciful. May Allah shower His mercy, blessings, and peace upon Prophet Muhammad – the last of His prophets and messengers – and his family, his Companions, and all those who follow his way until the end of time.

In this third volume of *Therapy from the Qur'an and Sunnah*, Dr. Feryad A. Hussain tackles the topic of changing behaviours that damage our relationships with Allah and with other people, as well as the way we see ourselves. Basing her advice on modern psychological theory and practice, verses from the Qur'an, and selected hadiths, Dr. Hussain steers us towards changing the way we perceive our actions and offers guiding thoughts to help us reform our behaviour according to Islamic ideals.

The goal of this advice is to remind us of what Islam tells us about various behaviours and habits so we may reflect, adjust our thinking, and represent Islam in our characters and manners – with the goal of earning Allah's pleasure and great rewards in this life and the hereafter.

May Allah accept this work and may He grant us all the ability to manifest true Islam in our behaviour and character. May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him. *Ameen*.

Muhammad Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri
Managing Director
International Islamic Publishing House
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah,
the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

All praise is for Allah, Lord of the Worlds. May He shower peace and blessings upon all the prophets (peace be upon them all), from the first, Ādam (*'alayhi as-salām* – peace be upon him), to the last, Prophet Muhammad (*ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* – blessings and peace be upon him), who was sent to humankind as the finest living model of the Qur'an. May He be pleased with the Companions (*raḍiya Allāhu 'anhum* – may Allah be pleased with all of them) and the Imams who came after them and who were some of the greatest intellects and examples of faith in history. May *al-Ḥakeem* (Allah, the Most Wise) grant us the wisdom to live according to this knowledge for the benefit of the Ummah (Muslim nation) and for our success in the worldly life and the hereafter, and may He grant us a rank with the most excellent of companions. Truly, all success is from Allah (*Subḥānahu wa Ta'ālā* – Glorified and Exalted is He) alone.



DEDICATION

To my family, who have always reminded us about the truth, no matter how old we were, and whose voices, *alḥamdulillāh* (all praise to Allah), remain.

To all those people who strive each day to overcome their *nafs* and remind me, *mā shā' Allāh*, of the true meaning of being a Muslim.

Jazākum Allāh khayr.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Rob Chappel, for his review from a non-Muslim reader's perspective (these were valuable in elaborating points non-Muslims may not understand) and also for his expertise on the psychological content and discussions around behavioural factors and implications.

To my ever-inspirational reviewers at IIPH, for the most skilled evaluations and comments. A special thanks to all IIPH team members for their professional advice and support and care.

The comments made by all of the above contributors have, as always, significantly improved my numerous ongoing drafts. Their share in this work is of an equal measure to my own efforts.

As ever, over these past few years, I am indebted to Fatima Khatibi and 'Baji' Naeema Noor, for their always personal, thoughtful, and critical review as experienced callers to Islam, for helping me choose relevant verses of the Qur'an, and for clarifying the links. They have always provided me with the best of experiences of sisterhood in all its senses and done more for me than I could have imagined.

May Allah (ﷻ) accept this endeavour.



INTRODUCTION

We are all susceptible to aberrations of thought and behaviour, be they conscious or otherwise. Furthermore, we often justify and excuse ourselves before others. We can be easily swayed to ignore what challenges us by trivialising it, framing it as a misunderstanding, or simply claiming that we have been misunderstood. The lengths to which we go to preserve our courses of action extend from the explanations we make for ourselves to the selective hearing of feedback from others. But we so often know in our hearts that we are wrong.

Allah mentions numerous times in the Qur'an that there are occasions when the tongue says what the heart does not agree with:

﴿... يَرْضُونَكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَى قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ﴾ (سورة

التوبة: ٨)

﴿...They please you with their [flattering] words, while at heart they remain adamantly hostile, and most of them are wicked.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 8)¹

We can change our thinking to try to justify our actions, no matter how wrong they may be. At other times, we may fill our minds with the 'right' thoughts but when it comes to action they are fleeting in our minds and are readily replaced by our reactive, emotional-cum-

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an in this book are taken (with some changes to the text) from *The Majestic Qur'an*, translated by Nasiruddin al-Khattab and under publication with IIPH. (Editor)

behavioural responses. We must train ourselves to stop and think before we act because these actions will determine who we are and who we are will determine our end.

The previous two volumes in this series have attempted to help readers examine their thoughts and emotions and the impact they have on their character. Now what remains is our behaviour. The worlds of our thinking and our behaviour should co-exist in balance. However, so often, they seem to be in isolation from each other and even oppose each other at times. It is incumbent upon us as individuals to create an interface where the two worlds meet and exist harmoniously. This is the essence of being a Muslim and keeping our Islam alive.

The premise of all forms of therapy is to change our thinking in order to impact positively on our behaviour. So often, the greatest challenge for a therapist is to identify a specific thought which would have the effect of altering the client's behavioural reaction to that thought. As Muslims, we understand and find that guidance from the Qur'an and words from the Hadith have such an impact. This frequently applies irrespective of how strongly individuals adhere to the basic tenets of their faith. Such is the extent to which Muslims identify with their Book that when an order is from Allah (ﷻ), the words have a totally different impact on Muslims than any other instruction.

The intention behind this third volume in the series is to help remind us all to do our best to reflect and represent Islam in our characters. Indeed, the greatest right that the religion has over us is for it to be defended: this means from others **as well as (and especially from) ourselves**. This all stems from the representation in the Qur'an of the ideal good, pure Islamic character.

'Abdullâh ibn 'Amr (*raḍiya Allâhu 'anhumâ* – may Allah be pleased with both of them) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The best among you are those who have the best manners and character.» (Bukhari)¹

Also, Abu ad-Dardâ' (*radīya Allāhu 'anhu* – may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Nothing will be heavier on the Day of Resurrection in the scale of a believer than good manners.» (at-Tirmidhi, who graded it authentic)

We are asked simply to exhibit good character, yet good character can feel so hard to attain. The effort seems too much and the challenges too many for us to pursue it for long before we resign ourselves to the belief that we cannot attain perfection and that we are not like the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) or the prophets (peace be upon them), so why should we even strive for it? However, if we ourselves cannot work to improve our own conduct and by this our Islam, then we have only ourselves to blame when we are criticised for our wrong way of acting and what this wrong behaviour does to the image of Muslims and Islam as a whole.

In reality, we know that the behaviour of any group member does not define a group's beliefs, as each individual will always be independent in their actions and we are all prone to mistakes and unhealthy behaviour. However, when the guidelines are so clear and we fail to implement them because of our own bad choices, we must consider the image this presents. We choose, however, to forget that what we think in this case is necessarily a conscious decision. In the current climate, we appear to be failing; whilst of course we are told in the Qur'an that Islam is protected by Allah, we have failed to

¹ All hadiths in this text have been checked and verified by IIPH's researchers. It is rare, but it does happen that a hadith is not verifiable within the timeframe of researching and editing the book. In that case, a decision is made by the editorial board whether or not to include the hadith. It is IIPH's policy not to include weak hadiths or fabricated (fake) hadiths in our publications. If a weak hadith is included in any text, it is usually because the author of the book discusses it as a weak hadith. (Editor)

project it accurately and positively through our representation and practice of it.

We see so many examples in the stories of the early Muslims of how people turned to Islam because of the manners and good characters of the Companions, the freedom and rights to live in peace, and the freedom to defend one's *haq* (truth, rights). How many people can we honestly say come to Islam today for these reasons? In truth, it is very few. Instead, people often study Islam because they want to understand why the Muslims appear to behave badly, then in reading the original sources they see its beauty and understand how far many of us are today from living the true Islamic guidance in our behaviour, even though we are Muslims. It is the reality of this goodness that draws them to Islam, not (necessarily) the good behaviour of the Muslims themselves. Admittedly this is a minority group, but the point is that we have drifted from the essence of what Islam tells us by side-stepping the issues of good character and behaviour and relegating that aspect of it to mothers, children, and socialisation; it is for other people. In doing so, we seemingly deny that Islam is for all people. We make the excuse that because we do not commit serious wrongs, there is no reason to reflect and change our behaviour. This is where things need to change and where we all, by Allah's will, need to return to the basics.

Over the last two hundred years, Muslim communities as a whole (excluding individual pioneers in their fields) have failed to contribute significantly to human civilisation. It seems that we live off the inherited reputations of our great predecessors and feel that their contributions cover and include us as well. We continue to take benefit from the advances of other communities and fail to offer much in return. However, rather than reflect on our inadequacies and failures, we too often blame others or create conspiracy theories. It is ultimately our own weakness in behaviour, though, that leaves us open to being vulnerable to such issues. In the end, it is we ourselves

who have failed Islam because we have lost the connection and the reason we were created. In working so hard to protect our image for the sake of our egos and to please our families, friends, and cultures, we have lost the real connection: to the Creator and to the hereafter.

As with the previous volumes, this work aims to help the reader consider how to work and develop a self-reflection process to improve their behaviour with the ultimate goal of improving their character and thus their faith, *in shā' Allāh* (God willing).

The ideas in this third volume are meant for everyone, be they Muslim or not, because as mentioned earlier, revelation is for all people. The focus is on Muslims because they belong to the religious community I am most familiar with, but my clinical experience has also shown me the benefit of using the same ideas for non-Muslims; with the permission of my patients, I have done so in my own clinical practice. However, it must be noted that not all the sections of the book will be familiar or applicable to non-Muslims, such as the basic tenets of faith and other Sharia rulings on daily obligations to Allah and to each other.

The non-Muslim reader should be aware that supporting others to avoid wrongdoing (as defined within Sharia) is part of one's faith. Whilst in many cultures such a practice may be seen as forcing a value judgement upon others, there is a shared understanding amongst Muslims that this is part of helping each other towards what is considered good behaviour. The manner in which this is done, however, is the key to it being effective (see Part 36). Hence, this work is directive rather than neutral in the advice given.

This approach to Islamically-centred therapy is, of course, only one of many variations of this model within the developing body of therapeutic approaches. Since this 'revival' (in our lifetime alone) is in its early stages, the final product is not perfect and admittedly it would not be wise to consider it all-inclusive; it is not. Without doubt, clinical psychologists and researchers will be able to develop much

more sophisticated and diverse models in addition to the basic model presented here, with Allah's help.

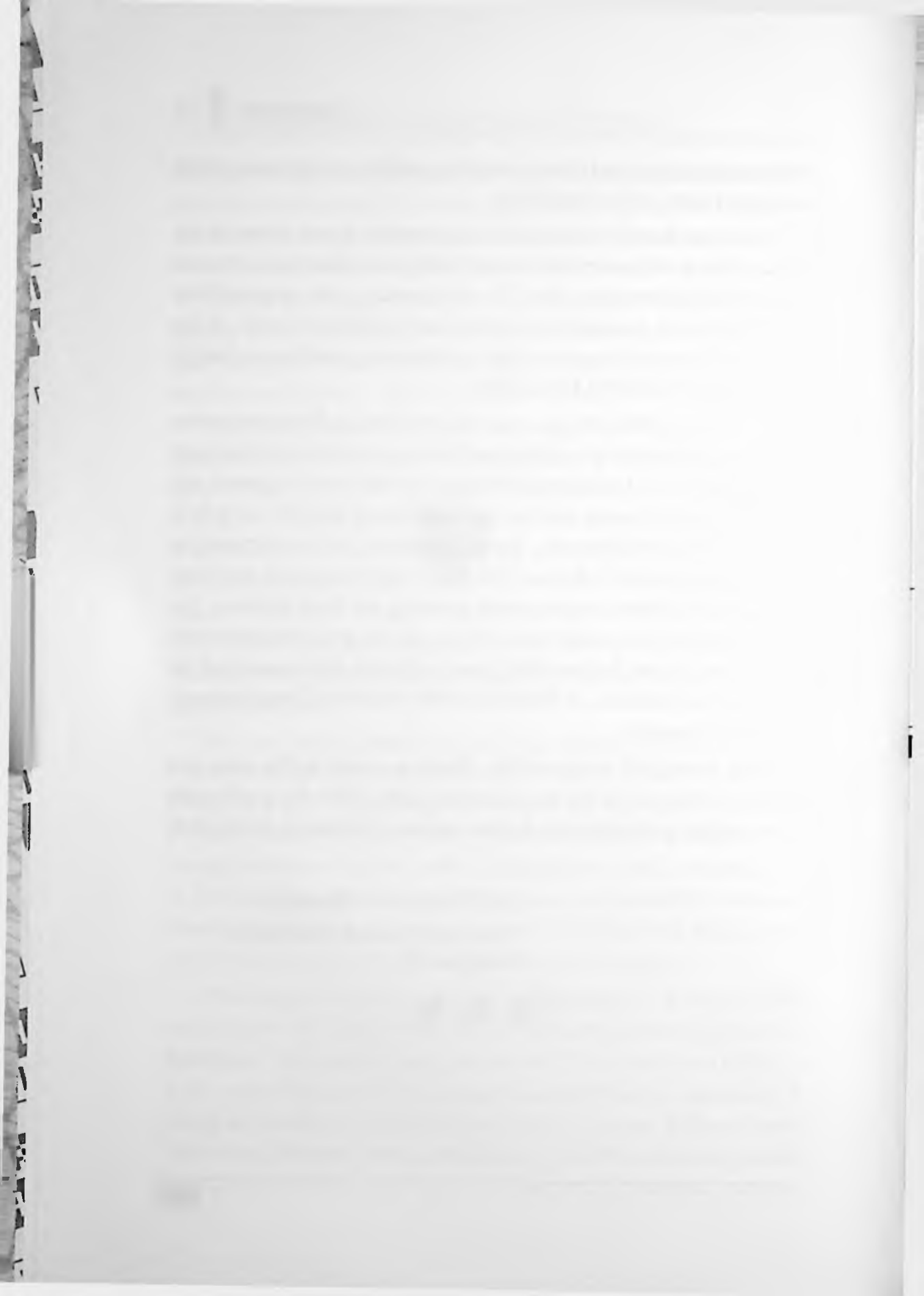
There are bound to be numerous anomalies found in the advice given. This is all part of our human frailty; after the Qur'an there is no work that is free from error. For any mistakes, I take responsibility and readers are requested to contact the publishers in case of any errors and share in the *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (ongoing, continuous charity) of spreading beneficial knowledge.

No one is perfect. We are, after all, only human. What determines the point and benefit of our lives as Muslims is that we did not harm others, that we did not harm ourselves, that we stood by justice and sought to make peace, and that we understood and did our best to strive for the good because, for all our errors, we are all trying to survive our own life's battles. The books in this series are not about apportioning blame to others and pointing out their mistakes, but about reflecting on ourselves as, in the end, we are accountable only for our own souls. Beyond that, what remains is forgiveness and the mercy of *ar-Rahmân, ar-Raḥeem* (Allah: the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful).

May Allah (ﷻ) accept all the efforts we make in His name and forgive and cover us for any mistakes made, since our good works alone will be the best wealth that we can leave behind, by Allah's will.

Dr. Feryad A. Hussain
Consultant Clinical Psychologist
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SECTION ONE:
THE FRAMEWORK



CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGY


The methodology employed is adapted from the previous volumes and similarly presents a formula which adopts Qur'anic verses and hadiths to be used to influence our thinking when changing our behaviour.

Identifying the behaviours

The list of behaviours is compiled from the Qur'an and Hadith, which, in turn, were developed in works (some translated) on behavioural change by scholars such as:

- Imam adh-Dhahabi (1994, English translation)
- Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal / Ibn al-Qayyim / al-Ghazâli (1993, English translation)
- al-Ghazâli (2007, English translation)
- Bukhari (1994, English translation)
- Akhtar (1997)
- Roushdy (1999)
- 'Abdullâh (1999)
- Zarabozo (2002)

They wrote classical and contemporary texts on this issue (see Chapter 3 for details). Since these texts present us with several different categorisations, the original lists of behaviours have been collated and adapted to reflect the diversity of behaviours as well as



to add specific/individual behaviours which could be included under these original categories. Again, these were related to the Hadith literature.

The layout of each behaviour and related thoughts and emotions

Each section is based on an adapted therapeutic framework in which the therapist explores trigger behaviours, beliefs, and consequences and then offers alternative thoughts and behaviours.

The framework for this book is as follows:

- **Description and manifestations:** The descriptions are Qur'anic where specified; otherwise they are generic. The description is coupled with the various manifestations of the behaviours.
 - **Related emotions:** This is an accompanying list of emotions, since no one behaviour stems from a single emotion and so often emotions behind the same and different behaviours can and do overlap. It helps us understand the emotion of the executor of such behaviours as well as the emotional responses those around them may experience.
 - **Related thoughts and justifications:** These are the possible thoughts and feelings that motivate the unhealthy behaviour.
 - **Possible consequences:** These are the effects such thinking and behaviour have on our lives.
 - **Possible impact on faith:** These points attempt to highlight how such behaviours can diminish aspects of our faith. They alert us to those implications of which we may not even be conscious but which will eventually affect our thoughts and behaviours.
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- **Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides:** The more healthy thought or the reminder against such behaviour as identified by our Internal Islamic Guides: that is, Qur'anic verses and hadiths.
- **Be aware about...:** Reflections and practical reminders based on the verses and hadiths.

The definitions/descriptions of behaviours presented are self-explanatory. However, in certain cases where the phrases are more widely used in 'Islamic circles' and may be unfamiliar to non-Muslims (I do not mean in principle but only in wording), such as carrying tales or backbiting, the descriptions have been expanded upon using references from the Qur'an and Hadith.

We know that the language of the Qur'an is very specific in meaning but much of this detail is lost in translation. If all possible definitions were to be considered, the essence of what this book intends would be lost for the reader. The point is not to highlight the details of types of anger, for example, or sub-categories within each behaviour, as this is far beyond the scope of this work. Rather, it is simply to find verses in the Qur'an that help us to identify and change our behaviour in a simple, uncomplicated manner. Any over-complication is, in itself, a barrier to behavioural change.

It is, therefore, important to be aware that the word employed to describe the behaviour may be considered to be limited in the translation used. For instance, the word 'anger' in one translation may have been used to cover a range of aggressive feelings without using alternative words, many of which may be found in other interpretations. Again, this may be an issue related to a secondary translation.

Note to the reader: These definitions as well as thoughts and consequences will naturally vary, not only across cultures but also according to the degree to which any individual practises correct

Islamic etiquette (or not). We must necessarily consider this when we apply these ideas to our own lives and must adjust them accordingly. Of course, it is not possible to be all-encompassing in such issues, so in many cases what is offered here may be helpful only as a general guideline.

Regarding the related thoughts and emotions

The emotions and thoughts presented are based purely on my clinical observations and experiences with patients suffering from a range of mental health problems. I have attempted to always connect them to the behaviour under discussion. I intentionally avoided detailed explanations about why we may exhibit such behaviour, as this is as much dependant on the individual as it is on the circumstances they face. When the related emotions are considered, it is necessarily the case that no emotional side effect of a negative behaviour will exist in isolation to another emotion or another behaviour; it is quite possible that certain behaviours share an emotional continuum with others. For example, for anger/aggression, an emotional side effect may be resentment – which may also equally apply to being arrogant.

The patients whose emotions and thoughts have been presented are, as with the last volume, from differing religious and ethnic backgrounds. I have, in general, excluded this information unless it is relevant to the example given and have chosen to focus only on the shared human experience of unhealthy behaviours.

It is, of course, noted that certain behaviours such as displaying anger are not always unhealthy and in cases of injustice or harm, anger is a normal and expected reaction. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was never known to have expressed anger except in cases where Islam, justice, and rights were challenged.

The examples presented are not necessarily reflective of the main reasons for a referral for therapy. They are identified specifically to highlight the behaviour in question. Therefore, there are no clinical case examples used in this volume; rather, I have used clinical sources in the section on justifications for the reader to relate to. The suggestions and advice, in turn, cannot be understood to reflect complete psychological treatment of that behaviour in isolation from the clinically diagnosed problem. For example, gossiping itself is not a clinical problem but may be part of how a clinical condition such as depression or anxiety is heightened and thus contributes to the individual experience of personal distress. Hence, it is only one aspect of the problem which may have contributed to a person's overall situation. It is, of course, important to note that the behaviours, whilst damaging, are not classified in psychological therapy as pathological. This is only the case in an Islamic context, where emotions and behaviour have a moral frame of reference. In general, such behaviours exist in everyday settings and in people who are otherwise 'healthy' in their overall behaviour, with no therapy required.

Note: The associated emotions are all negative because the point here is to focus on how negativity breeds negativity, not to justify it by saying things like "We feel good when we gossip." The related thoughts and justifications are a mixture of good and unhealthily-centred intentions. The Muslim reader must be aware that for the action to be accepted, both the act and the intention must be correct according to Sharia; it is not acceptable, therefore, for the act to be wrong and the intention good or vice versa; in both cases, the action would be unacceptable.

The consequences (both practically and religiously) are an important benchmark for the reader to focus on as issues to be aware of and thus a motivation to change.

The alternative Islamic reminders from the Qur'an and Hadith are then listed for the reader to consider.

I have offered a summary of reminders at the end of each section for readers to use as their 'internal voice'. They may consider these when they use their Internal Islamic Guides, as well as to help reinforce the practical issues related to any specific behaviour.

Finally, I have offered reinforcers which may be used as target behaviours upon which to focus our attention.


Qur'anic verses and hadiths

The methodology for identifying each verse and hadith is the same as in previous volumes. The translation used in this volume (unless otherwise specified) is *The Majestic Qur'an* translation.

It must be acknowledged, of course, that a secondary translation of an Arabic-to-English text will have shortcomings. The overall work seemed more appropriate for the needs of this text, however. This may lead to some problems regarding the behaviours cited under each section and the choice of verses. For example, where verses related to vain talk are considered relevant to the heading of gossip, this will be included in the description of that term. However, in other direct translations, they may be considered two separate behaviours. As ever, it is important to acknowledge that no translation is equal to the original Arabic.

Since the list of behaviours were taken from compilations by scholars who based their lists on the Qur'an and Hadith, I have intentionally chosen (by and large) verses of prohibition to make clear that Allah (ﷻ) Himself has affirmed that the behaviour is not acceptable: this is much more powerful and poignant than prohibition from other sources.

An additional reason is that when we ignore the punishment of our crimes or imagine only the reward, we tend to be less motivated to change, although this often depends upon the person. Furthermore,



these prohibitive verses are succinct and direct, suitable for the purpose of acting as our Internal Islamic Guides. This is important, as these must be used as the 'alternative thought' and so need to be brief in order for us to recall them. The verses chosen were those that I felt are most powerful from a clinical standpoint in illustrating the point being made. They give us the reminder that we need to consider change, by Allah's will, without being lost in detail, as Allah advises us:

﴿... وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣١)

﴿...Do not make a mockery of Allah's revelations...﴾ (*al-Baqarah 2: 231*)

There are, of course, some exceptions to this. In cases where prohibitive verses could not be found, I simply used those verses which remind us that by consciously refraining from exhibiting the destructive behaviour, we can be rewarded by Allah's pleasure and His rewards in this world and in the afterlife.

Other verses were chosen because they create a link between our unhealthy behaviour and a perpetrator of some wrongdoing in the Qur'anic narratives. Thus 'being in the company of bad company' in itself can motivate us to move away from such characters by negative association of our shared behaviour. It does not necessarily carry a charge of being a member of the said group (you are not a devil or a hypocrite only because you share a behaviour), but it implies clearly that we share the negative qualities of such individuals.

The verses may apply to people of other religions, idolaters, or any other group and not actually to Muslims. We may attempt to excuse ourselves from being associated with them because we are Muslim. However, we cannot do so if we behave in essence as those people did who were opposed to the message of Islam, even if we are born Muslims.

Additionally, it may be that certain verses are repeated in different sections as they apply to more than one case (of behaviour).

It is important to note that the verses themselves relate much of our unhealthy behaviour to poor faith or even disbelief because the guides for behaviour and action are clear. If we do not attempt to live by them, we inadvertently choose to ignore the divine commands of Allah regarding this.

In sum, all verses were chosen with their interpretation to allow the reader to reflect upon their behaviour and understand it from differing perspectives and hopefully motivate the change required for more healthy behaviour.

No interpretation of the verses are presented, but the reader is referred to *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*, one of the most respected explanations of the meanings of the Qur'an, to follow the references of verses cited. As previously mentioned, the Hadith texts used are generally limited to Imams Bukhari and Muslim, the great scholars, as the most widely accepted. These are supplemented by an additional work by Imam Bukhari, *al-Adab al-Mufrad* – which focuses directly on Islamic manners – and other hadiths that have been graded as sound (*ṣaḥeḥ*) or reliable (*ḥasan*)¹ where good examples were found. This was done in order to include as many behaviours as possible. As mentioned in the introduction, no interpretations of the hadiths were included in this volume, as this was not considered to be beneficial for the reader in specifically managing their behaviour.

There are, of course, many other verses that readers may find more suitable and the list is not comprehensive by any means. Other verses may seem relevant; however, their context as based upon the interpretation given by Ibn Katheer was not considered as such, so they were excluded.

Note: None of the advice in this text is intended to suggest that any individual should give up or prevent others from claiming their

¹ With a few rare exceptions; wherever a weak hadith has been included, it is indicated as such. (Editor)

rights according to Sharia regarding behaviour and social interaction; it simply reminds us all that in less serious instances, there may be easier (and less painful) ways to achieve our personal and social goals. However, as Muslims we must simultaneously exert a degree of self-preservation in line with what Sharia allows.



CHAPTER 2

DEFINING DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS

Considering sins and their definition in an Islamic context

As mentioned earlier, since sins are destructive not only to our worldly lives but also, more importantly, to our afterlives, it is our duty to defend our souls against them. This necessarily requires us to recognise them and understand their various manifestations.

For Muslims, the concept of sin is central to the foundations of their faith. Whilst the term may be considered rather outdated in a secular context, the definition of what is seen as sinful is helpful in identifying the very behaviours we seek to remove from our lives to find inner peace and acceptance by Allah of our life works. The potency of words in motivating us to change our behaviour comes from its association with accountability and punishment. Therefore, some understanding as to how they may be identified is important.

The scholars' opinions regarding what is defined as a major sin in Islam falls into three categories:

1. The **first opinion** is based on the hadith which clearly points out the major sins. Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated:
«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Avoid the seven great destructive sins.
-

The people enquired: O Messenger of Allah! What are they? He said: To join others in worship along with Allah, to practise sorcery, to take the life which Allah has forbidden except for a just cause (according to Islamic law), to consume *ribā* (usury), to consume an orphan's wealth, to give one's back to the enemy and flee the battlefield at the time of fighting, (and) to accuse chaste women who never think of anything touching their chastity and are good believers.» (Bukhari)

Scholars maintain that such sins are *al-mubiqât/al-muhaliqât*, (*lit.*, they cut off/slaughter); that is, they destroy the character/person who commits them.

2. The **second opinion** states that major sins can be identified as those sins which are mentioned in the Qur'an along with their corresponding punishment in this life, such as theft or adultery, or those sins which are mentioned in the Qur'an with a warning of a punishment in the hereafter, such as backbiting or taking monetary interest.
 3. The **third opinion** offers two basic guidelines for what constitutes major sin by stating that:
 - a. **“There is no minor sin that does not include continuity (of the wrongful behaviour).”** In other words, when we continue to sin, even if the sin is considered minor, our persistence in committing it means it becomes major. This is an important continuum, since when we commit minor sins we rely on the fact they are considered minor and excuse ourselves from changing because they are not major sins. Consequently, they become part of our character – and so in turn the minor sin/behaviour becomes a major sin for us. Furthermore, we tend to think that we do not need to seek forgiveness for minor sins; we assume they will be forgiven so we tend to ‘happily’ repeat them; so what we consider a
-

minor sin becomes a major problem for ourselves and others.

- b. **“There is no major sin that cannot be forgiven with repeated tawbah (asking for forgiveness).”**

This reminds us that even though we may assume that major sins cannot be forgiven, the fact is that they can be when we seek forgiveness. This enables us to have hope and start afresh. This tawbah, of course, has set requirements.¹

These views and the related criteria should be considered when we look at the list presented in Chapter 3.

Defining destructive behaviour

The term ‘destructive’ has been chosen intentionally since, based on the aforementioned definitions of sin, any form of unhealthy and harmful behaviour towards ourselves or others tends to not only destroy any good that we have done but can ultimately destroy our personality as a whole.

In an Islamic context, we may describe destructive behaviour based on the definitions of sins, as mentioned above, as bad/blameworthy/prohibited/disliked. The behaviours mentioned in this book relate to those regarded as destructive specifically within the context of divine revelation alone. This is because these set the standard for acceptable behaviours to the Creator (Allah) as well as amongst the creation (our human, social interaction), so they also focus on what is prohibited and disliked. As mentioned above, the concept of sin is fundamental

¹ The person must: 1) beg Allah sincerely for forgiveness; 2) regret having committed the sin; 3) refrain from repeating the sin; 4) make a firm resolve to never repeat the sin; 5) if necessary and possible, restore the rights of any person wronged by the sin (such as returning a stolen item). Thereafter, the person should strive to increase their good deeds.

to understanding such behaviours. The behaviours here are not subject to change and are absolute, so they apply to all cultures across the Muslim Ummah. There is no room to excuse certain behaviours under cultural differences. The individual is ultimately accountable to the Creator, to themselves, and to each other regarding each behaviour. This is because behaviour in Islam has certain rights which we ourselves and others have over each other in addition to the rights of the Creator over us all.

Behavioural therapists define destructive behaviour as related to the physical destruction of items, so the descriptions of unhealthy behaviour are considered more relevant. They include those behaviours which may be described as unhealthy/unhelpful/illogical. In contrast to the Islamic definition, what is considered destructive in this context does not relate specifically within a moral or ethical frame of reference, although it may include aspects of both, depending on the relevant cultural values of any given society. In essence, it can be defined as any behaviour which is considered to deviate from the norm. Of course, what is considered the norm may be subject to change. The relation of such behaviour to sin, then, is irrelevant. Rather, this understanding focuses on behaviours that prevent individuals from functioning effectively, living a healthy life, and developing healthy/normal relationships. The individual, in this view, is technically accountable only to themselves – though again, this is according to the cultural norms within which they live.

In both cases, the fact remains that there must be a level of consciously taking responsibility and alerting ourselves to what is considered the ‘correct’ behaviour. For the purpose of this work, then, the list of what is deemed destructive behaviours focuses on the Islamic description.

When we consider destructive behaviours, we may be able to immediately identify any cruelty we have suffered at the hands of others, but we rarely consider the harm that we ourselves may have

caused. We feel more at ease with our own wrongs (implicit and explicit). Since we cannot change others and know that any change must begin within ourselves, it is of paramount importance that above all else we reflect, as the Qur'an repeatedly tells us, on ourselves and on our own behaviours. This, in turn, means being aware of the thoughts and associated feelings as well as considering their impact. A less destructive alternative thought – a logical (healthy) thought – will, in theory, lead to a 'logical' (healthy) feeling.

It is difficult to distinguish clearly between behaviours and emotions since they are intertwined. However, as the last two volumes have been about reflecting and reviewing our thoughts, this work attempts to translate those intangible experiences into specific behaviours. The distinction between the two is important, because even though it may be obvious, it is not always manifest in our behaviours: the actions that follow as a result of our thoughts and feelings. For example, we may feel angry but not shout/argue or we may feel hateful but be cordial to those we dislike; however, when feelings are translated into action, we may feel hateful and manifest this as gossip or backbiting; we may feel resentful and express this by lying about someone or something. Therein lies the start of the destruction of our happiness, our peace, and our very selves.



CHAPTER 3

A LIST OF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS

As mentioned previously, this list has been compiled using earlier works by adh-Dhahabi, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Ghazâli, and Bukhari, all of whom wrote seminal texts on behavioural change and based their compilation solely upon the Qur'an and Hadith. In order to ensure a more detailed list (as these earlier works did not always identify specific behaviours), more general, contemporary works which built on these classics were also used, such as those by Akhtar, Roushdy, 'Abdullâh, and Zarabozo.

1. aggression/anger
 2. arguing/quarrelling
 3. assigning negative nicknames
 4. backbiting
 5. bad manners
 6. behaving arrogantly
 7. being lazy
 8. being materialistic/greedy for possessions
 9. being rude to parents
 10. being two-faced
 11. being unjust
 12. breaking promises/making false promises
 13. breaking family ties
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14. carrying tales
 15. complaining
 16. deceiving/cheating
 17. engaging in pointless debates and questioning
 18. failing to keep a healthy distance from sexual temptation
 19. failing to keep the right company
 20. favouritism
 21. gossiping
 22. hypocrisy
 23. ingratitude
 24. insulting and cursing others
 25. intentionally making things difficult for others
 26. intentionally giving bad advice
 27. interfering in the lives of others/spying
 28. lying/making false and unfounded accusations
 29. making fun of others
 30. miserliness
 31. neglecting personal hygiene
 32. not talking to one other
 33. oppressing others/abusing one's position
 34. overeating
 35. overspending
 36. pointing out other people's faults
 37. reminding others of your favours/charity to them
 38. seeking fame and popularity/showing off
 39. sleeping too much
 40. stubbornness (against doing the right thing)
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41. talking too much
42. violating the privacy of others
43. wrongfully using the name of Allah or Islam to justify one's wrong actions (under a definition of piety not supported by the Qur'an and Sunnah)

A number of additional considerations were made during the compilation of this list:

The behaviours mentioned, where required, have been translated from Arabic along with the relevant contextual definitions, but due to the limits of a translation-based model it may also be the case that other behaviours have been added/included under another behaviour. For example, being condescending in our behaviour or considering others as inferior to ourselves has been included in the category of 'behaving arrogantly'. Although arrogance was included as a feeling in the last volume, here we deal with its behavioural effects in the manifestations cited above.

Highlighting what is prohibited is not the intention behind this work; therefore, the obvious haram (prohibited) activities such as drinking alcohol, eating haram food, stealing, and sins such as consuming orphans' property and misappropriating spoils of war have been excluded. In these instances, the Qur'an makes clear their prohibition but they are not necessarily common to us all. (Although I have referred to 'failing to keep a healthy distance from sexual temptation', this is in reference to the subtle ways in which we do this rather than the obvious haram actions.) This list focuses only on what we may consider the more subtle behaviours we might either dismiss/cover or deceive ourselves into thinking we do not exhibit. There are, of course, many alternative and more comprehensive lists available in the literature by the authors mentioned above.

It must be acknowledged that in terms of the scale and continuum of unhealthy human behaviour, the list is far from complete and

readers may readily identify other behaviours which have not been included here.

Note: The behaviours referred to in this list include their presentation in both temporary and pathological states. Again, no one is perfect and we all experience lapses in good character. The point is to reduce the damage done to ourselves and others by considering the effects and the alternative strategies offered. Professional help may be needed for some people if the behaviour is part of a clinical problem and the advice offered here is not adequate to manage the problem successfully. It is important for Muslims to work with therapists who are Islamically centred or Islamically aware, as theoretical approaches underpinning therapeutic concepts may directly contradict some Islamic values and may cause unnecessary further distress and internal conflict.



SECTION TWO:
MAKING A START



CHAPTER 4

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS

How did things get so bad?


*T*here are many reasons why we end up behaving in destructive ways. They are indeed destructive not only because of the damage done to others, which is usually a given, but because that destructiveness changes us. We do what we dislike and even detest in others. We persist in the behaviour since we come to rely on the power of this harm to protect ourselves from any more misery, whether that misery is caused by ourselves or by others – or both.

This fear of being harmed is often where the root of the problem lies. We tire of people who claim to love us but never seem to make any sacrifices; we feel drained by being let down repeatedly by those who claim to care about us but whose actions show indifference; we become exhausted by starting again each day by repairing the pain caused by those who tell us time and time again how wonderful they think we are but do us no good in our hour of need, expecting only to be served by us instead. We become numb to the cycle of frustration and trying to find peace when others tell us relationships are give and take but they seem only to take and expect us to keep giving until we have nothing left. They seem to always play the (self-nominated) victim to our (wrongly-accused) aggressor – we must always be the

one to persuade them to accept what we can offer them and they are able to successfully manipulate us/our behaviour with seemingly unhealthy intentions. It is hard work trying to figure them out, so we become weary or simply learn to respond more harshly to defend our already-broken selves. Thus we reach the final stage of losing our good character by mirroring the paradoxical behaviour of others as a justifiable reaction. We learn to 'teach people lessons', to be harsh and cruel. As we focus on our newfound defences, we confuse justice with revenge, we lose the interest and ability to question our own behaviour, and as the method protects us externally we fail to notice its internal destruction. It becomes a new reality and somewhere between the haunting pain of past experiences and the determination that we will never again be the victim, our unhealthy behaviour is dictated according to and controlled by the damaging behaviour of others. We have lost our personalities; it is what we sacrifice for survival.

In therapy, we describe this conflict of emotions and actions as 'cognitive dissonance' (holding opposing emotions about the same experience/event), a concept developed by Leon Festinger, American social psychologist. He maintained that due to the discomfort caused by these inconsistent feelings, the person will seek to reduce them by trying to attain some form of consistency once more so that they can live with their behaviour without discomfort. He also stated that when dissonance is present, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. This readily explains our resistance to change in any form. (Of course, the obvious solution is to change our behaviour and the related thoughts or find alternative information to support the change.)

The maintenance of destructive behaviour leads to what Festinger called the 'halo effect'. In order to avoid dissonance, we convince ourselves that it is okay to harm the people we do not like and not okay to harm those we do. Psychologist Edward Thorndike defined it as a type of confirmation bias; that is, our positive feelings about a



certain person result in interpreting their dubious and even unhealthy behaviours as positive because of our overall view of them – it is as if they are wearing a halo. Therefore, it is the case that with our friends and family we overlook and accept their faults and even embrace them but do not do the same for others, since we do good for those we like and not for those we do not – and this makes us feel better.

Unfortunately, the good we do is limited by positive feelings and may not relate to the overall morality of the behaviour we are excusing (or not excusing). There is, of course, a major misconception here since we grow to like people over time and our subsequent behaviour serves only to reinforce our feelings (rather than the other way around). When we decide we like someone, we work towards increasing the liking rather than seek reasons for disliking. Our version of the truth about that person's behaviour is reinforced as well as our own reactions. This leads to a further disintegration of good behaviour, depending on who we are with (so there is truth in the idea that bad company will have a bad effect on us).

Alternatively, it may be the case that the more good we do for someone, the more they expect and the more they are blind to the wrong they/others do to us. Thus, good is expected from 'good people' and bad is considered 'normal' for 'bad people' and is therefore excused. The 'good person' is pushed more and more to be subjugated to the 'bad people' in order to accommodate their behaviour and excuse them from learning they are wrong. The justification? "You are the better person." (I can let you suffer as you will behave better in that situation than the bad person, who will create more problems. [Secretly, I am more afraid of them than of Allah so I cannot manage them, but I can control you because you are good and will avoid conflict/rocking the boat.]) There is a balance of self-preservation and the right to protect oneself that is completely ignored. Again, such illogical thinking results in a general excuse to allow people to behave badly with impunity.

The beauty of adhering to the ḥaq is that it bypasses this dissonance. This is because we live according to a higher principle that is above and beyond others and even ourselves. It is the application of this principle that leads to equal justice and good for all, as it reminds us that our allegiance is to Allah's command, not to our own sense of comfort or discomfort:

﴿... لَا تُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصْنُكُمْ بِحَبْلِ الْوَعْدِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٥٢)

﴿... We do not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear. And when you speak, be fair, even if it concerns a close relative. And fulfil the covenant of Allah. Thus He instructs you, so that you may pay heed.﴾ (al-An'ām 6: 152)

Thus, it is about the principle of behaviour rather than the people who are exposed to it.

Obstacles to behavioural change: The lies we tell ourselves

We work hard to formulate our own emotional stories to explain how we have found ourselves in the situation we are in. These tend to be selective – complexity and negativity often written out – with only the digestible aspects of our behaviour remaining. We believe our final versions to be true and soon the reality fades and this is the new one we have written for ourselves.

We are told repeatedly by Allah to use our common sense:

﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ﴾ ﴿٢١﴾ ﴿إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصَّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ﴾ ﴿٢٢﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٢١-٢٢)

﴿And do not be like those who say: We hear, but do not listen. Verily, the worst of creatures before Allah are the [wilfully] deaf and dumb, who do not understand.﴾ (al-Anfāl 8: 21-22)

It is, in fact, the essence of therapy to create a safe place for people to stop and think about their actions and use this common sense (which is the first thing that disappears when we are overwhelmed by any emotion). Therapy creates a pause between thought, feeling, and behaviour, to work within the space this gives us. In this place, we discover and examine what we are not paying attention to, what we need to think about.

When we do not wish to change our behaviour, we use many different explanations to justify our wrong actions. In our hearts we tend to know, as we are told in the Qur'an:

﴿بَلِ الْإِنْسَانِ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ ۚ وَلَوْ أَلْقَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ﴾ (سورة القيامة: ١٤-١٥)

Indeed, man is well aware of what he is doing, even though he may offer his excuses [to justify his deeds]. (al-Qiyamah 75: 14-15)

This is why sharing what is in our hearts is held so precious to us. It is our most sacred and vulnerable space. We must therefore recognise these so-called justifications – the lies we tell ourselves about our behaviour – to start the process of change.

Following is a list of the common lies we tell ourselves when it comes to not changing unhealthy behaviour and a response based on our Internal Islamic Guides:

1. **“It’s not a big deal.”** (We try to trivialise the act and its effects on ourselves and others as harmless. This helps us forget about changing our behaviour.)

We see it is dissonance (as mentioned above) that is responsible for restlessness and an inability to act consistently; of course, this influences our management of difficult situations. Understandably, this may be used to protect us from the pain of distress, but it often creates a secondary problem as we continue to disguise our behaviour as something other than what it is.

We must consider all sins as just that: sins. Although in contemporary psychological therapy (and indeed in society in general today) this is not a popular word, in Islamically-centred work it is potent both in its description and accusation, and therefore its ability to motivate change, as it relates the behaviour to consequences. When we categorise them as minor, we downplay their significance.

‘Abdullâh ibn Mas‘ood (رضي الله عنه) said:

A believer sees his sins as if he were sitting under a mountain which he is afraid may fall on him, whereas a *fâjir* [a wicked evildoer] considers his sins as flies passing over his nose and he just drives them away like this. [Abu Shihâb (the sub-narrator) moved his hand over his nose in illustration.]¹

We must consider that a small sin in our eyes may cause great damage to another person, just as we ourselves are harmed by others and their belief that their hurtful words or actions are ‘no big deal/just a passing comment’. We cannot characterise the effect of that wrong upon another as relatively harmless, so we must train ourselves to act with care.

Internal Islamic Guide: We must remember the words of Bilâl ibn Sa‘d, “Do not look at the smallness of the sin, but look at the One you have disobeyed [Allah].”

2. **“I’ve tried, but I can’t seem to change who I am.”** (We claim that we have read so many books and attended so many study circles, but we just cannot seem to change. We assume change is impossible.)

The ability to change our character and therefore our behaviour is discussed by the philosopher Miskawayh, who writes about this in detail in light of the Qur’an and Hadith. He was, in fact,

¹ Bukhari states that the first part of this narration, as presented above, was from Ibn Mas‘ood himself, then the hadith follows.

the scholar who inspired Imam al-Ghazālī to focus on character and produce his own seminal works on the topic. Miskawayh describes the character as “a state of the soul which causes it to perform its actions without thought or deliberation.”¹ He adds that it is influenced by a) natural temperament and b) what is acquired by habit and self-training, where both combine to become a trait of an individual’s character.

Scholars in his time differed in their views regarding the location of the character: whether it belonged to a rational or non-rational soul (as this is where the excuse of not being able to change lies). They debated over the ability of the individual to change their natural character at all. Miskawayh concludes that the reality could be readily observed by us all:

No part of character is natural to man, nor is it non-natural. For we are disposed to it, but it also changes as a result of discipline and admonition either rapidly or slowly.²

He does acknowledge that there is an individual capacity which affects what he describes as receptivity to character change. This does not mean that we cannot change, but that we may ourselves have limited capacity as to the degree of change; however, the ability to change remains. In essence, it involves taking responsibility for our actions as well as our reactions.

This is important when people give the excuse of, “They are uneducated people. We can’t blame them.” The Prophet (ﷺ) was described as unlettered but was the best in character, so this is not an acceptable justification for bad behaviour. It is a conscious decision that we must make, which involves alerting ourselves to our present state and how we have arrived

¹ Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 29.

² Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 29.

at a point where we utilise our capacity to do what is referred to in the Qur'an as *tafakkur* (thinking and reasoning with our intellect) and *tadabbur* (pondering so as to get to the root of the problem/experience). As we are told repeatedly in the Qur'an, we must train our minds to reason and reflect continuously and be aware of our thoughts and feelings and their causes. Only then will we be open to changing them and thus our behaviour.

Internal Islamic Guide: Is it that I don't want to change rather than that I can't? Time for *tafakkur* and *tadabbur*: thought, reflection, and reasoning.

3. **"I can't control myself, so it's not my fault."** (We often expect others to change and take responsibility for their actions but do not take the same responsibility when it comes to ourselves.)

If our behaviour were not changeable, there would not be such emphasis on the benefits of changing or on reward and punishment and therefore paradise or hell. We would simply be told to accept and live with our behaviour and that of others, both good and bad. This is not the case at all and indeed this has negative implications for our faith. We are repeatedly told in the Qur'an that we must account for and take responsibility for our deeds and no one will be held accountable for our actions except our own selves. Indeed, taking responsibility for our behaviour is no one's job but our own.

Internal Islamic Guide: Blame versus responsibility. You are responsible for your own actions; do not excuse yourself by blaming it on something or someone else. You remain accountable in the end. Accepting personal responsibility is not the same as thinking, "Well, I always get blamed. So what's new?" Sometimes we may get blamed because we are wrong.

4. **“I was born this way, so it’s part of my nature.”** (We blame nature for our destructive behaviour.)

This refers again to the argument made by Miskawayh, who states that in spite of what we believe, change is possible and it is not just in our genes. We are told at the very start of the Qur’an that the Qur’an is:

﴿... هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢)

﴿...guidance for those who fear Allah.﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 2)

If we are open to guidance, it means we are necessarily open to change, but again it is a conscious act that we must choose to consider.

Internal Islamic Guide: Will this excuse hold up in front of Allah (ﷻ) on the Last Day? Indeed, essentially this would mean we blame Allah (*astaghfirullâh* [I seek Allah’s forgiveness]) for our behaviour. We are free to choose to do the right thing or the wrong one, so think again.

5. **“It’s normal – that’s how people are in our culture.”** (We cannot go against our culture, so we accept it.)

This thinking has been responsible for creating enormous destruction to the Islamic framework related to good behaviour and it is a damaging lie. The biggest defence is that it (culture) is *mubâh* (permitted or neutral) (whether rightly or wrongly defined/understood by some people). Ironically, the term *mubâh* is often exploited to force cultural practices upon others who do not wish to participate and who prefer to follow the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Whilst this is one option, the excuse of culture means that the individual’s right to choose is unjustly taken away. It is also a threatening mindset, as it creates fear in people who question culture and presses them to remain silent in the face of wrongdoing; thus, the said

behaviour becomes normal. When it becomes normal, we absorb it even further into our general behaviour. Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri (رضي الله عنه) narrated: I have heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say:

«If any of you sees something wrong, he must change it with his hand; and if he is unable to do that, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do that, then with his heart: and that is the weakest of faith.» (Muslim)

When we realise that in certain cultures un-Islamic and unhealthy behaviour is simply seen as cultural, we see how it may mean that we can no longer even recognise in our hearts that a behaviour is unhealthy for us. In such cases, it can mean the death of good character.

Internal Islamic Guide: Culture is not compulsory. It is not an excuse to deprive others of their Islamic rights. Do not desensitise yourself to what is against Sharia and any accepted bad behaviour. Stay shocked!

6. “Allah is All-Forgiving.” (We can sin a little, can’t we?)

This is a common response when a person knows he or she is doing wrong. They defend the action by saying, “Allah will forgive me”, assuming that as long as we say this we can consciously and knowingly keep doing wrong because He is ar-Rahmân. Yet how far can we extend this excuse? What if someone knowingly harmed us and this was their justification? Would we accept it? We are told in the Qur’an:

﴿ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا... ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٦٩)

«Then they were succeeded by an evil generation who inherited the scripture, but they seized the fleeting gains of this world, saying: We will be forgiven...» (al-A‘râf 7: 169)

Internal Islamic Guide: Do not try to deceive Allah. You will lose out in the end:

﴿وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣)

﴿When it is said to them: Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Indeed, it is they who are the fools, but they do not know.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 13)

Think of the scales of judgement. We know in our hearts the difference between right and wrong. Indeed, in Arabic the word *kufri* means disbelief and covering (the truth). However, if we imagine our behaviour in the form of the balance of scales on the Day of Judgement, we allow some wrongdoing for ourselves, excusing it with the idea that in the end as long as the scales for good are heavier, that is what counts. It does not undo the harm we have caused others, though, which may mean in the end that the scales might swing against us.

7. **“He/she pushed me to react like that, so I lost it.”** (It’s their fault, not mine.)

This is one of the hardest challenges because so often it is true. People do push others past their limits. When we are surrounded by continuous bad behaviour, we ourselves disintegrate into the shared chaos around us. There are so many verses in the Qur’an, however, that tell us what to do when we are with such people:

﴿وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا ﴿١٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿١٥﴾ إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿١٧﴾﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٦٣-٦٧)

﴿The true slaves of the Most Gracious are those who walk humbly and with dignity on the earth and, when the ignorant address them, they say words of peace; those who spend the night prostrating and standing before their Lord; and who say: Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of hell, for verily its punishment is unrelenting. Indeed, it is an evil halting place and an evil abode; and who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor stingy, but follow a middle path between the [two].﴾ (al-Furqān 25: 63- 67)

We do not need to keep such company, at least not when they behave in an unhealthy manner.

Internal Islamic Guide: You have a choice to walk away long before you lose control, or disarm them with a few gentle words and change their reaction instead. Focus on how distressed you feel when you stay to debate with someone who will never agree with you. See the many examples in the Qur'an and *seerah* of believers walking away from these settings:

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا﴾ (سورة المزمل: ١٠)

﴿Bear patiently what they say and keep your distance from them in a dignified manner.﴾ (al-Muzzammil 73: 10)

﴿وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَلُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَلُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْنِئُ الْجَنَاهِلِينَ﴾ (سورة القصص: ٥٥)

﴿When they hear idle [or offensive] talk, they turn away from it and say: To us our deeds, and to you yours. We wish you peace. We have no desire [to be involved] with the ignorant.﴾ (al-Qaṣaṣ 28: 55)

In other words, leave them to Allah!

8. **“But I pray and fast and read the Qur’an, so I can’t be too bad, can I?”** (We often take refuge in the fact that we pray and use this as a buffer to excuse ourselves from acknowledging how unhealthy our behaviour may be.)

Scholars point out that if one prays and still behaves badly, there is something wrong with their prayers. We are given so many hadiths about people who fasted and prayed, but they were sent to the hellfire for their bad behaviour towards others. So this excuse has already been nullified, not least by the idea that our self-deceptions will be our destruction, as is clearly stated in the Qur’an:

﴿وَلَمَّا سَقَطَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدِ ضَلُّوا قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٤٩)

«When they became remorseful and realized that they had gone astray, they said: If our Lord does not have mercy on us and forgive us, we will surely be among the losers.» (al-A’raf 7: 149)

Internal Islamic Guide: Many hadiths repeatedly remind us that the best people are the ones with the best manners. Good character exists in two forms: a) between the servant and the Creator and b) between the creations only. The damage we do to others is between us and them, and the prayers we offer are between us and Allah (ﷻ). There is a clear difference, and on the Last Day we must account for both aspects of our behaviour. Indeed, for our bad behaviour towards each other, we must account twice: once to Allah for going against His guidance and then to the person we harmed. Your prayers will not save you if your behaviour was destructive. Only Allah’s mercy and forgiveness can do that.

These are the most common lies we tell ourselves when it comes to not wanting to change our behaviour. The responses from the Internal Islamic Guides should help us refocus when we lose ourselves in unhealthy behaviour and return us to a healthier track, by Allah's will. Emotions often beat us to it, though. We need to train our minds to focus on the consequences of our emotions, to reflect on the consequences of those feelings, then change our thoughts to create a more healthy emotion.

This is not about trying to be perfect. It is about trying to develop our characters and to identify and improve those behaviours which are to our detriment. It is common to not get it right the first time; the point is to keep trying until gradually it becomes part of our inner voice and alerts us when we veer towards what is unhealthy.




CHAPTER 5

THE LIES WE TELL OURSELVES VERSUS OUR RIGHTS IN ISLAM

Our understanding of rights

Talk of rights is rife in both Islamic and non-Islamic settings. Islamically, they are what Allah has bestowed upon us to make our lives and living with each other easier. In essence, they guide us in our interactions with others and in our responsibilities and obligations towards ourselves and each other (family, friends, and the wider community as well as authority/governmental bodies). This includes what we may or may not expect from each other in terms of levels and styles of interaction as well as practicalities such as personal, domestic, financial, and social obligations. These rights are based on the core continuum of all behaviours and speech within Islam: what is recommended (*mustahabb*), permissible (*halal*), accepted but neither recommended nor prohibited (*mubâh*), disliked (*makrooh*), and prohibited (*haram*). Such is its completeness that there are few aspects of our intra-actions and interactions where Islam does not offer guidance. These rights create accountability in our minds. They therefore promote good behaviour and enable us to avoid wrongful actions through their implementation. They are the rights from the Creator for our ease of living.

We also have rights that come from the creation. We talk of rights within cultures and relationships between communities and family




members. The word itself indeed has different meanings across cultures and refers to different contexts. We freely use the words, “It is my right upon you” to obtain something that may or may not be incumbent upon us as Muslims in order to influence others to do what we want and request something that may not be easy for the other person nor obligatory upon them. Whilst the rights may not be obligatory, the pressure that comes with them is such that those who choose to reject them are often excluded and not accepted until they conform. Although these rights tend to be based on ease as well, the ease here is often only for ourselves. They are about satiating our own egos and desire to control but not be controlled.

What is clear is that Islam allows us to enjoy any cultural ‘right’ that does not conflict with the religion. However, even then we are given a choice to reject culture over religion, since one is from the creation and the other from the Creator. (Note: *Shar’i* rulings – based on Sharia – also consider culture but only in cases where they do not contradict the Qur’an and Sunnah.)

So, explicit or implicit, all relationships – no matter how close – are based on a series of agreements about acceptable behaviours and these are, in fact, rights we have over each other and expect of each other. They are a manifestation of the intellectual/cognitive base of healthy relationships. The source is either a healthy one – Islam – or an unhealthy one – our egos and/or cultures. When we make the healthy choice, we can all live our lives in ease, by Allah’s will. Unhealthy choices lead only to a general corroding of relations between us. Either way, we are free to choose.

Rights and their relationship to people and cultures

We have become afraid of people who take their rights. We fear them and their freedom to exercise their choices because those choices




might disrupt our own status quo. We do not want to reflect on our own actions and duties and only want others to accommodate us.

People who talk about and take rights as the bases of their actions (but not so when they give them) can be formal, brutal, and aggressive people. The act is often implied to be unsavoury, although when we prevent someone from taking an Allah-given right, we do not see it in such a negative light. We are lazy to make the effort that comes with implementing rights, so we dislike and resent others when they do the same.

We defend our insistence on them relinquishing their rights by saying, “Life is not all about rights... we are friends/partners/spouses – come on!” as if rights are anathema to friendship and good relations: the exact opposite of why they are given to us. We claim, “It’s not in our culture” or “It doesn’t suit me for you to do that.” (So you must give up your Allah-given right because we are more important [*astaghfirullāh*].) It is as if the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) did not have a culture or egos and only we do. They, of course, had a very strong cultural environment; however, the rights that Islam gave them meant that they were free to choose to practise their new way of life released from the restraints of unhealthy cultural norms. Had they chosen to believe that life is not just about rights, no aspects of Islam would have survived. They would not have been the exemplary people we consider them today because we would not recognise Islam in their behaviour. In fact, many of them suffered divisions and physical assault from their own families in order to keep their rights and Islam alive: all for the sake of their own relationship with Allah. It was not expected of them, but it was their right to choose.

Worse still, we may argue, “I know it is your right but I do not like it!” This clearly over-rides a decision made by Allah and thus clearly rejects not only His guidance for us but also for others. When we hold this position, we also directly insult or challenge the prophets (peace be upon them) and the Companions who followed such *Sunan* and



consider their choices to be wrong as well. If we further try to justify that those rights were for those people, we enter a whole new arena of implying that things need to be modernised and updated, that Islam (though complete) does not apply to us today, simultaneously rejecting any number of Qur'anic verses and hadiths that go against this idea. This is a road to rejecting the core of Islam, so it is a truly destructive behaviour. We might justify our position by arguing that some rights are not obligatory but simply allowed; yet we do not allow people to accept them because we ourselves are not happy with the choice Allah has given them. Indeed, we hear highly sophisticated intellectualisations of why others should not take their rights, overcomplicating a rather simple situation. However, these same arguments are selectively not applied to so many straightforward cases where our egos are not threatened, so we happily do not consider this.

We ourselves choose to allow those rights we and our egos find easy, such as giving gifts, cooking for guests, performing *nawāfil* (supererogatory) prayers, and giving charity; these are things we benefit from. Indeed, we allow others to give up their rights and serve us when it suits us but is not expected of them (that is, it is not our right over them). However, we are not so easy when it comes to other rights, such as plural marriages or for rights to time in our relationships or freedoms within the way we may dress with *maḥram* men, for instance. These seem harder because they are not easy for our egos or cultures to swallow. No matter how many study circles we attend, how many lectures we hear, and how proud we are of Islam, we fear some rights and accept others. This is the pattern we tend to follow when it comes to rights. We forget that they are a gift from Allah (ﷻ) for each Muslim and not something from one Muslim to another to allow or not (playing God themselves). We fail to be aware that when we consider the reasons people want to take such rights (maybe to revive a *sunnah* or to keep the religion alive), they may simply have a much higher level of faith than us. We only want to

impress upon them our own ways of living based on our own ideas: again, the ego.


The irony, of course, is that when things go wrong, we will happily revert to these very same rights. We will defend ourselves, paradoxically, reverting to our own rights: “You have no right to expect that of me!” “You do not have the right to speak to me that way!” So we see the disruption that a lack of understanding regarding rights can cause between relations – no case, just tension.

Of course, we may give up our rights to reduce that tension and some rights are easier to forgo than others; this is a personal decision between two people and is based on the strength of their relationship. The point remains, however, that we must question ourselves about the justice of what we have done and our reasons behind it, not simply repeat the process because the other person has acceded to our demands and given up what Allah has allowed. If we do not do so, we may force others to have the relationship with Allah that we have, not the one they want. We forget that Allah belongs to everyone and our station in the hereafter is about the choices we make in this world. We stop others from trying to reach the station they desire and prevent them from aiming for (though not necessarily prevent them from reaching) the paradise they desire because of our own egos.

It is a weakness in our faith and no matter how we justify it, this is the basis for fearing such rights: “What will happen to us?”/“I cannot cope”, focusing on our egos rather than justice and therefore forcing others to bow down to our egos/cultures or otherwise making their lives very difficult. When the danger passes, we revert to preaching about the rights Islam gives us and how we are not as the Companions, though this may be simply because we do not try to emulate them.

The consequences of our choice of rights

There is always a choice, as we have been given free will. However, we must be aware that we will have to live with the consequences of



the way we choose. We must consider whether it is the Creator (ﷻ) or the creation Who/who knows best.

The confusion comes when the weight given to the ego-centred and cultural rights is considered equal to our God-given rights. We fall into the danger of creating a new religion using a mixture of rights from both and this is what we find in the Ummah now: so many views, so many choices, and so much pressure to conform to different versions of our/others' rights. The current generations are wading through cultures, egos, and religion to distinguish the right from the wrong. It is a challenging and exhausting process but necessary if we are to return to the clear way presented by Allah. The pressure to remain bound by our cultures and our egos persists, so the confusion remains.

If we follow 'cultural Islam', there will be as many versions of it as there are cultures. But since many cultural traditions are zeitgeists, it is fair to presume they will further evolve or change again. Therefore, to use cultural Islam as a benchmark for religious rights is a distortion of the religion itself. If we follow true Islam, though, our rights are complete and scholars can work to develop rulings to meet the differing needs of growing and diverse cultural populations. The choice is not as difficult as it feels.

The result of all of these behaviours towards rights is that aspects of the religion fade, become unrecognisable as Islam, or even die (symbolically speaking); or, as the hadith tells us:

«Islam began as something strange, and it will become strange again just like it was at the beginning...»

– and culture prevails over what Allah allows and rights to justice are eroded away. The religion will, of course, remain the truth forever but the behaviour of the people may not because we choose to lose unless we make the right choice, epitomising the end of the above hadith:

«...so glad tidings to the strangers.» (Muslim)

Like so many other aspects of life, we pick and choose our Islamic rights for ourselves and on behalf of others (even when we express disapproval of an action carried out by someone we do not even know). Whether it is for the culture we live in or the ego that lives within us, the Qur'an itself warns us repeatedly against both behaviours: blindly following the traditions of our forefathers and giving in to our own egos. In many ways, it can be argued that the lies we tell ourselves are inherently involved in preventing us (through fear) and others (through control) from taking their Allah-given rights and are simply a way of preventing them from living Islam. In such cases, it is these lies that are the religion of choice, not Islam. The danger of this form of thinking is that we reset the accepted boundaries that Allah has set; when we enforce these upon others, we alienate people from the religion as we encourage people to follow our egos rather than Allah (ﷻ). This is the way of sure failure.

By simply being aware of our own rights and those of others and accepting them as a free choice for everyone and not just for ourselves, life can be easier. This is the reality of having rights for us all.



CHAPTER 6

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

The process of behavioural change

*B*ehavioural psychologists have numerous theories to explain why we change as well as the actual process of change. They include, in general, the following theories:

- **Self-efficacy:** This explores our own perception/ideas about our ability to change
- **Learning theories:** How we learn to change through observations of other people's behaviour as well as how reward and punishment reinforces any given behaviour, thus influencing the extent of change
- **Social learning:** This considers the impact of the environment on changing our behaviour
- **Theory of reasoned action:** The impact of having an awareness of the consequences of our actions
- **Theory of planned behaviour:** This places an emphasis on being aware of our intention and how this affects change
- **Health action process approach:** This focuses on direct goal setting and goal pursuit

Stages of change model

In addition to the above, one model that helps us understand the process of change is what behavioural psychologists refer to as

the Stages of Change model. This model was developed in the late 1970s by researchers James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente. It was initially developed to help people give up smoking. However, the stages remain applicable in a range of contexts.

Prochaska and DiClemente state that three factors are required for successful change:

- A readiness to change (resources and knowledge to ensure a lasting change)
- Identifying barriers to change (anything that may prevent change)
- Expecting relapse (identifying anything that may cause us to relapse to our old behaviours)

The model outlines the following stages of change, which have been adapted for this text:

1. **Pre-contemplation**, which may involve denial or ignorance that we have a problem.

Solutions: Remind yourself that the behaviour is destructive; review your foundations (see the next section); more thought, reflection, and reasoning are required.

2. **Contemplation**, which makes us aware of the benefits of change as well as the costs to ourselves, creating some ambivalence in the effort to change.

Solutions: Remember why it is important to change. What is stopping you? What will help motivate you? Again, go back to the sources from the Qur'an and Hadith and consider the practical benefits to yourself and your life.

3. **Preparation**, which involves our initial behavioural experiments and information we learn about change.

Solutions: Remember your goals. Review your plan of action by renewing your intention; perform nawâfil prayers

and remind yourself again of your goals and intentions and, of course, the positive consequences. This can be a mid-way 'restart' to reinforce your motivation. To do this, refer to your list of Internal Islamic Guides in Chapters 4 and 7 for the relevant behaviour/excuse for not trying.

4. **Action!** Direct change.

Solutions: Reward yourself immediately and consider the rewards in this world and the next for improving your character. Imagine what your rewards will be in the hereafter and make sure you have some support to maintain your motivation levels.

It is helpful to keep these stages and their solutions in mind when we begin our personal journey of change.



CHAPTER 7

DEVELOPING A PERSONAL PROGRAMME

This section aims at encouraging the reader to follow or develop a personalised, Islamically-centred, step-by-step guide to manage behaviour in line with cognitive behavioural principles of eliciting change. This can be done either individually or in a study circle (which is an increasingly common practice nowadays in Muslim communities).

Strengthening the foundation

As mentioned previously, we often see individuals who carry out their obligatory forms of worship in a seemingly perfect manner, but their character and behaviour leave a lot to be desired. They excuse themselves with the belief that as long as they carry out the basic tenets of faith, their character does not matter – that it is just human nature/weakness – or perhaps they choose to be blind to their behaviour. However, in his last sermon, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said: «...O people, listen to me in earnest. Worship Allah, perform your five daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in zakat (obligatory charity). Perform Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) if you can afford to. All humankind is from Âdam and Ḥawwâ' (Eve). An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also a white person has no superiority over a black person, nor does a black person have

any superiority over a white person except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood...» (Bukhari)

This highlights the significant relationship between the basic acts of faith and good character. As mentioned earlier, when bad behaviour continues in spite of the fulfilment of the basic tenets of faith, there is something wrong in the way the foundational acts are implemented. So before we attempt to change our character, we need to strengthen these foundations through tafakkur and tadabbur: thought, reflection, and reasoning.

Step 1a: The basics

When you consider the five basic tenets of faith, ask yourself these questions:

- **Tawḥeed** (monotheism). Do I truly subscribe to tawḥeed or are there aspects of *shirk* (polytheism) in my behaviour? Remember that shirk does not only mean to associate others with Allah in a direct way; it can be much more subtle. Do I do things for the pleasure of others and forget my duties to Allah? Do I fail in certain aspects of Islam because I fear rejection by others? Do I willingly join in with things that are wrong because I do not want to be excluded, even though I know what I am doing is wrong? Do I remember Allah and show gratitude in my daily life or only when I need to? Allah reminds us:

﴿فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُون﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ١٥٢)

﴿Therefore remember Me; I will remember you. Give thanks to Me, and do not be ungrateful.﴾ (*al-Baqarah 2: 152*)

If Allah remembers us, then of course the effect is an improvement in our character, for good deeds draw us closer to Him, as He himself tells us.

- **Ṣalâh.** How do I prioritise my prayer? Do I avoid prayer because I do not like to perform *wuḍoo'* (ablution) and so in fact my *wuḍoo'* may not be complete, which nullifies my prayer? Is the actual process of my *wuḍoo'* correct? Do I think of other things whilst I am praying? Am I aware of what I am saying whilst I am praying? Do I rush my prayer because I want to go out or watch a TV programme? Do I miss my prayers because I did not plan my day around them and was shopping instead and had no time? The completion of our five daily prayers will be the first subject of questioning on the Last Day and if they are not in order, other deeds will take a lesser regard. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The first thing about which the people will be called to account from their actions on the Day of Judgement is prayer. Our Lord, the Exalted, will say to the angels – though He knows better: Look into the prayer of My servant and see whether he has offered it perfectly or imperfectly.

If it is perfect, it will be recorded as perfect. If it is defective, He will say: See if there are some optional prayers offered by My servant.

If there are voluntary prayers to his credit, He will say: Compensate the obligatory prayers with the voluntary prayers for My servant.

Then all the actions will be considered similarly.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Similarly, the following verses indicate that laziness in prayer is a sign of hypocrisy, clearly reiterating the relationship between one's prayers and good character:

﴿إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾ (سورة

النساء: ١٤٢)

﴿The hypocrites seek to outwit Allah but it is He Who outwits them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up reluctantly, only to be seen by people, and they remember Allah only a little.﴾ (*an-Nisā' 4: 142*)

﴿وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقَبَّلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ. وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَى وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَاهُونَ﴾ (سورة التوبة: ٥٤)

﴿Nothing prevents their spending from being accepted from them but that they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, they only come to prayer half-heartedly and they only spend reluctantly.﴾ (*at-Tawbah 9: 54*)

- **Fasting.** Is my fasting correct? Do I fast in Ramadan or do I make excuses such as “I am tired”, “The days are long”, “It is hot today”, and so forth. Do I need to make up any fasts? Do I fast with focus or do I simply not eat but still carry on with all those behaviours which are advised against whilst fasting? We are reminded in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«If anyone does not give up lying speech (false statements) and acting on those lies and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (that is, Allah may not accept his fasting).» (Bukhari)

- **Zakat.** Have I paid my zakat? Was there a time in my life when I had the money but did not pay? Do I hesitate when I give zakat and feel it reduces my *rizq* (sustenance, both physical and spiritual), so in my heart I do not do it happily?

Have I made up the difference of what I have not paid and cleared my debt to Allah? Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧٧)

«It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; rather righteousness is to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets; to spend from your wealth, despite your love for it, on kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, wayfarers and those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to establish prayer and give zakat...»
(*al-Baqarah* 2: 177)

- **Hajj.** Have I spent my wealth on travelling abroad and seeing the world but ignored the obligation of Hajj? Do I make excuses when I have a chance to go such as “I am not ready”, “I commit too many sins (and must only go when I am perfect)”, and so on? Indeed, the Prophet (ﷺ) advised in his final sermon:

«...Perform Hajj if you can afford to...» (Bukhari)

Its significance is self-explanatory.

All of the above reiterate that these basic tenets of faith form the basis of good character. The two are inextricably linked. We can only reveal in our hearts the truthful responses to these questions for ourselves. Since Islam is a complete system, it is quite possible that a mistake in one of these areas impacts elsewhere as all of them – whether we fulfil them or fail to fulfil them – obviously involve thinking and behaviour which, in turn, relates to our character.

Step 1b: Beneficial additions

As mentioned in a previous volume, there are optional acts of worship suggested by scholars which include:

- **Reciting the Qur'an** with understanding and reflecting on its meaning in the context of lessons taught/learned, especially since the Internal Islamic Guides are from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Remember the hadith in which 'Ā'ishah (*radiya Allāhu 'anhā* – may Allah be pleased with her) said:

«The character of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was the Qur'an.» (Bukhari)

The development of good character is rooted in the Qur'an: knowing it and acting on it.

- **Nawāfil prayers.** These are non-obligatory prayers. They can make up for deficiencies in our obligatory prayers and are a way of drawing us nearer to Allah (ﷻ). So they may be made in any circumstances when a Muslim feels they need to strengthen that connection, whatever the reason, as we see from a hadith *qudsi*:

«...Allah says: And My servant continues to draw nearer to Me with nawāfil prayers so that I shall love him. When I love him, I shall be his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hands with which he holds, and his feet with which he walks. And if he asks (something) of Me, I shall surely give it to him, and if he takes refuge in Me, I shall certainly grant it to him.» (Bukhari)

- **Dhikr** (remembrance of Allah) is a form of connecting with the Creator. It also serves as comfort in times when we are struggling to maintain good behaviour:

﴿ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴾ (سورة الرعد: ٢٨)

﴿Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah, for verily in the remembrance of Allah hearts find comfort.﴾ (ar-Ra'd 13: 28)

Remembering Allah also helps protect us from further sin and bad behaviour. Anas ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Verily, Satan is lying in wait over the heart of the son of Adam: when he remembers Allah, Satan withdraws, but when he forgets Allah, Satan will overpower his heart. That is the whisperer who retreats.» (Abi Ya'lâ; graded reliable by as-Suyooṭi)

- *Du'â'* (supplication) made at times when it is most likely to be accepted (such as after performing ṣalâh or wuḍoo'; after reciting the Qur'an; while travelling, fasting, or feeling oppressed; when sick; and when it rains) as well as being aware of the etiquette of making du'â' and the rules of acceptance (including sincerity and asking for what is permissible).
- ***Husn adh-Dhann*** (thinking good of Allah and all that He has written for you, in His Wisdom) as a manifestation of *tawakkul* (trusting in and relying on Allah). This is something we all claim we have, but when we face a problem we do not exhibit it. We need to remind ourselves of this; to live it means to accept it and keep working towards the good in one's life. It is the opposite of what we normally do, which is to lose hope and give in. Remember, the effort we exert in the path of good character is also rewarded, by Allah's will.

These factors all serve to strengthen our practice of Islam and our faith. However, what adds to this is developing the awareness that Allah sees us even if we do not see Him. The Hawthorne Effect described in social psychology tells us that our behaviour changes if we feel we are being watched. We all experience this phenomenon

within and amongst ourselves during our daily interactions and we see the differences in our behaviour in a public setting versus a private one. Therefore, this faith-based concept of knowing that Allah sees us should provide this internal resource for us and help us to become more consistent in the degree to which we reflect on and watch our own behaviour.

Step 2

This takes organisation and a clear head. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattâb (رضي الله عنه), the great Companion of the Prophet (ﷺ), is reported to have said, “Bring yourself to account before you are taken to account. Weigh your deeds before your deeds are weighed.” This is a poignant reminder of the significance of the following process.

It is always best to start by praying *nawâfil* prayers and asking for help in any such endeavour. This serves to strengthen the heart and mind and remind the individual that the changes they intend to make are for the sake of Allah, the Almighty, and can occur only with His help. It also serves as a useful psychological benchmark to start the process of change: symbolic of drawing a line under past behaviours. Be aware that it is always easier to start something than to finish it. When you feel yourself wavering, go back and repeat this stage to jump-start your motivation again!

Step 3

Psychologists employ a method of hierarchy when tackling behavioural change for certain mental health problems. The same technique can be adapted for use here as follows:

1. Make a list of all the behaviours you feel need some work, in line with the list of destructive behaviours presented. Remember, these are all taken from the Qur’an and Hadith so their prohibition is clear.
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2. Prioritise the order of change. Identify the behaviour which is done least often and which you feel is the easiest to change first, then the next behaviour least done and easiest to change, and so on, until you reach the behaviour which is most often done and the hardest to change. This makes your targets easy.
3. It is mentioned by some Islamic scholars that if we intend to change anything, we should allow ourselves a period of forty days. If the behaviour is maintained for forty days continuously, it becomes part of our habit.

Set a start date and mark off forty days. When you have achieved forty complete days of not presenting with the chosen behaviour that you wanted to change, you will find that the new way of conducting yourself has become part of who you are. It not only becomes easier for you to identify it, but this method also prevents you from re-enacting it. If, however, after five to seven days, you present with the marked behaviour even once, begin again at day one until you have a clear forty days. The effort it takes to start again will balance out against the temptation to perform the behaviour, especially when you know you will have to repeat the whole process. You may have to start again a few times but the pressure of avoiding this will soon overtake any possible failure to keep going.

At the same time, do not be too hard on yourself if you slip. It is not a failure. Change takes time, effort, and positive thinking. The most important thing is to never give up.

Step 4

We should be aware of the excuses we make that prevent us from changing, as they will be the greatest obstacles to overcome. Review Chapter 4 and consider which excuses apply to you. Become familiar with those excuses and be aware of how obstructive they are in changing your behaviour.

Step 5

When we try to change our behaviour, it is also important to identify what psychologists would call the maintaining and/or moderating factors; that is, those factors which allow the behaviour/problem to continue or to influence us (for better or worse). These may be related to circumstances, other people's reactions, and earlier experiences. They make us vulnerable to repeating the destructive cycle of behaviour we most want to avoid.

We can understand the influences of each as follows:

Step 5a: Maintaining factors

These are the factors which keep the destructive behaviour alive. They are commonly known in therapy as safety-seeking behaviours. They are those thoughts and actions which help us feel safe and protected from the fear of behavioural change not working out. Practically, these include factors which contribute to the avoidance of change. They are the thoughts, rationalisations/justifications, lies, and excuses we adopt to prevent us from trying. (See thoughts/justifications related to each specific behaviour in Chapters 4 and 7.) As the fear of challenging the behaviour rises, we increase these factors and this prevents us from trying to challenge them at all. As the fear subsides, so do the thoughts and safety-seeking behaviours and we feel that we do not need to change after all! These behaviours keep the problem behaviour going. This is because when we consider the thoughts and feelings that stem from them, we feel they are more effective than challenging the problem behaviour in the first place. (Of course, this applies more in a clinical problem and therapy setting, but the principle applies to all behaviour change to a greater or lesser degree.)

- On a physical level: Do you maintain a physically healthy lifestyle? We know that the state of the body is known to affect the state of the mind. Are you eating and sleeping well? (Too
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much or too little is a problem: in Islam, balance is important, as we will see in the text.) These factors do make a difference. Furthermore, both Islamic and modern conventional medicine tell us that food has an important role to play in our behaviours and moods as well as our general health, so do not downplay this. If the food you eat affects your levels of base anxiety, stress, or fear, then you are less likely to succeed in the challenge of changing your behaviour.

- Is there some background stress that you are not dealing with or a situation that you need to address? This may explain the root cause of the existence of certain behaviours. Although it is not always necessary to know this in order to change, these unmanaged issues may permeate the more healthy areas of our lives. Resolving them may require professional help, but try to identify any factor that may be affecting your ability to change and respond. Its implication is that because we do not feel we have enough control/emotional strength to manage a situation, as it is being drained away by a more significant problem, we feel less confident. This is important to acknowledge, since feeling able to challenge situations and control the potential outcome is part of managing it successfully.
- Be realistic: Do you have a realistic idea of what you will do and how others may respond? This does not mean predictions of the future, but have you set a benchmark of what is common and reasonable behaviour on both sides and a sensible and active plan to manage a difficult response? If we have an unrealistic idea of a situation, then of course this will add to our fears and negativity about feeling we can manage. It will either put us off or cause us to fail our experiment of changing and so be deterred from trying again in the future.
- What are your thoughts at this time? In instances where the destructive behaviour is exhibited, we may experience

recurring thoughts which bring us back to a negative state and perpetuate the thought or justification behind the behaviour. Numerous examples of such thoughts, related specifically to each behaviour, are presented further on. This would ordinarily be related to a certain context or situation.

- What do our body language and actions tell us about how healthy the behaviour is? For example, when we are about to gossip or backbite we tend to do so in hushed tones. We look around the room to see if anyone is listening. We excuse ourselves before we speak: “I shouldn’t say this, but...”, “I don’t mean to backbite, but...”. (This is usually a sign that we are about to do what we deny we are intending to do.) Such clues are evident in the definitions of virtue and vice given in a hadith reported by an-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān (رضي الله عنه):

«He said: I asked Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) about virtue and vice. He said: Virtue is a kind nature and vice is what festers in your heart and what you detest anyone to know.» (Muslim)

Step 5b: Moderating factors

Moderating factors influence the destructive behaviour, successfully or otherwise. Again they are not ‘magical’ predictors of whether we will succeed or fail, but they may influence the outcome. Similar to maintaining factors, they may also be related to our thoughts about the situation and realism regarding targets, but they often tend to be situational. For example, if you have tried something before and it has not worked out in certain situations, then although you may be confident in some settings, you may not be able to apply the strategy with the same confidence to all situations. The outcome is then more likely to affect you negatively the next time you try, so it can be self-reinforcing.

- Are there previous instances where you have tried to change and the reactions of others have been too much to handle and prevented you from changing? Remember that, unfortunately, other people are equally resistant to us changing as it may have implications for their own behaviours. Identify when and if this happens. Consider how to respond in a healthy and non-defensive manner – which may, paradoxically, mean that you employ the destructive behaviour: avoid this! Remember to refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah to remind yourself of the healthy alternative.
- Do you exhibit the behaviour in specific situations or contexts? For example, does the behaviour exist at certain times? We know that often when we are wasting our time, feeling lonely or bored, or have no focus or direction that unhealthy thoughts and behaviour come to us. The solution lies in taking action to protect ourselves from these phases and staying focused on what we are doing in our lives.
- Does the behaviour appear in the company of certain people? Our worst behaviour often exists with our closest friends because they tend to be the ones who forgive us all our faults and do not mention them to us in order to maintain peace in the friendship. However, in doing so they do not allow us to improve ourselves. We are warned in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتَ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيَسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا مِثْلَهُمْ ... ﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٠)

﴿He has already revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the revelations of Allah being rejected and ridiculed, do not sit with them until they begin to talk of other things; otherwise, you would be like them...﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 140)

This does not necessarily mean that you should change your friends (although it may, in some cases, be an option). The indication is that good and healthy friendships will help you bring out the best in each other and build your characters towards what is best. Alternatively, do you find you treat people of different beliefs and values harshly? Remember that in Islam, rights and justice are for all, not just for those who we deem are deserving of them. The Prophet (ﷺ) and the Companions had daily interactions with strong Muslims, weak Muslims, hypocrites, and non-Muslims (even amongst their relatives) and they remained within the bounds of Islam and did not mistreat them. It is noted in the seerah that even the strongest opponents of Islam never found the Prophet's good character lacking. They may have disagreed with his beliefs, but they respected his character.

- Is the behaviour time specific? Does it seem that you manage successfully at certain times of the day and week but at other times you do not? If so, consider who or what is around and who or what may be influencing your behaviour at the time. This may also be related to physical health, so be aware of your body's reactions as well.

These basic pointers should help you develop a personalised behaviour programme for yourself to start changing, by Allah's will.

The reader should note that since this is a self-help guide for behaviour change in general, not for mental health problems, the strategies suggested here are adaptations of therapy techniques. For problems that are of greater intensity and duration, and which result in significant deterioration in social functioning and relationships, these strategies are not adequate and one should seek professional help.



CHAPTER 8


REINFORCERS


In any process of change, we will experience peaks and troughs, each affecting our motivation to carry on. We might ask ourselves questions such as: What is this all for? What is the benefit to me personally? All it means is that I am nicer, but it does not mean other people will be, so is it worth this effort? Or quite simply, we may feel tired by the process of change and seek some general reinforcement to increase our motivation levels and get us back on track.

A key motivator at this point is to renew our intention and again perform our *nawāfil* prayers to reset the benchmark.

Stop and reflect on what you have achieved so far; even changing a habit for a day is great, so do not downplay it. The first few steps are always hard. Remember that at this stage it is likely that Satan will want you to fail, so his whisperings will start and you may easily become demotivated. He does not want you to succeed because it is his promise to Allah to block our path to Him, so we have a hidden battle. Remember that Satan comes only where he can find something, so it means that whatever stage you have reached, even if you have not begun, he feels threatened just by your intention.

Consider the following reinforcers as just some of the potential outcomes to these changes, *inshā'Allāh*. Re-read them when you feel demotivated and consider what has changed, be they differences in your own levels of happiness, in your family, in your relationships, in your work or social life, in your health, or in your wealth. Reflect and identify. Any one of these is a successful outcome.



- Any change you make will, *in shâ' Allâh*, bring you closer to Allah (ﷻ) since you are doing all of this to please Him. In this fact alone, there are no limits in the way this could change your life for the better.
 - The changes can bring you closer to being able to represent what a true Muslim's character is like, in the best light and in the best manner. Indeed, you might fulfil your Islamic obligations to Allah and the creation without even realising it.
 - Doing something negative takes more effort than doing something positive, so when we make these efforts to change and give up the unhealthy behaviours, we free our minds for more important things and do not take up the space with negativity. With free mind space, we will automatically feel more content with our lives and more able to manage other challenges. This will allow us to focus on the things that really matter.
 - You will be seen as trustworthy, honest, and reliable. These are core qualities which all the negative behaviours mentioned destroy and which, in turn, can ruin our relationships. Positive change can restore connections. In this, you will open up many more opportunities and doors to goodness for yourself and be able to achieve much more than before.
 - People will more likely see you for your character rather than just the material things you can offer, so the dynamics of your relationships will focus on your principles (these will cost you nothing). This is where your true strength will be shown. The other things will come to you regardless, as this is preordained.
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- You will gain good friends, and in this you will gain support for your own life circumstances. Similarly, people will be happy to share their lives with you: both successes and failures. This will allow you to live a more complete life, enabling you to be grateful for what you have and also have access to help when you need it. You will no longer be alone in times of distress or happiness.
 - Your life will feel enriched and energised because your mind and body will feel healthy. This, in turn, will enable you to manage daily challenges with ease.
 - You will feel less preoccupied with what is past and have some space to think positively about the future.
 - You will build up rather than break down bridges, opening up opportunities for happiness instead of closing things down.
 - You will feel the peace and freedom that comes with giving and letting go of negativity.
 - When you face challenges in the future, you will have the right mindset to deal with them in a constructive rather than destructive manner. It will also help you live more easily with weaknesses (your own and those of others). When you accept your own weaknesses, you are more likely to accept those of other people, and this makes you easier to be around.
 - People will start to listen to you, and feeling heard will help you develop your character and how you reflect on yourself. You may even be able to admit you are wrong. You will open your mind to new ideas, which may improve your life overall.
 - It makes you more sensitive to other people and this makes you more likeable as a person as it shows you respect others.
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If you begin to cover people's wrongs and mistakes, your own shortcomings will be covered as well. Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«...If anyone conceals (the faults of) a Muslim in this world, Allah will conceal him (his faults) in this world and in the hereafter...» (Muslim)

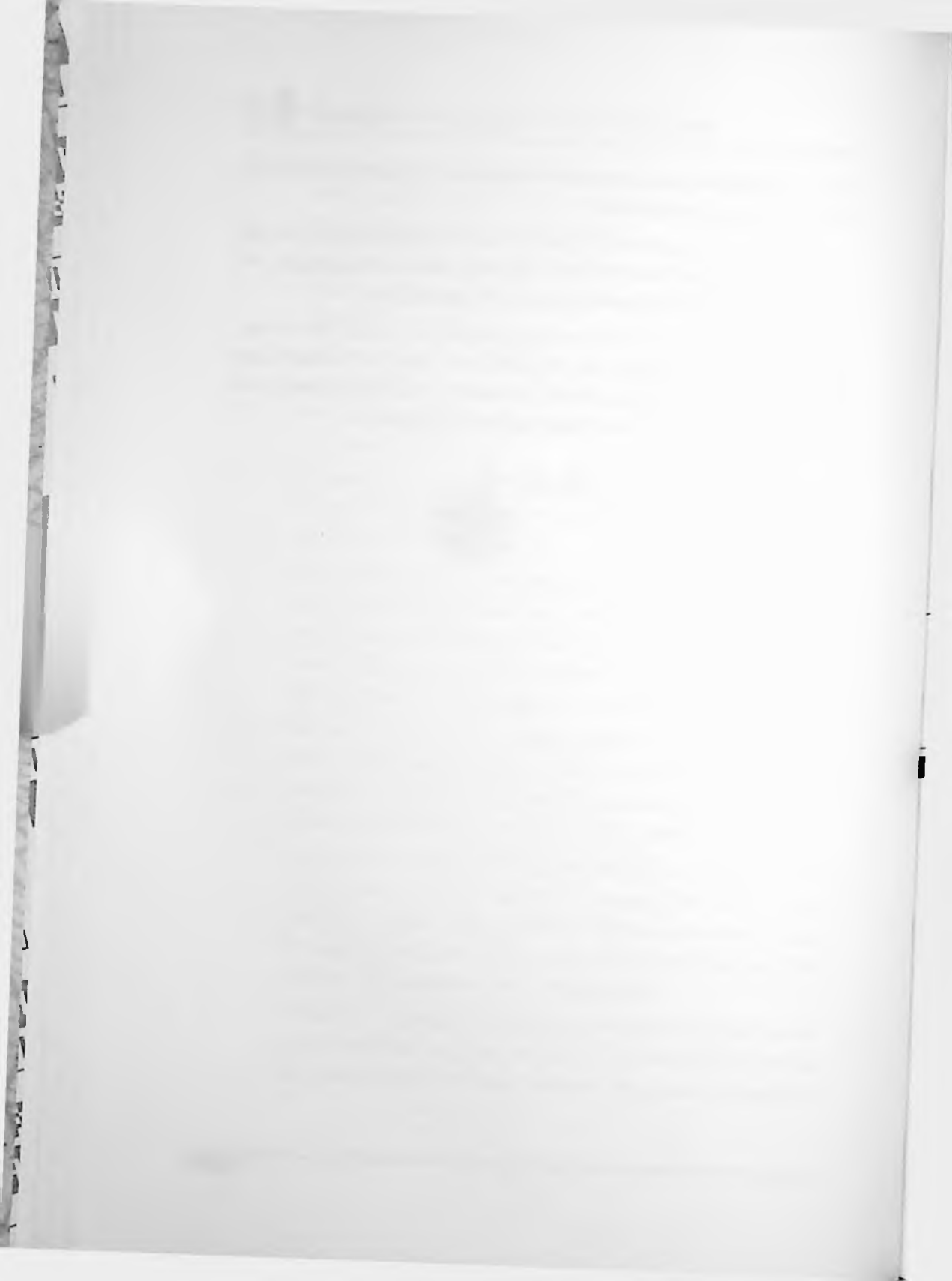
- *In shā' Allāh*, every effort you have made or will make will save you from a potential trial related to that behaviour and you will face less question regarding it on the Last Day; this is a great blessing.
- You will collect du'ā's from all manner of people you may not have expected. This in itself is a secret you can hoard; here it is good to be greedy!
- You are more likely to be heard and your views accepted, so it means you have a platform within yourself to influence people in a positive manner. People will enjoy being around you. In this, you will have two rewards: one in this world and the other in the hereafter, by Allah's will.
- You will not live with regrets and will be able to look back at a life well lived and time well spent. When you are questioned about how you spent your time, you can say, hand on heart, that you used your time wisely.
- This does not mean you will be steamrolled. You still have your rights, so do not assume it means you are weaker because of your good character. You are, in fact, much stronger because you please not only Allah but also the creation, so you are in a win-win situation.
- A Muslim's struggles and self-improvement can also serve as an inspiration for other Muslims. We hear stories about how people came to Islam because they were impressed

with the good manners of Muslims. It is quite possible this could include you!

- Most importantly, Allah (ﷻ) will be pleased with you and we cannot ask for more than this. When this happens, our lives can change beyond our wildest dreams.

Note: The reinforcers above apply equally to a reduction in any of the destructive behaviours. Rewards, of course, will come in the form that Allah, the Wise, decides is best for you. This is likely to be better than what you could have chosen for yourself.





SECTION THREE:
METHODS OF CHANGE



CHAPTER 9

DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOURS

The behaviours are listed in alphabetical order for ease of reference. Feedback from the last book suggested that readers found small, bite-size sections easier to follow and apply. Additionally, when we attempt to change numerous aspects of our behaviour, it is common for us to try to make this easier by grouping the issues together. In so doing, however, we may miss out on subtle but distinct differences and their effects on our lives. We may, therefore, not be able to fully rid ourselves of the problems since we may not even be aware of the gap we have created in their emotional or practical impact. This impartial order of behaviours allows the individual reader to understand how to manage a single issue in its entirety.

Managing our behaviour

Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) said:

«I asked Allah's Messenger (ﷺ): Which are the best deeds?

He said: To believe in Allah and to strive in His cause.


I asked: Which is the best slave to set free?

He said: The most valuable and highly prized to his master.

I asked: If I cannot do that?

He said: Help a craftsman or make something for someone who cannot do anything for himself.

I said: O Messenger of Allah! I am old and unable to do these things.



He said: Avoid wronging the people and that will be a charity from you to yourself.» (Muslim)

This hadith serves as a pertinent reminder to us all that developing a good character – that enables us to avoid harming anyone intentionally – is something good that we do for ourselves, not just for others. When we help ourselves, we pave the way for our own happiness.


Part 1: Aggression/Anger

Description and manifestations

Anger is one of our most commonly experienced and most misunderstood emotions. At the same time, it is an emotion whose behavioural manifestation is not always recognised or accepted as justifiable, irrespective of the wider context. What we do know is that anger makes us angry! Since it is an explosive emotion it is difficult to ‘digest’ and cover up, unlike most other emotions. It tends to be expressed in both direct and indirect ways.

Anger can lead to a range of both passive and active behaviours. This means that anger or aggression may not always be apparent in the actual behavioural response. For example, actively expressing aggression may be that we shout at someone or physically hurt them, whereas an example of passive anger may be that we invite everyone to a party except one person with whom we are angry. In the first instance, we are clearly expressing our anger, but in the second, it may be safer (for those who may not feel strong enough to engage in confrontation or who fear the consequences) to show anger through rejection or humiliation of the other. The second form of anger is perceived as more acceptable since it cannot be recognised directly as such, so we may tell ourselves that others do not see our anger or see us as aggressive.

Anger is manifested in a range of behaviours such as shouting and swearing; gritting one’s teeth; silence; clenched fists and muscle



tension; arguing; and even physical assault. It may also be expressed as actively ignoring, degrading, and/or humiliating others as a form of ongoing revenge/anger.

These behaviours often fuel anger not only within ourselves but sometimes also in the other party, inflaming the problem instead of alleviating it. In therapy, when we can identify the sources of the two core resulting emotions related to anger – blame and frustration – we are able to help move away from the behavioural destructiveness of the emotion itself. Once we remove the blame aspect (differentiating between what we can blame on others and what is our own responsibility), we are left to deal with the frustration, which allows us to be more practical (problem solving rather than problem saturating) in our management of the situation.

Related emotions


Anger, blame, frustration, show of power (to prove we are not weak), distress, hatred, revenge, resentment, refusal to be exploited or be the underdog, and stubbornness against doing the right thing.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I won't have anything to do with them again."*
- *"I'm not taking it anymore! I'm done with being treated like this."*
- *"They need to be taught a lesson."*
- *"It doesn't pay to be nice all the time. The nicer I am, the more they take advantage – so they deserve to be fixed."*
- *"I'm fed up with people making a fool of me!"*
- *"They've hurt me, so now I'm going to give them a taste of what it's like to feel as bad as I do."*
- *"I hope they get punished for what they have done." (I will make du'â' against them all my life. [This is a way for me to vent my anger because I cannot face them.])*

- *“They are horrible people so they deserve it!” (Therefore I do not need to feel guilty.)*
- *“If I see them I will give them a piece of my mind.” (This threat helps me believe I am regaining some control over how their behaviour causes me to feel.)*
- *“They had better stay out of my way because if I see them I won’t be responsible for my actions!” (I’m so angry I feel like I want to kill them!)*
- *“I won’t show my anger now.” (But I will hold it in my heart [so I can get back at them when it’s easier: when they are vulnerable].)*
- *“(I did a harmful thing) but it’s not my fault. They made me do it!”* We all have our limits, so in situations where this applies, managing anger is not easy at all, and this is why anger is such a challenge (see hadith below).

Possible consequences

- Anger and aggression can take over our thoughts and can result in holding on to rather than letting go of the anger. This may be in a more passive manner, making it less obvious (to others and even to ourselves) and therefore harder to deal with because we do not identify it for what it is.
 - We may spend a lot of time thinking about how to express this anger. It can make us feel out of control (and therefore we claim we are not responsible for our actions).
 - It can lead to the avoidance of others, which in turn transforms them into ‘bogeymen’ rather than just people, possibly increasing any related fear.
 - It can result in self-imposed isolation: a desire to punish others by making ourselves suffer. This can happen in certain cases of suicide, which is sometimes described in therapeutic terms
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as externalised anger/an angry act of behaviour. Although this is not to dismiss or trivialise the unhappiness someone may feel at this point or their level of distress, it may be the case that you would punish the wrong person – yourself.

- Anger can create in us a need to make obvious our rejection of other people's help when we may need it the most: when we need help to overcome our anger.
- It will likely reduce our ability to forgive and take a step towards making things right, so it means that we can perpetuate our own anger by its very manifestation and consequences.
- It is well known as one of the key emotions related to certain physical health problems. It is not the direct cause, but a contributory and maintaining factor; in this is an example of how emotions impact our physical health.
- It can lead to violence and even fatal harm to others and/or to ourselves.

Possible impact on faith

- Anger is an unhealthy distraction and one that can distance us from the mercy of Allah (a process which is sinful in itself; we add sin to sin and make our burden heavier rather than lighter).
 - We might want forgiveness from Allah but are not prepared to practise it for others; yet this is the only way out of anger. This, of course, does not mean putting ourselves in harm's way again, but it means letting go of the emotion and its behavioural consequences.
 - Holding on to anger implies that we do not accept Allah's wisdom in all things. There are only so many things we can avoid and account for. We are told in the Qur'an that whatever harm is meant to come to us will come, no matter what we do:
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﴿وَإِنْ يَسْسِكِ اللَّهُ يَضْرِبْ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٧)

﴿If Allah afflicts you with harm, none can remove it but He; if He blesses you with good, then He has power over all things.﴾
(*al-An'âm* 6: 17)

When we hold on to anger about certain situations, we fight what is predestined whilst quoting the Qur'an to justify our position and forgetting this very significant point. We also forget that not accepting Allah's wisdom causes more harm to ourselves. Thus anger affects our faith at a much deeper level.

- Once we start to feel this way, it undermines so many other aspects of our faith. It then means we may indirectly question many more of Allah's attributes related to wisdom, forgiveness, knowledge of the unseen, and others which relate to this behaviour.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿هَتَانِتمْ أَوْلَاءِ تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمُ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوا عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١١٩﴾﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١١٩)

﴿O you who [take them as close friends], you love them but they do not love you, even though you believe in all the scriptures. When they meet you, they say: We believe, but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips in their rage against you. Say: Perish in your rage; Allah knows well what is in [your] hearts.﴾ (*Al 'Imrân* 3: 119)

﴿وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٣٣-١٣٤)

﴿Hasten towards forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as vast as the heavens and the earth, which is prepared for the pious, those who spend [in Allah's cause] in times of both ease and hardship, who control their anger, and pardon people, for Allah loves those who do good.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 133-134)

﴿وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغْضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: ٨٧)

﴿And [remember] Dhun-Noon [Yoonus], when he departed in anger, thinking that We would not punish him. Then he called out in the depths of darkness: There is no god worthy of worship except You. Glory be to You; I have indeed done wrong.﴾ (al-Anbiyâ' 21: 87)

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَكَرَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٢٠١-٢٠٢)

﴿Verily, those who fear Allah, when an evil suggestion comes to them from Satan, remember and immediately begin to see clearly. Whereas the devils support and encourage their [human] brothers in sin, and never cease.﴾ (al-A'raf 7: 201-202)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«The brave (or strong) one is not the one who knocks other people down, but the brave (or strong) one is he who keeps himself in control when he is angry.» (Bukhari)

«Sulaymân ibn Surad (رضي الله عنه) said that two men were sitting in the company of the Prophet (ﷺ) when they began to revile each other. One of them became so angry that his face reddened.

The Prophet (ﷺ) looked towards him and said: I know of an expression which, if he repeats it, his anger will subside... (That is) I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan (*a'oodhu billâhi min ash-Shayfân ir-rajeem*)...» (Bukhari)

Ibn ‘Abbâs (رضي الله عنه) related:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: Teach people (the religion) and make things easy for them. Teach people and make it easy for them.

He said that three times.

He also said: When you are angry, keep quiet.

He said it twice.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah reported:

«A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: Advise me.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Do not become angry and furious.

The man asked (the same) again and again and the Prophet (ﷺ) said in each case: Do not become angry and furious.» (Bukhari)

‘Abdur-Raḥmân ibn Abi Bakrah (رضي الله عنه) said:

«My father dictated a letter to ‘Ubaydullâh ibn Abi Bakrah when he was the judge of Sijistan, saying: Do not pronounce judgement between two persons while you are angry, for I have heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say: No one should judge between people while he is angry.» (Muslim)

The Sunnah gives us other advice about managing anger in addition to the above. We are told that if we feel angry and we are standing, we should sit, and if we are sitting we should lie down.

Abu Dharr reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«If one of you is angry when he is standing, let him sit down so that the anger will leave him. Otherwise, let him lie down.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Also, ‘Atiyah narrated that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Verily, anger comes from Satan and Satan was created from fire. Fire is extinguished with water, so if you become angry then perform ablution with water.» (Abu Dâwood; graded reliable by Ibn Ḥajar and as-Suyooti and weak by al-Albâni)

Two hormones, adrenaline and noradrenaline, are secreted by the adrenal gland in response to any physical or emotional stress the body undergoes. Such stress includes fear and anger. Indeed, one of the effects of anger is the increased production of these two hormones.

The amount of noradrenaline and adrenaline in the blood can increase simply by changing from sitting to a standing position.¹ Different kinds of mental stress can significantly increase the blood adrenaline level, however. Anger would place great pressure on the body if one becomes angry while standing. The advice given in the Sunnah is in perfect rhythm with both the body and the mind.

If we consider this advice in the light of what happens to our bodies when we are angry, it is nothing short of a miracle in that it was given over 1400 years ago.

Be aware about aggression/anger

- There are warning signs of anger in the body. Listen to them.
- When we are incited to anger, there is usually a build-up of emotions that we tend to ignore. Try to identify the pattern; it usually starts way before things get really heated.
- When we are angry, we are in bad company. I refer here to Satan, not necessarily to the people we are angry with.
- The consequences of our angry behaviour is not only damaging to others but perhaps even more so to our own selves and to our character, since when we accommodate anger and see it as an accepted behaviour, it becomes a very useful excuse and thus a barrier to positive change. (“I can’t help myself. I just seem to lose my temper quickly!” “She/he is just an angry person.” “You know I get angry easily!” [So stop making me angry!])

¹ Tulen, JH, et al., “Cardiovascular control and plasma catecholamines during rest and mental stress: effects of posture,” accessed June 23, 2019, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/10334962.




- Anger is not easy to manage, but that does not mean we cannot manage it. This acknowledgement is important since not doing so can become an excuse for not changing. (“It’s easy for you to say, ‘Stop being angry’ but it’s not that easy!”) We are advised to manage our anger, so it means it can be achieved since Allah would not command us to fulfil something which is impossible.

Part 2: Arguing/Quarrelling

Description and manifestations

Arguing/quarrelling may seem less harmful than anger and may even be seen more as a minor infringement than a destructive behaviour. It is not. It is on the same continuum. Whilst anger may be explosive in its manifestation, arguing and quarrelling are corrosive in their effect. They can create a repetitive pattern and eventually this pattern can take over our character in stealth: we stand by such behaviours and habits and convince ourselves that it is others, not us, who create situations for quarrelling by their bad behaviour. It exists in many forms, such as bickering; creating a fuss over trivial issues; continuously looking for reasons to become annoyed or irritated; always challenging others; and never letting others have a difference of opinion but feeling that we must change their point of view even when it is allowed to have a different perspective. All these behaviours reflect only our own insecurities, weaknesses, and fear of being exposed as a failure in living up to the image we claim to represent. They are, therefore, often a masking of our own state of unhappiness. We end up spreading our own misery, making the lives of other people equally unhappy.

The poignant aspect of this behaviour is that it tends to have its source either in issues already discussed or matters that are not really




important, so we often realise after the damage has been done that there was no real reason behind it.

Related emotions

Anger, estrangement/social isolation/loneliness due to avoidance by others, increased dissatisfaction, lack of enjoyment, arrogance (from a desire to find faults in others as a way to escape our own inadequacies), and unjustifiable/unjust hatred of someone or something.

Related thoughts and justifications


- *“I am not happy with you, so nothing you do is good enough for me.” (I need you to suffer because I am unhappy, so I will reject and find fault with whatever you do.)*
 - *“I will have the last word.” (See how smart I am compared to you? [I don't want to be seen as weaker or not as confident in my views, so I will hang on to them even if they don't make sense.])*
 - *“I am always right.” (I cannot afford to be wrong – it is you who is wrong. [The way to prove that is to find fault with you/ anything related to you and make you feel like a failure.])*
 - *“You think I am not good enough for you.” (So I find fault with you because that way I will feel superior and [you can feel bad about being so arrogant]. This means I do not need to reflect on my own behaviour.)*
 - *“(I hate my life so) I need to vent.” (You are the closest to me and are meant to be there for me [and allow me to treat you in this unfair manner].)*
 - *“I'm so unhappy.” (I am not satisfied by anything you do [because I am not satisfied in my relationship with you].)*
 - *“I'm allowed to disagree with you – I have a brain of my own, you know!” (This is just to remind you of that.)*
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- *"I'm just tired/don't feel well/have a short fuse these days."*
This is a tough one, since we are all human. We should be aware of the moods of other people and work to make their mood lighter and not provoke a quarrel.
- *"Sorry, but I just cannot tolerate stupidity." (And you do such stupid things.)*
- *"Well, stop annoying me and I will stop arguing!"*

Possible consequences

- Being argumentative and quarrelsome means that we can never be satisfied, as such a habit keeps us busy finding things to argue or quarrel about; when there is nothing, we find something.
- People will see us as a fussy, moaning complainer. This does not attract people nor does it make them want to spend time in our company.
- If we are always quarrelling and arguing, people are unlikely to want to share their lives' or hearts' secrets with us, so it is likely that our circle of close friendships will decrease.
- We may find that the only people around us are equally argumentative and quarrelsome. So we may never find peaceful friendships since they will likely be suffering from the same insecurities and have employed the same defences.
- People will not listen to our viewpoints at all after a while; they will either avoid us or stop listening.

Possible impact on faith

- It creates an unpleasant character, which is the opposite of what is advised for a Muslim. Since the basis of a good Muslim is good character, this is in major conflict with our faith – it is not an action that is limited to certain settings but cuts across them
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all. Good people may avoid us, which means we might not change this habit as there is no one around to help us reflect.

- It distances us from Allah's love. We see in the hadith below that a quarrelsome person is hated by Allah. To be hated by Allah (ﷻ) means to be deprived of His favours by doing what we know He hates. Again, think about Who we are disobedient to when we quarrel. When we trivialise this behaviour, we cause ourselves to lose out on Allah's pleasure.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَأَصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٤٦)

﴿And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you lose heart and your strength desert you. And be steadfast, for Allah is with those who are steadfast.﴾ (al-Anfāl 8: 46)

﴿وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِّنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ﴾ (سورة لقمان: ١٩)

﴿Be moderate in your gait and lower your voice; verily the most hideous of sounds is the voice [braying] of the donkey.﴾ (Luqman 31: 19)

﴿وَإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِن بَغَت إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقْتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبَغَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ٩-١٠)

﴿If two groups among the believers fight one another, then make peace between them. If one of them transgresses against the other [and rejects all efforts to make peace], then fight [all of you] against

the one that transgresses, until it complies with the command of Allah. Then if it complies, make peace between them on the basis of equity and be just, for verily Allah loves those who are just. The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your [contending] brothers. And fear Allah, so that you may be shown mercy. ﴿*al-Hujurat* 49: 9-10﴾

Abu Moosá (رضي الله عنه) said that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent him and Mu'adh to Yemen and told them:

«Be easy with the people and do not be difficult with them, and give them glad tidings and do not repel them, and obey each other and do not dispute with one another.» (Muslim)

Abu Umâmah (رضي الله عنه) related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«I am the leader of a house in paradise. I guarantee a house in paradise for one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a house in the middle of paradise for one who abandons lying, even if he is joking; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of paradise for one who has good manners.» (Abu Dâwood; graded reliable by al-Albâni and Ibn Bâz)

'Â'ishah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The most hated person to Allah is the most quarrelsome of the opponents.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about arguing/quarrelling

- We may lose our respect before others when we constantly argue and squabble, no matter how right we think we are (or may actually be).
- The change in our behaviour at such times can make us appear undignified.
- As with anger, in arguing and quarrelling we may easily say something which we regret and which we cannot take back. Oftentimes this leads to long term or permanent estrangement between close friends and even family members.

- We are encouraged in the Sunnah to make peace and be nice to each other; this is usually what gets things done. Quarrelling is not the way to gain popularity and be heard. Rather, it is the route to disrepute.
- Allah Himself hates such behaviour, so it is no small matter.

Part 3: Assigning negative nicknames

Description and manifestations

The significance of selecting a name for a newborn child is clear in Islam. A good name reflects aspirations for him or her, so we are advised to select a name with care and consideration. We must think about the implications of what we choose upon how they will view themselves and what others will think of them. There are, in fact, clear criteria in Islam for choosing a name as well as advice against certain types of names. Following these lines of thinking, we can understand that assigning negative nicknames is without doubt a harmful behaviour.

Assigning negative nicknames is a form of bullying which we see mostly on the playground (and this itself gives us some idea of the immaturity of such behaviour). A nickname may highlight a defect in a person's character or appearance. However, whilst we may discipline children if they exhibit this behaviour, as adults we excuse ourselves ("It's okay for me to call her/him 'Fatty' or 'Shorty': she/he is my friend/sibling/partner") and the action may not be seen as destructive. We believe that this form of insulting people close to us is acceptable, even though we may rush to protect them when others do the same. It is as if we reserve our respect only for strangers. There exists, of course, a certain informality with family, but even this should not cross the boundary of personal sensitivities, especially when we know what those sore spots are. Family members and friends may be more likely to forgive us because of our closeness to them, but

this does not make the behaviour right or acceptable. There must be some harm being done if the other person needs to forgive us in the first place, so we should not assume that forgiveness negates the bad behaviour.

We may even assume that because we hurt them to their face and with a smile, it is an exclusive form of behaviour because they know this is our 'pet' name for them. It follows, then, that this can be made even worse when it is done behind the person's back and not to their face; this can extend the unhealthy behaviour to include backbiting and being two-faced. If we were to stop and consider the reasons we use negative nicknames, it may unveil some negative things about our own character, so we tend to see it as harmless (at least to ourselves) and expect the other person to accommodate our manner.

Alternatively, we may assign a seemingly flattering nickname to someone, but this is acceptable only if we mean it with sincerity and love rather than sarcastically or on the basis of some hidden agenda or jealousy. ("Let's give Genius over there the work to do." [He thinks he is so clever; let's see if he can manage this – that will teach him to act so clever./He makes me feel so insecure it will be nice to see him in a fix!]) It goes without saying that this is not affectionate at all.

We cannot ignore the impact this form of bullying can have on the confidence and therefore the lives of other people. We see from the Sunnah the very beautiful and sensitive nicknames the Prophet (ﷺ) ascribed to the people around him. These names give a distinctly different feeling than those mentioned above, no matter what we claim the intent to be.

Related emotions

Bad manners, contempt/disdain, condescension, considering oneself superior (in thinking such behaviour is acceptable although we would not accept it ourselves), arrogance, estrangement (when the victim becomes tired of the ongoing humiliation), punishment (for past or current wrongs to ourselves or someone we care about), enjoying

pointing out a person's flaws (as a result of our own insecurity about feeling inadequate), and being vindictive/spiteful.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"But I have always called them by that name – they know I don't mean it."* (Although I am ignoring the fact that the negative description is accurate and so publically points out a flaw.)
- *"I am older than them; it is a sign of my affection."* (Even though it is not nice, I am not accountable to them because I am older than them.) Again, this relates to the false belief that elders are not subject to the rules of Sharia.
- *"They are my children. I can call them whatever I want. Mothers never intentionally hurt their children!"* (I can ignore the fact that I cannot behave in this way and that it sets not only a bad example but may cause some estrangement between us.) No matter what our relation to someone is, abusing them is likely to make things much worse and perhaps harder to recover from.
- *"No need to be so touchy!"* (I can't admit it's wrong, so I have to justify it now and stick with my decision [so I will blame it on them instead of reflecting on myself and what it says about me].)
- *"He/she deserves it. He/she is a horrible person!"* This fails to acknowledge how this keeps tension alive for the victim.
- *"I know them and what they are really like. I could think of worse names and even then, that's being nice after all they have done to so-and-so!"*

Possible consequences

- Assigning a negative nickname often says more about the one who uses it than the one named. What it tells us is not positive!

- In some people's minds, when we do this we may bring to light some of our own shortcomings and provoke them to develop a similar nickname for us. It may be even worse than the one we call someone else.
- If the nickname relates to a wrong they have committed, it does not help the victim to move on nor does it allow the person a chance to reform, so we may contribute to the maintenance of a problem for other people.
- We may need that person's help one day. What will we have done to earn it?

Possible impact on faith

- It is something we are clearly warned against. When we behave in this way, we not only collect a sin for disobeying the Sunnah but also for insulting the one towards whom we have directed the harm.
- If the nickname relates to something wrong they have done, we are uncovering their faults. Doing so is a sin in Islam. Consider how we would feel if we were called by our worst habit and that was assigned to us as a nickname for everyone to hear. Our sins are covered, so let us cover each other's. (This, of course, does not apply to illegal or haram [forbidden according to Islamic law] activities, where someone in authority should be alerted to prevent harm to others.)

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٥٣)

﴿Tell My slaves that they should say what is best, for Satan sows discord among them. Verily, Satan is to man an avowed enemy.﴾
(*al-Isrâ' 17: 53*)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرِ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِاللِّقَابِ يَبْسُ إِلَيْكُمْ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُم الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ١١)

﴿O you who believe, let not some men ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them; and let not some women ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them. Do not speak ill of one another, and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. What a bad thing it is to be called an evildoer after having believed. And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the wrongdoers.﴾
(*al-Hujwât 49: 11*)

«Abu Jubayrah ibn aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk (رضي الله عنه) narrated: This verse was revealed about us, the Banu Salimah: ﴿...and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. What a bad thing it is to be called an evildoer after having believed...﴾

He (Abu Jubayrah) said: When Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) came to us, every one of us had two or three names.

He began to say: O so-and-so!

But they would say: Keep silent, O Messenger of Allah! He becomes angry by this name.

So this verse was revealed: ﴿...and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames...﴾.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Be aware about assigning negative nicknames

- The prohibition against assigning negative nicknames is clear. The fact that it is specifically mentioned as an 'evil' in the Qur'an means that is not a small matter, as we see from the damage it can do to those on the receiving end of this behaviour.

- Thinking of ourselves as better than others through ridiculing them does not mean assigning negative nicknames is a better quality in us, just because we do not like them anyway. It adds to our own bad behaviour.

Part 4: Backbiting

Description and manifestations

The term backbiting (*gheebah*) means talking behind someone's back, in their absence. It is mentioned in the following hadith reported by Abu Hurayrah:

«Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) asked: Do you know what backbiting is?

They said: Allah and His Messenger know best.

Then he said: Backbiting is when you speak about your brother in a way he would not like.

It was asked: What do you say if I find that my brother has the fault of which I have spoken?

He said: If he is as you say, you have backbitten him and if not, you have slandered him.» (Muslim)

Backbiting is classified as a major sin due to its destructive nature and the animosity it can cause between people. In an Islamic context, it comes in two forms: *hamz* (negative gesturing, winking, or facial expressions) and *lamz* (which is committed with the tongue). These topics include any negative comment, whether about a person or their property. We assume comments about inanimate objects, such as someone's house or car, concern the objects alone and we lie to ourselves that this is not a reflection of our thoughts regarding the owner. By these excuses we attempt to trivialise the behaviour. However, according to the definition of *gheebah*, it remains backbiting and may lead to an even greater problem if what we say is not true, as the hadith indicates.

We may also delude ourselves into thinking that whilst we do not ourselves backbite, we do no harm by listening. Often the reason we remain silent, however, is not because we disapprove (and in fact we may secretly agree), but that we would not voice an opinion ourselves. It may be that we simply do not like the person but want to appear to be good, so we remain silent when they are talked about whilst we secretly enjoy their humiliation in absentia. Alternatively, we may be too weak to act, so we sit silently in disapproval.

Related emotions

Anger, hatred, insecurity, boredom, isolation/estrangement (if the other person finds out what has been said), considering oneself superior to others, bad manners, and a desire to be popular (by 'amusing' others with our so-called witty observations of other people, although this is also a prohibited thing).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"They need to be brought down a peg or two." (They think they are better than everyone else [but I can't do it to their face – that would be rude]. I can air my views with others who will agree with me [and help me justify my view of them].)*
- *"They don't deserve any respect." (They have hurt me and I am angry, so I enjoy talking about them/hearing them talked about in this way.)*
- *"This isn't really backbiting. I am letting off steam." (Or that is what I tell myself.)*
- *"I am not backbiting, but..." / "You know I never like to talk about people behind their backs, but..." / "I shouldn't say this, but..."*
- *"I know we shouldn't backbite, but..." (See how pious I am? I know that Islam tells us this not allowed [so that gives me some leeway to excuse myself from its rules].)*

- *“It’s true, so it’s not backbiting.” (Although actually they make me feel inferior [so this way I can regain some face by criticising them].)*
- *“I am not backbiting.” (Although I have never liked them [but if I stay quiet I won’t be included and I can say, hand on heart, that I wasn’t the one talking about them].)*
- *“It’s okay to backbite so-and-so; she/he is always backbiting other people.” (So I am not doing anything wrong, am I?)*

When we talk about others in this way, it is usual for us to look around and/or whisper our comments, so our bodies also warn us that we are doing something we would not like to be made public. This is a sign of our wrongdoing from our own selves. Such body language also applies to other behaviours, which are mentioned under separate categories.

Possible consequences

- If people talk about others, there is no guarantee they do not talk about us.
 - People may start to avoid us as an expression of their disapproval, so we may end up lonely.
 - People do not trust those who backbite, so it means people will most likely stop trusting us out of fear that they will be the next target.
 - People may use the fact of our backbiting to expose us when it suits them. Remember, this sort of behaviour has no moral code. The behaviour and information can be used readily by another person in another place in any manner that suits them – with our name attached.
 - The ones listening are not likely to stand by us if things go public.
-

Possible impact on faith

- Whether we ourselves backbite or silently enjoy it, we gather for ourselves a sin which will be exposed to the person we spoke against on the Last Day. No matter how great we think the backbiting ‘loyalty circle’ may be, it is not safe from Allah. When we participate in this act, we show weakness in our belief that Allah can see us even if we cannot see Him and think because no one else can see us that Allah will not call us to account. We also deny at one level the fact that Allah is All-Seeing and thereby reject this attribute, which in turn weakens our faith.
- We will have the burden of two sins on the Last Day: one for the actual sin and the other for the debt to the other person for the sin we committed against them.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٥٣)

﴿Tell My slaves that they should say what is best, for Satan sows discord among them. Verily, Satan is to man an avowed enemy.﴾
(*al-Isrâ' 17: 53*)

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِتْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾ (سورة الحُجُرَات: ١٢)

﴿O you who believe, avoid suspicion in most cases, because in some cases suspicion is a sin. Do not spy on one another, and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would surely abhor it. So fear Allah; verily Allah is Accepting of repentance, Most Merciful.﴾ (*al-Hujurât 49: 12*)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نُهُوا عَنِ النَّجْوَى ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَيَتَنَجَّوْنَ بِالْإِنْسِرِ وَالْعُدُونِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ وَإِذَا جَاءُوكَ حَبَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يَحِبَّكَ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَيَقُولُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ حَسْبُكُمْ جَهَنَّمُ يَصَلُّونَهَا فَيَنْسُ الْعَصِيدُ﴾ (سورة المجادلة: ٨)

﴿Have you not seen those who were forbidden to converse [maliciously] in private, yet they go back to what they were forbidden to do, and converse privately in sin and transgression, and in disobedience to the Messenger? And when they come to you, they greet you in a manner other than that in which Allah greets you, and they say to one another: Why does Allah not punish us for what we say? Sufficient for them is hell, which they will enter – a hapless journey's end.﴾
(*al-Mujâdilah* 58: 8)

﴿وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ﴾ (سورة الحمزة: ١)

﴿Woe to every backbiter, fault-finder.﴾ (*al-Humazah* 104: 1)

Abu Hurayrah narrated: I heard Abul-Qâsim (the Prophet ﷺ) say:

«If someone slanders his slave (by accusing him of committing adultery) and the slave is free from what he says, he will be flogged on the Day of Resurrection unless the slave is really as he has described him.» (Bukhari)

In another narration:

«Jâbir ibn 'Abdullâh said that they were with the Prophet (ﷺ) when a very stinking gust of wind blew. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked his Companions if they knew what it was. He said: It is the (stinking) air of those people who backbite the believers.» (Bukhari)

Ibn 'Abbâs said:

«Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) passed by two graves and said: Both the inmates of the graves are being tortured, and they are not being punished for a major sin. One of them was not careful to clean himself

of urine drops (on his body) and the other used to go about with calumnies...» (Bukhari)

Be aware about backbiting

- It is clearly prohibited and considered a great sin, so we must think about the excuses we make to trivialise it and stop making them.
 - Do not assume that because we somehow have more power or authority than another person that it is okay to backbite them. The most vulnerable people in society have equals right to dignity, just as we would want them for ourselves or for those we wish to protect.
 - Offensive facial expressions and shared nods and smiles are included in backbiting. Just because they are not vocal does not mean they do not count.
 - There is no piety in backbiting someone who has done something haram; it is still backbiting.
 - Things will not end favourably for the one who backbites. (People have a habit of switching sides rather quickly.) If we talk about one person, it means we are likely to talk about our friends as well. It will not make us popular or necessarily turn people against the person we are talking about. In many cases, it will only turn them against us.
 - Be aware of the social context of backbiting; people often confine their backbiting to their close friends, as if this brings them closer (helping their friends to share in the wrong). If we have a good friend who says, “I don’t normally backbite so I shouldn’t say this, but...” we should say, “Please don’t say it then.” We should leave the room, change the topic, or clearly disassociate ourselves from the conversation. This way we show without doubt that it is an activity we are not interested in.
-

Part 5: Bad manners

Description and manifestations

Good manners carry weight across all cultures, religions, and communities. It is more likely that we will be a positive influence if we act in a well-mannered way. Even in times of heated debate, the one who gives a polite and dignified reaction and chooses his or her words carefully is noted more than the one who shouts and whose words are forgotten but their bad manners recalled.

The Islamic description of good manners ties in directly with the fulfilment of one's religion, as we see from this book itself. Positive changes in behaviour are a way of satisfying one's Islamic obligations; when we become better Muslims, we become better people. Imam al-Qurṭubī, the great scholar of Qur'anic interpretation, Hadith, and Sharia, defines manners as follows:

It is a person's way of dealing with others, and it is either to be praised or dispraised. Praised manners are generally achieved by being [good] with others [even] against yourself and following justice even it is against yourself. In particular, it includes forgiveness, patience, tolerance, generosity, compassion, leniency, and so on. On the contrary, dispraised manners include lying, deception, lack of mercy, and so on.¹

The Arabic words *khalq* (creation) and *khuluq* (manners) are inter-related and share the same root: (خ-ل-ق). They appear together in prayers from the Sunnah. This is exemplified by a supplication the Prophet (ﷺ) used to make:

«اللَّهُمَّ كَمَا أَحْسَنْتَ خَلْقِي فَحَسِّنْ خُلُقِي»

¹ "The Status of Good Manners in Islam," accessed June 25, 2019, <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/articles/175407/the-status-of-good-manners-in-islam>.

«*Allâhumma kamâ aḥsanta khalqī fa ḥassin khuluqī.*

(O Allah! Just as You have made my external features beautiful, make my character beautiful as well.)» (Ibn Ḥibbân; graded sound by al-Albâni)¹

We most clearly see the importance of good character in the examples of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Companions, through whose good manners and characters Islam spread.

Indeed, such is the impact of good manners that it is quite common for us to like a person for their good manners even though they may commit sins (as defined Islamically), and we may dislike the one who prays excessively but has bad manners. It must be noted that in the Islamic context, however, manners are connected with moral and correct Islamic conduct; wrong behaviour is not excused. In spite of this, our experience tells us that the impact of good manners results in positive rather than negative feelings towards a person. We trust the well-mannered person; we respect and accept their views, and are more likely to be influenced by them simply because of this quality, even if sometimes they are wrong.

Bad manners, of course, have quite the reverse effect. They can be excused by cultural differences, so it is important to consider how we define them. For this reason, we may define bad manners in the context of this book to include behaviours such as using foul language, interrupting people, calling names, offensive gestures, neglecting basic human courtesy, and others. Of course, they also include many of the behaviours listed as destructive behaviours.

¹ Hadiths that report that this du‘â’ should be recited specifically when looking in the mirror are weak. However, the du‘â’ itself (without connecting it to looking in the mirror) has been recorded in at least one sound hadith. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbXcRQnd80M> for a detailed explanation. (Editor)

Related emotions

Rejection, repulsion, irritation, anger, avoidance/estrangement, social isolation, discomfort/unease (in the company of bad-mannered people), and ignorance.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“What’s the point in praying five times a day if you don’t know how to speak to people?”*
- *“I cannot get past their bad manners, so I cannot listen to what they have to say.”*
- *“They are just so rude! I don’t want to become like that, so I am keeping away from them!”*
- *“They just don’t know how to behave.”*
- *“I don’t care if you know the Qur’an by heart/pray/go to all those study circles. I can’t value your Islamic qualities if that’s how you treat people.”*
- *“You have to treat these people badly – they don’t understand any other language!” (It’s my defence against the fear I feel of being harmed.)*
- *“If you are nice to people, you get taken for a fool or they expect more from you.” (So it’s better for me to protect myself from that by being offensive and controlling.)*

Possible consequences

- Unlike many of these destructive behaviours, bad manners can cut across all aspects of our lives and are not always limited to secret circles and close friends; as such, they may show everyone clearly who we really are.
- Bad manners do not make us popular; no one likes bad conduct.
- People tend to not listen to people with bad manners, even if what they say makes sense.

- People do not like to be associated with people with bad manners, so it can result in social isolation.
- We may feel we are in control of people when we use bad manners, but they may not respect us and will always look for a way to keep a safe distance from us. When people like and respect us, they are more likely to do what we want from them than if they are afraid of us.

Possible impact on faith

- The fact that good manners are related to completing one's faith suggests that having bad manners is an accurate reflection of the quality of our faith and the representation we give to others about us as Muslims.
- Given the emphasis on good manners which run through all aspects of our faith, if we have bad manners we also damage the image of Islam. People who do not know the truth about Islam will judge it through our behaviour.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً قَالُوا أَنْتُمْ خَالِفُوا قَوْلَ اللَّهِ قَالَ وَعُدُّ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٦٧)

﴿And [remember] when Moosâ said to his people: Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow. They said: Are you mocking us? He said: Allah forbid that I should be so ignorant!﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 67)

﴿وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِحَيْتَةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٨٦)

﴿When you are given a greeting, respond with a better greeting, or [at least] with the like thereof. Verily, Allah takes careful account of all things.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 86)

﴿وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ﴾ ﴿١٩﴾

(سورة لقمان: ١٩)

﴿Be moderate in your gait and lower your voice; verily the most hideous of sounds is the voice [braying] of the donkey.﴾ (Luqman 31: 19)

﴿وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ

مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ ﴿٤٦﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٤٦)

﴿Do not dispute with the People of the Book except in the most courteous manner, unless it be with those of them who transgress [against you]. And say: We believe in that which has been sent down to us, and in that which was sent down to you, for our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit [as Muslims].﴾ (al-'Ankaboot 29: 46)

﴿فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ﴿٩﴾ وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ﴿١٠﴾﴾ (سورة الضحى: ٩-١٠)

﴿So as for the orphan, do not mistreat him; and as for the beggar, do not speak harshly to him.﴾ (al-Duha 93: 9-10)

Abu Shurayh al-Khuzâ'i (رضي الله عنه) said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be good to his neighbour; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honour his guest; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should say what is good or remain silent.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah said that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«The one whose neighbour is not safe from his harm will not enter paradise.» (Muslim)

Abu Moosâ said that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent him and Mu'âdh to Yemen and told them:

«Be easy with the people and do not be difficult with them, and give them glad tidings and do not repel them, and obey each other and do not dispute with one another.» (Muslim)

‘Ā’ishah said that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«O ‘Ā’ishah, indeed Allah is kind and He loves kindness, and confers upon kindness what He does not confer upon harshness, and does not confer upon anything else other than it.» (Muslim)

An-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān said:

«I asked Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) about virtue and vice.

He said: Virtue is a kind nature and vice is what festers in your heart and what you detest anyone to know.» (Muslim)

«‘Ā’ishah said that a man asked the Prophet (ﷺ) for permission (for something) and he (the Prophet [ﷺ]) remarked that he was a wicked man of his tribe. But when he came in, the Prophet (ﷺ) met him with an open heart.

She asked him: How is it that you first described him as wicked but then met him very cordially?

He said: Allah does not like indecent speech and the indecent man.» (Bukhari, Aḥmad, and Abu Dāwūd)

Ibn Abbās reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Adopting good character, good habits, and moderation (in spending) is one portion of the twenty-five portions of prophethood.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded reliable by al-Albāni)¹

Abu Hurayrah also related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Modesty is part of faith and the faithful will go to paradise. And rudeness is part of callous nature and callousness will go to hell.» (Muslim, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, and al-Ḥākim)

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«A Muslim is the one who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a *muhājir* (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all that Allah has forbidden.» (Bukhari)

¹ Another narration says it is «one of the seventy portions of prophethood».

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Amr also said:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) was neither obscene nor did he use bad language or evil words to make people laugh. He used to say: The best among you are those who have the best manners and characters.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

‘Ā’ishah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Jibreel (the angel, Gabriel) continued to recommend to me to treat neighbours kindly and politely, so much so that I thought he would order me to take them as my heirs.» (Bukhari)

Abu Shurayh reported:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: By Allah, he does not believe!

Someone asked: Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: That person whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil.» (Bukhari)

There are also some du‘â’s that the Prophet (ﷺ) advised us to recite. The fact that he sought refuge against bad manners underlines the significance of avoiding them.

Ziyâd ibn ‘Ilâqah (رضي الله عنه) reported:

«My uncle Qubah ibn Mâlik said that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate:

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ مُنْكَرَاتِ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَالْأَعْمَالِ وَالْأَهْوَاءِ»

Allâhumma inni a‘oodhu bikâ min munkarât il-akhlâqi, wal-a‘mâli, wal-ahwâ’.

(O Allah! I seek refuge in You from undesirable manners, deeds, and aspirations.)» (at-Tirmidhi; he graded it ‘reliable but odd’)

Abu Umâmah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«I am the leader of a house in paradise. I guarantee a house in paradise for one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee

a house in the middle of paradise for one who abandons lying, even if he is joking; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of paradise for one who has good manners.» (Abu Dāwood; graded reliable by al-Albāni and Ibn Bāz)

Be aware about bad manners

- With all his excellent skills of debate, Prophet Moosā (*'alayhi as-salām* – peace be upon him) sought refuge from ignorant people, so even the best people fear ignorance. Do not use other people's ignorance as an excuse to display bad manners.
- Bad manners will not make people like us; in fact, they will feel quite the opposite, no matter what their own behaviour is.
- Demonstrating good manners is the best way to diffuse tensions, negativity, and ill-feeling.
- Good manners apply to everyone. They are not reserved only for other well-mannered people or for those we love.
- Maintaining good manners prevents us from harming others, and in this way we ourselves remain unharmed by our actions. In general, people do not usually behave badly towards those who behave well, as there is no reason to do so.
- Good manners do not apply only to other people, excluding ourselves.
- We should not believe that only children should have good manners.
- Displaying good manners/good character is our way to get closer to the Creator (ﷻ) and the best of His creation (ﷺ).
- The bad manners of certain people who talk about religion put people off Islam. Think about this when you engage in religious debate.

Part 6: Behaving arrogantly

Description and manifestations

The distinction between pride and arrogance (described in the Qur'an as *fakhar* and *takabbur*, respectively) is very fine. In many instances, the words are interchangeable (especially given the negative side of pride, where one may be happy at the misfortune of others successfully caused by their machinations, or where one considers himself/herself superior to others). Indeed, we can find two definitions that exemplify this overlap in the definitions of pride/arrogance in the hadiths below.

About pride: 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ood narrated:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Whoever has as much as the weight of an atom of pride in his heart will not be admitted into paradise.

A man said: People like to dress well and wear fine shoes.

He said: Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty; pride is the rejection of rights and the oppression of people.» (Muslim)

About arrogance: 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said (when asked what arrogance is):

«It is to act foolishly about the truth (which means to reject it) and to despise other people.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albāni)

This may be an issue of translation rather than an actual lack of distinction in meaning. However, the fact that they can be interpreted as interchangeable means we might consider them somewhat jointly, whilst acknowledging possible differences.

Furthermore, we find that in various Qur'anic interpretations and translations, the words used are the same as haughty/audacious. In the verses and hadiths chosen below, I have followed this variation and used examples related to arrogance, pride, haughtiness, or audaciousness as long as they fit into this shared definition. It should

be noted that the Qur'anic Arabic meanings are very specific and this generalisation of the terms is due to the problems of translation, not a lack of clarity in the Arabic definitions. Of course, in English the meaning is less specific and is generally based on ideas of superiority, so this definition is also included in the verses and hadiths chosen below.

Based on the above, arrogance comes in many forms and relates to a number of emotions associated with it. It is, in essence, when we feel superior in ourselves and in our actions, especially when the outcome favours us or our view. In this instance, arrogance is when we reject what is obvious for the sake of our own ego; when we stand by our viewpoint no matter how illogical it is or what challenges we face that question us; and/or when we show no regret when we oppress other people by our views and behaviours and consider their needs and desires as trivial or dismiss them completely. It is also when we feel we are not accountable for our actions, so therefore we show no respect to authority or any challenge to our own power over others and consider them to be a minimal threat.

Arrogance is not always directed at others, however. It may cause internal destruction when we are, for example, too proud to try to understand someone else because we fear we will then have to review our own wrongdoings; we therefore reject their behaviour and them. At some level we reject either our own or other people's humanity and rights, as defined in the hadith above. This behaviour can lead to other qualities such as prejudice and condescension of others due to their wealth, families, colour, education, connections, and so on. All these involve some view of oneself as the better person without a logical, moral, or justifiable reason.

In addition to these behaviours, our body also holds and exhibits arrogance through our facial expressions or the way we walk or gesture. Certain expressions such as smirking, sneering, or 'walking with our noses in the air' are seen as bodily manifestations of pride.

It is a significantly more complicated behaviour to control due to the extensive impact it can have not only on individuals but cultures, communities, and even countries. It is, therefore, clear why it is considered destructive.

Related emotions

Contempt, disdain, condescension, considering oneself superior/ others inferior, insecurity (as a defence against feeling inferior to others), jealousy, prejudice, and pride.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“The truth may be clear but I do not accept it.” (I will not review/reconsider my thoughts because I do not want to be wrong/it is too much effort [and has serious implications which I do not want to consider].)*
 - *“I know it is your right, but...” (I don’t care. [You must do what is easy/convenient for me.])*
 - *“I simply have higher standards than you.”*
 - *“Oh, this is on its last legs but don’t throw it out – let me give it to charity.” (See how big-hearted I am [although it is not really useable]? I am so generous, even though I would never accept such a thing in that condition. They should be grateful: they are poor; after all, and not used to the luxury that I live in.)*
 - *“Look at this – how cheap is that?”/“I only use imported goods.”/“If it is not a name brand then I don’t want it.”*
 - *“Finally, I have broken them up.” (I am so clever; they will never know it was me. This is such a success for me and my intelligence!)*
 - *“These people are so uncultured.” (Actually, I think I am better than them [but this word sounds less offensive].)*
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- *“I am far too intelligent to talk to you.” (You are so uneducated/so poor/so unclean. [I would hate for people to see I know you/such people.])*
 - *“But I pray and fast nawâfil – so this book/description doesn’t apply to me. I can say with a clear conscience that I am on the right path.”* Overconfidence can lead to arrogance, so even defining oneself as very pious is included in it.

Possible consequences

- We may be considered a dangerous person, as arrogance is difficult to rein in when we lose control of it. We may think we have power, but what we actually have is disdain and isolation. Eventually, the power base we build will hold only ourselves.
- Arrogant people eventually fall. We become so comfortable in our apparent successes that we do not see the danger to ourselves until it is too late. In the state of pride/arrogance, we may not accept views other than our own; warnings from others mean nothing. This begins by disintegration from within and whilst we may continue to be arrogant externally, we end up unable to maintain it. At this point, we are likely to find ourselves alone, without support or sympathy.

Possible impact on faith

It will remove us from numerous sources of good, because the destructive thoughts that come with this tend to blind us to any warnings against our behaviour. From the Qur’an, we learn about the destruction caused by arrogance in many of the individuals and tribes to whom Islam was revealed but who, out of their arrogance, did not fear Allah’s warnings. If we behave as they did, we are no different from them and we may be subject to the same fate. Such is the danger of this behaviour that even in the afterlife, this quality can prevent us from entering paradise, as the hadiths in the introduction

to this section and below tell us. Therefore, it may destroy our life not only in this world but also in the hereafter.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٣٤)

﴿And [remember] when We said to the angels: Prostrate before Ādam, and they [all] prostrated except Iblees; he refused and was arrogant; he was one of the disbelievers.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 34)

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ ۗ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالسَّمَسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٥٨)

﴿Have you not heard of the one who argued with Ibrāheem about his Lord, as Allah had granted him kingship? Ibrāheem said: My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death. He said: I give life and cause death. Ibrāheem said: But it is Allah Who brings the sun from the east; so bring it from the west [if you can]. Thus the one who disbelieved was dumbfounded. Allah does not guide people who are given to wrongdoing.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 258)

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ ۗ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٦٧)

﴿O you who believe! Give of the good things which you have earned, and of what We have produced for you from the earth, and do not select the inferior things to give away, when you yourselves would

not accept them unless you were to overlook them. And know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.} (al-Baqarah 2: 267)

﴿ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا لِمَنْ ءَامَنَ مِنْهُمْ أَنْتَعَمُونَ أَنْ صَلَحُوا مِنْ رَّبِّهِ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾
 قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ
 وَعَكَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يُصَلِّحْ أَقْنَبْنَا بِمَا نَعِدْنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 ﴿٧٧﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَنَاحِمٍ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ
 لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رَسُولَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ النَّصِيحَ ﴿٧٩﴾ ﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ٧٥-٧٩)

¶The chieftains of his people who were arrogant said to those who were regarded as weak, to those among them who believed: Do you really know that Şâlih has been sent by his Lord? They said: We do indeed believe in the message with which he has been sent. Those who were arrogant said: As for us, we disbelieve in that in which you believe. Then they hamstrung the she-camel, and insolently transgressed the command of their Lord, saying: O Şâlih, bring us that with which you are threatening us, if you are indeed one of the Messengers [of Allah]! So an earthquake overtook them, and morning found them lying lifeless in their homes. So he left them, saying: O my people, I did indeed convey to you the message of my Lord. I gave you sincere advice, but you do not like sincere advisers.} (al-A'raf 7: 75-79)

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّمَهُ الْغُيُوبِ
 ﴿٧٨﴾ الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ
 وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ
 ﴿٧٩﴾ ﴾ (سورة التوبة: ٧٨-٧٩)

Do they not realise that Allah knows what they conceal and what they talk about in secret, and that Allah is Knower of the unseen? It is those hypocrites who find fault with those believers who give freely in charity and with those who give according to their means, and they ridicule them. Allah will cause their ridicule to rebound on them and theirs will be a painful punishment. ﴿ (at-Tawbah 9: 78-79)

﴿ **إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌُ وَحِدٌ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرَةٌ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا جَرَمَ أَنْ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمَ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا أَسْطِيزُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة**

النحل: ٢٢-٢٤)

Your God is One God. As for those who do not believe in the hereafter, their hearts refuse to know, and they are arrogant. Undoubtedly Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose. Verily, He does not love the arrogant. When they are asked: What has your Lord sent down? They say: Tales of the ancients. ﴿ (an-Nahl 16: 22-24)

﴿ **فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ فليس مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ ﴾ (سورة**

النحل: ٢٩)

So enter the gates of hell, to abide therein forever. Wretched indeed is the abode of the arrogant! ﴿ (an-Nahl 16: 29)

﴿ **هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ أَوْ بَأْسٌ رَبِّكَ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة النحل: ٣٣-٣٤)**

What are they [the disbelievers] waiting for, but for the angels to come to them, or for the decree of your Lord to come to pass? Likewise did those who came before them. It is not Allah Who wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves. The evil consequences of their deeds overtook them, and the very thing [punishment] they used to ridicule overwhelmed them. ﴿ (an-Nahl 16: 33-34)

﴿وَأَسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا مُجْتَوِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَكْفُرُوا بِالْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ إِنَّمَا لَنَا لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾﴾ (سورة القصص: ٣٩)

﴿He and his troops behaved arrogantly in the land without justification, and thought that they would not be brought back to Us.﴾ (al-Qasas 28: 39)

﴿وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿١٨﴾﴾ (سورة لقمان: ١٨)

﴿Do not turn your face away from people [in contempt], and do not walk on the earth with insolence. Verily, Allah does not love anyone who is conceited and boastful.﴾ (Luqman 31: 18)

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ قُلْ إِنْ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ بِالَّتِي تُفَرِّقُكُمْ عِنْدَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَن ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ الضَّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَهُمْ فِي الْعُرْفَةِ ءَامِنُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي ءَايَاتِنَا مُعْجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُخْضَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾﴾ (سورة سبأ: ٣٤-٣٨)

﴿We never sent any warner to a city but its affluent ones said: Verily, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent. They said: We are more abundant in wealth and children, and we are not going to be punished. Say: Verily, my Lord grants abundant provision to whomever He wills, or gives it in scant measure, but most people do not know. It is not your wealth or your children that bring you nearer to Us; but those who believe and do righteous deeds – it is they who will have a multiple reward for their deeds, and they will dwell secure in the high places in paradise. But those who strive against Our revelations, seeking to discredit them, it is they who will be delivered up for punishment.﴾ (Saba' 34: 34-38)

﴿... فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤٢﴾ اسْتَكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ ۚ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا ۖ وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾﴾ (سورة فاطر: ٤٢-٤٣)

﴿...But when a warner did come to them, it only increased them in aversion, behaving arrogantly in the land and plotting evil, but the plotting of evil affects none but its authors. Are they waiting for anything other than the fate of the earlier peoples? No change will you find in the way of Allah, and no alteration will you find in the way of Allah.﴾ (Fâtir 35: 42-43)

﴿أَفَهَذَا الْحَدِيثَ أَنْتُمْ مُدْهِئُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنْكُمْ تَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾﴾ (سورة الواقعة: ٨١-٨٤)

﴿Do you then take this discourse [the Qur'an] lightly, and instead of thanking Allah for the bestowal [of the Qur'an], you reject it? Then why do you not [intervene], when the soul [of the dying person] reaches the throat, whilst you are looking on?﴾ (al-Wâqi'ah 56: 81-84)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«You should not say: Feed your lord (*rabbaka*), help your lord in performing ablution, or give water to your lord, but you should say: my master (*sayyidi*) (that is, feed your master instead of lord) (or) my guardian (*mawlây*), and one should not say: my slave ('*abdi*) or my slave girl (*amati*), but he should say: my lad (*fatâya*), my lass (*fatâti*), and my boy (*ghulâmi*).» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«O Muslim women! None of you should look down on the gift sent by her neighbour, even if it were the trotters of a sheep (fleshless part of the legs).» (Bukhari)

In another narration from Abu Hurayrah, it was related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«I shall accept an invitation even if I were invited to a meal of a sheep's trotter, and I shall accept a gift even if it were an arm or a trotter of a sheep.» (Bukhari)

Ḥārithah ibn Wahb al-Khuzā'i narrated that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«May I tell you of the people of paradise? Every weak and poor obscure person whom the people look down upon but if he takes an oath to do something, his oath is fulfilled by Allah. And may I inform you of the people of the hellfire? They are all those violent, arrogant, and stubborn people.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about behaving arrogantly

- Arrogance will not give us any power over life and death. No matter who we are, we have limits and there is always something we cannot achieve. Our arrogance may make us too blind to see this, but that does not mean others don't.
- Behaving arrogantly means that in reality it is us, not the other person, who is not good enough.
- Be aware of body language and expressions when talking to others, as this is another 'body warning' to us: does our body behave arrogantly even though we deny it to ourselves?
- Giving charity can also be an arrogant act if we give something to someone that we feel is not good enough for us. If it is not good enough for us, it is not good enough to give to someone more vulnerable and needier than us. Consider how you would feel if you received the old thing you are about to give, then decide if it is for charity or for the dustbin.
- So often, the justification for our arrogance is rooted in traditional beliefs or cultural behaviours that have no actual value or recommendation in an Islamic context. Do not use culture, however advanced/modern it may seem, to consider

that it is acceptable to be arrogant. Any advances are due to Allah's mercy, not our abilities.

- The company of arrogant people is incomparable to anything we might imagine in this worldly life. Destroying our present and being punished for it in the hereafter is not a triumph by any means. It demonstrates how arrogance can undermine our own logic, thus not even benefitting ourselves.
- Being ungrateful for things, even if they are not designer goods or expensive, is truly arrogant. When we behave so, we may cut our own rizq. We should be gracious when we are given anything; for us it may be nothing, but for the giver it may mean a lot just to give, no matter what it is.
- Arrogance will not earn us paradise either in this world or the next – no matter what we think of ourselves.

Part 7: Being lazy

Description and manifestations

Laziness in this sense is not as a result of physical or mental tiredness. It is in fact an active process of choosing not to do those things which are incumbent upon us – even more so, those things which are not urgent but may cause inconvenience or disruption to our lives or those of other people if we do not do them. (Of course, we may not be present to see the effects of our laziness on others, so it is easy to think it only affects us. It does not.) We are surrounded by so many easier alternatives to the 'hard lives' we experience that we filter out things according to our lethargic state and use the ease we would like as opposed to the ease we have as our benchmark. This is more so the case when we know we are the only ones who can do the job (whatever it may be). We can therefore exploit our position as we know that no matter how slowly we carry out our tasks, we cannot be

replaced. We do not consider that similarly, the time we have wasted cannot be replaced, nor can the negative impact our laziness has on the lives of other people be corrected. This behaviour has a tendency to make us very self-centred and selfish.

Laziness manifests itself in different ways. For example, we cannot be bothered to see friends, go to the shops, search for a job, reply to phone messages or e-mails, get up early and be on time for our daily routine to be completed... the list goes on. The justification is, of course, that "Someone else will do it"/"It will eventually get done", without any acknowledgement of the impact this attitude may have on the daily functioning of both our own lives and the lives of other people. We will likely not be around to see the negative effects of letting people down; if we are asked to defend our laziness the answer is simple: "Why don't **you** do it instead of telling **me**?" When we receive such a response from others or make it on behalf of ourselves, it can make others lazier and, in turn, less motivated.

It is our excuse of choice. We may even do our best to pathologise it: "It is low motivation/a psychological problem."/"I haven't been taking my vitamins." We excuse ourselves and each other with no evidence of ill health at all (which is an exception to the definition – illness is not a choice). We are kind to laziness and call it tiredness instead, even though it prevents us from doing so many important things, and especially when we use it as an excuse to not fulfil our obligations to Allah and to each other. We do not consider the impact of the disappointment that our laziness may cause and the loss of time which we will never recover. This is something we will fully understand only when our time has run out. If we consider what we must account for on the Last Day and how we will be desperate for any minute good deed, then we must be aware of using our time to do any amount of good in preparation for the day when time will come to an end and our regret will be futile.

Related emotions

Inconsiderateness, dismissiveness (of things that may be important to others), frustration, annoyance and inconvenience (caused to others when we are lazy in our duties), wasting time (our own and that of other people), a general lack of motivation (when it becomes a habit/regular excuse), and disappointment (at being let down by the lazy person).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I am tired." (I just don't feel like doing it.)*
- *"I don't have time." (I have to go home and watch TV.)*
- *"Hee hee hee...sorry, I was just being lazy." (By being honest, I can clear myself of the consequences of my laziness.)* Although honesty about our laziness is not necessarily a problem, this is dependent on the action that was not fulfilled and how often we repeat it.
- *"Hmm... funny how you always find time for other people but not for me." This is person-specific laziness that we tend to reserve for our families but not for others.*
- *Questions: "Why must I always clean up after you? Don't you think I have a life? Is this the reason for my existence?"*
Answer: "Because I know you will do it." (I don't mind listening to you complain as long as I can stay lazy! We're friends, aren't we? Friends do things for each other; I am not acknowledging that I do nothing for you.)
- *"It's not really being lazy – my husband/wife won't mind doing it for me." (To the point where it becomes their job.)*
- *"If you really loved me, you would help me out./I'll be your best friend!/As the elder one could you...?" (I have no intention of doing this job, but I will finagle my way into getting someone else to do it.)* This is fun when it is meant in a light way,

between people who are close. However, when it becomes an informal obligation upon the other, irrespective of their own condition, it is simply an injustice against them.

Possible consequences

- We become unpleasant to be around.
- People get tired of us letting them down, so they will start to exclude us from their plans.
- We will not be considered reliable and, as laziness causes us to fail to meet or reach our agreements, opportunities may cease to come our way.
- Our laziness does affect other people since they will often have to deal with the consequences. So they will start to disconnect their lives from ours to avoid the fallout from our laziness. We may find that our friends and family start to go elsewhere and their closeness to us diminishes, which causes further rifts in our relationships.

Possible impact on faith

- We may delay obligatory acts, such as praying late or not at all. We may neglect sunnah and nawâfil acts (which on the Last Day will be necessary to cover any half-done obligatory acts). This will create a distance between us and Allah (ﷻ).
 - We are likely to fail in our familial and societal obligations. This, in turn, is likely to cause problems for which we will be held accountable by Allah.
 - The money we earn may lose its blessings if we take shortcuts and accept payment for work we have not performed. For instance, if we work in the payroll department but are lazy in completing our tasks, employees do not get paid on time. This is an accepted feature in many Muslim communities; no concern at all is shown regarding the problems this causes for
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employees, yet they are expected to keep working. This is an example of the direct impact of laziness on the lives of others.

- According to authentic hadiths, one of the regrets the people of paradise will have is that they did not spend more time worshipping and remembering Allah while on earth. If any action we do for Allah is considered a form of worship, then laziness is indeed a grave mistake and will be a source of regret.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ. وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَالِيٍّ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَارِهُِونَ ﴾ (سورة

التوبة: ٥٤)

﴿Nothing prevents their spending from being accepted from them but that they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, they only come to prayer half-heartedly and they only spend reluctantly.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 54)

Anas ibn Mâlik said that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to invoke Allah:

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ، وَالْكَسَلِ، وَالْجُبْنِ، وَالْهَرَمِ، وَالْبُخْلِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ، وَمِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ»

«Allâhumma inni a'oodhu bika minal-'ajzi wal-kasali, wal-jubni wal-harami wal-bukhli, wa a'oodhu bika min 'adhâbil-qabri, wa min fitnatil-mahyâ wal-mamât.

(O Allah, I seek refuge in You from incapacity and laziness, from cowardliness and senility and miserliness, and I seek refuge in You from the torture of the grave and from the trials of life and death.)»

(Muslim)

Anas ibn Mâlik also related the following supplication made frequently by the Prophet (ﷺ):

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْهَمِّ وَالْحَزَنِ، وَالْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ، وَالْبُخْلِ وَالْجُبْنِ، وَصَلَعِ الدِّينِ وَغَلَبَةِ الرِّجَالِ»

«Allâhumma inni a'oodhu bika min al-hammi wal-ḥazani, wal-'ajzi wal-kasali, wal-bukhli wal-jubni, wa ḍala' id-dayni wa ghalabatir-rijâl.

(O Allah! I seek refuge in You from anxiety and grief, from inability and sloth, from niggardliness and cowardice, and from the burden of debt and the domination of men.)» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Be aware about being lazy

- Since our daily prayers form the core of our Islam, laziness in this area causes degeneration in the rest of our lives. We may even reflect and see how our attitude to prayer can be representative of our general personality: healthy or otherwise.
- Laziness in doing good deeds in general means we are focused only on the gains in this life, on ourselves, and on those we care about (and sometimes not even them). If we truly understood the reward of active goodness, we would not waste any time being lazy but do as the Qur'an tells us:

﴿... فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٤٨)

﴿...So hasten to do good deeds...﴾ (*al-Mâ'idah* 5: 48)

We get only one life; don't waste it. Regret is difficult enough to live with in this life, but it will be torturous to face it in the next.

- Laziness was considered so significant that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) sought refuge against it. This means it is no small matter.

- Think of how desperate we will feel on the Last Day when we need the reward of good deeds and realise the time we wasted being lazy instead.

Part 8: Being materialistic/ greedy for possessions

Description and manifestations

Desire for materialistic possessions is a feature of many cultures. No matter how rich or poor people are, they often harbour a secret (or not so secret) desire to seek material gain. We covet and want more, even when we have more than enough. It is arguably a subtle form of addiction, as is illustrated in the wording of the following Qur'anic verse:

﴿الْهَمُّ التَّكَاثُرُ﴾ ﴿١﴾ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ﴿٢﴾ (سورة التكاثر: ١-٢)

«Competition for worldly gain distracts you until you come to your graves.» (*at-Takâthur* 102: 1-2)

The following hadith also highlights this. Ibn 'Abbâs heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«If the son of Âdam (that is, the human being) had two valleys of money, he would wish for a third, for nothing can fill the belly of the son of Âdam except dust, and Allah forgives the one who (repents to him and) begs for His pardon.» (Bukhari)

Of course, it is natural to want material goods by which to live comfortably. However, we find that for some people the basics do not feel like they are enough to satiate the desire. Even though it may be enough in reality, we want more and more. If what we have is enough for ourselves, we begin to compare it to what others have – then we want that thing as well. It can indeed become a craze.

Greed for possessions, as with all behaviours, comes in a range of manifestations such as a desire for more clothes, more shoes, more

cars, faster cars, bigger cars, better houses, better areas for our houses, more money, more holidays, more food, better phones, faster phones, the latest games... the list never ends when we focus on all we want. In this form, greed is not just about wanting more, but it is also often accompanied by not wanting others to have as much or trying to prevent others from having the same. The underlying greed is to be the best at everything: an impossible dream yet one that is chased the world over. We totally forget that we must account on the Last Day for everything we have. At that time, only the good we competed in – not material possessions – will count.

Related emotions

Greed, jealousy, dissatisfaction, discontentment and ingratitude (and thus a lack of value of what one already has), unhealthy competitiveness (as opposed to healthy: see the verse mentioned earlier about racing to do good), condescension, superiority, and arrogance (at what one has as compared to others).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“I must have it!” (I have no need for it, nor any reason for having it to keep for later, but I can’t get it out of my mind.)*
- *“One is good but two would be better... hee hee hee, I am wicked.” (This admission means I can trivialise this waste.)*
- *“I will get two now as I may not find them again when I need them.” (So my reason/excuse for collecting things is that I am planning ahead.)*
- *“She/he has one.” (She/he doesn’t deserve it any more than I do. [I don’t want to be seen as less able to afford things as compared to her/him.])*
- *“But this is the latest one!” (The other one isn’t good quality and will die soon anyhow. [I must be seen discarding the older models so that I show how up-to-date I am with technology,*

even though it is for my child who is only twelve and does not need it other than for calling school friends or getting a lift home from me.]

- *“If I don’t get one, they will think they are better than me.” (I couldn’t bear to be thought of as less than them – I know Allah knows who is best, but... you know what I mean. [Their view is more important than what Allah thinks of me.]*
 - *“Just think what I could do if we had even more money.” (It may be that I could invest and make more [with which I could do a lot of good].) It cannot be denied that many people do great things for others with their money, but there is always a limit. How much of what we seek to increase in our wealth actually goes to good causes and how much of it goes towards personal luxury?*
 - *“I worked hard to have all this. It is up to me to do what I want with it.” (So don’t try to make me feel guilty.)*
 - *“Good on you! You made it – do what you like with it.” (I wish I could live that way. [Let me live vicariously through your money and so support you to waste it instead.]* We often do not advise others wisely on how to do good with their money because we are too busy wishing we had the same money to live a luxury lifestyle.
 - *“It’s a value judgement.” (So don’t be judgemental.)* This is fine, but it also means we do not advise our friends to do good things with their wealth in an Islamic light, which would lead to true wealth in this world and the next. Wealth is, after all, a loan from Allah and not really ours; we see so often that the more we give, the more we get in return, so the giving is not wasted when done for the sake of Allah. This may not mean a gain in material wealth but a gain in the hereafter, which will be much more substantial. This, of course, does not mean to ask the wealthy person to give us their money instead!
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- *“It’s terrible to chase possessions so much. I totally agree. Yes, yes – materialistic people are terrible, aren’t they?” (I won’t acknowledge that I myself have several houses and a business on the side of my main job as a highly paid such-and-such...)*

Possible consequences

- We will rarely feel content in life. This is because when we are greedy for material things there will always be something we feel we are lacking. No matter what we have, we will not feel satisfied.
- Money has a limited value. In therapy, we often see people who have lost everything and their regret is that they did not value the wealth bestowed upon them because they assumed it was endless.
- If we keep wanting and spending towards the aim of materialistic acquisition, at some point our money will run out and so will our dreams, which may rely on material gain to come true.
- We risk losing sight of the truly valuable things in life: our religion, our family, halal income, and friends.
- We see on a daily basis the effect of the responsibility of wealth and possessions and how it can weigh as a heavy burden on those who possess it; it is not as easy as we think. We only want more because we do not see the responsibility and implications of it either in this world or the next.

Possible impact on faith

- Our possessions – as well as all that we have collected – are a loan from Allah and we will need to account for how they were earned, used, and spent. Our rizq is pre-written, but we may try to seek more than what is preordained for us. This may leave us feeling disappointed that Allah did not give us
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more. This inherently implies negative things regarding the wisdom, generosity, and justice of Allah and questions His decisions for us.

- Gathering material possessions is the opposite of the way of all the prophets (peace be upon them), who – even when they had money – did great things with it and collected it only to give it away. Collecting possessions for ourselves is not the same. We can see similar examples of how the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) had very few belongings; when we are materialistic, we fail to follow the way of the best of Muslims.
- Do not consider wealth or children as a reason to boast to others who have less or none; they are also a trial for us. Many of the prophets were poor and their wives had no children, so do not consider yourself better than these ‘chosen’ people. It is all from Allah and none of it is from ourselves, much as we like to think the opposite.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ زَيْنٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢١٢)

﴿The life of this world is made to appear fair-seeming to those who disbelieve, and they scoff at those who believe. But those who fear Allah will be above them on the Day of Resurrection, for Allah bestows His abundance without measure on whomever He will.﴾

(*al-Baqarah* 2: 212)

﴿ زَيْنٌ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ
الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۗ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَقَابِ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٤)

Fair-seeming to men is the love of pleasures, such as women and sons, heaped-up hoards of gold and silver, fine horses, and livestock and well-tilled land. These are the enjoyments of the life of this world; but with Allah is the best place to return to. ﴿ (Al 'Imrân 3: 14)

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾ ﴿ (سورة آل عمران: ١١٦)

As for those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children will avail them at all against Allah; it is they who will be inhabitants of the fire, abiding therein forever. ﴿ (Al 'Imrân 3: 116)

﴿وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ وَاللَّذَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ﴾ ﴿ (سورة الأنعام: ٣٢)

The life of this world is nothing but play and a distraction; but indeed the life of the hereafter is better for those who fear Allah. Will you not then understand? ﴿ (al-An'am 6: 32)

﴿وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَانِهِمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ﴾ ﴿ (سورة الأعراف: ٤٨)

The people on the heights will call out to men whom they will recognise by their marks: Of what benefit to you were your great numbers and wealth and your scornful pride? ﴿ (al-A'raf 7: 48)

﴿كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا فَاسْتَمْتَعُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا أُولَئِكَ حِطَّتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ﴾ ﴿ (سورة التوبة: ٦٩)

[O hypocrites, you are] like those who came before you, who were more powerful than you and more abundant in wealth and children. They enjoyed their share [of worldly pleasures], and you have been enjoying your share just as those who came before you enjoyed their

share; and you have been indulging in idle talk just as they did. Such are the ones whose deeds will come to nothing in this world and in the hereafter; such are the ones who are the losers. ﴿at-Tawbah 9: 69﴾

﴿لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (سورة الحجر: ٨٨)

﴿Do not look longingly at the good things We have given some among them to enjoy, nor grieve over them, but lower your wing [in humility and gentleness] to the believers. ﴿al-Hijr 15: 88﴾

﴿... وَلَا تَعُدُّ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تَرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوْنَهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٢٨)

﴿...and do not turn your eyes away from them, desiring the adornment of the life of this world. And do not obey him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own whims and desires, and is reckless in his deeds. ﴿al-Kahf 18: 28﴾

﴿أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوْنَهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا﴾ (١٦) ﴿أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا﴾ (٤٤) (سورة الفرقان: ٤٣-٤٤)

﴿Have you seen the one who takes his own whims and desires as his god? Can you be his keeper? Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are just like cattle; nay, they are further astray from the right path. ﴿al-Furqan 25: 43-44﴾

﴿فَإِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ اتَّبَعَ هَوْنَهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (٥٠) ﴿وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ (٥١) (سورة القصص: ٥٠-٥١)

﴿But if they do not respond to you, then know that they only follow their own desires, and who is more astray than one who follows his own desires, without any guidance from Allah? Verily, Allah

does not guide people who are given to wrongdoing. Now We have caused Our word to reach them in stages, so that they may pay heed. ﴿*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28: 50-51)

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾
 وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ
 لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ بِآلَتِي
 تُقْرَبُكُمْ عِنْدَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَن ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جِزَاءٌ الضَّعِيفُ بِمَا عَمِلُوا
 وَهُمْ فِي الْعَرْشِ ءَامِنُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي ءَايَاتِنَا مُعْجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ
 مُخْضَرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة سبأ: ٣٤-٣٨)

﴿We never sent any warner to a city but its affluent ones said: Verily, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent. They said: We are more abundant in wealth and children, and we are not going to be punished. Say: Verily, my Lord grants abundant provision to whomever He wills, or gives it in scant measure, but most people do not know. It is not your wealth or your children that bring you nearer to Us; but those who believe and do righteous deeds – it is they who will have a multiple reward for their deeds, and they will dwell secure in the high places in paradise. But those who strive against Our revelations, seeking to discredit them, it is they who will be delivered up for punishment. ﴿*Saba* ' 34: 34-38)

﴿ إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ زُفْرَةٌ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة التغابن: ١٥)

﴿Your wealth and your children are but a trial, and with Allah there is an immense reward. ﴿*at-Taghâbun* 64: 15)

﴿ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا لَأَطْفَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾ نَزَاعَةٌ لِّلشَّوْءِ ﴿١٦﴾ تَدْعُوا مَن أَذْرَبُوا وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٧﴾ وَجَمَعَ فَأَوْعَىٰ ﴿١٨﴾ ﴾

(سورة المعارج: ١٥-١٨)

﴿By no means! It is a raging fire [that awaits him], that will strip away the scalp. It will call those who turned their backs and disobeyed, and accumulated wealth and hoarded it. ﴿*al-Ma'ârij* 70: 15-18)

﴿كَلَّا بَلْ لَا تُكْرِمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تَحْضُونَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ ﴿١٨﴾
وَتَأْكُلُونَ الثَّرَاتِ أَكْلًا لَّمًّا ﴿١٩﴾ وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ﴿٢٠﴾﴾ (سورة

الفجر: ١٧-٢٠)

﴿Nay, but you do not show kindness to the orphan, you do not urge one another to feed the poor, you devour inheritance indiscriminately, and you have an insatiable love of wealth.﴾ (al-Fajr 89: 17-20)

﴿إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾﴾ (سورة العاديات: ٦-٨)

﴿Verily man is ungrateful to his Lord – and he himself bears witness to that – and verily, because of his love of wealth, he is stingy.﴾ (al-‘Ādiyāt 100: 6-8)

﴿وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ، ﴿٢﴾ يُحَسِّبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ، ﴿٣﴾ كَلَّا لَيُبَدَّنَ فِي الْحَطَمَةِ ﴿٤﴾﴾ (سورة الهُمزة: ١-٤)

﴿Woe to every backbiter, fault-finder, who accumulates wealth and keeps on counting it, thinking that his wealth will make him live forever. By no means! He will surely be flung into the crushing fire.﴾ (al-Humazah 104: 1-4)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Fortune is not the wealth of the world but fortune is the contentment of the soul.» (Muslim)

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) would give me something but I used to say to him: Please give it to someone poorer and needier than me.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said to me: If you are given something from this property without asking for it or having a greedy desire for it, then take it; and if you are not given it, do not pursue it.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah related that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Allah does not look at your form or your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds.» (Muslim)

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A man keeps on asking others for something until he comes on the Day of Resurrection having no flesh on his face.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Be aware about being materialistic/ greedy for possessions

- Any money we have comes from Allah (ﷻ). Our rizq was pre-written, more than fifty thousand years before we were even created, as reported by ‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Amr:

«I heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say: Allah ordained the measures (of provision) of the creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, and His Throne was upon water.» (Muslim)

We should consider this when we chase material things.

Remember that the more we have, the more we will have to account for on the Last Day. Even a poor person will experience a long questioning; why prolong our suffering?

The more wealth we have, the more responsibility comes with it. It may be easier just to be happy with what we have. Of course, this does not apply to those people who suffer through poverty since their striving is not their choice. However, it applies to those who have enough but want more (and then even more).

We should not think that it is bad to have lots of money and possessions. It is what we do with it that counts. We must remember the following hadith:

«No one should be jealous of anyone except two people – a man who has money and he spends it for the sake of Allah, and

a man whom Allah has blessed with knowledge and he teaches it.» (Bukhari)

Only we and Allah know what is truly in our hearts and the real reasons why gaining possessions is our dream. Even if our aim is to use our wealth to help others, if the underlying intention behind it is to show others how generous we are, even that charity is futile.

Material possessions can change us and our character for the worse: is the material gain worth the potential spiritual loss?

Think of all the discontented millionaires; wealth does not buy happiness, satisfaction, or good character.

The desire for more and more presents us as lacking in dignity; greed is not attractive.

Part 9: Being rude to parents

Description and manifestations

Being rude in any context is bad, but being rude to one's parents has a much more severe punishment in Islam. Most parents would agree that raising children is often a thankless but personally rewarding task. It should be the one most prized for all the benefits we receive from it.

Rudeness to parents manifests itself in many ways, such as:

- The manner in which we speak to our parents;
 - What we say;
 - How much we value their sacrifices (expressed by the sacrifices we make in return);
 - How we maintain their authority even when they are weak and vulnerable and no longer physically or emotionally as capable as they were;
 - Forgiving them their frailties as they always forgive ours (and even if they do not), by not being ashamed of them;
-

- Not expecting love and care to be a one-way gesture just because we did not ask to be born;
- Respecting their viewpoint no matter how worldly and educated we become;
- Not always trying to tell them about life as if they have no experience (only to learn the right lessons when it is too late).

We are reminded throughout the Qur'an to be good to our parents. We are not reminded as frequently to be good to our children, since favouring our children is something natural to us all. However, with our parents we seem to forget all they have done as we begin to think only for ourselves and our own children, ignoring the sacrifices they have made. In many cultures, it is seen as odd to live with one's parents as an adult in order to look after them and to tend to their needs. We see the consequences of neglecting our parents in societies where people are left alone, ill and uncared for, as a 'reward' for their love and care. We forget that when we do so, we teach our own children how to treat us when we are old; this is an example we will no doubt regret setting when our time comes.

It should be noted that in Islam, there is a difference between being rude to one's parents and refusing to obey them when they ask us to do something wrong/un-Islamic; the way we handle this is important. Parents always retain their rights. Indeed they have very clear rights over their children as a consequence of all they have given up for us. This is applicable whether one's parents are Muslim or not. Islam does not promote the idea that if we are Muslim and our parents are not that we can mistreat them; there is no piety in considering that it is allowed. *Ḥaq* prevails above all people.

The onus here is on the parents themselves to teach their children how to respect parents not only through modelling good practices with their own parents but also by imparting relevant knowledge as part of one's faith (as with all these behaviours). Sadly, we teach

children about almost everything except how to respect their own parents because our love for them makes us more forgiving and less firm in such boundaries; for our children, then, this is not seen as an important part of good character or a necessary behaviour.

We are reminded, of course, that if parents treat their children badly they will be questioned about it and must account for it. Their own destructive behaviour will not be ignored since children also have rights over their parents.

Related emotions

Dismissiveness (of the significance of the impact of this behaviour on our parents), bad manners, arrogance, ingratitude, injustice (where we feel it is acceptable to be rude to one's parents but not to others), lack of empathy and sympathy, developing (to a degree) a lack of basic humanity, and a harshness of character which may extend towards others who are vulnerable.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"Oh, they know I don't mean it."* It is as if somehow we assume that because they are our parents, they no longer have any human sensibilities left.
 - *"It's Mum and Dad – they don't mind. They are used to it." (So I can excuse my bad behaviour as a habit for them to acclimatise themselves to, rather than change what is wrong about me.)*
 - *"It's all part of being a parent, isn't it?" (To forgive my rudeness [but I won't accept it from anyone else].)*
 - *"She is not your mother/He is not your father, so it's okay if you are rude to her/him because if I chastise you, then you will turn against me." (And although I am your father/mother, I want to be liked more than I want to be just. [Let them take the flack – they are my spouse, after all, so I expect them to even though*
-

I wouldn't tolerate the same.]) This is a common situation for many people who are second husbands or wives when the blood parent themselves chooses to teach their children that only certain parents deserve respect. This not only teaches children injustice towards adults and bad manners but you add to your sin if you do not speak out. If you allow them to behave this way, you leave the way open for them to treat you the same.

- *"I didn't ask to be born, so why should I be tied to them?" (Even though I have taken every benefit for the privilege of being born.)* Your presence on the earth is by Allah's decree alone. It is highly unlikely you will accept to have such a conversation with your own children!
- *"Well, they were horrible to me when I was younger, so now they know how it feels."* This is akin to the abused becoming the abuser and has further negative consequences for our lives. In fact, it only prolongs the abuse for us as well as for our parents.
- *"I am getting back at him for how he treated Mum."* (So it means I have a good reason to be rude to him [even though Mum is dead and wouldn't approve... so actually this is about me, not Mum].) The relationship between parents is just that: between the father and the mother, not for the child to control or judge. Each adult accepts what they will of their partner or makes clear what they do not like. In such instances, it is likely that you only make more problems for the parent you are 'helping' without their permission. Furthermore, our help may not be requested or expected, so we must consider who this helps and why it is being done. (There is, of course, a manner in which children support an abused parent, but further abuse and revenge is not the answer and will have to be accounted for.)

Possible consequences

- We may be on the other end of our bad behaviour when we have children.
- We may need our parents, no matter how high up in the world we go, so it is in our own interest to create a relationship where this does not backfire on us.
- Our parents' du'â's for us are always accepted – so we risk losing this. This may not seem like a big issue, but remember: few people forgive and forget the way parents do.
- If our parents have passed away, we face guilt and regret if we mistreated them. Neither of these emotions is easily ameliorated.

Possible impact on faith

- We may end up breaking relations with our parents. This is a grave sin in Islam and will result in being cut off from many blessings in our lives.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿۱۷﴾ وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ
بِالْجُنُبِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا
فِخْرًا ﴿۱۸﴾ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ
مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿۱۹﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ وَمَن يَكُنِ
الشَّيْطٰنُ لَهُ قَرِيْنًا فَسَاءَ قَرِيْنًا ﴿۲۰﴾ (سورة النساء: ۳۶-۳۸)

﴿Worship Allah, and do not ascribe any partner to Him. Be kind to parents, relatives, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are related to you and neighbours who are not related to you, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and any slaves you may own. For Allah does not love those who are arrogant and boastful, those who are stingy, and exhort people to stinginess, and conceal what Allah has bestowed on them of His bounty – for We have prepared for disbelievers a humiliating punishment – and those who spend their wealth to show off to people, but do not believe in Allah and the Last Day. If anyone has Satan as a companion, what an evil companion he is!﴾ (*an-Nisā'* 4: 36-38)

﴿ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ
الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أَمْرًا وَلَا نَهْرَهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا
كَرِيمًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي
صَغِيرًا ﴿٣٧﴾ ﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٢٣-٢٤)

﴿Your Lord has ordained that you should worship none but Him and show kindness to parents. If one or both of them reach old age in your care, do not say to them even the mildest word of annoyance or reproach them; rather speak to them with respect. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say: My Lord, have mercy on them, as they cared for me when I was small.﴾ (*al-Isrā'* 17: 23-24)

﴿ وَوَضَعْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بُولَدِيهِ حَمَلَتُهُ أُمُّهُ، وَهَنَّا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصْلَهُ، فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ
اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَى الْمَصِيرِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ
لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ
إِلَىٰ تَنَزُّؤِي إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعِكُمْ فَأُنَبِّتُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة لقمان: ١٤-١٥)

﴿We have enjoined upon man kindness to his parents. In travail upon travail his mother bears him, and his weaning takes place within two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents. Unto Me is the return

[of all]. But if they endeavour to make you ascribe partners to Me of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. But keep company with them in this world kindly, and follow the way of those who turn to Me. Then to Me you will all return, and I will inform you about what you used to do.} (Luqmān 31: 14-15)

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ (سورة الأحقاف: ١٥)

{We have enjoined upon man kindness to his parents. With hardship his mother bears him and with hardship she brings him forth, and his bearing and weaning take thirty months. Then when he reaches his prime and reaches the age of forty years, he says: O my Lord, inspire me to be constantly grateful for Your blessings that You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and to do righteous deeds with which You will be pleased; and establish righteousness among my offspring for me. Verily, I repent to You and verily I am one of those who submit to Allah [in Islam].} (al-Ahqāf 46: 15)

‘Abdur-Rahmān ibn Abi Bakrah related that his father said:

«We were seated among a group with Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ), then he said: Shall I tell you what are the greatest sins?

He repeated the question three times.

Then he said: Associating anything with Allah, disobedience to parents, and bearing false witness.

Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) reclined and then sat up and repeated it until we wished for him to cease.» (Muslim)

«‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ood said that he asked the Prophet (ﷺ): Which deed is most dear to Allah, the Almighty, the Glorious?

He answered: To offer the prayer at its time.

Then he asked: Which deed after that (is most dear to Allah)?

He said: To behave kindly with parents.

He asked again: Which deed (is most dear to Allah) after that?

He said: To wage jihad in the cause of Allah.

The narrator ('Abdullâh ibn Mas'ood) said that (when he asked,) the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned these (three in particular), but if he had continued to ask he would have kept on answering.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah narrated:

«A man came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and asked: O Messenger of Allah, which of the people is most deserving of my good companionship?

He said: Your mother.

(The man asked:) Then who?

He said: Then your mother.

(The man asked:) Then who?

He said: Then your mother.

(The man asked:) Then who?

He said: Then your father.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«No son can repay (fully the favours of) his father (or give him his rights) except that if he finds him (his father) as someone's slave then he should buy him (from his master) and release him.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

«Abu at-Tufayl (رضي الله عنه) said that 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) was asked if the Prophet (ﷺ) had told him something exclusive which he had not disclosed to the people as a whole. He said that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had not told him anything at the exclusion of other people except (what lay written on a piece of paper) in the sheath of his sword. He then drew out a paper which conveyed (this) message:

May Allah curse him who slaughters an animal to something other than Allah, and may Allah curse him who steals signposts (so that he may encroach on another person's land), and may Allah curse him who curses his father (parents), and may Allah curse him who shelters one who innovates in religion.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah narrated:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) once said: May he be humiliated! May he be humiliated! May he be humiliated!

The Companions asked him: O Messenger of Allah, who?

He said: He who has parents, or one of them, in their old age yet he does not go to paradise (by being dutiful to them).» (Muslim)

'Abdullâh ibn 'Amr reported:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Abusing one's parents is one of the major sins.

They (the listeners) said: O Messenger of Allah, does a man abuse his parents too?

He (the Prophet [ﷺ]) replied: Yes, one abuses the father of another man, who in turn abuses his father. One abuses his mother and he in turn abuses his (the former's) mother.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Three supplications are answered, and there is no doubt about them: that of one who is wronged, that of a traveller, and the curse of parents against their children.» (Bukhari, Ibn Mâjah, and others)

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Allah has forbidden for you to be undutiful to your mothers...» (Bukhari and Muslim)

In addition to the above hadiths, Ibn 'Umar said that the weeping of the parents is from disobedience and is one of the major sins.¹ (It is so if children do something that hurts them and they weep.)

¹ Bukhari, *al-Adab al-Mufrad* (graded sound by al-Albâni).

Be aware about being rude to parents

- It is part of our faith to be kind to our parents.
- Showing kindness does not mean we join them in haram acts, but even this must be dealt with in a respectful manner.
- The mother is given a higher status than the father. Indeed, for a married man the greatest right over him is that of his mother (not his wife), so this is something for wives to consider. However, the wife has her own rights and the mother-in-law does not have the same rights over a daughter-/son-in-law that she has over her son/daughter. Our parents are our responsibility, not that of our spouses; what they choose to do to help them is a kindness to them and to us. We cannot take this for granted and pass on our responsibility to others. Most often what we see in such cases is that only the parents of one spouse are considered worthy of such attention, with no value or awareness placed on the other person's duty to their parents. As ever, we may seek only what benefits us and our own families.
- The line between respect for parents and respect for adults in general is fine; if our children are rude to us as their parents, they are likely to be rude to other adults and this reflects on our parenting. Similarly, they are likely to be rude to a new spouse, who is not the children's parent. Consider how that would undermine our own relationship with our partner.
- Being kind to our parents is a source of reward in both this world and the hereafter.
- We must not trivialise any harm we do to our parents, as the *du'â* against a child from the parent is answered. They still feel pain no matter how old we or they are, so any bad behaviour is likely to revisit us.


- The significance of kindness to parents is so much that when they have died, we are encouraged to be kind even to their friends. By this, consider the status Allah gives them.
- It is better to learn these lessons before one becomes a parent, rather than regret our behaviour when they have left this world and we suffer with our own children as a (possible) consequence of our own actions.

Part 10: Being two-faced

Description and manifestations

Being two-faced is a very destructive quality, not least because it sows the seeds of mistrust and, in a wider context, creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity (since no one can be sure if the person is honest about anything they are saying). In Islam, the two-faced (or double-faced) person is warned of a severe punishment in the hereafter. The irony of the two-faced act is that the person who behaves in this way deludes themselves that no one knows what they are doing, yet it is usually a behaviour known about them by others. Like the gossip and the backbiter, when they express their contradictory behaviour, it is usually noted that they cannot be trusted to be honest with the person they are being two-faced with. Thus, rather than demonstrate their (false) belief that they show wit and intelligence in fooling people, their behaviour merely serves to show them as lying and deceitful people, since these qualities are at the root of being two-faced.

The manifestation in which being two-faced exists is fairly clear: people will say or imply one position in certain company and change their position when they are in other company; hence their opinion and view is only as reliable as the last person they spoke to. Sometimes their view may be consistent with one person until they are forced



into a corner by another party or feel under some form of pressure to agree with them, or they may want to be included in a certain group or opportunity that causes them to change position – so their allegiance tends to be not for the sake of justice but for their own benefit. Alternatively, they may seek to be popular with everyone and feel that the way to achieve this is to agree with any opposing view as long as they are liked for their agreement. Reasons behind such behaviour, then, may vary but the act remains a betrayal to one party or another. The irony is that no party knows with whom the two-faced person's loyalty lies.

Related emotions

Mistrust, insecurity, fear, dishonesty, confusion and misunderstandings, and increased cynicism/negativity/suspiciousness regarding any good behaviour (from being the victim of two-faced behaviour).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I can't say it to their face!" (That would be mean... [anyway, I am too cowardly to express my true thoughts].)*
- *"I must join in with this conversation." (Even if it means being two-faced [because I must be accepted by them and anyway, I am not strong enough to disagree or stop them from being two-faced – I fear them more than I fear Allah].)*
- *"Actually, I am not being two-faced. I was just trying to be polite and didn't want to hurt them by saying it to their face."*
- *"I am not being two-faced. This person needs my help so I will pretend I no longer agree with my friend's point of view." (They said that after Allah there is only me [so it means I am pretty powerful and must show this by siding with the one who gives me such power].)*

Possible consequences

- This behaviour indicates a lack of courage in one's convictions, so it suggests a lack of confidence. It is not a way to cover our weaknesses but to expose them.
- We will eventually lose friends because being two-faced means we are unreliable, untrustworthy, and dishonest. These are not qualities that attract and keep other people in our social circle.
- The only people who will befriend us will be people who are like us, so we will create a bad set of friends for ourselves.
- We should not be surprised if we make enemies. People may not admit they are aware of this quality we have and simply use us as a messenger, so it could backfire. Rather than pleasing people, we will be disliked by them instead.
- It is hard to undo the damage this causes; even if we did not mean it, we may not be forgiven. It is a quality that removes any sympathy for the one who behaves this way, so the consequences could be widespread.

Possible impact on faith

- The qualities of the hypocrites cover many aspects of this behaviour: lack of trust, lying, and not keeping a promise (all of which are encompassed in being two-faced). It is not one sin but many at once. When we think of the hypocrites at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), these were the qualities they held. They ended up losing their Islam because eventually they said and agreed with those things that took them out of the fold of Islam for good.
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Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامِنُوا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيْطَانِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْفَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمْىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١-١٨)

When it is said to them: Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We only want to put things right. Indeed, they are the ones who make mischief, but they do not realize. When it is said to them: Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Indeed, it is they who are the fools, but they do not know. When they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; but when they are alone with their devils, they say: We are really with you; we were only mocking. Allah is mocking them, and gives them free rein in transgression so that they wander blindly. These are the ones who have traded guidance for error, but their trade brings no profit and they are not guided. Their likeness is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it illuminated all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness, unable to see. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return [to the right path]. ﴿ (al-Baqarah 2: 11-18)

﴿ أَفَنْظَمُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٧٥)

﴿Do you [O believers] then hope that they will respond to your call, when a party among them used to hear the word of Allah, and they distorted it knowingly after having understood it?﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 75)

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ
وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ ﴿٢٠٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٠٤)

﴿Among people are those whose speech pleases you in this world, and they call Allah to witness as to what is in their hearts, yet they are the most contentious of opponents.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 204)

﴿سَتَجِدُونَ ءَاخِرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلٌّ مَا رَدُّوا إِلَىٰ الْفِتْنَةِ
أُرْكَسُوا فِيهَا... ﴿٩١﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ٩١)

﴿Others you will find who want to be safe from you and safe from their own people, but whenever they are faced anew with temptation to evil, plunge into it headlong...﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 91)

﴿إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾﴾ (سورة
النساء: ١٤٥)

﴿The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the fire; you will not find any helper for them.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 145)

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا خَرَجُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ أَنفَاً
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ ﴿١٦﴾﴾ (سورة محمد: ١٦)

﴿Among them are some who listen to you [O Muhammad], but when they leave your presence, they say to those who have been given knowledge: What did he say just now? These are the ones whose hearts Allah has sealed up and they follow their own whims and desires.﴾ (Muhammad 47: 16)

﴿سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا
يَقُولُونَ يَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِالنَّبِيِّ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ^٤ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ
ضَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا^٥ بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١١﴾﴾ (سورة محمد: ١١)

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَىٰ آهْلِهِمْ أَبَدًا وَرَبِّ ذَٰلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظُرُوبَ السَّوْءِ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا ﴿١٢﴾ (سورة الفتح: ١١-١٢)

«Those of the Bedouin who lagged behind will say to you: We were preoccupied with [looking after] our wealth and families, so pray for forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: Who has any power at all [to intervene] on your behalf with Allah if it be His will to do you harm or benefit you? Verily, Allah is well aware of all that you do. Rather you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never return to their families, and that was made fair-seeming in your hearts. You harboured evil thoughts, for you are people devoid of good and doomed.» (*al-Fath* 48: 11-12)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Indeed, among the worst of people to Allah on the Day of Judgement is the two-faced person.» (at-Tirmidhi, who graded it sound)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«On the Day of Resurrection, you will find that the two-faced man is in the worst of conditions in the sight of Allah. When he goes to (some people), he has one face, but when he goes to the others, he has a different face.» (Bukhari)

‘Ammâr ibn Yâsir reported that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«He who has two faces in the world will have two tongues of fire on the Day of Resurrection.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Be aware about being two-faced

- The punishment is severe, so we must ask ourselves: is the problem/person really worth it (especially if our intentions relate to injustice – which is the case with being two-faced)?
- We may think no one knows what we are doing, but Allah (ﷻ) does and His knowing will have more serious consequences than people knowing.

- We will most likely end up being exposed for what we do and end up living lonely lives with no real friends because of it. This may result in us busying ourselves with even more two-faced behaviour to stay connected.

Part 11: Being unjust

Description and manifestations

Fairness and justice are qualities that are inherent in our sense of humanity. We recognise them from early childhood with our cries to our teachers/parents of “That’s not fair!”. We feel it very deeply as adults when someone is unjust towards us; such is the weight of being fair and just. To be so is a challenge, however.

Injustice exists in many forms. In essence it is when we change the rules according to the people or the setting involved as a response to the same act; this results in one person suffering without any clear reason. It is an inconsistency in reasonable reactions to an event and this lack of consistency makes us feel something is unfair. For example, it is when we excuse our children but not those of other people, or when we excuse our parents but not our partners, or when we excuse our families but not strangers – all for the same act. To this end, we can see that injustice involves some form of favouritism (another destructive behaviour) and/or prejudice.

We may want to be fair but do not want someone to suffer because justice has been given to another – this is nowhere more true than with our friends and family. We may easily turn a blind eye to their wrongdoing simply because they are who they are, no matter what that wrong may be: “...but you are my dad/sister/friend – how could you say I am wrong?” (It doesn’t matter if I am.) The loyalty is oftentimes so deep that we cannot see clearly the harm that someone else may suffer because of our misguided view of justice. So we may

have an unjust view of justice itself when it comes to ourselves and those who are close to us.

Alternatively, rather than urge someone to admit their wrong, we may encourage the offended person to focus on forgiveness rather than the mistake and this sometimes allows the perpetrators to walk free. (This is not related to criminal acts, but to unhealthy behaviour.) Whilst in Islam we are encouraged to forgive, the admission that we have done wrong is quite separate from this forgiveness and is something which makes forgiveness easier. Indeed, forgiveness does not readily come when people unnecessarily make excuses for the wrongdoing of others. If that forgiveness is given to the perpetrator on behalf of the victim, however, it is totally illogical and indeed destructive for the victim and also their view of justice by others. Although we are encouraged to settle arguments, if we continually deny the wrongdoing of one party against another, we must consider the wronged person's rights.

We consider *ḥaq* only as giving someone their rights. We do not consider and often do not like it when others take their *ḥaq*. This is especially true in those circumstances where people have helped us more than we needed or had a right to – when we knew this but happily took the benefit anyway without even acknowledging either to others or to ourselves that they did not need to do anything for us at all. We fail to understand that when they do not have to do something, that is their right also. Indeed, in many instances where we do not want someone to have their right, we may accuse them of jealousy: “You don't want to help me because you are jealous and do not want me to succeed.” Taking one's right is just as important as giving others theirs, and this is what provides a peaceful status quo in our lives. We may even see others give up their rights but because it suits us, we do not remind them that they do not have to, nor do we limit our expectations accordingly. How often do we say, “No, thank you,

because it is not my right over you to do that?" The answer, if we are honest, is "Rarely." True justice is when we consider their taking and refusing as being equal to our own. This is part of being just and living *ḥaq* in all its senses. It is, therefore, of vital importance that we know the rights (our own and those of others) for every action we take.

Related emotions

Abuse/cruelty, arrogance (as defined by an earlier hadith), ignorance, harshness in character, bias in judgement, and weakness.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I can't make my family/friends look bad." (I care more about them than about Allah.)* Bad behaviour is a reflection of the person themselves, and an added injustice not only makes them look bad but you as well. Their reaction is nothing compared to what Allah's will be on the Last Day, however, when we will have to explain ourselves. They will not be able to save us from the punishment and may even say, "We didn't ask you to lie for us!"
- *"They have chosen to give up their right." (So it's okay for me to take advantage of it/them.)*
- *"I am going to force that person to do something that is not my right to ask." (I am ignoring the fact that Allah has given that person their right to do this or to refuse. [I am so brave at crossing Allah's boundaries – the punishment is so far away and after I have abused them of their right, I can work towards making them forgive me.])*
- *"Life's not fair – get used to it!" (It's not fair partly because of people like me [but I am not owning that].)*

Possible consequences

- If this is the level of our own behaviour, people will measure us against it. Eventually, we will not be treated with justice ourselves and only then will we feel the effect of the damage we may have caused others.
- Losing our sense of justice will have an impact on other decisions we make in our lives. So we will necessarily face those consequences, especially as time and circumstances change and people will not be subject to our actions any more.
- We are not likely to be trusted even by those close to us because our injustice will likely create a hierarchy even amongst our close family and friends.
- We may be taken advantage of because we will be seen as a 'soft touch/easy target' due to our always-changing positions. (This is not a sign of flexibility, which is something quite different.)

Possible impact on faith

- The concept of justice is very closely linked to truth, so if we fail to be just, we inadvertently fail in so many more fundamental aspects of Islam.
 - We risk considering the weight we give people equal to what we should give Allah when we ignore being just and go against what we are told in the Qur'an (as the hadith above illustrates). We also deny the supremacy of Allah by overriding His system of justice.
 - This behaviour can lead to a dangerous level of arrogance in itself because what we imply by it is that our rules are better than those made by Allah, even though He has created both us and the rules for our living. In fact, we create a set of criteria for justice other than what Allah has ordained.
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Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿... وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾
(سورة البقرة: ١٤٠)

﴿...And who does greater wrong than those who conceal a testimony they have received from Allah? But Allah is not unaware of what you do.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 140)

﴿... وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (٨٦) ﴿أُولَئِكَ جزأؤهم أن عليهم لعنة الله والملائكة والناس أجمعين﴾ (٨٧) ﴿خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٨٦-٨٨)

﴿...But Allah does not guide people who are given to wrongdoing. The requital of such people is that upon them is the curse of Allah, the angels and all humankind. They will remain under it forever. Their punishment will not be alleviated, nor will they be given respite.﴾ (Al 'Imrān 3: 86-88)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ؕ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ؕ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىَٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا وَإِن تَلَوْا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٣٥)

﴿O you who believe, be steadfast in justice and bear true witness for the sake of Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your kinsfolk. Whether he is rich or poor, Allah can best take care of both. So do not follow your emotions, lest you swerve from justice. If you distort your testimony or decline to give it, then verily Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 135)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَتَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ؕ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٨)

﴿O you who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to Allah, bearing true witness impartially. Do not let your hatred of some people lead you away from justice. Be just; that is nearer to true piety. And fear Allah, for Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (al-Mā'idah 5: 8)

﴿وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ. وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ لَا تَكِلْفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَيَعْهَدِ اللَّهُ أَوْفُوا ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾﴾ (سورة

الأنعام: ١٥٢)

﴿Do not touch the orphan's property, before he comes of age, except to improve it: give full measure and weight, with equity. We do not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear. And when you speak, be fair, even if it concerns a close relative. And fulfil the covenant of Allah. Thus He instructs you, so that you may pay heed.﴾ (al-An'ām 6: 152)

Jâbir ibn 'Abdullâh (رضي الله عنه) narrated:

«While Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was distributing the booty at al-Ji'rānah (name of a place), somebody said to him: Be just (in your distribution).

The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: Verily, I would be miserable if I did not act justly.» (Bukhari)

An-Nu'mān ibn Basheer said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Fear Allah and treat your children fairly.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

«An-Nu'mān ibn Basheer also said that his father brought him to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said: I have given this son of mine a slave who used to belong to me.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Have you given a similar gift to all of your children?

He said: No.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Then take (your gift) back.» (Bukhari, Muslim, and others)

Be aware about being unjust

- Being unjust will erode our good character and soon we will not be able to tell justice from injustice, so we should save ourselves from the harm we will do to ourselves.
- Unjust people have very few good people around them. Soon enough, our own injustice will backfire since that will be the standard we have set and the one by which we will be measured.
- We should not consider only our own rights but be aware of those of others.
- We should look at the facts, not the people, when we seek to give a just response.
- The best person – as we see in the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) – feared being unjust. So we should feel bad when we are unfair and work against it.

Part 12: Breaking promises/ Making false promises

Description and manifestations

We have all suffered the heartbreak of false promises (those promises we make sometimes in the heat of the moment but which we have no actual intention to keep). We make them to secure our current position, whatever that may be. They occur in moments of heightened emotion and enthusiasm: when we want to marry someone but we do not meet their needs; when we want to avoid a fight; when we want something from our partners or family or friends and use a promise as an exchange; or when we are desperate for help. The

focus of false promises is always our own desires first and foremost, projected in such a way as to convince the other person that what we are offering is sincere, although we may know otherwise in our hearts. We may, at the time of making those promises, have been (momentarily) wholly sincere to escape the challenges we were facing, but that same sincerity disappears when we fail to keep our word. Indeed, often the other people themselves disappear in order to escape our explanation.

We may even expect others – in the name of love, friendship, and generosity – to excuse our failure, yet in spite of all of this we do not hesitate to repeat the mistake. Indeed, sometimes we get into a pattern of making promises so they may be broken as a way of escaping difficult expectations. It becomes acceptable, so we easily and readily trivialise the deterioration it can have on our character and our relationships.

Related emotions

Unhappiness, disappointment, mistrust, isolation in relationships (where it is a repeated behaviour and others become tired of us letting them down), indifference (to the promise of keeping the next promise), loss of respect, estrangement, resentment, and irritation/annoyance/anger at being let down.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“I meant it at the time.” (The fact that I haven’t fulfilled it should be excused because I was sincere at the time. [Of course, I am no longer sincere, but that’s another thing.])*
- *“If I agree, it will keep her/him happy.” (Actually, I have no intention to do what I have promised [but the words make me sound sincere].)*
- *“I have simply changed my mind.” (I am allowed to, you know!)*

- *“If I ignore them, they will forget I promised to do that for them.” (Then I can be relieved of the guilt of failing to do what I promised.)*

Possible consequences

- If it is about marriage – or indeed any form of partnership or even a business contract – then of course it is a very bad start and will unquestionably affect the outcome of that relationship; we should not be surprised if things don't go as planned.
- We will be seen not only as untrustworthy but also as a liar, no matter how we reframe the behaviour. Our word will carry no weight. People will either not take us seriously (which means they may not support us when we need them) or they will simply withdraw their friendship and warn others about our behaviour as it has implications for their own lives.
- We will be seen as unreliable, which will close opportunities for people to work with or socialise with us. Letting people down frequently is not the sign of an honourable person: this is how we will be seen.

Possible impact on faith

- We clearly share a characteristic of a hypocrite, as defined in the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is not seen as a distinctly separate sin which may be dismissed, but part of a problem which may eventually disintegrate our character further. If we look at the other signs of a hypocrite, this one easily overlaps or leads to others. As mentioned earlier, this is often a downward spiral regarding our general level of faith and similarly moves us away from the desired Muslim character.
- It also means that we consider deceit a casual matter and are happy to be of those people described in the Qur'an as saying one thing whilst their hearts mean another. This is a gross

rejection of complete chapters of the Qur'an (such *Soorat al-Mutaffifeen*) that deal with deceit.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَنَّى السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧٧)

﴿It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; rather righteousness is to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets; to spend from your wealth, despite your love for it, on kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, wayfarers and those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to establish prayer and give zakat; to fulfil the covenants you make; to be patient in the face of hardship and adversity, and in times of conflict. Such are the true believers, and such are the pious.﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 177)

﴿ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴾ (١١) وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِي نَقَضَتْ غَزَلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوَّةٍ أَنْكَنَّا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ ۗ وَلِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخَالِفُونَ ﴾ (سورة النحل: ٩١-٩٢)

﴿Fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have entered into it, and do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them and have made Allah your surety, for verily Allah knows all that you do. Do not be

like the woman who unravels the yarn she has firmly spun, breaking it into strands, by making your oaths a means of deceiving one another, merely because one party may be more numerous than another. Allah is only testing you by means of this, and on the Day of Resurrection He will surely make clear to you the matters concerning which you differed. ﴿ (an-Nahl 16: 91-92)

﴿وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا وَتَذُوقُوا السُّوَاءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾﴾ (سورة النحل: ٩٤)

﴿Do not make your oaths a means of deceiving one another, lest any foot should slip after being firmly planted and you have to taste the evil [consequences] of having barred people from the path of Allah, and yours will be a grievous punishment. ﴿ (an-Nahl 16: 94)

﴿وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٥٣)

﴿Tell My slaves that they should say what is best, for Satan sows discord among them. Verily, Satan is to man an avowed enemy. ﴿ (al-Isrâ' 17: 53)

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ١-١١)

﴿The believers have indeed attained true success, those who humble themselves in their prayers, who turn away from all that is vain [of words and deeds], who are active in giving zakat, and who restrain their carnal desires, except with their wives or any slave women they

may own, for then they are free of blame. But whoever seeks anything beyond that, such are the transgressors. Those who are faithful to their trusts and pledges, and who are diligent in their prayers, such will be the heirs who will inherit paradise; they will abide therein forever.﴾
(al-Mu'minoon 23: 1-11)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he tells a lie; when he promises, he breaks it (his promise); and if you entrust him, he proves to be dishonest (if you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it).» (Bukhari)

Be aware about breaking promises/ making false promises

- Keeping a promise is a chance to do some good and make someone happy; what is the harm in that (where the action is good)?
- We should not make promises if we cannot fulfil them. It only leads to awkward explanations or avoidance. In most cases, it would be simpler to either keep them or refuse to promise. Promises made to be broken are harmful to both parties.
- Breaking promises is a sign of a hypocrite and a liar, as we are saying one thing but doing another. Do we really want to be described in such terms?

Part 13: Breaking family ties

Description and manifestations

Maintaining blood ties is given significant weight in Islam; similarly, breaking them (intentionally disconnecting from our blood relatives) carries a significant sin.

Personality clashes are hard to manage, and this is often the cause of wanting to break family ties. It is understandable that we want to

protect ourselves from harm, but when those people have rights over us to stay in touch, we must brave the storm. This is not always easy because we can mostly find ways around things.

Breaking ties tends to manifest itself directly through breaking all communications – usually after a significant disagreement – with the intention of remaining permanently disconnected. When we try to overcome our feelings about difficult relatives, we feel that we are weaker and they have won; yet we forget that they must account for their own bad behaviour before Allah, Who will be a much more powerful judge than we can be ourselves. We spend our time looking for reasons to maintain the break and not heal the ties; this serves only to remind us of the harm we have suffered, which in turn does not encourage us to solve the problem.

It is a vicious cycle and one that Satan loves: to break up families. The family is, after all, what holds communities together and this cohesion produces successful people. Thus the destruction of the family can lead to the destruction of communities as loyalties become divided and are acted upon. Staying together, of course, relies on overlooking people's mistakes, just as we want them to overlook ours.

Related emotions

Social isolation, arrogance, ingratitude (where we forget the good our family members have done for us), lack of generosity of character (when we consider how happy some relatives would be just to get a short phone call), estrangement, and animosity.

Related thoughts and justifications


- *“Oh, it's fine! They won't notice I haven't been in touch.” (I am not that important to them. [That's my story and I'm sticking to it.]*
- *“Allah will understand. I am weak.” (They really are horrible people!)*

-
- *"I am not breaking ties. I just don't have time." (I am busy trying to avoid them.)*
 - *"I have no bad feelings in my heart."* This may be true, but we need to double check whether this really is the case or if we are lying to ourselves.
 - *"I am just closer to that side of the family." (Actually, if I show willingness with one side it proves I am not breaking family ties [although they are all quite unconnected to each other and it is specific to their relation to me, not each other... and anyway. I just don't like them].)*

Possible consequences

- We may find we have no support when we need it most, as often families come together when there is a crisis. If we are not on speaking terms, this makes it less likely.
- We may miss out on significant events in the lives of others because of how divisive breaking ties can be.
- We may cause other divisions between members of the wider family, who may feel forced to choose sides.
- We may miss out on joyous occasions because no one wants to be in the same room with us. Part of any joyous event is in sharing it with other people, so it is likely to reduce our own happiness at such times.
- It is not a healthy model of relationships to present to our own children, who may do the same to us.

Possible impact on faith

- We dishonour the tie in which Allah (ﷻ) has placed great honour. In doing so, we disagree with His wisdom and deny all that goes with it. When we do this, we also reject what good may come to us with it, which means we do not utilise it or we refuse Allah's gifts to us.
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- When we decide to permanently break blood ties, we indirectly reject the verse in the Qur'an which tells us:

﴿... وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢١٦)

﴿...But it may be that you dislike a thing although it is good for you, and that you like a thing although it is bad for you. Allah knows, and you do not know.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 216)

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿...وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾ (سورة

النساء: ١)

﴿...Fear Allah, in Whose name you demand your mutual [rights], and be mindful of your ties of kinship, for Allah is always watching you.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 1)

﴿وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٣٦)

﴿Worship Allah, and do not ascribe any partner to Him. Be kind to parents, relatives, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are related to you and neighbours who are not related to you, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and any slaves you may own. For Allah does not love those who are arrogant and boastful.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 36)

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ (سورة

النحل: ٩٠)

«Verily, Allah enjoins justice, kindness and giving kinsfolk [their due], and He forbids obscenity, wickedness and aggression. He admonishes you, so that you may pay heed.» (*an-Nahl* 16: 90)

Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The one who severs the bonds of womb relations will not enter paradise.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«People’s deeds are presented before Allah on Mondays and Thursdays, and then every slave (of Allah) is granted forgiveness (of minor sins) if he does not associate anything with Allah in worship. But the person in whose heart there is rancour against his brother will not be pardoned. With regard to them, it is said twice: Hold these two until they are reconciled.» (Muslim)

Abu Bakrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«There is no sin greater than oppression and severing of ties of relationship, and that is more worthy of punishment in this world and the next.» (Ibn Mājah and at-Tirmidhi; graded sound by al-Albāni)

‘Ā’ishah reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«The word *ar-rahm* (womb) derives its name from *ar-Rahmān* (the Most Compassionate [Allah]). So if anyone keeps good relations with it (the womb, meaning kith and kin), Allah will keep good relations with him, and if anyone will sever it (his bonds of kith and kin), Allah will sever His relations with him.» (Bukhari)

«Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: Allah created His creation and when He had finished it, the womb got up and caught hold of Allah, whereupon Allah said: What is the matter?

It said: I seek refuge in You from *al-qāṭee‘ah* (those who sever the ties of kith and kin).

Allah asked: Will you accept (be satisfied) if I bestow My favours upon the one who keeps your ties and withhold My favours from the one who severs your ties?

It said: Yes, my Lord!

Then Allah said: That is for you.

(Abu Hurayrah added): If you wish, you can recite: «Then is it to be expected of you, if you turn away, that you will spread mischief in the land and sever your ties of kinship?» (Muhammad 47: 22)» (Bukhari and Muslim)

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: «The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him does not truly uphold the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about breaking family ties


- Allah knows the excuses we make to ourselves. We must think about who we have not been in touch with and the real reasons why. (This is quite apart from our right to defend ourselves from harm by others.)
- If we do not maintain ties of kinship, we will be forbidden from paradise.
- The impact of breaking family ties can be far-reaching and we contribute to its damaging effects.

Part 14: Carrying tales

Description and manifestations

Like backbiting, carrying tales (*nameemah*) is a term commonly used in Islamic contexts. It is defined as unnecessarily giving someone information that pertains to what another person may have said about them with the intention of causing animosity between them. This is irrespective of whether the information is correct or not.

This behaviour exists in many contexts. People may start with the ‘best of intentions’ as their main justification for carrying out the



behaviour. Upon exploration, though, such behaviour is usually for personal gain and/or favour. We often carry tales so that we can cover, excuse, or justify our own wrongdoing or appear more favourable in the eyes of others in comparison to the other person. Of course, it overlaps in its characteristics with backbiting and gossip and the distinction between each behaviour is very fine.

Related emotions

Insecurity, jealousy, anger, hatred, wanting to be favoured, wanting to create animosity (divide and conquer), and abuse of power.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"It's not carrying tales. I am trying to protect them."* We are allowed to share certain information when we are trying to protect others. However, in the case of carrying tales, this is not the case. The reasons are much more trivial than feigned concern.
- *"She/he has really annoyed me today." (So it is my duty to tell everyone how horrible they are [and this is best done if I tell them what they said about you – that way you will agree with me].)*
- *"It just slipped out. I was angry. I didn't mean it." (That's my excuse and I'm sticking to it.)*
- *"I don't want to hear anything positive about this person." (I do not like them [so if I tell you something bad, you will stop praising someone I do not like/approve of].)*

Possible consequences

- Our minds will be occupied with scheming rather than healthy, productive thoughts because tale carrying takes some planning.
- As with other destructive behaviours, we may simply get used for our ability to cause problems, which may contribute

to situations we may not even be aware of. We may gather enemies rather than friends, including some we may not even know about.

- We will miss out on opportunities to improve our lives because no one can trust what we say; in this way, we close doors for ourselves.

Possible impact on faith

- We are unlikely to be allowed into circles where people who have constructive behaviour congregate, as we will be seen as a negative and divisive person. In this respect, we will reduce our own chances to improve our behaviour and decrease access to those things which may earn us some reward rather than Allah's anger.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامِنُوا وَإِذَا حَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيْطَانِيهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْفَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَّهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ صُمُّ بِكُمْ عُتِيَ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١-١٨)

﴿When it is said to them: Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We only want to put things right. Indeed, they are the ones who make mischief, but they do not realize. When it is said to them: Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools

believe? Indeed, it is they who are the fools, but they do not know. When they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; but when they are alone with their devils, they say: We are really with you; we were only mocking. Allah is mocking them, and gives them free rein in transgression so that they wander blindly. These are the ones who have traded guidance for error, but their trade brings no profit and they are not guided. Their likeness is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it illuminated all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness, unable to see. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return [to the right path]. ﴿ (al-Baqarah 2: 11-18)

﴿يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءٰمَنُوْا اِنْ جَآءَكَ فٰسِقٌۢ بِنَبٍِٔ فَتَبَيَّنْۤوْا اَنْ تُصِيبُوْا قَوْمًاۙ يَّجْهَلُوْنَ فَنُصِصُوْا عَلٰٓى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ تٰدِيْبِيْنَ ﴿٦﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ٦)

﴿O you who believe, if a wrongdoer comes to you with any news, investigate [and verify the facts], lest you harm people out of ignorance, then come to regret your actions. ﴿ (al-Hujurat 49: 6)

﴿وَلِنْ طٰٓئِفَتَيْنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَقْتُلُوْا فَاصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَاۙ فَاِنْ بَغَتْ اِحْدَهُمَا عَلٰى الْاٰخَرٰى فَقْتُلُوْا الَّتِي تَبَغٰى حَتّٰى تَفِىءَ اِلَآءِ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِۙ فَاِنْ فَاَتَتْ فَاصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَاَقْسَطُوْا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِخْوَةٌۢ فَاصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَ اٰخْوَانِكُمْ وَاَتَقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ٩-١٠)

﴿If two groups among the believers fight one another, then make peace between them. If one of them transgresses against the other [and rejects all efforts to make peace], then fight [all of you] against the one that transgresses, until it complies with the command of Allah. Then if it complies, make peace between them on the basis of equity and be just, for verily Allah loves those who are just. The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your [contending] brothers. And fear Allah, so that you may be shown mercy. ﴿ (al-Hujurat 49: 9-10)

Abu Hurayrah related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«You will not enter paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I tell you something which, if you do it, you will love each other? Spread the greeting of peace among yourselves.» (Muslim)

«Hammâm ibn al-Hârith (رضي الله عنه) said: We were sitting in a mosque when a man came and sat with us. It was said to Hudhayfah that this man was an informer for the sultan, so Hudhayfah – hoping for the man to hear him – said:

I heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say: The informer who spies and relates what he hears will not be admitted to paradise.» (Muslim)

«Someone said to Hudhayfah that a particular person reported to ‘Uthmân the doings of other people. Hudhayfah said that he had heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say: A *qattât* (mischief-maker) will not enter paradise.» (Bukhari)

«Asmâ’ bint Yazeed (رضي الله عنها) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: Shall I tell you who the best among you are?

The Companions said: Do tell us!

He said: The best slaves of Allah are those who, when they are seen, Allah is remembered (they are very pious).

Then he asked: Shall I not tell you who the worst among you are?

They said: Tell us, definitely!

He said: The worst slaves of Allah are those who go about slandering, who separate friends, and who seek to corrupt and distress the upright who are free from evil.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded reliable by al-Albâni)

Be aware about carrying tales

- It is ultimately **we** who are the problem, not the person we talk about. It is our character which will compare unfavourably when we are discovered.
- Stop the person who is carrying tales and do not entertain their comments. It could be us they discuss next time round.

- We are always advised to make peace, not enmity, between people – so why trade positivity for negativity? It is we who will lose out in the end.

Part 15: Complaining

Description and manifestations

We have befriended complaining. It has become a social pastime and an accepted (bad) habit. When we have nothing to talk about, we may make negative comments without thinking, just to have something to say. Indeed, we see it as harmless because we do it without any expectation of sympathy or even as an expression of deep personal unhappiness. It is just a habit to say what is on our minds. It manifests in our daily routines, where we may start the day with a ‘moan and a cup of tea’, when we use our free time to cite all the things that are going wrong in our lives (for no real reason), when we find fault even when things are going well, or when we focus on what is wrong rather than what is right and voice these views to others, thus spreading our negativity. This (unquestioned) ongoing negativity is what is destructive. The satisfaction with what we do have is replaced by the continued awareness of what we do not. Soon there seems to be nothing good in life and nothing good to say.

Of course, we are allowed to voice our concerns and clear our hearts of any heaviness we may be experiencing in life. Ideally, this should occur in a given context and for a limited period. Indeed, listening to troubles is often the role of a therapist when the negativity cannot be shaken; even then, the goal is often to work through and overcome it rather than suggest the person persist with it.

Complaining in and of itself, which serves no purpose other than grumbling, is what we need to avoid, however. The extent to which such a behaviour is considered destructive is most clearly exemplified in the event where Prophet Ibrâheem (ﷺ) visited his son (Prophet

Ismâ'eel [Ishmael]) and found only his wife at home. When Ibrâheem asked her how things were, she continuously complained; after this, Ibrâheem advised his son against such a wife and subsequently Ismâ'eel did indeed divorce her. (Bukhari) This demonstrates the disdain by which complainers were held by the prophets. This example illustrates how this behaviour can destroy relationships and any good we may have in our lives. It is truly a toxic behaviour.

Related emotions

Irritation (for people who have to listen), negativity, anger, resentment, ingratitude, and isolation (when people get tired of listening).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"It's not a big issue – I'm just saying..."*
- *"I just feel like having a moan." (There is no harm in that, is there?/I don't expect you to do anything for me.)*
- *"We always moan." (In our family/culture. [It is what we do but we don't mean anything by it. It's life, isn't it?])*
- *"I can't help it. I just feel so irritable these days."*
- *"Ignore me. I am just moaning." (And as I have asked you to ignore me, it means I can carry on doing it.)*

Possible consequences

- People will eventually distance themselves from us because negativity can easily 'infect' other people.
 - People will not share their happinesses and successes with us out of fear that we will belittle them by finding something negative. This, in turn, will reinforce our negativity because we will have little positivity to counter our complaining.
 - As we see in the hadith below, it is better to remain silent than to be punished for saying something which may anger Allah.
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We do not want to develop a habit which will only cause us to suffer in the hereafter.

Possible impact on faith

- Complaining is, in fact, a form of ingratitude for the blessings of Allah (ﷻ) and this is a quality disliked by Him. It may also result in any existing blessings being removed from our lives. Therefore, we may lose out not only in the hereafter but also in our worldly lives.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَنِي وَحُرِّزِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾
(سورة يوسف: ٨٦)

﴿He said: I only complain of my distress and sorrow to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know.﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 86)

﴿وَإِذْ تَأَذَّتْ رِيبِكُمْ لِينِ شُكْرِكُمْ لَا زَيْدَنَّاكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ﴾
(سورة إبراهيم: ٧)

﴿And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed: If you give thanks, I will surely give you more, but if you are ungrateful, verily My punishment is indeed severe.﴾ (Ibrāheem 14: 7)

﴿... وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّت قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّادِقِينَ عَلَى مَا آصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾﴾
(سورة الحج: ٣٤-٣٥)

﴿...And give glad tidings [O Muhammad] to the humble, those whose hearts are filled with awe when Allah is mentioned, who endure with patience whatever befalls them, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 34-35)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Whoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day should either speak good or be silent.» (Bukhari)

Salamah ibn `Ubaydullâh al-Khaṭmi (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) also said:

«For the one who reaches the morning while he is healthy in body, secure in dwelling, and possessing his day's sustenance, it is as though the worldly life has been fully granted to him.» (at-Tirmidhi; graded sound by al-Albâni)


Be aware about complaining

- It gets boring to listen to, which means people will find us boring as well.
- It sets a habit of ingratitude. Do we really have a good reason to complain?
- It solves nothing and serves only to remind us that we are not happy. Talk about solutions instead.
- Think about the advice Prophet Ibrâheem gave his son and start worrying!
- The Sunnah of the prophets is to keep their complaints for Allah, Who is in truth the Only One Who can do anything for us. We ought to try this instead of complaining to people.

Part 16: Deceiving/Cheating

Description and manifestations

Deceiving and cheating are the core behaviours of so many other destructive behaviours. They can be difficult not only to describe but also to recognise because of the range of disguises they take. Essentially, however, they both involve some form of covering reality, where we actively and consciously attempt to conceal the real picture of events, actions, words, or even emotions. Additionally, when we cheat, we may also add forms of avoiding compliance with moral and ethical guidelines as well as indulging in actual illegal



activity. Because they exist as sub-components of other destructive behaviours, we may not give them adequate attention or weight. Yet they contribute, perpetuate, and fuel destructive behaviour in a powerful yet discreet manner. Even in their manner of manifestation they are deceitful.

Deceiving and cheating may exist in actions such as a shopkeeper charging for poor quality goods; students cheating on exams; people creating loopholes to sidestep protocol; lying; misrepresenting ourselves or products or work we produce; insincerity; theft (be it of a pen at work or money from a purse); blackmail and extortion (irrespective of whether the one who does this is a powerful government body or an individual); and other forms of fraudulent behaviour. These behaviours also underlie other destructive behaviours such as being two-faced, backbiting, and making false promises because all such actions involve a covert level of deceit. We may not only mislead others through these behaviours but we may even deceive our own selves. The effects of these behaviours are such that due to the deceitful nature of deceit itself, it is often too late for the victim to realise what has happened. Their effects are pervasive and we see how, in extreme cases of cheating and deceit, the foundation of people's trust in others can be irreparably damaged.

Related emotions

Disappointment, hopelessness, mistrust, cynicism, harshness of character (to protect ourselves from abuse), abuse of power/position, and greed.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"They won't notice."*
 - *"If anyone asks me/says anything: Deny! Deny! Deny!"*
 - *"It was just too tempting/easy."*
 - *"Well, I have to get rid of bad stock as well as good so I need to show the good stuff to sell the bad. That's business!"*
-

- *“I have to feed my kids and make ends meet. The cost of living is going up.” (So I find it acceptable to charge you ten times the going rate.)*
- *“Everyone does it!” (Therefore I can't be doing anything wrong.)*
- *“If I am really nice to them, they won't catch me.” (And my guilt is covered with my smiles [because I know what I am doing is wrong: that's why I am covering it up].)*
- *“They are just kids/old people (that is, vulnerable and weak people). What can they do to me?”*
- *“I have no problems. I can sleep easy at night.” (Mainly because I just don't think about what I am doing [not because I think it is right].)*
- *“They haven't said anything, so it means they haven't noticed.” (I have gotten away with it. [I am not considering the possibility that they know how deceitful I am but have either forgiven me or are waiting to end our relationship/interaction.])*
- *“Oh, they are so nice. They know I am doing it and don't mind because they are so forgiving.” (So I will continue to deceive them. [Actually, it's their fault for being so nice... nice people are stupid, aren't they? So they get what they deserve.])*

Possible consequences

- We contribute to causing misery in the lives of other people, who may suffer as a consequence of our deceit. We will need to account not only for the deceit itself but also for the suffering of others because of our actions.
 - These qualities tend to undermine our personality as a whole and people will keep a distance from us because they will not be able to distinguish between our sincerity and deceit.
-

Possible impact on faith

- If we lie or deceive people about any aspect of Islam, we have created a major problem for our life in this world and the hereafter since it is likely to undermine our whole character. It may even take us out of Islam. No matter how well intentioned the deceit was and to what end, we are clearly warned in the Qur'an against such behaviour. Recovery from these acts is not easy.
- It is not the case that we are lying **for** Islam but **about** Islam. Allah does not need us to deceive, since the religion is described as truth (ḥaq). If we present Islam in a deceitful way, we have rejected this.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبْتُمْ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ﴾
(سورة البقرة: ٢٢٥)

﴿Allah will not call you to account for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will call you to account for that which is intended in your hearts; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.﴾
(*al-Baqarah* 2: 225)

﴿وَأَتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْحَيثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا﴾
(سورة النساء: ٢)

﴿Give orphans their property, and do not substitute [your] worthless things for [their] good ones, nor consume their wealth by mixing it with your own, for this is indeed a great sin.﴾ (*an-Nisā* 4: 2)

﴿لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ فَكَفَرْتُمْهُ إِطْعَامَ عَشْرَةِ مَسْكِينٍ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تَطْعَمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرَ رَقَبَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامَ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ كَفْرَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ﴾

وَأَحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ (سورة

المائدة: ٨٩)

﴿Allah will not call you to account for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will call you to account for the oaths which you swear in earnest. The expiation thereof is to feed ten poor persons with the average type of food that you give to your own families, or to clothe them, or to free a slave. If that is beyond your means, then fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths you have sworn. But fulfil your oaths. Thus Allah makes clear to you His revelations, so that you may give thanks.﴾ (al-Mā'idah 5: 89)

﴿ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِبِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾﴾ (سورة يوسف: ٥٢)

﴿[Yoosuf said:] Thus my master will know that I did not betray him in his absence, for Allah will never allow the plans of the treacherous to succeed.﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 52)

﴿وَبَلِّ لِلْمُطَفِّفِينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَكَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٤﴾ لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٥﴾ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾﴾ (سورة المطففين: ١-٦)

﴿Woe to those who give short measure, who, when they take by measure from people, demand it in full, but if they measure or weigh for them, they give them less than their due. Do these people not realise that they will be resurrected on a momentous day, a day on which humanity will stand before the Lord of the worlds?﴾ (al-Mutaffifeen 83: 1-6)

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Umar narrated:

«Two men came from the east and addressed the people, who were in wonder at their eloquent speeches.

Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: Some eloquent speech is as effective as magic.» (Bukhari)

Sahl ibn Sa'd (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «A man may seem to the people as if he were practising the deeds of the people of paradise while in fact he is from the people of the hellfire; another may seem to the people as if he were practising the deeds of the people of the hellfire while in fact he is from the people of paradise.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Be aware about deceiving/cheating

- Other people may not be able to see our intentions, but this is what Allah will judge us by.
- If we deceive and cheat, especially with finances, our own rizq may be decreased. We may wonder why, no matter how much money we make, we cannot make ends meet. This may be the reason why.
- Deceit has a habit of coming back at us in a way we didn't expect. People who have been deceived or cheated will want to clear their names if they have been implicated or find the perpetrator, so our bad behaviour will likely be exposed.
- Deceit means we lie and defraud others. It can't be disguised as harmless just because we assume others do not know what we are doing.

Part 17: Engaging in pointless debates and questioning

Description and manifestations

Engaging in pointless debate has come to be a pastime, especially in the more 'intellectual' circles of the society. Where countries have a progressive education system it may be encouraged, though usually constructively, as a form of advancement in the discipline. However, when the point is simply to pass time and 'flex our intellectual


muscles` in order to humiliate and degrade others, there is nothing constructive about it.

We may think that if we have a pointless debate about something intellectual then we are not guilty – even if we have not learnt anything from the discussion and in some cases even caused ourselves more confusion. Indeed, it has become an increasingly common practice amongst Muslims (although we have been warned against it – see the hadith below) to spend hours debating our views on certain hadiths, challenging those who do not agree, and considering that when we do so we are, in fact, being very pious. If we are honest, clearly this is not the case, especially when Islamic teachings warn us not to engage in it. In less academic settings, there is a tendency in some Muslim societies for people to become overinvolved in questioning for lack of something to do, whether they ask about private lives and relationships or other matters. To this end, it can spill over into gossip and backbiting and people are often offended when others exercise their right to refrain from engaging in such discussions.

This behaviour is destructive in the level of mental exhaustion it leaves us with. The continual negativity surrounding pointless debate and the circular arguments which never seem to end serve only to fuel resentment and estrangement and are rarely beneficial in imparting knowledge. Furthermore, we forget that the time wasted will never be returned and that we may have spent hours and even days when we perhaps even delayed our *ṣalâh* because we were so engrossed. We may sacrifice something very valuable for something very wasteful indeed. Herein lies its greatest destruction.

Related emotions

Resentment, estrangement, anger, hostility, stubbornness (usually related to refusing to accept that one's point is not valid), avoidance (of the one who engages in this behaviour), and social isolation.



Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I am not being annoying. I am just trying to find out." (For no good reason.)*
- *"I must make them agree with me." (Because I am right and they are wrong.)*
- *"It's good to have a dinner conversation." (Although it may put people off eating [it is such an intellectual thing to do].)*
- *"Why don't they want me to know? I must pursue this until I find out!" (Because I feel not being told is a form of rejection, even though they have a right not to tell me anything or answer my question. [I will not allow others to reject me.]*
- *"I just like to kill time."*
- *"I want you to know how much I know." (The more you engage, the more I can do this. [If you don't, I will reject you, insult you, and make you feel like a failure, so I win either way.]*
- *"Don't you like me? Why don't you tell me?" (I must keep asking [and ignore the fact that a good friend/Muslim doesn't ask questions they don't need to about the personal lives of others].)*
- *"I wouldn't mind if you asked me." (This is a challenge to show I don't mind, because I know they wouldn't ask. [I would tell them to clear off if they did.]*

Possible consequences

- People will be unlikely to invite us to meet with them or spend time with them relaxing because this habit causes irritation and tension and people do not like to be around it.
- People may not necessarily consider us to be intelligent just because we talk a lot. They may not listen to what we have to say or be influenced by it. If we are looking for an audience, this is not a good way.

- When we believe something with any level of conviction, we tend to want others to believe the same. When we implement this strategy in pointless questioning and debate, the danger is that we ‘convert’ people to ideas which we later refute, cannot recall saying, or have simply changed our views about. Whilst we may enjoy the debate, we ought to take responsibility for the danger our ideas cause to others when we force our ideas upon them for the sake of an entertaining evening.
- We may end up looking foolish because when we engage in such conversations we often concentrate less on the content of what we are saying and focus simply on defeating the other person. We may say things which have additional effects, which cause unnecessary hostility when the debate is over.

Possible impact on faith

- Since this is prohibited in Islam, we cannot consider that we will gain more knowledge, either of the religion or the worldly life, through it. There is unlikely to be any benefit from an activity which is advised against. Therefore, it is probable that we will narrow rather than expand our minds.
- If the debate is about religious knowledge and we do this with the intention of satisfying our ego, then similarly we are unlikely to benefit from any such knowledge, increase it, or find success through it.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ إِن تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ فَسُئِلْتُمْ وَإِن تَسْأَلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنزَلُ الْقُرْءَانُ أَن تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُوا بِهَا كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ ﴾ (سورة المائدة: ١٠١-١٠٢)

﴿O you who believe, do not ask questions about matters which, if they were made known to you, would only cause you hardship. If you ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made known to you. Allah has pardoned whatever happened in the past [of such questions]. Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing. Some people before you asked such questions, then became disbelievers as a result of that.﴾ (al-Mâ'idah 5: 101-102)

﴿خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٩٩)

﴿Be gracious, enjoin what is right and turn away from the ignorant.﴾ (al-A'raf 7: 199)

'Abdullâh ibn 'Umar related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«A man persists in asking the people for something until he faces Allah, the Almighty, without any flesh on his face.» (Muslim)

Abu Moosâ narrated:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about things which he did not like, but when the questioners insisted, the Prophet (ﷺ) became angry. He then said to the people: Ask me anything you like.

A man asked: Who is my father?

The Prophet (ﷺ) replied: Your father is Hudhâfah.

Then another man got up and asked: Who is my father, O Messenger of Allah?

He replied: Your father is Sâlim, the freed slave of Shaybah.

'Umar saw anger on the face of the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: O Messenger of Allah, we repent to Allah (for offending you).» (Muslim)

Ibn 'Abbâs said:

«Some people were asking Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) questions mockingly...

A man would say: Where is my she-camel?

So Allah revealed this verse in connection: ﴿O you who believe, do not ask questions about matters which, if they were made known

to you, would only cause you hardship...» (*al-Mā'idah* 5: 101) – and recited the whole verse.» (Bukhari)

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «...Allah has hated for you ... to ask too many questions (in disputed religious matters)...» (Bukhari)

Anas ibn Mālik narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «People will not stop asking questions until they say: This is Allah, the Creator of everything; then who created Allah?» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Be aware about engaging in pointless debates and questioning

- Sometimes asking too many questions will lead us to information we may well wish we did not know, and we will be stuck with the consequences.
- Such behaviour is considered the quality of the ignorant rather than intelligent people.
- It is clearly prohibited, so it is not a trivial matter and the punishment is grave.

Part 18: Failing to keep a healthy distance from sexual temptation

Description and manifestations

We are surrounded by cultures that tell us that guarding our sexual behaviour is wrong, unnatural, and repressive; if we are not willing to experiment in our youth, we are considered to have wasted our time or missed out on major experiences and rites of passage. (However, these same societies do not consider the pressure they impose regarding this very personal matter as being oppressive and controlling.) This mindset is not limited to non-Muslim cultures; indeed, across the

Muslim world, we see the same behaviours and attitudes. They tend to be more hidden and less prevalent, yet they do exist. It is considered part of the effort to be more modern and advanced, so young people in Muslim countries feel this is something they should desire and indulge in.

The ways in which we risk crossing the boundary of sexual temptation can loosely be described as anything we do to attract members of the opposite sex with whom we do not have a permissible relationship. This includes basic things such as:

- The way we dress (and what we compromise in the way we dress [and why]);
- The way we speak;
- The content of our speech;
- The tone we use when we speak (in Islam, men and women are told to use a professional manner when they speak to a member of the opposite gender);
- The amount of eye contact we make;
- The way we smile;
- How we use our bodies; and
- Our degree of and reasons for interaction.

The rules apply to both men and women; neither gender is exempt from certain ground rules. Whilst the hijab for women is in their covering as well as in some of the above points, for men it is in dressing modestly and lowering their gaze.

Also included in these behaviours are the films we watch and the type of discussions we have – by this I do not mean we avoid this issue; I mean the content of conversations we have which neutralise or trivialise this issue – as it all contributes to making sexual temptation easier and accepted.

Pressure on young people is very real. It is a great challenge when media images all over the world encourage sexual behaviours in subtle as well as obvious ways. If we do not have the right body shape, clothes, or facial appearance, we are told we are not attractive to the opposite sex. This is considered a failure on our part; remedying our superficial 'flaws' is identified as the main goal, set for us by most of the media today. If we defend ourselves from this, it is easy to become socially isolated or considered abnormal. The freedom of choice to reject this is taken away from us by the same people who complain that they do not want ideas impressed upon them but are happy to do so to others. The situation is not easy and Muslim communities have failed to equip our youth with the support and confidence they need to manage this issue.

We see examples in the seerah of how men and women behaved with one another and how couples would spend time together interacting, talking, and eating – even taking their complaints about their spouses to others (with the intention of seeking advice) – all done within the boundaries of Islam. We seem to have lost the balance now and have been unable to develop an appropriate middle way to emulate these examples without fear that we will offend culture or egos. It is an area that has remained untouched in terms of management and it is rarely discussed in a constructive manner. With the younger generations, we see that the prohibition and warning models previously used do not allow them to ask any questions about such matters for fear of instant punishment. They do not ask adults at all, so relationships tend to come to light only much later, often when the damage is already done.

Related emotions

Feeling repressed, peer pressure, lust, unhappiness in our marital relationships (which often results in people seeking their needs elsewhere), shame (at being discovered), regret, secrecy, and deceit.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"No one will know."*
- *"But I am going to marry them." (If I say this, I feel I have an excuse... even though we have not discussed it.)*
- *"I am in total control of my emotions and my body."*
- *"People know me – I would never do that." (So if I came close, I could forgive myself because no one would suspect me.)*
- *"This new style of beard/hijab makes me look really sexy!" (The boys/girls will love it!)*
- *"I know I shouldn't be in the room alone with him/her but my intention is not bad. We are just talking/working." (Though I do find them really attractive.)* This is a trap, since after such behaviour is repeated a few times, the next stage becomes easier and the boundaries are more readily crossed because of the previous justification of good intention. Alternatively, nothing may happen but the thought deceives us into thinking we are not doing anything wrong.
- *"I refuse to have someone dictate to me what I should and should not wear. People should not look at me if I wear provocative clothing." (I know I look good, though [and I secretly enjoy the attention but I must be seen rejecting it].)*

In an ideal world, people would indeed focus only on themselves, but sadly, we do not live in such a world. Just as we lock the doors to our homes and protect our families and our belongings, we must take personal responsibility for protecting ourselves. This does not mean (as is too often the case) that we can be blamed for any harm that comes to us because of the wrong actions and weakness of others. There is no justice if we blame the victim and excuse the perpetrator. This only serves to increase the acceptability of wrong behaviour in general.

- *“I am not flirting. It just so happens I am always made up/ smell good whenever so-and-so is around.” (Actually, I try to be prepared in case I do bump into him/her.)*
- *“It’s just a sneak peek, so quick they wouldn’t notice so it doesn’t really count.” (Though I am planning it and it is not accidental.)*
- *“I don’t get what I want/need from my wife/husband.” (So watching porn is better than having an affair, isn’t it? I would be so angry if I found out they were doing it, though. It’s haram, after all!)*
- *“It’s nothing I haven’t seen already, so watching porn/nudity is not really an issue. We are all adults.”*

Possible consequences

- We are likely to get ourselves into a difficult situation and in some cases not be able to undo the damage. We should not assume sex ensures a marriage proposal. Rather, it can lead to the rejection of the person for their promiscuity and is often used as leverage in arguments when we try to defend our good character with the same person we have been involved with.
- We will be destined to marry someone like us; we may not have minded such a boyfriend/girlfriend but may not be able to live with him or her as a spouse.

Possible impact on faith

- It is considered a major sin, especially if we consider what the Sharia punishment is: stoning to death for the married persons and one hundred lashes for the unmarried. (*an-Noor* 24: 2) Consider how severe this punishment is. Additionally, illicit relationships involve more than this; they are added to by deceit, lies, and other actions, so a major sin is added to by a host of other sins to maintain it. Naturally, it takes us very far
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from what is expected of the Muslim character and what Allah guides us to. It is certainly not a good start to any relationship we may later want to legitimise.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّيْفَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٣٢)

﴿Do not approach fornication [or adultery], for it is shameful, an abominable way indeed.﴾ (*al-Isrā' 17: 32*)

﴿ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾ ﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ١-١١)

﴿The believers have indeed attained true success, those who humble themselves in their prayers, who turn away from all that is vain [of words and deeds], who are active in giving zakat, and who restrain their carnal desires, except with their wives or any slave women they may own, for then they are free of blame. But whoever seeks anything beyond that, such are the transgressors. Those who are faithful to their trusts and pledges, and who are diligent in their prayers, such will be the heirs who will inherit paradise; they will abide therein forever.﴾

(*al-Mu'minoon 23: 1-11*)

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ ۝ يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوبَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ

خَطُوتِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ (سورة النور: ١٩-٢١)

Verily, those who like to see indecency spread among the believers will have a painful punishment in this world and the hereafter; Allah knows, and you do not know. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah towards you, and that He is Most Compassionate, Most Merciful [He would have hastened to punish you]. O you who believe, do not follow the footsteps of Satan; whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, he only enjoins indecency and wickedness. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah towards you, not one of you would ever have been purified. But Allah purifies whomever He wills, and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. ﴿an-Noor 24: 19-21﴾

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُجُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنَاتِ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾﴾ (سورة

النور: ٣٠-٣١)

Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is [fully] aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their head covers over their chests and not expose their adornment

except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed. ﴿ (an-Noor 24: 30-31)

﴿ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لَسْتَنْ كَاٰحِدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ اِنْ اَتَقَيْتَ ۙ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْاُولٰٓئِ وَاقْمِنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَتَيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهُ ۗ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة الاحزاب: ٣٢-٣٣)

¶ O wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women, provided that you fear Allah. So do not speak too softly, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire; but speak in an appropriate manner. Stay in your homes and do not flaunt your charms as was done during the former [times of] ignorance; establish prayer and give zakat; and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only wants to keep all that is loathsome away from you, O members of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you thoroughly. ﴿ (al-Aḥzāb 33: 32-33)

﴿ ... وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسَأَلُوهُنَّ مِن وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَلَا اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْا اَزْوَاجَهُ ۗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِ ۗ اَبْدًا ۗ اِنْ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمًا ﴿٥٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة الاحزاب: ٥٣)

¶ ...And when you ask them [his wives] for anything, ask them from behind a screen; that is more pure for your hearts and for theirs. It is not proper for you to cause annoyance to the Messenger of Allah or to ever marry his wives after he is gone, for that would be a grievous offence before Allah. ﴿ (al-Aḥzāb 33: 53)

﴿يَأَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلْبَابِهِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: ٥٩)

﴿O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters, and the believing women, to put on their *jalâbeeb* [when they go out]; this will make it more likely that they will be recognized [as chaste women] and will not be harassed. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ (*al-Ahzâb* 33: 59)

﴿يَعْلَمُ خَائِبَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ﴾ (سورة غافر: ١٩)

﴿Allah knows the stealth of the eyes and all that the hearts conceal.﴾ (*Ghâfir* 40: 19)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Faith consists of a little over seventy – or a little over sixty – elements; the best of them is: *lâ ilâha illâ Allâh* and the least of them is removing harm from the path, and shyness is a part of faith.» (Muslim)

Abu Qatâdah (رضي الله عنه) said:

«We were in a group sitting with ‘Imrân ibn Ḥuṣayn and among us was Bushayr ibn Ka‘b. That day, ‘Imrân related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Shyness is the best virtue, or he said: Shyness is the best of virtues...» (Muslim)

Jareer ibn ‘Abdullâh (رضي الله عنه) said:

«I asked Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) about a quick glance at the face. He ordered me to turn away my eyes.» (Muslim)

‘Alqamah (رضي الله عنه) said:

«I was walking with ‘Abdullâh at Mina when ‘Uthmân met him. He stopped there and spoke to him. ‘Uthmân said: O Abu ‘Abdur-Raḥmân, let us find for you a young woman to marry.

He said: When you say so, (it reminds me that) Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: O young men, whoever among you can afford to support a wife then he should marry, for it keeps the eyes from glancing and

prevents immorality, and whoever cannot afford to do so, then he should fast in order to control his desire.» (Muslim)

‘Uqbah ibn ‘Âmir (رضي الله عنه) reported:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: Be warned about visiting the ladies. A man from the *Anṣâr* asked: O Messenger of Allah, what about the wife’s (male) in-laws?¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: The (male) in-laws are death (to the wife).» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Allah has decreed for the son of Âdam his share of the adultery he commits with the eyes. The adultery of the eye is to look at a forbidden thing and the adultery of the tongue is to engage in talk, while the self wishes and desires and the private parts affirm all of this or deny it.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«The denizens of the fire will be of two kinds and I have yet not seen them. One will have whips like the tails of oxen and they will flog people with them. The women will be naked although they are dressed; they invite others to wrongdoing and allure others to it with hair like the humps of camels. These women will never be admitted to paradise nor will they perceive the fragrance of paradise, although its scent can be perceived from a distance.» (Muslim)

‘Uqbah (Abu Mas’ood) said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Surely of the sayings of the earlier prophets that have reached the people are that if you do not have shame, then you may do what you like.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Faith consists of more than sixty sub-divisions or branches (parts). And *al-ḥayâ*’ is a part of faith.» (Bukhari)

¹ Some scholars say this refers particularly to the brother-in-law. (Editor)

Samurah ibn Jundab (رضي الله عنه) related:

«When the Prophet (ﷺ) finished the (morning) prayer, he would face us and ask: Who amongst you had a dream last night?

So if anyone had a dream he would narrate it. The Prophet (ﷺ) would say: *Mâ shâ' Allâh* (indicating a good occurrence).

One day, he asked us whether any of us had seen a dream. We replied in the negative. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: But I saw (a dream) last night that two men came to me, caught hold of my hands, and took me to the Sacred Land... We proceeded on and passed by a hole like an oven, with a narrow top and wide bottom and a fire kindling underneath the hole. Whenever the flame went up, the people were lifted up to such an extent that they were about to get out of it and whenever the fire got quieter the people went down into it and there were naked men and women in it. I asked: Who (what) is this? ... You have made me ramble about all night. Tell me all about what I have seen.

They (the two companions who had accompanied him) said: ...And those whom you saw in the hole (like an oven) were adulterers (those men and women who committed forbidden sexual intercourse)...» (Bukhari)

‘Alqamah narrated:

«While I was walking with ‘Abdullâh, he said: We were in the company of the Prophet (ﷺ) and he said: He who can afford to marry should marry because it will help him to lower his gaze (from looking at forbidden things and other women) and save his private parts (from committing illegal sexual acts), and he who cannot afford to marry is advised to fast, as fasting will diminish his sexual urges.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about failing to keep a healthy distance from sexual temptation

- One thing leads to another; we should not make ourselves vulnerable. Even if we deceive ourselves into thinking it is

all right because we intend to marry that person, things may not work out and the contact remains a source of regret and fear (in case a [different] future spouse should discover the secret).

- We must be clear which people are defined as mahram and which are not. There is no such thing as a non-mahram being your ‘brother’, as is an excuse in many Muslim countries for a woman to neglect maintaining hijab in front of them. We must not lie to ourselves about this.
 - Adultery and fornication are clearly prohibited and the punishment in Islam is severe, so even if we live in a non-Muslim country we must think about what the punishment would be if we lived under Islamic law. That will help us focus on avoidance.
 - It is okay to be in love with or feel attracted to people, even though in many cultures this is considered ‘sinful’; in itself, it is not. However, what happens next can be. Islamically, we are advised to find out more about a potential spouse and go ahead with what is allowed. We should show our sincerity and commitment and marry them if we feel they can provide (most of) what we need for a successful marriage. Indeed, in these instances there are procedures in Sharia where it is encouraged to see the other person and talk in company, but this is in a specific context only.
 - Allah (ﷻ) knows this is far from easy. This is why we are told that the one who avoids an invitation from a woman for sexual intercourse will be one of the seven groups of people under His shade on the Last Day. (Bukhari, Muslim, and others) So we must choose what we want the most.
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Part 19: Failing to keep good company

Description and manifestations

The influence of unhelpful friends and acquaintances is widely acknowledged by parents and peers, by partners and siblings; there is a general awareness that friends can influence us in unhealthy ways and change us for the worse rather than for the better. Indeed, in some therapeutic treatments for problems such as addiction, part of the withdrawal from the substance – whatever it may be – can sometimes be changing our social circle. So we see that friendship is a serious issue with far-reaching implications.

We have perhaps all experienced at some point a negative influence from unhealthy friends and the detrimental effect it can have on our own thinking and behaviour. Doing the wrong thing or covering our wrong behaviours whilst maintaining them is so much easier with support around us. We have only to consider how often we share our wrong deeds with our friends because they are most likely to accept them. The irony of such ‘friends’ is that they may disown us when it is time for them to take responsibility for their encouragement and influence.

The manifestation of this behaviour is best understood by how we measure what defines an unhelpful friend. Essentially, we see that either because of being with them or while we are with them, we notice a degenerative effect on our good behaviours and an increase in our bad behaviours. When we share with them those things we have done wrong, they tend to be reassuring and passive rather than supportive to change; they may not react at all because the wrongful behaviour is seen as accepted and the norm. They may find it entertaining or even encourage us to repeat our mistakes. This, of course, means they are not concerned about the repercussions on us or our lives, since, as mentioned above, they are not likely to acknowledge their role in our problem. They may even exclude or punish us if we do not agree



with their stance, so we may feel forced to behave in a certain way with them and compromise. Such groups of people may force us to choose between them and other people (friends or family). Again, this is a sign that the company we keep is not right.

As we mentioned earlier, this is a friendship where the agreements between the two parties are based solely on what each other's ego considers fit, with little or no ethical benchmark. It is very hard to maintain such a relationship, as there is no prediction as to what the next expectation will be. The reasons for encouraging others to behave badly are often related to their own unhappy circumstances. These may even encourage us to live out their angry fantasies and let us take the consequences, but because they are our 'friends' we are not likely to expose them. In essence, bad company helps us cover harmful behaviour, which is as destructive to ourselves as it is to those we harm.

Related emotions

Weakness/vulnerability, fear of rejection and social isolation, and wanting to be part of the accepted crowd (irrespective of what behaviour is expected from the other person).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I don't have any other friends apart from these. If I give them up, I will be alone."*
- *"They are my friends. They are just looking out for me." (In their own way. [It may not be the best thing for me, but how do I reject their help without them getting annoyed with me and maybe even losing their friendship?])*
- *"It's not my friends who are wrong – it's you!" (I don't want to reflect upon my behaviour and I must defend my friends, because that's what friends do.)*
- *"Well, we have to forgive our friends and not be judgemental."*

- *“Actually, I need to advise them and explain to them when they are wrong and I can only do that if I catch them red-handed.” (I am ignoring the fact that I do not comment when they drink and smoke [and my silence is not about disapproval, but about fear that I will be yelled at or rejected].)*
- *“Better to have these friends than none at all.”*
- *“You don’t understand us; they are good people.” (Because they are nice to me. [While I do these bad things, they support me.])*

Possible consequences

- These friends will likely leave us as they move on with their lives, but their influence will remain. Since this influence is negative, it is we who will have to deal with the consequences of having such friends.
 - When the basis for a relationship is unhealthy, we tend to lose out on healthy relationships with other friends and family, all of whom will also move on. We are likely to be left with a very negative view of the world through the limited group of bad company we choose to keep. This view will serve only to harden our bad behaviour and eventually our hidden unhappiness and make us less likely to be more constructive in our lives. (We see cases where people who stand with bad company end up with very little success.)
 - We will be seen to hold all of the group habits by association, whether we implement them or not and whether we agree with them or not.
 - We are likely to attract more people with the same behaviours because anyone who wants to change will simply leave the group. They will not accommodate our alternative desires because that is not the basis for friendships such as these.
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Possible impact on faith

- We are doubling up on sins, not only our own but of all the group members whose wrong behaviour we support or encourage (be that through silent participation or voiced commendation).
- When someone reassures us that the wrong we do is fine and not to worry, we tend to repeat it. They are only helping us to increase our punishment in the hereafter (see the section on definitions of sins) but they will not be ready to take any punishment for us, as we see from some of the verses below.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتَ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَفْعَدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي مَخِوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا مَاتَهُمْ إِنْ اللَّهُ جَامِعُ الْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٠)

﴿He has already revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the revelations of Allah being rejected and ridiculed, do not sit with them until they begin to talk of other things; otherwise, you would be like them. Verily, Allah will gather all the hypocrites and disbelievers together in hell.﴾ (*an-Nisâ' 4: 140*)

﴿ وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا لَا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٤٨)

﴿The people on the heights will call out to men whom they will recognise by their marks: Of what benefit to you were your great numbers and wealth and your scornful pride?﴾ (*al-A'raf 7: 48*)

﴿ وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ ﴾ (سورة الرعد: ٣٧)

﴿Thus have We revealed it, a code of law in Arabic. If you were to follow their whims and desires, after the knowledge that has come to

you, you would have neither protector nor defender against Allah. ﴿
(ar-Ra'd 13: 37)

﴿ وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَّ الْحَقُّ وَعَدَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُمُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾

(سورة إبراهيم: ٢٢)

﴿And Satan will say, when the matter is decided: Verily, Allah gave you a true promise; I also gave you promises, but I betrayed you. I had no power over you, except that I called you and you responded to me. So do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I disavow your erstwhile association of me with Allah. Verily, for the wrongdoers there will be a painful punishment. ﴿

(Ibrâheem 14: 22)

﴿ وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ، وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٢٨)

﴿Content yourself with [the company of] those who call upon their Lord every morning and afternoon, seeking [to see, in the hereafter] His Countenance, and do not turn your eyes away from them, desiring the adornment of the life of this world. And do not obey him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own whims and desires, and is reckless in his deeds. ﴿ (al-Kahf 18: 28)

﴿ اللَّطِيفَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٦٦﴾ (سورة

النور: ٢٦)

Evil words describe evil people, and evil people are described by evil words; good words describe good people, and good people are described by good words. Those [good people] are innocent of all that [the slanderers] say; they will have forgiveness and a generous provision. ﴿ (an-Noor 24: 26)

﴿يَوَلِّيٰ لِيٰنِي لَمْ اَخْذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيْلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ لَقَدْ اَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ جَاءَنِي ﴿٢٩﴾ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِلْاِنْسٰنِ خَدُوْلًا ﴿٣٠﴾﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٢٨-٢٩)

Alas for me! Would that I had not taken So-and-so as a friend! He led me astray from the Reminder [the Qur'an] after it had come to me. And Satan is ever treacherous to man. ﴿ (al-Furqān 25: 28-29)

﴿اٰخْرٰوْا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا وَاَزْوَجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَاهْدُوْهُمْ اِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقَفُوْهُرَّ اِيْنَهُمْ مَّسْئُوْلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ مَا لَكُمْ لَا نُنَاصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ بَلْ هُمْ اَلْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاَقْبَلْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَسْتَاْءُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالُوْا اِيْنكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَاْتُوْنَآ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ لَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا طٰغِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا اِنَّا لَلذٰلِقُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَاَعُوْبَتَكُمْ اِنَّا كَاْنُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾﴾ (سورة الصافات: ٢٢-٣٢)

[Allah will command:] Gather together those who did wrong, and others of their ilk, as well as whatever they used to worship besides Allah, and direct them to the path of hell. But detain them, for they are to be questioned. [Allah will say to them:] What is the matter with you, that you do not help one another? Rather on that day they will submit completely. They will turn upon one another, reproaching one another. They [the followers] will say [to the leaders]: You used to prevent us from doing what is right [and good]. [The leaders] will say [to the followers]: Rather it was you who would not believe, and we had no power over you. Rather it was you who were a people given to transgression. Now the punishment of our Lord has become inevitable for us; we will surely taste it. We led you astray, for we ourselves had gone astray. ﴿ (as-Sāffāt 37: 22-32)

﴿ فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ ﴿٥١﴾ يَقُولُ
 آءَا نَكَ لِمَنِ الْمَصْدِقِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ آءَا ذَا مِنَّا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظْمًا آءَا نَالِمُ الَّذِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ هَلْ أُنْتُمْ
 مُّظْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِن كُنتَ لَتَرِدُنِي ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَوْلَا
 رِغْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنتَ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَمِينِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ إِلَّا مَوْتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ
 بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ ﴿سورة الصافات: ٥٠-٥٩﴾

They will turn to one another with questions. One of them will say: I had a friend [on earth], who used to say: Are you one of those who believe that when we have died and become dust and bones, we will be brought to account? He will say: Shall we look for him [in the fire]? So he will look down and see him in the middle of the blazing fire. He will say: By Allah, you almost brought about my ruin! Were it not for the grace of my Lord, I too would have been there [in hell]. Is it then that we are not going to die, except our first death, and that we will not be punished? ﴿as-Saffat 37: 50-59﴾

﴿ وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ
 عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَنَا قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ
 الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَيَتَسَاءَلُ الْقَرِينُ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَلَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ إِذ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ فِي الْعَذَابِ
 مُشْتَرِكُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ ﴿سورة الزخرف: ٣٦-٣٩﴾

Whoever turns away from the reminder of the Most Gracious [the Qur'an], We will assign to him a devil to be his constant companion. Verily, they [the devils] bar them from the [right] path, but they think that they are rightly guided. Then when [such a one] comes to Us, he will say [to his devil companion]: Would that there was between me and you the distance between east and west. What a wretched companion! [It will be said to them:] As you have done wrong, it will not benefit you today that you are to share the punishment. ﴿az-Zukhruf 43: 36-39﴾

﴿لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُم بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ أُولَئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (سورة المجادلة: ٢٢)

¶You will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having close ties with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers or their kindred. It is they in whose hearts Allah has inscribed faith and strengthened them with divine aid. He will admit them to gardens through which rivers flow, to abide therein forever. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. They are the party of Allah; verily it is the party of Allah Who will be the successful ones.﴾ (al-Mujādilah 58: 22)

Abu Moosā narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The example of a good and righteous companion and an evil one is that of a person carrying (or selling) musk and another blowing a pair of bellows. The one who is carrying (or selling) musk will either give you some perfume as a present or you will get a good smell from him, but the one who is blowing a pair of bellows will either burn your clothes or you will get a bad smell from him.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Seven types of people will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His. They are: ...two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake, and they meet and part only in Allah's cause...» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«A man follows the religion of his friend, so look at who you befriend.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by an-Nawawi)

Be aware about failing to keep good company

- If we spend time with the wrong crowd, we should not be surprised if people think we have the same negative characteristics.
- We should consider carefully the advice our friends give us and measure it with what is expected Islamically. This is a good guide for us to avoid listening to bad advice or being influenced by a friend who may lead us to greater problems.
- A good friend will bring out the best in us and tell us (nicely) when we are wrong (to protect us from harming ourselves or others and making life unnecessarily difficult). They will encourage us when we do something good and try to prevent us from doing something wrong.

Part 20: Favouritism

Description and manifestations

As with being unjust, when it comes to those we love, we can always find excuses to do for them what may harm someone else and somehow our consciences are at ease with it; they are, after all, our family, are they not? We forget that those other people mean something to someone as well, quite apart from the moral and ethical issues involved in the behaviour. The seerah shows us that there was no favouritism between the Prophet's friends, wives, and family and all were subject to the same laws, including himself. The right person was chosen for their skills. The wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) were warned clearly that their relation to him had no personal benefits, and amongst the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) there was no injustice committed against each other, no matter what the hearts felt about the other wives. *Mâ shâ' Allâh*, the Prophet (ﷺ) even encouraged parents to show their love equally to all children. No one was above another in matters of this world or the next (be that paradise or otherwise) just

because of their relatives and friends. Yet the problem of favouritism is a common problem in the Ummah.

Favouritism is manifest in a range of specific ways, but the favoured person is always identifiable by these actions. What occurs of favouritism in the heart is not in our control, but what is demonstrated externally by our injustices because of it clearly is. We see favouritism in parents:

- When certain children are always encouraged and rewarded and others are ignored no matter what they achieve;
- When two children do wrong and only one is punished;
- When opportunities are given only to certain children and others are excluded; and
- When one child can do no wrong irrespective of how wrong their behaviour may be.

We see it in marriages:

- When a spouse favours their family over their partner's;
- When the husband gives rights to one wife and not the other; and
- When a spouse supports their siblings but not their partner for the same actions.

We see it in business:

- When personal friends may be the ones who are offered promotions even if they do not have the requisite skill set; and
- When the rules of employment are relaxed for some workers but not others in spite of mitigating circumstances.

We see across a number of Muslim communities that it is a common practice to simply hire one's friends and relations no matter what their professional background may be; in those countries, we see the sad outcome, which is clearly manifested in the poor quality of services

offered. In such cases where favouritism is part of the cultural norm, it has a national impact.

The role of justice in favouritism means that it is again inherently linked to rights and agreements. It may further involve personal prejudices based on any number of internal or external preferences. The reasons also vary since they may not always be out of love but due to fear of the consequences of not showing favour to one person over another (of course, this only legitimises their possible jealousy, which in itself is a sin in Islam). So it is possible to create harm from an apparent act of (selective) love.

We may consider favouritism to be a trivial thing, but in most cases the effects are very disruptive and impact on others, sometimes for many years, with serious consequences. The result is divisive and we can never predict when we will face the consequences of our unfairness and the extent to which this impacts our wider social settings. It is ironic that with many of these behaviours, no matter how much we seek to harm people, we harm ourselves the most.

Related emotions

Jealousy, resentment (of others' position to help their family), revenge, and abuse of power and position (through the unethical implementation of personal preferences and prejudices).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"She/he is my friend/family/child." (The rules of justice do not apply to them, only to others [so I will ignore how this is an obvious and public rejection of all you have done for me].)*
 - *"They are the best person for this job." (Well, they are not [but my mother would go crazy if I did not hire my cousin].)*
 - *"I believe them over you because they are my friend and I have known them for years." (There is no need to check if the facts are correct because my friends are perfect.) (See the 'halo effect' mentioned earlier.)*
-

- *"No one gave me a step up and I know how hard I had to work. Why shouldn't I make it easy for someone else? Besides, I really like her/him." (I can always be on hand to help them learn what they need to know [and can ignore the impact this has on the work of others who do have the skills but whom I like less... if they are low in morale because of it, then it's not my issue].)*
- *"I love them." (This means they are good people as far as I am concerned, so forget the facts [and they deserve more justice than anyone else].) (Again, the 'halo effect'.)*
- *"But I know her/him better than a stranger, so that's a safer bet, isn't it?" This is always a ready excuse to not even allow others a chance.*
- *"I must favour so-and-so because otherwise my family will turn against me." (I am more afraid of them than of you – so you can suffer whilst I show my favouritism [to keep myself safe from their harm... actually, I am being very cowardly].)*
- *"She just reminds me of myself/my favourite aunt/grandmother... so I can't tell her to stop her behaviour because I missed out on doing things with them." (So I am doing this for myself and my favouritism is actually about past failures, not current loves.)*
- *"Don't you worry: I will help you get where you need to go." (No matter that there are others who deserve the same chance. [That's what family does for each other! Forget all those other loyalties people have shown me and forget ethics as well.])*

Possible consequences

- We may enjoy supporting our favoured one(s), but we risk the resentment of others and the consequences that go with this. There is always a price to pay where injustice is concerned.
- Whilst we may be able to implement and control this behaviour in a contained environment, things change and we may lose that control.

- Do not expect those whom we favour to remain loyal; they learn from us how to focus on their own benefits and needs. If we are parents, we ought to think about what we are teaching our children. Would we really want to be responsible for our family being divided because of our love for one child over the others? What will that child do when we are no longer around? Our behaviour may well have caused them problems with their siblings, and we will not be there to protect them in the future when we are gone.
- The negative consequences caused by favouritism will not encourage people to make du‘â’ for us, so it will eventually backfire on us somewhere along the line.

Possible impact on faith

- Since favouritism is divisive, when this is done amongst children we risk depriving ourselves of the du‘â’s of the other children. Is this wise, since they will be the ones whose du‘â’s will help us after we die?
- This is a secret form of injustice and again, one behaviour can encompass a number of sins. The justification of a good intention (such as love) will not nullify the act if it was a wrong one. We are actually rejecting the rules of Allah (ﷻ) as if we were unaware that it is He and not our favoured one who will hold the keys to paradise. Focus on favouring Allah and His commands rather than others.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۗ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْكَيْلِ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ لَا تَكْلِفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۗ وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا

قُرْبَىٰ وَيَعْتَدِ اللَّهُ أَوْفُوا ذَلِكُمْ وَصْنَكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٥٢)

«Do not touch the orphan's property, before he comes of age, except to improve it; give full measure and weight, with equity. We do not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear. And when you speak, be fair, even if it concerns a close relative. And fulfil the covenant of Allah. Thus He instructs you, so that you may pay heed.»
(*al-An'âm* 6: 152)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الْمُدْتَرِّ ۱﴾ قُرْآنِدِرْ ۲ ﴿وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرْ ۳﴾ وَتِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ ۴ ﴿وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ ۵﴾ وَلَا تَمَنَّ عَلَىٰ مَن تَسْتَكْبِرُ ۶ ﴿وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ ۷﴾ (سورة المدثر: ١-٧)

«O you who are covered with your cloak, arise and warn, your Lord magnify, your garments purify, abomination shun, give not out of a desire for gain, and for the sake of your Lord, be patient.» (*al-Muddath-thir* 74: 1-7)

Ibn Mas'ood related:

«Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: You will see after me favouritism and things which you will disapprove of.

They asked: What do you order us to do (under such circumstances)?

He replied: Discharge your obligations and ask for your rights from Allah.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

«Usayd ibn Ḥudayr reported that a person from among the Anṣār said: O Messenger of Allah! You appointed such-and-such person. Why do you not appoint me?

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: After me, you will see others given preference over you, but you should remain patient until you meet me at the *hawd* (a cistern, stream, or pool in paradise).» (Bukhari, Muslim, and others)

Be aware about favouritism

- This is simply not justice. No matter how much we support and aid someone simply due to favouritism in this world, in the hereafter they (and we) will be on our own. This applies to everyone, no matter who we are or what we do.
- If we achieved something solely through favouritism, we should not be proud of ourselves.
- If we lose out on something because someone else was favoured, we must consider it a challenge to maintain our good behaviour. We will be given justice on the Last Day and, *in shâ' Allâh*, will be rewarded for both our patience and our forbearance.

Part 21: Gossiping

Description and manifestations

Described as *laghw* (dirty, vain, evil speech) in the Qur'an, the overlap between this and other destructive behaviours such as backbiting, hypocrisy, lying, and others is very clear. Therefore, the boundaries are easily confused. It is manifest in various forms such as:

- Exploring details unnecessary for us to have;
- Focusing on and revelling in the mistakes and wrongdoings of others;
- Conversing about people whilst they are not there (we are rarely brave enough to do this when they are present); and
- Pontificating on what we see as the mistakes in others' lives.

We find people's difficult situations amusing and are full of advice which we would never actually give to them; it is just fodder for our own thoughts.

As with complaining, gossiping is a favourite pastime for many people. Digging for personal information about the lives of others is considered harmless. Often, the talk is about people we do not know, nor are likely to meet, so gossiping about them seems acceptable because of the distance. This is without doubt promoted by the media, who encourage our interest in trivial things about the lives of others and make us feel socially inadequate if we are not aware of such details. Social circles mirror such ideas and we regularly ask for updates on local personalities or family and community members, usually for our personal interest alone; we are bored and need something to occupy us. The content is almost always negative: focusing on the wrongs of others, shocking news about them, things that humiliate them before others, and information that they would not want to be known. These factors make gossip entertaining – it replaces television and is available any time.

Gossiping is never constructive because we do nothing with the information but pass it on to others when they are bored and need amusement. We claim that we do no harm (though this cannot be guaranteed) but we certainly do no good either. If we are honest, how often do we enquire or spend an afternoon talking about the private lives of others so we can help them in some way? Hardly ever! We want to know only for the sake of knowing. Of course, we forget and are not so keen when the gossip is about ourselves. If we consider how often we are told by Allah in the Qur'an to reflect, we can consider how much progress we would make on our characters if we gossiped (to ourselves) about ourselves instead of others: that would be a very humbling experience indeed.


Related emotions

Boredom, nosiness, jealousy, resentment, and possible abuse of power (what people are doing in their private lives can be useful information in different contexts of other destructive behaviours).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I am not saying anything bad about them." (That's backbiting, and I am so nice I don't talk about people behind their backs. [I am just nosy about their personal lives.]*)
- *"It doesn't harm them. They don't know I know." (The fact that I do not **need** to know passes me by.)*
- *"I'm bored and getting all the latest gossip is fun." (Just because they didn't want to tell me what they were doing doesn't mean I won't find out.)*
- *"My life is boring. What else is there to talk about?" (I can justify my gossip with a back-handed compliment – my life is so empty compared to their exciting lives, woe is me – no one wants to gossip about me.)*
- *"It brings some colour into my drab little life."*
- *"I am not gossiping. Actually, I am concerned." (I have no intention of actually talking to the person themselves [but if I sound concerned then it doesn't sound like gossiping, does it?])*

Possible consequences

- We are not always going to be considered interesting to be around.
 - People may come to us only for gossip, which means they do not really value anything else we have to offer. Worse still, they may think we have nothing else to offer besides gossip. This means they find us, in truth, to be shallow and have no actual respect for us.
 - We do not actually gain popularity, but notoriety. Consider the difference.
 - Everyone knows a gossip, so we should not think that we can disguise this if we are one. People will be careful about what they share with us.
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- We may be considered a source of entertainment but not a friend.
- If our friends are gossips too, then we have no way of changing this habit and we will remain stuck with it.
- There is no positive contribution to society with this behaviour, yet it takes up so much of our time.

Possible impact on faith

- After we die, any knowledge we passed on that helped someone will be a source of constant reward. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, as narrated by Abu Hurayrah:

«When a man dies, his good deeds come to an end except three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, and a righteous son (or child) who will pray for him.» (Muslim)

If the only knowledge we transmit is pointless information, we will have created a loss for ourselves and a great source of regret.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ، وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ٨٣)

¶ When they hear any news, whether it is of a reassuring or disquieting nature, they make it known to all and sundry, whereas if they referred it to the Messenger and those in authority among them, those who sought news could learn it from them. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah towards you, all but a few of you would have followed Satan. ﴿ (an-Nisā' 4: 83)

﴿ وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٥٣)

﴿Tell My slaves that they should say what is best, for Satan sows discord among them. Verily, Satan is to man an avowed enemy.﴾
(*al-Isrā' 17: 53*)

﴿ ... وَلَيَسْئَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْقَرُونَ ﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ١٣)

﴿...and on the Day of Resurrection they will surely be questioned about the lies they fabricated.﴾ (*al-'Ankaboot 29: 13*)

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَخْفَىٰ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَىٰ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا آدَنَىٰ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴾ (سورة المجادلة: ٧)

﴿Do you not see that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth? There is no private conversation among three but He is their fourth, or among five but He is their sixth, or among fewer or more than that, but He is with them, wherever they may be. Then He will inform them of their deeds, on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Allah has knowledge of all things.﴾ (*al-Mujādilah 58: 7*)

﴿ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا تَنَجَّيْتُمْ فَلَا تَنَجَّوْا بِالْإِنْمِرِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَةِ الرَّسُولِ وَتَنَجَّوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَالنَّقْوَىٰ وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴾ (١) ﴿ إِنَّمَا النَّجْوَىٰ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ لِيَحْزُبَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَلَيْسَ بِضَرَارِهِمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ (١٠)

(سورة المجادلة: ٩-١٠)

﴿O you who believe, when you converse in private, do not do so in sin and transgression, and in disobedience to the Messenger; rather do so in righteousness and piety. And fear Allah, unto Whom you will be gathered. [Malicious] private conversation is only prompted by Satan, so that he may cause grief to the believers, but he cannot

harm them in the least, except by Allah's leave. And in Allah let the believers put their trust. ﴿﴾ (al-Mujādilah 58: 9-10)

﴿ فذَرَهُمْ يَبْغُضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يَوْمَ يُخْرَجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ نُصَبٍ يُوْفُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ خَشِيعَةً أَبْصَرُهُمْ تَرَهِقُهُمْ ذَلَّةٌ ذَلُّكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة المعارج: ٤٢-٤٤)

﴿So leave them to indulge in their falsehood and idle worldly pursuits until they encounter that day of theirs which they are promised; on the day when they will come rushing forth from their graves as if they are racing towards a goal, their eyes downcast, humiliation will overwhelm them. That is the day which they were promised.﴾ (al-Ma'ârij 70: 42-44)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Allah likes three things for you and dislikes three things for you. He likes for you to worship Him, to not associate anything with Him, and that you are unified and not divided; and He dislikes for you gossip and begging and squandering of wealth.» (Muslim)

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Allah has prohibited you to be undutiful to your mothers, to bury your daughters alive,¹ and to neglect paying the rights of others. And Allah dislikes for you to beg from people, engage in vain talk, or for you to ask persistently or to be extravagant.» (Muslim)

'Ubādah ibn aş-Şāmit (رضي الله عنه) related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, whilst a group of his Companions were around him:


«Give me the pledge ... Not to utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood (that is, either by attributing illegal children to their husbands, or by accusing an innocent person and spreading such an accusation amongst the people.) ... (The Prophet [ﷺ] added:)

¹ It was common practice before the era of Islam – referred to as the days of ignorance – to bury female children alive simply for being female. This practice was prohibited with the coming of Islam.

Whoever amongst you fulfils this pledge will be rewarded by Allah and if anyone indulges in any of these (sins) and receives the punishment in this world, the punishment will be an expiation for that sin. And if one indulges in any of them and Allah conceals (his sin), it is up to Him to forgive or punish him (in the hereafter)...» (Bukhari and others)

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah stated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «...Allah has hated for you *qeel* and *qâl* (sinful and useless talk like backbiting or that you talk too much about others)...» (Bukhari)

Be aware about gossiping

- If we consider the limited time we have in this world and think about the consequences of how the way we spent that time will affect us in the next world – when we will review every second of our lives – we should ask ourselves: was it really a good way to spend an afternoon? What did we gain from knowing this information about the other person?
 - Gossiping can lead to other destructive behaviours such as lying, backbiting, and injustice. We must not assume it is harmless fun; it is not. We need to consider how we would feel if the gossip were about us.
 - We may tell ourselves that what we are talking about is fact (somehow convincing ourselves that therefore it is not gossip). However, when there are gaps in the information, we often speak quickly or make up the missing part through implication to complete the story through words such as “They probably did such-and-such – that would explain it”, trying to make ourselves sound very reasoned and tempered in our style. We may even try to sound concerned about the person (although we may not have actually spoken to them directly). This is a very sophisticated way to cover up the fact that we are gossiping.
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- We should not assume the other person will not know we have gossiped about them. On the Last Day we will be exposed, and that will be worse than them not knowing at all.
- It is not conducive for creating a good and healthy environment.
- It is clearly prohibited and disliked by Allah (ﷻ). This means it is not a trivial thing.

Part 22: Hypocrisy

Description and manifestations

As with many of the behaviours mentioned, hypocrisy (described in the Qur'an as *nifâq*) comes in many forms, which include lying, deceiving/cheating, being two-faced, and backbiting. All of these behaviours, of course, occur in private whilst in company the person presents themselves in a very different manner to others and intentionally covers one's true views. It is, in essence, a double standard (doing one thing and saying another).

Its manifestations are represented in its definition, but it involves playing different roles depending on the company we are in. It means we say things that we do not agree with because of the people we are with; then we say something else that contradicts this earlier point of view when we are either alone or in other company. It is a behaviour borne out of insecurity (of being wrong or of having made the wrong decision) and fear and a desire to please people and be accepted; there is no loyalty to the other parties involved, only loyalty to oneself.

The dangers with emotions that centre on the self rather than the right or best thing to do is that there are few boundaries that we are not prepared to cross. This has serious implications for both this life and the next, since our desire to save ourselves blinds us to any limits we may cross.

Related emotions

Anger, hatred, resentment, insecurity, considering oneself superior to others, cowardice, and jealousy.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“They will not find out.” (I am spending the remainder of my time making sure they don't catch me out.)*
- *“I can't afford to disagree with them.” (So I'd better show that I agree.)*
- *“It is important even if I am doing wrong to stop others from doing wrong.” (At least whilst I am with them [because I am afraid of what the others might do to me if I don't].)*
- *“I am outnumbered and don't feel strong enough to deal with the backlash if I say the opposite to what they are saying, so best save my skin and nod in approval.”*
- *“I may do X haram thing but that is not what we are talking about here; we are talking about Y. It doesn't mean we have to be perfect before we can advise others against what is haram, does it?”*

In principle this may be considered understandable, but it should alert us to our own double standards rather than focus on the other person's faults.

- *“I may give lectures and tell people how to behave, but I am home now so I don't need to bother; I can relax (and be myself). Forget talking about rights: that's my day job. You are my husband/wife. We are friends and our marriage is not about that.”*

This is a worrying example. If our role models and leaders do not represent the Islam they preach, then what hope is there for any of us?

Consider also the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah, who said that he heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say:

«Verily, the first to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who had (apparently) died as a martyr. He will be brought forward. Allah will remind him of the favours He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them.

Then He will ask him: What did you do to express gratitude for it?

The man will reply: I fought for Your cause until I was martyred.

Allah will say: You have lied. You fought so that people might call you courageous; and they have done so.

A command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into hell.

Next, a man who had acquired and imparted knowledge and read the Qur'an will be brought forward. Allah will remind him of the favours He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them.

Then He will ask him: What did you do to express gratitude for it?

The man will reply: I acquired knowledge and taught it, and read the Qur'an for Your sake.

Allah will say to him: You have lied. You acquired knowledge so that people might call you a learned (man), and you read the Qur'an so that they might call you a reciter, and they have done so.

A command will then be issued about him, and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into hell.

Next, a man who Allah had made affluent and to whom Allah had given plenty of wealth will be brought forward. Allah will remind him of the favours He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them.

He will ask him: What did you do to express gratitude for it?

The man will reply: I did not neglect any of the ways You liked wealth to be spent liberally for Your sake.

Allah will say to him: You have lied. You did it so that people might call you generous, and they have done so.

A command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into hell.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Reflect that whilst the hadith focuses on a scholar, not everyday people, we must be aware that any religious knowledge we acquire is a responsibility. Imam al-Ghazālī, the philosopher, is reported to have said, “What use is that knowledge that we don’t practise?”

Possible consequences

- You are unlikely to gain long-term friends, because the nature of hypocrisy is that eventually your true beliefs will be exposed.
- You may find yourself very lonely in the end and rather than pleasing people, you will have displeased them and will have to deal with their reactions and responses.

Possible impact on faith

- This is the characteristic associated with the harshest enemies of Islam: do we really want to share it?
- Due to the sub-component sins involved in perpetrating this one, we build sin upon sin, so it is not one wrong we are doing but several.
- We may consider in deceiving people that Allah has not noticed. This is a distinct lack of *taqwâ* (fearful awareness and mindfulness of Allah) and you may end up siding with views that take you outside the fold of Islam. So be wary of pleasing people and focus on pleasing Allah instead.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا بِمَا أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أَنزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَحَكَّمُوا إِلَى الطَّغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِءِ وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَكًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْكَ صُدُودًا ﴿١١﴾ فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ جَاءُوكَ يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا إِحْسَانًا وَتَوْفِيقًا ﴿١٢﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا ﴿١٣﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ٦٠-٦٣)

Have you not seen those who claim to believe in the Revelation sent down to you [O Muhammad], and in that which was sent down before your time, yet they want to refer for judgement to *ṭāghoot*,¹ even though they were commanded to reject it? Satan wants to lead them far astray. When it is said to them: Come to the Revelation that Allah has sent down, and to the Messenger, you see the hypocrites turn away from you with aversion. How will it be, if calamity befalls them because of the deeds which their own hands have wrought? Then they will come to you, swearing by Allah: We only wanted to do good and bring about reconciliation! Those are the ones of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts; so turn away from them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls. ﴿*an-Nisā* 4: 60-63)

﴿سَتَجِدُونَ ءَاخِرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلٌّ مَا رَدُّوا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكَسُوا فِيهَا... ﴿١١﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ٩١)

¹ In this context, *ṭāghoot* refers to any set of laws or legislation other than Islamic Sharia.

﴿Others you will find who want to be safe from you and safe from their own people, but whenever they are faced anew with temptation to evil, plunge into it headlong...﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 91)

﴿إِنَّ السُّفْهَانَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كَسَالَىٰ
رِءَاءُونَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾ مُدْبِدِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا
إِلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٤﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٢-١٤٣)

﴿The hypocrites seek to outwit Allah but it is He Who outwits them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up reluctantly, only to be seen by people, and they remember Allah only a little. Wavering in between, belonging neither to these nor those. For those whom Allah has caused to go astray, you will never find a way [to guide them].﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 142-143)

﴿الْمُتَّقُونَ وَالْمُتَّفِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَنكِرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ
هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ
جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ وَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُمَّ عَذَابٌ مُّهِمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾﴾ (سورة

التوبة: ٦٧-٦٨)

﴿The hypocrites, men and women, are all alike. They enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right, and they are tight-fisted. They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them. Verily, the hypocrites are the wicked. Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the disbelievers the fire of hell, to abide therein forever. It is sufficient for them; Allah has cursed them and theirs will be an everlasting punishment.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 67-68)

﴿وَيَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّىٰ فِرْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَمَا
أُولَئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا فِرْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْعِتْقُ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُدْعِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ أَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ مَرَضٌ آمَرُوا أَنْ يَأْتُوا

﴿سورة﴾ ﴿٥٠﴾ ﴿٤٧﴾ ﴿٥٠﴾
 النور: ٤٧-٥٠

﴿They [the hypocrites] say: We believe in Allah and in the Messenger, and we obey. But after that, some of them turn away. Such are not [truly] believers. When they are called to Allah and His Messenger so that he may judge between them, some of them turn away in aversion. But if the right is on their side, they come to him willingly. Is it that there is a disease in their hearts? Or are they full of doubt? Or do they fear that Allah and His Messenger might deal unjustly with them? Nay, it is they who are the wrongdoers.﴾ (an-Noor 24: 47-50)

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَسْتَعِجُ إِلَيْكَ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا خَرَجُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ أَنفَا أَوْلِيكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ﴾ (سورة محمد: ١٦)

﴿Among them are some who listen to you [O Muhammad], but when they leave your presence, they say to those who have been given knowledge: What did he say just now? These are the ones whose hearts Allah has sealed up and they follow their own whims and desires.﴾ (Muhammad 47: 16)

﴿سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا يَقُولُونَ بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ يَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا﴾ ﴿١١﴾ ﴿١٢﴾
 وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزُيِّنَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنِّي السَّوَاءَ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا﴾ (سورة الفتح: ١١-١٢)

﴿Those of the Bedouin who lagged behind will say to you: We were preoccupied with [looking after] our wealth and families, so pray for forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: Who has any power at all [to intervene] on your behalf with Allah if it be His will to do you harm or benefit you? Verily, Allah is well aware of all that you do. Rather you thought that the Messenger

and the believers would never return to their families, and that was made fair-seeming in your hearts. You harboured evil thoughts, for you are people devoid of good and doomed.﴾ (*al-Fath* 48: 11-12)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَمْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣﴾﴾ (سورة الصف: ٢-٣)

﴿O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most loathsome to Allah that you say that which you do not do.﴾ (*as-Saff* 61: 2-3)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he tells a lie; when he promises, he breaks it (his promise); and if you entrust him, he proves to be dishonest (if you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it).» (Bukhari)

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Amr related that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«There are four traits: whoever has them all is an utter hypocrite and whoever has one of them has that trait of hypocrisy until he gives it up. If he speaks, he lies; if he is trusted, he betrays; if he makes a promise, he breaks it; and if he is an adversary, he is vulgar.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Ka‘b ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: «The believer is like a tender plant moved by the winds, sometimes being bent down and sometimes made to stand up straight, till his appointed time comes; but the hypocrite is like the cedar standing firmly, which is unaffected by anything, till it is completely cast down.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah reported:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: Whoever dies and did not strive in the cause of Allah and did not intend to do so would have died having a trait of hypocrisy.

‘Abdullâh ibn al-Mubâarak said: We thought that was within the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ).» (Muslim)

Ibn ‘Umar narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The similitude of a hypocrite is that of a sheep which roams aimlessly between two flocks. She goes to one at one time and to the other at another time.» (Muslim)

Samurah ibn Jundab related:

«Whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) finished the (morning) prayer, he would face us and ask: Who amongst you had a dream last night?

So if anyone had a dream he would narrate it. The Prophet (ﷺ) would say: *Mâ shâ’ Allâh* (indicating a good occurrence).

One day, he asked us whether any of us had seen a dream. We replied in the negative. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: But I saw (a dream) last night that two men came to me, caught hold of my hands, and took me to the Sacred Land ... We went on until we came to a man lying in a prone position and another man standing at his head carrying a stone or a piece of rock, crushing the head of the other man with that stone. Whenever he struck him, the stone rolled away. The man went to pick it up and by the time he returned to him, the crushed head returned to its normal state and the man came back and struck him again (and so on).

I asked: Who (what) is this? ... You have made me ramble about all night. Tell me all about what I have seen.

They (the two companions who had accompanied him) said: ... The one whose head you saw being crushed is the one whom Allah had given knowledge of the Qur’an (knowing it by heart) but he used to sleep at night (did not recite it then) and did not act upon it (upon its orders) by day and so this punishment will go on until the Day of Resurrection...» (Bukhari)

Abu Moosâ narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The example of a believer who recites the Qur'an and acts on it is like a citron, which tastes nice and smells nice. And the example of a believer who does not recite the Qur'an but acts on it is like a date, which tastes good but has no smell. And the example of the hypocrite who recites the Qur'an is like sweet basil, which smells good but tastes bitter. And the example of a hypocrite who does not recite the Qur'an is like a colocynth, which tastes bitter and has a bad smell.» (Bukhari, Muslim, and others)

Be aware about hypocrisy


- The punishment is severe, so do not take it lightly.
- It has a negative effect on our overall character since it creates so many secondary forms of destructive behaviour as a result. Do not see it as a single bad characteristic; it is not.

Part 23: Ingratitude

Description and manifestations

We are not good at gratitude; we may not even thank people, so thanking the Creator may be something we rarely do. We reserve Him for when we **need** things, not for when we **have** things, exactly as the Qur'an reminds us. Ingratitude is the norm for us in many contexts and we may not even consider it a destructive behaviour. We think it is our right to have things and for others to do things for us; that they owe us and that we are deserving – but none of these justifications necessarily apply. Furthermore, once we have taken our self-proclaimed right, we rarely remember Who/who gave it to us; the need is over so we think the effort is complete.

Ingratitude manifests itself in various forms. Directly, it includes the obvious act of not expressing gratitude or even acknowledging the good someone has done for us. It may be the miserable, unsmiling thanks begrudgingly given because, even though we need something,



our ego remains defiant that it needs nothing. We may also fear we will have to repay the favour. It includes negativity upon receipt of a gift or not reciprocating any good someone does for us, either practically or verbally.

Indirectly, it involves complaining and ignoring the good we have in our lives (which means that focusing on the bad in our lives is also a form of ingratitude). Ingratitude is also shown when we take things for granted, since we complain as soon as those things are missing. For example, how many of us thank Allah (ﷻ) that we are healthy and functioning, without any mental or physical handicap? The answer, as ever: not many of us.

We are told in Islam that when we thank the creation, we show our gratitude to the Creator: if we do not thank them, we show ingratitude to Allah for His blessings upon us (even though they may be manifest through the creation). This is stated in the following hadith, in which Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«He who does not thank the people is not thankful to Allah.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by Ibn Muflih)

It is a reality of our natures that we inherently desire some form of acknowledgement of what we are doing (even if it is the good feeling of knowing we did something positive); otherwise, there is no incentive to continue. The irony of ingratitude is that if any good behaviour is not positively reinforced with words or actions, then eventually we see how easily people may give up on doing good deeds. The natural response to ingratitude is, generally, "I won't bother next time." When we need something from someone we have taken for granted and they have given up on us, then through what channel will we receive help?

So we see that ingratitude comes in passive and active forms. How we experience its impact not only causes divisions and negativity between people but can also result in a general unwillingness to do

anything to help anyone. Once again, our own bad behaviour affects our own selves the most.

Related emotions

Unhappiness, resentment, jealousy (why acknowledge something good someone does when we think they do not deserve what they have?), dissatisfaction (with one's life, which means we may focus on the negative and what we do not have rather than what we do), taking things for granted (such as good health), hostility and estrangement (when we feel unhappy at our good deeds not being valued), and arrogance (when we feel we deserve the good done to us or when we do not see it as ultimately a blessing from Allah).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I have never really thought about being grateful for such things as my health." (But I do complain quickly enough when things go wrong.)*
- *"Never mind if I didn't say thanks." (I don't like it anyhow, so why pretend? That would be insincere.)*
- *"Never mind if I don't say thanks. I give him/her plenty of stuff and he/she never thanks me."*
- *"If I say thanks, it means somehow I am less than them and indebted to them." (I [am too arrogant and] cannot accept that it is a duty upon me as a form of basic courtesy.)*
- *"If I pray and recite the Qur'an, I deserve to get what I want." (So of course I will complain when I don't and am silent when I do. [I am doing what I should do, so why should I not complain?])*

In such instances, of course, we forget the verses in the Qur'an where we are told that trials are a test of our faith. We claim to have faith, but feel we are a victim when we have to face trials.

Possible consequences

- If it is help we want and we are not grateful, we may not get it when we need it, whether from Allah or from the creation. We cut off our own sources of support.

Possible impact on faith

- When we do not show gratitude, we are potentially telling Allah that whatever He gives us is not good enough and so we risk losing other blessings in our lives. We may feel there are no blessings in life to be grateful for (and take for granted all that is good in our lives), but we will be aware of them if they are gone. Is this an experience we want to have?

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٥٢)

¶Therefore remember Me; I will remember you. Give thanks to Me, and do not be ungrateful.﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 152)

﴿وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعِيشًا قَلِيلًا مَا تَشْكُرُونَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٠)

(سورة الأعراف: ١٠)

¶We established you firmly on earth and appointed for you means of livelihood therein; little it is that you give thanks.﴾ (*al-A'raf* 7: 10)

﴿وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي

لَشَدِيدٌ﴾ (سورة إبراهيم: ٧-٨) وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ تَكْفُرًا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَأَبَى اللَّهُ لَعْنَتِي حَمِيدٌ

(سورة إبراهيم: ٧-٨)

¶And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed: If you give thanks, I will surely give you more, but if you are ungrateful, verily My punishment is indeed severe. And Moosâ said: Even if you are

ungrateful, you and all who are on earth together, verily Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy. ﴿Ibrâheem 14: 7-8﴾

﴿... فَلَمَّارَاهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ، قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ؕ أَشْكُرَ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ؕ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ﴾ (سورة النمل: ٤٠)

﴿... Then when he saw it set before him, [Sulaymân] said: This is a favour from my Lord, to test whether I will be grateful or ungrateful. Whoever is grateful, his gratitude is to his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is self-sufficient, most generous. ﴿an-Naml 27: 40﴾

﴿وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ﴾ (سورة لقمان: ١٢)

﴿Indeed, We granted wisdom to Luqmân [saying]: Be grateful to Allah. Whoever is grateful, his gratitude is to his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Worthy of all praise. ﴿Luqmân 31: 12﴾

﴿وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا رَّطَيْنَ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَبٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمْ بِبَخْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زُرْعًا ﴿٣١﴾ كَلَّمَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ ءَأَنْتَ أَكْلَاهَا وَلَمْ تَطْعِمِ مَنَّهُ شَيْئًا وَفَجَرْنَا خِلْفَاهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَكَانَ لَهُ، ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ، وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ: أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ، وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ، قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ يَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ فَآيِمَةٌ وَلَيْنَ رُجِدْتُ إِلَى رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ لَهُ، صَاحِبُهُ، وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ: أَكْفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٦﴾ لَيْكِنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٣٧﴾ وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ إِنْ تَرَنِ أَنَا أَقَلُّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾ فَعَسَى رَبِّي أَنْ يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَيُصْبِحَ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٣٩﴾ أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَاءً غَورًا فَلَنْ نَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ، طَلْبًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَأُحِيطَ بِشَمْرِهِ فَاصْبِحْ يَقْلِبُ

كَفَيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَمْ
تَكُنْ لَهُ فِتْنَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنْصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ هُنَالِكَ الْوَلِيَّةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ
تَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٣٢-٤٤)

Present to them the example of two men: to one of them We gave two gardens of grapevines and surrounded them with date palms, with a cornfield lying in between. Each garden brought forth its produce and did not fail to yield its best, and We caused a stream to flow through them. So he was a man of wealth. He said to his companion, as he was conversing with him: I am wealthier than you and have a greater entourage. He went into his garden, having thus wronged himself, and said: I do not think that this will ever perish, nor do I think that the Hour will ever come. Even if I am brought back to my Lord, I will surely find a better place than this. His companion said to him, in the course of his conversation with him: Do you disbelieve in the One Who created you from dust, then from a drop of semen, then fashioned you into a man? But as for me, [I say that] He is Allah, my Lord, and I will not associate anyone with my Lord. Why could you not have said, when you entered your garden: Whatever Allah wills [will come to pass]; there is no power but with Allah? Although you see me less than you in wealth and children, yet my Lord may well give me something better than your garden, and send upon [your garden] thunderbolts from heaven, leaving it barren and slippery. Or its water may disappear under the ground, so that you will never be able to find it again. And so all his produce was destroyed, and he began to wring his hands in sorrow at the loss of what he had spent on it, as it lay in ruins with all its trellises fallen in, saying: Would that I had never associated anyone with my Lord! He had none to support him against [the punishment of] Allah, nor was he able to help himself. In that case, the only protection is that of Allah, the True God. He gives the best reward and the best outcome. ﴿al-Kahf 18: 32-44﴾

﴿إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾﴾ (سورة العاديات: ٦-٨)

«Verily man is ungrateful to his Lord – and he himself bears witness to that – and verily, because of his love of wealth, he is stingy.»
(*al-‘Ādiyât* 100: 6-8)

Ibn ‘Abbâs narrated:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: I was shown the hellfire and that the majority of its dwellers were women who were (disbelievers or) ungrateful.

It was asked: Do they disbelieve in Allah (or are they ungrateful to Allah)?

He replied: They are ungrateful to their husbands and are ungrateful for their favours and the good (charitable deeds) done to them. If you have always been good (benevolent) to one of them for a period of time and then she sees something in you (not to her liking), she will say: I have never seen any good from you.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah reported that he heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) say: «Allah willed to test three men of Bani Isrâ’eel: one was a leper, one was bald, and one was blind. He sent an angel, who went to the leper and asked: What thing would you like the most?

He replied: Good colour and good skin, for the people have a strong aversion to me.

The angel touched him and his illness was cured, and he was given good colour and beautiful skin.

The angel asked him: Which property do you like the most?

He replied: Camels.

He (the leper) was given a pregnant she-camel and the angel said (to him): May Allah bless you in it.

The angel then went to the bald-headed man and asked: What thing would you like the most?

He said: I would like good hair and wish to be cured of this disease, for the people feel repulsion towards me.

The angel touched him and his illness was cured, and he was given good hair.

The angel asked (him): Which property do you like the most?

He replied: Cows.

The angel gave him a pregnant cow and said: May Allah bless you in it.

The angel went to the blind man and asked: What thing would you like the most?

He said: That Allah may restore my eyesight to me so that I may see the people.

The angel touched his eyes and Allah gave him back his eyesight. The angel asked him: Which property do you like the most?

He replied: Sheep.

The angel gave him a pregnant sheep.

Afterwards, all three pregnant animals gave birth to young ones, and they multiplied and brought forth so much that one of the (three) men had a herd of camels filling a valley, and one had a herd of cows filling a valley, and one had a flock of sheep filling a valley.

Then the angel, disguised in the shape and appearance of a leper, went to the leper and said: I am a poor man who has lost all means of livelihood while on a journey. None will satisfy my need except Allah and then you. In the name of the One Who has given you such nice colour and beautiful skin and so much property, I ask you to give me a camel so that I may reach my destination.

The man replied: I have many obligations (so I cannot give you any).

The angel said: I think I know you. Were you not a leper to whom the people had a strong aversion? Were you not a poor man, and then Allah gave you (all of this property)?

He replied: (You are wrong); I got this property through inheritance from my forefathers.

The angel said: If you are telling a lie, then let Allah make you as you were before.

Then the angel, disguised in the shape and appearance of a bald man, went to the bald man and said to him the same as he told the first one, and he, too, answered the same as the first one did.

The angel said: If you are telling a lie, then let Allah make you as you were before.

Then the angel, disguised in the shape of a blind man, went to the blind man and said: I am a poor man and a traveller, whose means of livelihood have been exhausted while on a journey. I have nobody to help me except Allah, and after Him, you yourself. I ask you in the name of the One Who has given you back your eyesight to give me a sheep so that with its help, I may complete my journey.

The man said: No doubt, I was a blind man and Allah gave me back my eyesight. I was poor and Allah made me rich; so take anything you wish from my property. By Allah, I will not stop you from taking anything (you need) of my property which you take for Allah's sake.

The angel replied: Keep your property with you. You (three men) have been tested and Allah is pleased with you and is angry with your two companions.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about ingratitude

- Remember to thank Allah (ﷻ) above all else and count the blessings He has given you, as that is true gratitude.
- When we feel negative about people, we ought to actively think of all the good someone may have done for us as it will, *in shâ' Allâh*, reduce our negativity and increase our feelings of forgiveness.

- Taking things for granted is a sign of ingratitude, so consider what we have not been thankful for and start being thankful for it.
- We cannot realistically own the good we do, but we should, in fact, realise it as a blessing from Allah; otherwise, our ingratitude is added to by arrogance (for example, we should be grateful that Allah has given us good qualities and allowed us to make healthy choices). When we do good, we are also instruments of good only because of Him; because of that we receive the love, the thanks, and the positivity that accompanies it. We cannot achieve anything by ourselves. We should be grateful when we have a chance to do good for someone.

Part 24: Insulting and cursing others

Description and manifestations

The behaviour of cursing and insulting others is destructive enough in itself. What adds to this behaviour is that it tends to escalate negativity between people and others may respond with equal, if not worse, insults. We are often quick to attack because we may assume the temporary nature of our anger and mood reflects the temporary nature of the impact. It does not. Of course, when it is over and the intensity of emotion has dissipated, the words remain and this leads to further problems. The lingering emotional pain may be harder to overcome than physical pain, and when we experience emotional pain through insults, it is even harder to forgive and forget. Whether we are on the receiving end or the one insulting, its consequences are far-reaching.

The form of this behaviour comes mainly in obvious swearing, insults, and bad du'â's made against others. We consider making du'â's against others a minor thing and the more forcefully we feel our anger, the more severe the du'â's against them. This is a more discreet


form of cursing, because du'â's are made either openly or silently. The irony is that we assume Allah will accept these du'â's because of our mood but not necessarily because they are a fair reaction; we act as if we are casting a spell rather than turning to Allah to settle an account. As with insults, the person may simply return the bad du'â' and if they have been the ones wronged, we may then bring harm upon ourselves. We have no guarantee the du'â's won't be answered and applied against us instead.

This behaviour can be random, stemming from bad moods and arguments, or can be absorbed into our characters as a habit. Unfortunately, when this becomes a personal habit or cultural trait and then becomes 'acceptable' to exhibit such outbursts, we have our excuses ready. Indeed, communities often describe themselves as 'passionate' or 'hot-blooded', which also includes having hot tempers. It may then be excused as a cultural habit amongst a group of people (either a family culture or a wider social culture): "We are XYZs! It is part of our culture/character to fight!"

Related emotions

Anger, aggression, hatred/contempt, feeling inferior, insecurity, fear (felt by the one being insulted), discomfort, personal unhappiness (so nothing seems positive), arrogance and resentment, estrangement, lack of forgiveness, and harshness of character (where the habit is excused as a personal habit and disguised as moodiness).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"It's what we do in our house. In fact, if someone doesn't insult us we think they have fallen out with us!" (For us, it is amusing.)*
 - *"They were really annoying me and I lost my temper."*
 - *"I just get really irritated when I see them and can't seem to help myself. My hatred seems to always appear out of nowhere."*
-
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(I am not considering that this aspect of my behaviour is a problem.)

- *“There are just certain qualities I hate and they seem to have them, so I can’t notice anything else when I am with them.”*
- *“They insulted me first. Do they think I will just keep quiet? I won’t allow them to speak that way to me and get away with it.”*

This is understandable, but it is also worth remembering that we have an option to say something sensible rather than inflammatory or even walk away with our dignity intact, by Allah’s will, and no regrets.

- *“If they can hand it out, they have to learn to take it.”*

We are readily brave when it comes to being the one who insults, but very distressed when we are insulted back. In spite of this, we do not reflect on the impact our own behaviour has on the one we have insulted.

Possible consequences

- We may say something in anger that is hurtful and the person on the receiving end of this may not consider it part of a passing mood. Remember that how we behave when angry is also culturally specific; some people make any manner of comments which they randomly bring out of nowhere (they are used only for the battle but are not expected to cause long term harm) whilst others say what they have been thinking for a long time based on continuously being insulted, with each insult building up internal resentment. It is not a momentary thing and sometimes the impact of the insults will linger for a long time after the argument ends (only to be held in mind for the next round). Continuously doing this can undermine our relationships.
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- Continuously swearing and cursing others as a matter of course and not considering it significant is simply setting a low standard of behaviour for ourselves. We should save our best behaviour, not our worst, for our loved ones. We often find, however, that whilst such behaviour may be accepted at home, in the outside world it is usually kept in check; this reiterates that it is a choice of behaviour. When it is not hidden even in public, we cannot predict that other people will react in a less harmful way. We may not be able to deal with the effects.

Possible impact on faith

- If we make bad du'â's against people, we should not assume our anger means we are right. When we do so, we forget that Allah is just and will not fulfil such du'â's against innocent people; worse still, it may backfire if they follow our example and make du'â' against us.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴾
﴿ ١٤٨ ﴾ إِنَّ بُدُوًا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفَوُهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا ﴿ ١٤٩ ﴾

(سورة النساء: ١٤٨-١٤٩)

﴿Allah does not like anyone to speak ill [of others] in public, except the one who has been wronged. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. If you do good openly or conceal it or pardon a wrong [done to you], then verily Allah is Pardoning, Omnipotent.﴾ (an-Nisâ 4: 148-149)

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ
وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾ تُوْتِي أَكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ
الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ
اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ ﴾ (سورة إبراهيم: ٢٤-٢٦)

«Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach to the sky. It yields its fruit at all times, by its Lord's leave. Allah makes such comparisons for people so that they may pay heed. But an evil word is like an evil tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth; it has no stability.» (Ibrâheem 14: 24-26)

'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ood related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:
«To abuse a Muslim is evil and to kill one is disbelief.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:
«When two people take to insulting each other, the first is the sinner on the condition that the oppressed does not exceed the limits.» (Muslim)

Ibn 'Umar reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:
«It is not befitting for a believer to curse others.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded authentic by al-Albâni; also recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

'Iyâd ibn Hîmâr (رضي الله عنه) reported:
«I said: O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), a man abuses me.
The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Two men who abuse each other are both devils: both are rude and both speak lies.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Sa'd ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
«It is a grave sin for a Muslim to abuse anyone.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Be aware about insulting and cursing others

- It is understandable that if we insult someone they will retaliate. We should not be surprised and use it as an excuse to insult them again. We simply should not insult them in the first place.
- When we respond to an insult, in some ways we are behaving equally badly. So we cannot assume our behaviour is justified

because 'they started it'. It only ends in a downward spiral for both parties.

— Insulting others is serious. Do not excuse it as a 'bad habit'.


Part 25: Intentionally making things difficult for others

Description and manifestations

The malice involved in this behaviour is self-evident and reflects poorly on the general character of the one who perpetrates such behaviour. The habit also overlaps with other destructive behaviours, such as lying, deceit, injustice, and abusing one's position. These all add to the degeneration of good character.

The behaviour is manifest through any means by which we seek to obstruct anyone from achieving their goals, whatever they may be. This includes overt forms: not allowing an action without good reason, causing delay, misrepresenting information, distorting facts, and not making people aware of all facts as well as the more covert forms of restricting thinking or movements to facilitate this control. This is done with an unhealthy emotional intention and is therefore almost always intentional rather than accidental.

The issue of control here is pertinent to its maintenance and also points to an underlying insecurity and fear of either being replaced or rejected. By holding on to power in whatever situation, we are able to prevent others from reaching our position or presenting a challenge to our ways of thinking or behaving. In truth, if we were on the top there would be no need for this behaviour; so it further implies that this is done when we cover the truth and know in our hearts our reasoning is not secure. It is, in fact, an aggressive defence for us to hold on to power.



Related emotions

Abuse of power, cruelty, anger, aggression, injustice, favouritism (to prevent others from succeeding over one's personal choices), unhealthy competitiveness, unhappiness, and revenge (especially as the verses below cite in issues of divorce and separation).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"She/he deserves it for hurting me so much."*
- *"I am older/senior/have more money." (I do it because I can.)*
- *"This will buy me some time. If I delay things/make a problem for you, this helps me implement my own plan." (So I am not abusing my position. [It is a strategic delay tactic.]*
- *"I am not being cruel. I just want things the way I want them." (My inflexibility is the real problem, but I am in a position to make it work for me and others are not in a position to disagree with me.)*

Sometimes the behaviour may not be a direct intent but a by-product of our personal habits which affect others negatively.

Possible consequences

- We are likely to be seen as jealous and power-crazy. People will simply stop coming to us, which will end our reign of power. This is, therefore, a temporary role and tends to be used only to destroy rather than create positivity. In the end, we will rule no one except ourselves, and then we will likely seek out others to help us rather than obstruct us as we ourselves may have done to others. The fact that we would not apply the rule to others illustrates the destructive element of the behaviour.
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Possible impact on faith

- We challenge Allah if we prevent others from doing what is allowed and we also defy Him by attempting to stop others from reaching the goals Allah has written for them. This is not a battle we can ever win. We may succeed in preventing them, but we will destroy this life and the next for ourselves in the process.
- When we make things difficult for ourselves, it can result in unnecessarily pressuring other people. In the matter of religion, this will serve only to alienate them, as we see from the hadiths below.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣٧)

﴿And if you divorce them before the marriage is consummated, but after their dowry has been settled, then half of the dowry [is due to them], unless they forgo it, or the one in whose hand is the marriage tie [the husband] forgoes his share [and gives her the dowry in full]. And forgoing it is closer to piety. Do not forget to show graciousness to one another, for Allah sees well all that you do.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 237)

﴿ ... وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٨٣)

﴿...Do not conceal testimony, for whoever conceals it has a sinful heart. And Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 283)

﴿... وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٢٨)

﴿...avarice is ever-present in human souls. If you do good and practise self-restraint, Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (*an-Nisā*' 4: 128)

Abu Mas'ood al-Anṣārī (رضي الله عنه) narrated:

«A man came to Allah's Messenger and said: O Messenger of Allah! By Allah, I fail to attend the morning congregational prayer because so-and-so (Mu'adh ibn Jabal) prolongs the prayer when he leads us in it.

I had never seen the Prophet (ﷺ) more furious in giving advice than he was on that day. He said: O people! Some of you make others dislike (good deeds, prayers). So whoever among you leads the people in prayer should shorten it because among them there are the old, the weak, and the busy (having some jobs to do).» (Bukhari)

Anas ibn Mâlik narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Facilitate things for people (concerning religious matters) and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Religion is easy, and no one overburdens himself in his religion but he will be unable to continue in that way. So do not be extremists, but try to be near perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded. Gain strength by worshipping in the mornings and afternoons and during the last hours of the night.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about intentionally making things difficult for others

- We are told clearly: make things easy for the people, otherwise we might put them off of doing good. In effect, we are contributing to their unhealthy behaviour as well as our own.

Part 26: Intentionally giving bad advice

Description and manifestations


The right of a Muslim upon another is to be given sincere advice. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Six are the rights of a Muslim over another Muslim: when you meet him, offer him greetings; when he invites you to a feast, accept it; when he seeks your counsel, give it to him; when he sneezes and says: *Alḥamdulillāh*, you say: *Yarḥamuk Allāh* (may Allah have mercy on you); when he falls ill, visit him; and when he dies, take part in his funeral.» (Muslim)

It is a matter of faith when we do not uphold this. While we are in this world, we may consider this a small issue because the wrong advice will probably not affect us. However, we fail to recognise that it will reflect upon us. We are able to distinguish fairly accurately when someone does something with ill-intent, and whilst the injured party may not blame us for the outcome, it is our intention that will be called into question.

This behaviour comes in forms such as intentionally giving wrong advice; giving misleading advice and (as with making things difficult for others) misrepresenting information; and lacking due care and attention when giving advice (since it is not our own issue).

Again, all these behaviours are rooted in the insecurity of our own endeavours. We may feel we have failed, so we feel unhappy when others succeed; we fear being considered less than them in life or a failure in comparison. We try to sabotage their success instead of sharing in it and perhaps even gaining their du‘â’s and adding blessings to our own lives. We forget that circumstances change easily and soon it may be that we need help from the very people we deceived with our bad advice. As with the previous behaviour, we will expect them to care about us when we did not care about them.



Related emotions

Insincerity, insecurity (if we fear the person will outdo us), unhealthy competition, bad intention (if we dislike the other person), and feeling inferior (and ‘correcting’ this by making problems for that other person and thereby increasing our own feelings of superiority).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“Why should I help them? They never do anything for me.” (I know this is bad advice [but that’s my excuse and I am sticking to it].)*
- *“I don’t care what they do.” (So why make the effort?)*
- *“This could work against me.” (So I won’t give the wrong advice. [I just won’t give the right advice/I’ll be vague.])*
- *“I don’t know.” (Who cares? Actually, I don’t want you to have what I do and I will feel very jealous if you get it.)*
- *“I am too busy focusing on how good this makes me look. I am not really thinking about what I am saying.” (So the advice actually only benefits me, not you.)*
- *“I didn’t force them to do what I said; it was their choice.” (They can’t see my intention, so I can hide behind this line.)*

Possible consequences

- No one will ask for our advice, and this is a sorry state to be in.
- We may well have to give some recompense when our bad advice catches up with us and people want some justice.

Possible impact on faith

- We fail in the rights we owe to other Muslims. We must never assume that people will automatically forgive us and that we will never face repercussions. On the Last Day, we will answer first to Allah, since offering good advice is something He has

commanded. Similarly, we reject a command from Allah in the manner we offer it, so no good will come of it for us, let alone for the other person.

- Again, this behaviour is made up of other destructive behaviours such as lying, insincerity, hypocrisy, and making other people's lives difficult, so we add sin upon sin for ourselves. This will be worsened by any bad outcome that results from our ill-intentioned advice.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا يَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٦٧-١٦٩)

¶ Verily, those who disbelieve and bar others from the path of Allah have indeed gone far astray. Those who disbelieve and do wrong, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any path, except the path that leads to hell, to abide therein forever. And that is easy for Allah. ﴿ (an-Nisā' 4: 167-169)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا أَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٨)

¶ O you who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to Allah, bearing true witness impartially. Do not let your hatred of some people lead you away from justice. Be just; that is nearer to true piety. And fear Allah, for Allah is well aware of all that you do. ﴿ (al-Mā'idah 5: 8)

Anas reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«None of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.» (Bukhari)

Tameem ibn Aws ad-Dâri (رضي الله عنه) reported:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: The religion is sincerity.

We asked: For whom?

He replied: For Allah, His Book, His Messenger, and for the leaders of the Muslims and their masses.» (Muslim)

Jareer ibn `Abdullâh narrated:

«I gave the pledge of allegiance to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) to offer prayers perfectly, to pay zakat regularly, and to give good advice to every Muslim.» (Bukhari)

`Abdullâh ibn `Amr reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«A Muslim is the one who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a muhâjir (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all that Allah has forbidden.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about intentionally giving bad advice

- Receiving good advice is one of the rights a Muslim has over another, so when we consider abuse of human rights, this must be included.
- The consequences of our bad advice will expose us at some point.
- The other person may suffer in this life, but we will suffer in the next. Which is worse?

Part 27: Interfering in the lives of others/Spying

Description and manifestations


We use love and concern as an excuse to interfere in the lives of other people, whether they are family, friends, acquaintances, or co-workers. We feel that our love for them means we can control them

and wonder why they cannot accept such a form of love. We forget the individual rights of personal freedom others have whilst we do our best to protect our own freedom to act as we wish. We are happy to give our opinion on what others should do, but ensure no one tries to interfere in our own lives; it is survival of the fittest, after all!

Manifestations include behaviours such as:

- Giving advice when it is not asked for, under the guise of suggestions;
- Continually commenting on aspects of other people's lives and asking them to justify their position or behaviours to us (acting as some form of filter system for Allah's laws for the world);
- Insisting that they accept our point of view on the way they live;
- Asking where they have been and where they have come from (and being offended when we are not told) and then going on to evaluate that action according to our own criteria; and
- Looking out of our windows, watching who comes and goes from our neighbours' homes and then calling them later for details.

The unfortunate aspect of this behaviour is that we see it is usually carried out by people who do not seek advice nor share their own lives with anyone as they consider it to be their right to privacy. This double standard adds to the destruction this behaviour causes. Furthermore, such interference and subsequent advice tends to be based upon what is personally or socially acceptable rather than what is Islamic. Indeed, when we see people do something which is forbidden in Islam, we often remain silent because we fear we will offend them, but we do not mind advising them on trivial matters regarding which we have no place to speak at all.



We feel that if people are close to us or share the same community we are free to do this. Indeed the advice is often not only directed towards adults but their children as well, thus blurring appropriate boundaries for parents and children and disrupting their relationships as well. Sadly, we do not interfere when our suggestions are wrong or when we have hurt the other person in trying to control them in this way. In such cases, it seems that the advice to change and improve one's life is only for others, not ourselves.

Again, these are further examples where rights are overtaken through the ego's desires and cultural demands, selectively applied by those who are more powerful to those under their care rather than actually under their control.

Related emotions

Control, arrogance (that we feel we have a right to ask when we do not), and nosiness.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I am older than them and have a right over them." (But no one should tell me what to do. [I don't like it.]*)

This is a common misconception and unless one acts according to ḥaq, no one has the right to control or tell others what to do simply because they were born before the other person, except for the rights of parents over their children, and even that has its limits. We can easily consider the example of Prophet Moosâ and his brother, Hâroon. It was Moosâ (as the younger brother) who was seen as the greater prophet, not the older brother, Hâroon (may peace be upon them both). The same applies to Prophet Yoosuf (ﷺ), who was one of the youngest of a large number of the sons of Prophet Ya'qoob (ﷺ), yet was chosen over them as a prophet. Age is often just an excuse to control others.

- *"I know what's best for you." (Maybe, maybe not.)*
- *"I should know/I like to know what others are up to." (It makes me feel superior [otherwise there is no good reason for me to know].)*
- *"I am just trying to give you some advice." (Although you did not ask for my opinion, I feel I have a right to tell you.)*
- *"I wasn't being nosy. I was just wondering." (No reason for me to know, so I was being nosy.)*

What actual difference does it make to us if we know what someone is doing? The answer is: Very little at all, unless a crime or something haram is being committed. At those times, people tend to lose their curiosity rather suddenly.

- *"Oh, it's a cultural misunderstanding. Our people always say such things but mean nothing by it." (Unless you try to disagree with them.)*
- *"I never had the freedom to do what you are doing, nor was I brave enough." (So because of my own dissatisfaction, I will interfere with your life and tell you what to do just as I was told what to do. [Why should you be stronger than I was and have more freedom?])*

Possible consequences

- We will end up isolated and lonely as people begin to avoid our questioning.
- We may be told to mind our own business if we fail to recognise our mistake in repeating this behaviour. People have limits as to how much interference they can take before they simply cut us off.
- We may cause disruption in other people's lives because of our behaviour and are likely to be held responsible for that.

Possible impact on faith

- Interference is one of those behaviours for which there are clear boundaries. If we act against this, we are ultimately saying our boundaries are more appropriate than those set by Allah: based, of course, on our own ego.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ نَظِيرِينَ إِنَّهُ وَلَكِنَّ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَسْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذَى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَجِىءُ مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَجِىءُ مِنَ الْحَقِّ...﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: ٥٣)

﴿O you who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are given permission [and are invited] to come for a meal; and do not enter in hopes of getting a meal and waiting for it to be prepared. But if you are invited, then enter, and when you have eaten, then disperse, without lingering for conversation. Such [behaviour] causes annoyance to the Prophet; he is too shy to ask you to leave, but Allah is not too shy [to tell you] the truth...﴾ (*al-Aḥzāb* 33: 53)

Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idi said:

«A man spied through a hole into the house of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) when the Prophet (ﷺ) was combing his hair with an iron comb. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: If I had known you were spying, I would have stabbed your eyes with it. Indeed, the command to take permission to enter has been enjoined because of that, and one should not spy on others.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«If anyone spies into your house without permission and you throw a stone at him and put out his eye, there is no blame on you.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Refrain from suspicion, as suspicion is the most evil of falsehood; and do not look for the faults of others and do not spy on each other and do not be jealous of each other and do not abandon each other. And, O worshippers of Allah, be brotherly.» (Muslim)

Be aware about interfering in the lives of others/spying

- Unless we (as a parent, a spouse, or other authority) have a right over a person to ask, we have no right to interfere and even then, if our advice is against their shar'i rights, then what we say will not count. If Allah gives other people the right, we have no choice but to accept.
- We ought not to consider that because the other person is silent that they do not mind our interference. In this case, we must consider our own behaviour, not their reaction.
- That person has every right to tell us to mind our own business and we have no right to be offended by their reaction; scholars tell us such questioning is not allowed.

Part 28: Lying/Making false and unfounded accusations

Description and manifestations

Without doubt, this is a very destructive behaviour. It is like so many similar behaviours aimed specifically at causing destruction with ill intent and there is no disguising this. It includes all those occasions when we intentionally do not tell the truth, when we disguise and misrepresent reality, and when we deny and reject the truth whilst knowing all along that what we are saying is simply not true. Therefore, lying covers a range of disguises related either to ourselves or to others. It exists not only in the form of lies but also injustice. It may also involve being two-faced and backbiting.

The contexts in which it exists depend on who we are trying to protect from any form of shame, harm, or consequence. When we lie about ourselves, we may do so in public if the issues are related to gaining popularity or fame, but less so when we are likely to be found out. When we lie about others, it is carried out most often when the person we are lying about is either unaware or not present at the time. If they are present, they are likely to be in a vulnerable position and thus less likely to defend themselves. People rarely make this allegation against a confrontational person. We may make a direct accusation or may imply it and cover our lie by acting as if we doubt it ourselves but plant a seed of doubt in the minds of others. It is also manifested as silence when one knows the reality in the presence of another person who may be under accusation.

The main reason behind it tends to be self-preservation and self-promotion of ourselves, although we may wonder what is left of such a 'self' after we cause so much damage to an innocent person. Regarding others, the context is mostly in the form of shaming or degrading that person. It can also be a form of revenge without allowing them to defend themselves, in order to ensure that our position remains the only existing reality in the eyes of others.

Related emotions

Fear, selfishness, self-preservation (so we blame others to save ourselves), revenge, deceit, lying (in order to misrepresent the situation), feeling inferior to the other person (so accusing them and making oneself feel superior in comparison), being unjust, and dishonesty.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"They can handle it. I will die/get killed/be punished if I am found out, so I will blame them."*
 - *"They won't know it was me." (So I am safe. [I don't care if they are not.])*
-

- *"They don't know what's being said, so it can't really harm them." (I am safe in this state of 'ignorance' about the implications of my actions.)*
- *"They deserve it; this will knock them down a peg or two."*

This is destructive because often the revenge may not be aimed towards the said person but towards someone else, and the accusation may be made to a member of their family or a loved one in order to harm them.
- *"I don't see why they should be considered better than me." (This will readjust the balance just enough so my place in this situation or relationship is not usurped by the newcomer. [I want to be the favourite.]*
- *"It's a joke!" (Let me see how annoyed they get with each other before I admit this. [I do enjoy a good fight.]*

Possible consequences

- This will most likely backfire and the scheming behind the method means we are less likely to be forgiven easily.

Possible impact on faith

- It is considered a lie in Islam and we are told to not lie even as a joke. It is often the case that by the time the 'joker' has admitted their dishonesty, feelings of hostility have already been stirred. Whilst the person may admit it was a lie, the other person's reactions and subsequent response may not be easily dismissed. We are likely to be seen as divisive and mischievous if we practise this as a form of humour.
 - At some level, we are trying to outwit Allah. In doing so, we also challenge the supremacy of Allah over all things. We may consider that we have succeeded in disrupting that person's life, but Allah's plan will go ahead.
-

- We may leave ourselves cut off from further guidance. Our faith will eventually diminish as we build only our sins; this is a huge loss that we have the ability to prevent.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَلَا تَلْسُؤُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكُنُوا الْحَقَّ وَانْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٤٢)

﴿And do not confuse truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth knowingly.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 42)

﴿ ... وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

﴿ (سورة البقرة: ١٤٠) ﴾

﴿...And who does greater wrong than those who conceal a testimony they have received from Allah? But Allah is not unaware of what you do.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 140)

﴿ وَلَا تَجِدُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا ﴾

﴿ (سورة النساء: ١٠٧) ﴾

﴿Do not plead on behalf of those who betray their own souls, for Allah does not love one who is treacherous and sinful.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 107)

﴿ وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ﴾

﴿ (سورة النساء: ١١٢) ﴾

﴿But whoever commits an offence or a sin, then blames it on an innocent person, will bear the guilt of slander and manifest sin.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 112)

﴿ ... وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا ﴾

﴿ مُّبِينًا ﴾ ﴿ يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴾ (سورة

﴿ (سورة النساء: ١١٩-١٢٠) ﴾

﴿... Whoever takes Satan as a protector [and helper] instead of Allah has indeed suffered a manifest loss. [Satan] makes promises to them and fills them with false hopes; but Satan makes promises to them only in order to deceive them.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 119-120)

﴿يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوَّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شٰهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلٰى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ الْوَالِدِيْنَ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ؕ اِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا اَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاللّٰهُ اَوْلٰى بِهِمَا۟ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوٰى اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا وَاِنْ تَلَوْا اَوْ تَعْرَضُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ حٰخِيْرًا ﴿۱۲۰﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ۱۳۵)

﴿O you who believe, be steadfast in justice and bear true witness for the sake of Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your kinsfolk. Whether he is rich or poor, Allah can best take care of both. So do not follow your emotions, lest you swerve from justice. If you distort your testimony or decline to give it, then verily Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 135)

﴿قُلْ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْاِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَاَنْ تُشْرِكُوْا بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزِلْ بِهٖ سُلْطٰنًا وَاَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا عَلٰى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۳﴾﴾ (سورة الاعراف: ۳۳)

﴿Say: My Lord has only forbidden shameful deeds, whether [committed] openly or in secret, sin, unjustified aggression, ascribing partners to Allah for which He has not sent down any authority, and saying concerning Allah that of which you have no knowledge.﴾ (al-A'raf 7: 33)

﴿وَلَمَّا سَقَطَ فِيْٓ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَرَاَوْا اَنْهَمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۹﴾﴾ (سورة الاعراف: ۱۴۹)

﴿When they became remorseful and realized that they had gone astray, they said: If our Lord does not have mercy on us and forgive us, we will surely be among the losers.﴾ (al-A'raf 7: 149)

﴿... وَلِيَحْلِفْنَ اِنْ اَرَدْنَا اِلَّا الْحُسْنٰى وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾﴾ (سورة التوبة: ۱۰۷)

﴿...They will surely swear that they intended nothing but good, but Allah bears witness that they are indeed liars.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 107)

﴿وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٥٣)

﴿Tell My slaves that they should say what is best, for Satan sows discord among them. Verily, Satan is to man an avowed enemy.﴾ (al-Isrā' 17: 53)

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا أَكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ تَوَلَّى إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾ تَوَلَّى جَاءُو عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ قَالُوا لَيْسَ اللَّهُ هُمْ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَتَوَلَّى فَضَلَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَحِمَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِذْ تَلَقَوْهُمُ بِالْبِئْسَ لَكُمْ بَأْفَاكُمُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾﴾ (سورة النور: ١١-١٥)

﴿Verily, those who propagated the slander were a group among you. Do not think that it was bad for you; rather it is good for you. Each man among them bears [responsibility for] his share in the sin, and as for the one among them who played the major role, for him there will be a grievous punishment. Why, when you heard it, did the believing men and women not think the best of one another and say: This is obviously a lie? Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it? As they did not bring the witnesses, they are the liars before Allah. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah towards you in this world and the hereafter, a grievous penalty would have overtaken you, because of the talk you indulged in, when you were propagating it with your tongues and saying with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge. You regarded [your talking about it] as a

trivial matter, whereas with Allah it was a grievous offence. ﴿an-Noor 24: 11-15﴾

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لَعُنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَ يُؤْمَدُ بِوَقْفِهِمْ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٥﴾﴾ (سورة

النور: ٢٣-٢٥)

﴿Verily, those who make accusations against chaste women who are innocent at heart and believers are cursed in this world and the hereafter, and theirs will be a grievous punishment. On the day when their own tongues, hands and feet will testify against them regarding what they used to do. On that day, Allah will give them in full their due recompense and they will know that Allah is indeed the Truth Who makes manifest [the true nature of all things].﴾ (an-Noor 24: 23-25)

﴿... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣﴾﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٣)

﴿... Verily, Allah does not guide anyone who persists in lies and disbelief.﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 3)

﴿إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا ﴿٣٦﴾ حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾ وَكَوَاعِبَ أَزْوَاجًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَكَأْسَادَهَا قَا ﴿٣٩﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِدَابًا ﴿٤٠﴾ جَزَاءً مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاءً حِسَابًا ﴿٤١﴾﴾ (سورة النبا: ٣٦-٣٦)

﴿Verily, for the righteous there will be salvation, gardens and vineyards, and youthful [companions], of equal age, and a cup that is full. They will not hear therein any vain talk or lies – a recompense from your Lord, a generous gift.﴾ (an-Naba' 78: 31-36)

‘Abdur-Rahmân ibn Abi Bakrah reported that his father said:

«We were seated among a group with Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ), then he said: Shall I tell you what are the greatest sins? (He repeated the question three times.) Associating anything with Allah, disobedience to parents, and bearing false witness.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) reclined and then sat up and repeated it until we wished for him to cease.» (Muslim)

'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ood said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
«Should I tell you about slandering? It is the telling of untruths which create strife between people.» (Muslim)

He also said:

«A person tells the truth until he is recorded as truthful, and he tells a lie until he is recorded as a liar.» (Muslim)

'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ood narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:
«Be truthful, as truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to paradise, and a man keeps on being truthful until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to the fire, and a man keeps lying until it is written for him before Allah that he is a liar.» (Muslim)

In a similar hadith, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ood also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Hold fast to the truth. Surely truth leads to piety, and piety leads to paradise. And surely a man goes on speaking the truth until he is recorded as truthful with Allah. And refrain from telling lies, because telling a lie leads to bad deeds and bad deeds lead to hell. And surely, a man goes on telling lies until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.» (Bukhari)

«Umm Kulthoom bint 'Uqbah ibn Abu Mu'ayt (رضي الله عنها), who was one of the first emigrants who gave allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ), said that she heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: The one who makes peace between people by inventing good or by saying good things is not a liar.

Ibn Shihāb said: I have heard that the people were prohibited from lying except in three (situations): war, reconciliation between people, and the conversation of a man and his wife and the conversation of a wife and her husband.

It was also related that she said: I have not heard him permit lies in anything of what people say except in three (situations).» (Muslim)

Umm Kulthoom bint 'Uqbah also narrated that she heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say:

«He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things is not a liar.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he tells a lie; when he promises, he breaks it (his promise); and if you entrust him, he proves to be dishonest (if you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it).» (Bukhari)

Samurah ibn Jundab related:

«Whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) finished the (morning) prayer, he would face us and ask: Who amongst you had a dream last night?

So if anyone had a dream he would narrate it. The Prophet (ﷺ) would say: *Mā shā' Allāh* (indicating a good occurrence).

One day, he asked us whether any of us had seen a dream. We replied in the negative. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: But I saw (a dream) last night that two men came to me, caught hold of my hands, and took me to the Sacred Land ... There I saw a person sitting and another standing with an iron hook in his hand, pushing it inside the mouth of the former until it reached the jaw bone and then tore off one side of his cheek, and then did the same with the other side; in the meantime, the first side of the cheek became normal again and then he repeated the same action.

I said: What is this? ... You have made me ramble about all night. Tell me all about what I have seen.

They (the two companions who had accompanied him) said: ... As for the one whose cheek you saw being torn away, he was a liar and he used to tell lies and the people would report those lies on his authority

until they spread all over the world. So he will be punished like that until the Day of Resurrection...» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«If anyone does not give up lying speech (false statements) and acting on those lies and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink.» (Bukhari)

Abu Umāmah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«I am the leader of a house in paradise. I guarantee a house in paradise for the one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a house in the middle of paradise for the one who abandons lying, even if he is joking; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of paradise for the one who has good manners.» (Abu Dāwood; graded reliable by al-Albāni and Ibn Bāz)

Be aware about lying/making false and unfounded accusations

- It is clearly prohibited and has serious consequences in this world and the next. We gain a sin by lying as well as for any damage that our lies may cause.
- We must not deceive ourselves by saying we have a good intention (as mentioned earlier, a wrong behaviour with a good intention is not accepted).
- Over time, other negative behaviours that are associated with this (lying and being two-faced and hypocritical) will lower our overall good character.
- There are exceptions, one of which is when one lies to make peace between two parties. This is only in three cases, however, as specified in the hadith above. Again, do not see lying as a single wrong behaviour. Lying involves many other destructive behaviours.

- In Islam, there is no such thing as a ‘little white lie’, and we must be mindful of disguising our lies in this way by referring to the exceptions mentioned; they simply do not apply in most cases.

Part 29: Making fun of others


Description and manifestations

It is common for some people to create amusement amongst themselves and their friends by mocking and belittling others (the exact amusing aspect of this is hard to identify, however). We see in the media on a daily basis the negative impact such behaviour has; it can lead to emotional damage as well as physical violence and even death of the victim or the perpetrators. We feel that if we insult others, we gain some form of superiority and social acceptability (until we ourselves are ridiculed, and invariably this time does come). The Sunnah warns us against such behaviour – which suggests there is no superiority to be gained, but rather the opposite – but we excuse it by saying it is not meant to harm. But harm it does.

It is manifest when:

- We point out the mistakes or previous actions of others;
- We speak to them in a manner they do not like or about a topic they find painful or embarrassing; or
- We even point out a shortcoming or fault and trivialise it in an attempt to actually highlight it.

The behaviour, like gossip, is used for entertainment and so is generally carried out in public, since the effect in a private setting is less humiliating and therefore less entertaining for the ‘joker’, whose aim is to be raised in esteem by others. This reflects equally badly on both the joker and his/her audience, since being amused by such antics makes us party to them. It is, in essence, a form of bullying and involves the sort of primitive malice we find in school playgrounds; it is hard to counter with dignity because childish behaviour does not



share adult values of propriety. This is where the humiliation of such behaviour is intensified, because it is tantamount to an adult being insulted and treated not only **like** a child but **by** a child – and being applauded for that.

The joker tends to focus solely on their own popularity, with no concern for their victim, or the extent to which the harm of such behaviour can last, or the consequences on their emotional and psychological states. For them, it was simply ‘a bit of fun’.

Related emotions

Fear, insecurity, feeling inferior, resentment, contempt, revenge, open cruelty, and insensitivity.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“We are only having a bit of a laugh! It’s not hurting anyone and I don’t see anyone crying!” (Because all I can see are the people around me laughing [which means I am making them happy].)*
- *“Some people can’t take a joke.”*
- *“I don’t mean it in a bad way.” (I am ignoring that there is no bad action with a good intention. [Anyway, the fact that I am popular is more important than someone else being harmed.])*

Possible consequences

- People will not want to be around us, or we may find ourselves on the end of ridicule that is in a more painful form than the one we have expressed. This will be our own doing.
- People will consider us childish and mean-spirited, so the ridicule and the joke are actually on us. This may be made more amusing by the fact that we cannot see it, although we may consider ourselves to be very quick witted.

Possible impact on faith

- If we clearly reject the advice of the Sunnah and feel confident in ignoring the harm we cause, we risk losing other blessings and guidance in our lives.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْحَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ... ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢١٢)

﴿The life of this world is made to appear fair-seeming to those who disbelieve, and they scoff at those who believe. But those who fear Allah will be above them on the Day of Resurrection...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 212)

﴿ يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٦٩)

﴿He grants wisdom to whomever He wills; and he to whom wisdom is granted has been given much good; but none will pay heed except people of understanding.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 269)

﴿ وَلَقَدْ أَسْتَهْزِئُوا بِرُسُلٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٠-١١)

﴿Indeed, Messengers before you were ridiculed, but then those who mocked them were overwhelmed by the very thing [punishment] they used to ridicule. Say: Travel through the land and see what was the fate of the deniers.﴾ (al-An'ām 6: 10-11)

﴿ يَحْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ قُلِ اسْتَهْزِئُوا بِإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُخْرِجُ مَا تَحْذَرُونَ ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١١)

تَخَوْضُ وَتَلْعَبُ قُلْ أَيُّ اللَّهِ وَءَايَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ لَا تَسْذَرُوا
فَدَكَّرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ إِنْ نَعْفَ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ مِنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَآئِفَةً بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا
مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ (سورة التوبة: ٦٤-٦٦)

¶The hypocrites are afraid lest a soorah be sent down concerning them, informing the [believers] of what is really in their hearts. Say: Carry on with your mockery! Verily, Allah will bring forth that which you are afraid of. If you question them, they will surely say: We were only indulging in idle talk and joking. Say: Was it Allah, His revelations and His Messenger that you were ridiculing? Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after having believed. If We pardon some of you, We will punish others, because they are evildoers. ¶
(at-Tawbah 9: 64-66)

﴿وَصَنَعَ الْفُلْكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا
فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ
عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾﴾ (سورة هود: ٣٨-٣٩)

¶So he started to build the ark, and every time the chieftains of his people passed by him, they ridiculed him. He said: Though you ridicule us now, we will certainly ridicule you as you are ridiculing us. You will come to know who will receive a punishment that will disgrace him, and upon whom will descend an everlasting punishment. ¶ (Hood 11: 38-39)

﴿هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَأَصَابَهُمْ
سَيِّئَاتٌ مَا عَمِلُوا وَخَافَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾﴾ (سورة النحل: ٣٣-٣٤)

¶What are they [the disbelievers] waiting for, but for the angels to come to them, or for the decree of your Lord to come to pass? Likewise did those who came before them. It is not Allah Who wronged them,

but it was they who wronged themselves. The evil consequences of their deeds overtook them, and the very thing [punishment] they used to ridicule overwhelmed them. ﴿ (an-Nahl 16: 33-34)

﴿ ... وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَابْصَرًا وَأَفْئِدَةً فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَرُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿ (سورة الأحقاف: ٢٦) ﴾

﴿...and We gave them hearing, sight and intellect. But neither their hearing nor their sight nor their intellect was of any avail to them, for they used to reject the signs of Allah. And the very thing [punishment] they used to ridicule overwhelmed them. ﴿ (al-Ahqaf 46: 26)

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ ... ﴿ (سورة الحجرات: ١١) ﴾

﴿O you who believe, let not some men ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them; and let not some women ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them... ﴿ (al-Hujurat 49: 11)

﴿وَبِلِّ لِكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٌ ﴿ (سورة الحمزة: ١) ﴾

﴿Woe to every backbiter, fault-finder. ﴿ (al-Humazah 104: 1)

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Amr related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«A Muslim is the one who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a muhâjir (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all that Allah has forbidden.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about making fun of others

- We ought to consider more carefully the things we joke about.
- We should consider all the qualities about ourselves that deserve ridicule (this may make us stop and think before we do it to others).

- People may have very good reasons for their behaviour, so we must ask ourselves why they do something rather than make fun of it. The reasons may surprise us.
- Making fun of others is clearly prohibited. We assume that by mocking others we are better than them, but the behaviour itself means we are not behaving decently or humanely.

Part 30: Miserliness

Description and manifestations

Miserliness is a behaviour which has come to be seen by some people as amusing rather than unhealthy. Yet there is nothing amusing when we think of the wider implications of being miserly, not only upon our own lives but the lives of others. Being miserly is more than not giving money; it includes when we have a lot but give minimal, and in that sense it also refers to any possession we have that exceeds a healthy amount. It is also when we pretend we do not have enough or when we find the cheapest possible ways to give whilst boasting of the huge amounts we have given. All of these behaviours seek to cover up our miserliness.

Ironically, we often find that those with less are more likely to be generous with what they have than those who have enough or more than enough. We fill our bank accounts and live off interest alone (which is, in itself, haram), but when it comes to giving, we make excuses for not having enough money for ourselves, let alone others. Alternatively, we may give a minute amount and expect great praise and acknowledgement. Giving something is, of course, so much better than giving nothing, so the amount is not always an issue (depending on one's personal situation). However, when it comes to parting with our money, we may become unreasonable. Yet we do not hold this inner dialogue when it comes to spending on yet another pair of shoes or another set of jewellery. We deserve it, do we not?

Of course, we see and hear of wonderful acts of generosity and these acts must be rightly honoured and respected. However, they seem to be reduced day by day as the excuses for not giving become more sophisticated and divisive.


Related emotions

Greed, fear (that our own funds will decrease), being inconsiderate and insensitive, insecurity that someone may have something we do not (although we may see they have nothing), and simply being mean with our money.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“Sorry, I don’t have any change.” (Actually I do, but it is small change and I won’t feel good about giving you fifty pence so I won’t give you anything.)*
- *“They use the money for drugs/drink and I won’t support their habit!”*

This is understandable since we do not wish to add harm to the person in need, but why not do something else instead, such as buy some food or clothes for them? We are human and we all spend our money in unhealthy ways at some point (whether in wasteful ways or on the wrong things). People in need are no different. Do not assume all homeless or needy people are criminals: it is a totally unjust assumption. We see examples in the seerah and in the lives of the great imams that people with the best of faith helped those with the weakest faith come to a better way of behaviour. This was irrespective of how bad their behaviour was. Indeed, their kindness was what helped such people to return to good behaviour.

- *“In shâ’ Allâh, as soon as I have some money I intend to give something to charity.” (I say this but I have no intention of giving. Using in shâ’ Allâh makes me sound sincere, though.)*
-
- 

- *“Oh, they are all part of crime gangs. They collect lots of money and send it back home where they have palaces.”/“These charities keep half of our donations, so I won’t bother.”*

If, as we have seen in recent years, the evidence for such actions proves to be true, find someone else to whom you can give the money rather than not give anything to anyone.

- *“I would like to give some money, but whenever I have money it never seems to be enough. How can I give it away when I need it myself?” (These designer trainers are a necessity...)*
- *“If I give you a pound, that is a huge amount of money for someone like you, so twenty pence is enough.” (People in need live in a world of different currency rates than those of us who have money. Anyhow, I have to buy a whole lot of treats for myself. I need cheering up.)*
- *“They are not my people/fellow countrymen, so why should I give them any money?” (I [am secretly very prejudiced and] only like to give charity to the people of my own community, no matter where I live or who else I take money or help from.)*

This is so far from the spirit of Islam!

Possible consequences

- We will not be called upon to donate and will eventually develop an unpleasant reputation, since it indirectly suggests that we are not keen to support the vulnerable person. This means we will miss out on other opportunities to help. If we were miserly in a few cases, our habit and reputation will be extended to areas which we may actually be happy to support.

Possible impact on faith

- We will have to account on the Day of Judgement for any money we saved and did not spend. The more we had, the longer the questioning will be (and this questioning will not

be easy, so we will extend our own suffering on an already terrifying day). This will be made easier for us, *in shâ' Allâh*, if we gave it away or were planning to.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ تَيْسَ الْبِرِّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَنَّى السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ١٧٧)

﴿It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; rather righteousness is to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets; to spend from your wealth, despite your love for it, on kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, wayfarers and those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to establish prayer and give zakat; to fulfil the covenants you make; to be patient in the face of hardship and adversity, and in times of conflict. Such are the true believers, and such are the pious.﴾ (*al-Baqarah 2: 177*)

﴿ وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ١٩٥)

﴿And spend in the cause of Allah, and do not contribute to your destruction with your own hands; but do good, for Allah loves those who do good.﴾ (*al-Baqarah 2: 195*)

﴿ ... وَسَأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ

تَنْفَكُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ... ﴿١١٧﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢١٩-٢٢٠)

﴿...They ask you how much they are to spend; say: Whatever is surplus to your needs. Thus does Allah make clear to you His revelations, so that you may reflect on this life and the hereafter...﴾
(*al-Baqarah* 2: 219-220)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِي يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفِيعَةٌ ۗ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٥٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٥٤)

﴿O you who believe, spend from that which We have provided for you, before the day comes when there will be no bargaining, no friendship, and no intercession. It is the disbelievers who are the wrongdoers.﴾
(*al-Baqarah* 2: 254)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنفِقُوا مِّن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِتَّائِبِينَ إِلَّا أَن تُضِعُّوا فِيهِ ۗ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٢٦٧﴾ الشَّيْطٰنُ يُعِدُّكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُّكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٦٧-٢٦٨)

﴿O you who believe! Give of the good things which you have earned, and of what We have produced for you from the earth, and do not select the inferior things to give away, when you yourselves would not accept them unless you were to overlook them. And know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy. Satan threatens you with poverty and instructs you to be miserly, but Allah promises you His forgiveness and grace. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.﴾
(*al-Baqarah* 2: 267-268)

﴿لَن نَّالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٩٢)

﴿You will never attain righteousness until you spend [in charity] of that which you love; and whatever you give [in charity], verily Allah knows it well.﴾ (*Āl 'Imrān* 3: 92)

﴿ وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ سَرٌّ لَّهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا يَخْلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٨٠)

Those who covetously withhold what Allah has granted them by His grace should not think that it is good for them; rather it is bad for them, for the things which they covetously withheld will be hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection. To Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is well aware of all that you do. ﴿ (Al 'Imrân 3: 180)

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿٣٧﴾ (سورة النساء: ٣٧)

Those who are stingy, and exhort people to stinginess, and conceal what Allah has bestowed on them of His bounty -- for We have prepared for disbelievers a humiliating punishment. ﴿ (an-Nisâ' 4: 37)

﴿ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٢٩)

Do not keep your hand tied to your neck [like a miser], or stretch it forth to its utmost extent [like a squanderer], lest you become blameworthy and destitute. ﴿ (al-Isrâ' 17: 29)

﴿ وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ (سورة النور: ٢٢)

Let not those among you who are people of virtue and wealth swear to cease giving [aid] to their kinsfolk, the needy and those who have migrated in Allah's cause. Rather let them pardon and overlook. Do you not like for Allah to forgive you? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. ﴿ (an-Noor 24: 22)

﴿لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ بِالْبُخْلِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٤﴾﴾ (سورة الحديد: ٢٣-٢٤)

﴿[Know this] so that you do not grieve for what passes you by, nor exult over what He gives you, for Allah does not love anyone who is conceited and boastful, those who are stingy, and exhort people to stinginess. And whoever turns away, verily Allah is Self-Sufficient, Worthy of all praise.﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 23-24)

﴿فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ ﴿٥﴾ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٦﴾﴾ (سورة الليل: ٦)

﴿As for him who gives in charity and fears Allah, and believes in the ultimate good.﴾ (al-Layl 92: 5-6)

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٥﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٧﴾﴾ (سورة الماعون: ٤-٧)

﴿So woe to those who pray but are heedless regarding their prayer, those who make a show of piety yet withhold small kindnesses.﴾ (al-Mâ'oon 107: 4-7)

Abu Hurayrah related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«When anyone dies, his deeds cease, except three: regular charity, knowledge which he has imparted to others, or a God-fearing son (or child) who supplicates for him.» (Muslim)

Anas ibn Mâlik said that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to invoke Allah:

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ، وَالْكَسَلِ، وَالْجُبْنِ، وَالْهَرَمِ، وَالْبُخْلِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ، وَمِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ»

«Allâhumma inni a'oodhu bika minal-'ajzi wal-kasali, wal-jubni wal-harami wal-bukhli, wa a'oodhu bika min 'adhâbil-qabri, wa min fitnatil-mahyâ wal-mamât.

(O Allah, I seek refuge in You from incapacity and laziness, from cowardliness and senility and miserliness, and I seek refuge in You from the torture of the grave and from the trials of life and death.)» (Muslim)

Jâbir reported:

«Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) asked: Who is your chief, O Banu Salimah? They answered: Jadd ibn Qays, although we consider him a miser. He said: What malady can exceed miserliness? Rather, your chief is 'Amr ibn al-Jamooḥ.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Abu Hurayrah narrated:

«A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked: O Messenger of Allah, which charity is the most superior in reward?

He replied: The charity which you practise while you are healthy, niggardly, and afraid of poverty and wish to become wealthy. Do not delay it to the time of approaching death and then say: Give so much to so-and-so and so much to so-and-so and it already belongs to so-and-so (his heirs).» (Bukhari)

Asmâ' bint Abi Bakr (رضي الله عنها) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Do not shut your money bag; otherwise Allah, too, will withhold his blessings from you. Spend (in Allah's cause as much as you can afford).» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Every day two angels come down (from the heaven) and one of them says: O Allah! Compensate every person who spends in your cause and the other (angel) says: O Allah! Destroy every miser.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The example of an almsgiver and a miser is like the example of two persons who have iron cloaks on them from their breasts to their collarbones. When the almsgiver gives in charity, the cloak becomes

capacious until it covers his whole body to such an extent that it hides his fingertips and covers his footprints (obliterates his tracks). And when the miser wants to spend it (the iron cloak) sticks and (its) every ring gets stuck to its place. And he tries to widen it but it does not become wide.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Charity does not in any way decrease wealth, and for the servant who forgives, Allah adds to his respect; and for the one who shows humility, Allah elevates him in the estimation (of the people).» (Muslim)

Be aware about miserliness

- There is some shame if we pray and do not give to charity, as the two acts are not isolated from each other.
- Allah dislikes this quality and the punishment for it is severe. Is **not** giving really worth it? Remember: do not consider even a tiny amount worthless; it is something and it all adds up. Of course, if we have the means to give more but choose to give a small amount, then we should not be too proud of our giving.
- Being miserly is such a serious issue that the Prophet (ﷺ) sought refuge from it in his du'â's. We should not take the matter lightly.
- It is Allah's money, so we cannot really assume that if we withhold it unnecessarily from His creation, we will get to keep it. It may have been given to us precisely for us to give it to another person.
- We cannot take money with us when we die, but we may receive continued rewards for it after we die if we gave some away.

Part 31: Neglecting personal hygiene


Description and manifestations

Problems with poor personal hygiene need little elaboration. Suffice it to say that it is a duty we have to ourselves and to others to remain clean enough that we do not emit any offensive odour. Neglecting our personal hygiene includes those times when we need to wash and clean ourselves, for whatever reason, and do not. We accept that we smell unpleasant and are not concerned about the consequences. We may argue that we are free in the privacy of our own homes, but if we ignore it we are less likely to be concerned when it comes to others. We may expose our family members to it and this, in turn, affects the environment in the home; they may remain silent even though they are offended by it. People outside our families may not be as discreet in their reactions, however. It is not attractive to anyone and gives an additional message that we are insensitive to other people and have no general sense of propriety.

The issue is less excusable for those of us who live in countries where all resources – such as clean water, soap, body lotions, and deodorants – are affordable and easily available. (The key, of course, is to wash rather than simply cover the odour with perfume, which creates a more offensive odour.)

Islam is the only religion that instructs its followers to wash all exposed body parts five (or more) times a day, so if we are Muslim and we pray, we have no excuse at all. Additionally, we are told to wash our private body parts with water each time we relieve ourselves; so again, if we follow the Sunnah in such things we have no reason for poor hygiene. Yet we can all think of times we have been to the communal prayer or elsewhere and found ourselves next to someone with offensive body or mouth odour.

In this, we can see that the habit of poor personal hygiene is related to sheer laziness in fulfilling the rights our bodies have over us or



to being insensitive to others by ignoring something which can be easily remedied.

Related emotions

Laziness, lack of awareness of personal hygiene issues, lack of self-awareness, and poor hygiene habits.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"I can't smell anything." (It must be just them.)*
- *"I always smell that way. I have a problem." (I am using this as an excuse to not do anything about it.)*
- *"No one has said anything." (So I will just do whatever I want; I can tolerate it because it's me.)*
- *"My husband/wife has not mentioned it." (I wonder why we have no romance in our lives. [I am not connecting these two things.])*
- *"Why do people keep giving me soaps as gifts?" (Of course, it's a joke. isn't it? So I will give the soap to my family when I get home.)*

Possible consequences

- We find that people avoid us, but we cannot identify anything wrong with our morals and ethics. Might it be this?
- The romance in our marriages is bound to be reduced and at some level this interferes with our relationships. Even though it is something that can be easily resolved, our laziness prevents us from doing anything about it.
- People will talk about us in a derogatory or disgusted manner, especially if we do not take their hints.
- We may be called in to our superiors at work and have this situation pointed out to us. Consider the humiliation we would face if this happened.

Possible impact on faith

- We may not fulfil the requirements for prayer and an invalid prayer has much wider implications for our lives.
- The Companions (رضي الله عنهم) were told to beautify themselves for their spouses. When we have poor hygiene we fail in the standard set for us and reject the application of that advice. This is unlikely to end well for us.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٢)

﴿... Truly, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and He loves those who purify themselves.﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 222)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ ۝١ قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ ۝٢ وَرَبِّكَ فَكَذِبْ ۝٣ وَيَأْتِيكَ فَطَهِّرْ ۝٤ وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ ۝٥﴾

﴿(سورة المدثر: ١-٥)﴾

﴿O you who are covered with your cloak, arise and warn, your Lord magnify, your garments purify, abomination shun.﴾ (*al-Muddath-thir* 74: 1-5)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Five practices are part of one's *fiṭrah* (human nature and natural disposition): circumcision, shaving the pubic hairs, trimming the moustache, clipping the nails, and removing the hair from the armpits.» (Bukhari)

Abu Mâlik al-Ash'ari (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Cleanliness is half of faith; *Alḥamdulillâh* (praise be to Allah) fills the scale; *subḥân Allâh* (glory be to Allah) and *Alḥamdulillâh* fill up what is between the heavens and the earth; prayer is a light; charity is proof (of one's faith); endurance is a brightness; and the Qur'an

is a proof on your behalf or against you. All men go out early in the morning and sell themselves, thereby setting themselves free or destroying themselves.» (Muslim)

Be aware about neglecting personal hygiene

- We are clearly warned against being unclean: no excuses allowed.
- Do we really want this to be our defining characteristic? When this happens, other people may not be able to get past it to value our other qualities.

Part 32: Not talking to one another

Description and manifestations

The issue of keeping away from people who harm us whilst not talking to us is complicated. We are not expected to place ourselves in situations where people may repeatedly harm us, yet at the same time we are encouraged to keep things amicable even in a split. The difference between keeping a distance, avoidance, and cutting someone off is delicate since the three can overlap to some extent.

Not talking to someone is self-explanatory and is based on feelings of hostility, where cutting off is intended as a punishment and an openly hostile reaction to an event. It may concern breaking blood ties, which was mentioned earlier. In these situations, the same rules apply.

When we are angry, upset, or offended, avoidance seems the best way to cope with that pain. Indeed, it does have its benefits as we often need space to collect our thoughts and consider our course of action. However, ongoing avoidance of each other, leading to someone deciding to cut off the relationship permanently, is not beneficial. It can eat away at us and we can become constantly aware of the person we are avoiding and even become angry that they are avoiding us in return. This then fuels our anger and perhaps even

makes us more resolute to ignore them. We may pretend to ourselves that we are not ignoring them, that we have no ill feeling in our hearts, that we have simply been busy – but the answer to this lies in our feelings and emotional reactions when we think about having to pick up the phone and get in touch with them (anxiety and the related nerves and fear are different from maintaining hostility in such matters, so the two should not be confused if we attempt to justify this behaviour).

Related emotions


Fear (of being rejected or harmed again), weakness (not feeling we have the courage), unhappiness with them, inability to forgive, anger/resentment (that we had to take the first step – even though Islamically this is the better option), and pride.

The same applies when we witness our friends and relatives behaving in this way. We are encouraged to facilitate reconciliation rather than turn away.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“Just leave it. It’s better to be away from them and their harm.”*
- *“The longer we don’t talk, the harder it gets.” (So I will excuse myself from trying.)*
- *“I have no ill feelings. I have just been incredibly busy.” (Actually, I am still annoyed with them, but that’s my excuse and I am sticking to it.)*
- *“The thing is, I don’t want to put myself in such a vulnerable position again.”*

Once more, the vulnerability is related to the degree of initial damage done.

- *“If they don’t get along with me, what can I do?” (It’s up to them and I don’t want to be seen as the baddie.)*
-
- 

Possible consequences

- It is a problem-saturated rather than a problem-solving reaction. (It may bother us more than it bothers the other person, and in this way it continues to harm us.)
- We must consider not only our own behaviour but honestly reflect on what we have done to the other person to try and understand what has caused the chain of events.

Possible impact on faith

- We are not allowed to deliberately stop talking to each other for more than three days if we intentionally want to show our hostility and aggression. If we do so, we also show ingratitude for any goodness they may have shown towards us. This may affect the next sort of friend Allah sends us – if He chooses to send another one at all.
- We are not necessarily encouraged to place ourselves in situations where we are repeatedly harmed by someone and it causes a problem for us because we keep going back for more. In such cases, we are allowed to keep a healthy distance. It is the manner in which this is done that counts. We must either keep things civil or work on the problems. In both situations, Islam demands that we proceed with caution.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿... وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾ (سورة

النساء: ١)

﴿...Fear Allah, in Whose name you demand your mutual [rights], and be mindful of your ties of kinship, for Allah is always watching you.﴾ (*an-Nisā' 4: 1*)

﴿ فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ ﴾ (سورة

محمد: ٢٢)

﴿Then is it to be expected of you, if you turn away, that you will spread mischief in the land and sever your ties of kinship?﴾ (Muhammad 47: 22)

﴿ وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا... ﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ٩)

﴿If two groups among the believers fight one another, then make peace between them...﴾ (al-Hujurat 49: 9)

Anas ibn Mâlik narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Do not hate one another and do not be jealous of one another and do not desert one another – and, O Allah's worshippers, be brothers. Lo! It is not permissible for any Muslim to desert (not talk to) his brother (Muslim) for more than three days.» (Bukhari)

Abu Ayyoob al Anṣârî (رضي الله عنه) related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«It is not lawful for a man to desert his brother (Muslim) for more than three nights. (It is unlawful for them that) when they meet, one of them turns his face from the other, and the other turns his face from the former, and the better of the two will be the one who greets the other first.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«People's deeds are presented before Allah on Mondays and Thursdays, and then every slave (of Allah) is granted forgiveness (of minor sins) if he does not associate anything with Allah in worship. But the person in whose heart is rancour against his brother will not be pardoned. With regard to them, he said twice: Hold these two until they are reconciled.» (Muslim)

Be aware about not talking to one another

- In the Qur'an, we are encouraged to actively make peace between people.
- We have three days to cool off. Use them and move on!
- The better person is the one who first visits, picks up the phone, sends an e-mail, texts, or greets the other person.
- If we have not heard from someone in a while and we know the non-contact is not related to the usual reasons, it is important for our own consciences that we consider if we ourselves have done something wrong before we dismiss it and blame the other person.

Part 33: Oppressing others/ Abusing one's position

Description and manifestations

Oppression is described in the Qur'an as *dhulm*. The root word means to knowingly put something back in the wrong place; it may arguably be considered a cover-up of reality.

The behaviour is manifest when:

- Others rely on us to uphold justice and we fail;
- We do not give others their rights;
- We know what Allah allows but we do not like it so we make it difficult for them;
- We know people rely on us, and we let them know we have some power over them and remind them we are doing them a favour;
- We deny or ignore their needs because we know they have only us;

- We let others exercise their rights and remind them we are ‘allowing’ them their rights (even though we are only saving ourselves when we do this).

The abuse may be overt or covert, obvious (when coupled with cruelty) or subtle (when coupled with sheer laziness or weakness of character).

This destructive behaviour does not necessarily apply only to those people who are in power such as rulers, dictators, politicians, and leaders. Rather, it applies to anyone who has power over any other person (single or multiple) but does not support justice in favour of maintaining their own good position – so it is about focusing on the needs of the self and not Allah’s just commands. The oppressor can be a sibling, a spouse, a friend, or even someone we rely on for our needs in the way elderly parents rely on their children for their needs and vice versa. This is important, since we do not tend to see such people as abusing their power/position but they do.

Of course, this refers to reasonable needs and not wants and desires which may be extreme or simply not possible. Those demands are a different form of abuse: they are an abuse of our dependency, so these rules apply to the other instead.

Related emotions

Cruelty, arrogance, harshness of character, injustice, (selectively) ignorant, estrangement, and growing animosity (whether this is made apparent or not).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“I do it because I can... what can she/he do to me? I am her/his parent/spouse/boss.”*
- *“I do not care.” (It is not convenient for me [so I will ignore that I am being cruel in rejecting this need]. They will assume it is because I am busy or something.)*

People know when someone is taking advantage of them; do not fool yourself.

- *"I am busy." (I am just pretending I haven't heard the news./ It is not happening and it will go away.)*

Consider this and review the excuse when we make time for everyone else but not for those people who need us.

- *"They depend on me, so they can't do anything about it; otherwise they will lose other things. It's me or no one, so they will just have to wait until I am ready."*
- *"I have all I need." (So honestly I don't care if they don't. I am the one with more control and power in the relationship, so I do not need to do anything I do not want to do. Only others should make sacrifices, not me.)*
- *"I am not abusing my position. I am just disconnecting from them because they did not do what I said. They are free." (I ignore the fact that this is just a subtle form of control through rejection [a more indirect punishment].)*

Possible consequences

- We may lose our power base.
- We may end up needing to rely on someone else who behaves in the same way; these situations often have a way of backfiring.
- There is always someone stronger out there who may enjoy the challenge we pose by our oppression of someone vulnerable, and they may have even fewer moral scruples than we do. We must not consider that we are infallible just because we abuse others.
- When we look at the oppressors and abusers of power (be they kings or beggars), we see that the lives of such people often do not end well nor are they blessed with a good death. That in itself is a reflection of how they have spent their lives.

Possible impact on faith

- The du'â' of the oppressed against the oppressor is always answered by Allah (ﷻ). We must realise that we could be the subject of someone's supplication against us.
- We will be questioned regarding the people over whom Allah gave us responsibilities. On the Day of Judgement, it will be too late for the oppressed to forgive us. There will be no abuse of power then.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿الطَّلَقُ مَرَّتَيْنِ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٩)

Divorce may be pronounced twice; then the wife should either be retained honourably or be released graciously. It is not lawful for you to take back anything that you have given [to your wives], except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah. If you do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, then there is no blame on either of them if the woman opts to give something for her release. These are the limits ordained by Allah, so do not transgress them; if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, it is they who are the wrongdoers. ﴿(al-Baqarah 2: 229)

﴿وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَبِنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِنَعْتِدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ... ﴿٢٣١﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣١)

﴿When you divorce women, and they have approached [the end of] their waiting periods, either retain them on equitable terms or release them on equitable terms. Do not retain them in order to harm them, thus overstepping the limits; if anyone does that, then he has wronged himself...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 231)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَنْحَسَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾ وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَكَاتٍ زَوْجٍ وَءَاتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٢٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْتُمْ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٢١﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٩-٢١)

﴿O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will, nor to hinder them from marrying others, in order to take away some of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifestly immoral conduct; but live with them in kindness. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good. But if you decide to replace one wife with another, even if you had given one of them a heap of gold, do not take the least bit of it back. Would you take it wrongfully and sinfully? And how could you take it when you have been intimate with one another, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 19-21)

﴿أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وَجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارِرُوهُنَّ لِضَعْفِ أَعْيُنِهِنَّ...﴾ (سورة الطلاق: ٦)

﴿Accommodate them [during their waiting period] where you also reside, according to your means, and do not harass them in order to make their lives difficult...﴾ (al-Talāq 65: 6)

‘Abdullâh ibn Mas‘ood related:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Whoever has as much as the weight of an atom of pride in his heart will not be admitted into paradise.

A man said: People like to dress well and wear fine shoes.

He replied: Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty; pride is the rejection of rights and the oppression of people.» (Muslim)

Abu Umâmah al-Hârith narrated:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: If anyone takes the right of a Muslim by oath, Allah will relegate him to the hellfire and prohibit paradise for him.

Then a man asked: O Messenger of Allah, even for a little matter?

He said: Even for a toothstick.» (Muslim)

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«A good Muslim is a brother of another Muslim so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. If anyone fulfilled the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfil his needs; if anyone brought his (Muslim) brother out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection; and if anyone screened a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection.» (Bukhari)

Anas ibn Mâlik related:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one.

People asked: O Messenger of Allah! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: By preventing him from oppressing others.» (Bukhari)

Ibn ‘Umar narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Adh-Dhulm (oppression) will be darkneses (*dhulumât*) on the Day of Resurrection.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Whoever has oppressed another person concerning his reputation or anything else should beg him to forgive him before the Day of Resurrection, when there will be no money (to compensate for wrong deeds); but if he has good deeds, those good deeds will be taken from him according to any oppression he has done and if he has no good deeds, the sins of the oppressed person will be loaded on him.» (Bukhari)

'Abdullâh ibn 'Umar related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Surely, every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: the imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges.» (Bukhari)

Ma'qil narrated: I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«Any man who has been given authority by Allah for ruling over some people and does not look after them in an honest manner will never experience even the smell of paradise.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about oppressing others/abusing one's position

- It is clearly prohibited, and we are advised to be nice even if it is in difficult circumstances. This means we cannot use personal difficulty as an excuse to not fulfil our responsibilities or as an excuse to abuse our position.

- Do not assume that the harm we do is minimal; ask the one suffering. The punishment even for a small act of oppression is severe.
- We may have power in this world, but we will have none in the next and that will be much worse.
- In the case of oppressing someone in their right to divorce or marriage (man or woman), we must understand that even if we force someone to live with us, we cannot force their hearts to love us; in this, we choose a life of misery for them and for ourselves and will have to account for the suffering of both.
- We will be questioned about whether we justly discharged our responsibilities to and our authority over others.

Part 34: Overeating

Description and manifestations

This is a destructive behaviour which easily becomes an acceptable habit. It is self-explanatory in its manifestation: we eat beyond our need simply because we want to or because we can afford to. We feel that eating is a part of life, so there can be no major harm in overeating: after all, it is food, not a drug. We ignore the negative health effects and the injustice at the world level of eating every day beyond our fill. We do not apply the idea of moderation when it comes to food. We excuse ourselves, claiming it is a necessity, but we cannot say with a clear conscience that we are not wasteful in those things that others do not have. We not only overeat but waste food and see it as a sign of our wealth and even our superiority. Indeed, it is common in some countries to boast about eating only imported and branded food when the majority of the country is starving, to boast about never eating the same meal twice, and to throw food away rather than give it away or eat it again. In all cases, excess in food is damaging not only to those of us who have it but also to those with whom we do not share it.

Many of us live in countries where obesity is a health problem, yet we still eat in excess. Adding to the problem, the unhealthier the food is, the cheaper it tends to be; there seems to be no ethical limit when it comes to making money from people's bad habits. In our overeating, we seem to have little gratitude for all we have and little sympathy for others who do not have as much. This is a habit that we find difficult to control, even when it affects our physical health. This level of overeating (aside from clinical health or psychological problems such as bulimia and metabolism issues) is usually interpreted in therapy terms as filling the emptiness we feel inside as a result of deep unhappiness; truly, as our lives have become more meaningless and focused on trivialities, food has become more important.

Related emotions

Greed, feeling superior, being unfair, inconsideration, and arrogance (when only certain food is considered good enough).

Related thoughts and justifications

— *"I give money to charity." (So I can ignore the fact that I am still eating enough for two people.)*

One good act does not necessarily excuse a bad one.

— *"It's a wedding; we must feed our guests generously according to Islam." (What will people say if we don't have twenty dishes? [Using the name of Islam is easy here as no one will argue with me.])*

— *"It's food, not drugs, so it doesn't matter." (I am ignoring the fact that it is still harmful and that someone else could be having it – someone who hasn't eaten in a few days what I have eaten in one meal.)*

We must consider what we put into our stomachs and cherish and care for our bodies, since we rely on them so much.

— *"No one is hungry here."*

We cannot excuse overeating simply because we do not see the effects of it before our eyes. Somewhere along the line, our overeating has an impact on others.

Possible consequences

- Health problems caused by poor nutrition or overeating.
- Obesity and the practical and sometimes surgical consequences of having to lose all the excess weight we carry. This is a time-consuming and costly business.
- It is, in fact, a form of greed which is very apparent and unpleasant to be around, so people may be embarrassed to be seen with us.
- It can really affect our motivation and ability to carry out our daily activities. It can cause further problems such as laziness, which in turn complicates things for us further.

Possible impact on faith

- It goes against the advice given in the Sunnah on how to eat. This not only suggests that we reject divine guidance, which is arrogant, but also reflects on our level of faith, as the hadiths below point out.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أَكْلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرَّمَانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَءَاتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴾
(سورة الأنعام: ١٤١)

﴿It is He Who produces gardens, trellised and untrellised, and date palms and all manner of crops, and olives and pomegranates, similar [in some ways] yet dissimilar [in others]. Eat of their fruit when

they bear fruit and give what is due on the day of harvest. But do not exceed the bounds, for He does not love those who exceed the bounds. ﴿ (al-An'ām 6: 141)

﴿يَبْنَى مَادَمَ خُدُوا زِينَتَكَرْ عِنْدَكَى مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٣١)

﴿O children of Ādam, dress well every time you offer prayer [or perform *tawâf*]. Eat and drink, but do not exceed the bounds, for He does not love those who exceed the bounds.﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 31)

Abu Hurayrah related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«The food for two is sufficient for three, and the food for three is sufficient for four.» (Muslim)

Similarly, Jâbir ibn 'Abdullâh reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«The food for one suffices two, and the food for two suffices four, and the food for four suffices eight.» (Muslim)

Jâbir and Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنهما) narrated that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«A believer eats with one stomach, but an unbeliever eats with seven stomachs.» (Muslim)

Miqdâm ibn Ma'dikarib (رضي الله عنه) reported: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say:

«There is no vessel which the son of Ādam can fill that is more evil than his stomach, for it is enough for him to take a few bites in order to straighten his back. Yet if he is overcome by appetite, then he may fill it with a third of food, a third of drink, and a third of breath.» (Ibn Mâjah; graded sound by Ibn Muflih)

Be aware about overeating

- When we eat with a good intention, we will not feel hungry if we have to share a plate with someone else.


- It is part of our faith to not eat excessively. We ought not deceive ourselves into thinking food is not related to religion and is not something we will have to account for; we will.

Part 35: Overspending

Description and manifestations

Extravagance in spending creates several problems for us, apart from the actual wasting of money. It shows a lack of value not only for the money we do have but also the possessions we collect with it. When one or two items do not serve to satiate us, then several additions tend to nullify the effect and existence of the original items since the choice is now vast. Consequently, we often have things in our possession that we forgot we had or have not seen since we bought them.

This behaviour is manifest most obviously in our spending on unnecessary items simply because we have the money to do so. In some cases, it may be because we do not work for that money ourselves, so we do not feel the effort it takes to make it; therefore, we are not concerned about how little effort it takes to spend it. Of course, it is one thing to be extravagant once in a while but another to lead an extravagant lifestyle in general. For some of us, as long as money keeps coming in, we do not question what we do with it. This behaviour can also be more subtle in the forms it takes, such as not taking care of the things we have because we know they can be replaced. We may come to undervalue old or original items because their worth is seen only in their monetary price and not in their sentimental or cultural value. A gift made for someone or passed down generation to generation is considered cheap or outdated, whilst a more costly superficial gift is seen as the one to purchase. In this, greed for possessions or wealth ties in with extravagance and overspending. This in itself is destructive enough, but it goes further when we use this standard for other people.



We often find that people who can afford to spend a lot waste money more than those people who cannot afford to be carefree but choose to be sensible with their money and spend it more wisely. More often than not, this is a display meant to cover our own insecurity at not feeling equal to those who are able to spend freely (or wastefully). We try to show others how wealthy – and therefore better (we think) – we are. We do it so we can say to ourselves and suggest to others, “Look! We are so wealthy we can throw our money away.”

However, this is not always a conscious act. In some cases people waste money simply because they have it. In both cases, the behaviours not only cause practical destruction (because the money may run out or we may find that our funds are cut short and we end up feeling unfulfilled by life because our ‘fulfilment’ was material), but it also leads us to develop a superficial character, which paves the way to a host of other problems.

Related emotions

Arrogance, wastefulness, and inconsiderateness.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“If you’ve got it, flaunt it!”*
- *“Only the best will do.” (I don’t know why, but that’s what I feel.)*
- *“We only use imported goods.” (Because we like to tell people how much money we have. [This makes us feel less inferior.]*
- *“We only like things from certain places.” (We like to tell people this so they know how much money we have [because otherwise we feel poor in comparison and we are not willing to accept that anyone is better than us].)*
- *“You are just jealous. That is why you tell me I am wasteful.” (I am shallow, so this is the level at which I interpret your*

comments since being shallow means I do not have the ability to reflect.)

- *“It’s a habit I have. I just can’t resist! It’s an impulsive thing.”
(So I am not taking responsibility for my actions.)*

Possible consequences

- We will be seen as pretentious and of no use to other people except when they need money or things from us. This may set us up to spend money on others or be rejected.
- Overspending leaves us open to exploitation. We may attract dangerous people with this habit, especially when we overspend, because it is obvious we have money.
- Being extravagant means that we fail to develop other social skills in an attempt to connect to people, as money is the only relationship we have. This only goes so far and is a relationship without depth.
- Material things may make us feel better temporarily, but they will not solve our problems in the long term.

Possible impact on faith

- It is a clear contradiction of the description in the Qur’an of Muslims as people of the middle way/moderation, so we fail to reflect Islam in a just light. This is indeed the image many non-Muslims now hold about Muslims. Naturally, but wrongly, they assume this is Islam itself (an image for which some Muslims are directly responsible) and not simply the wrong behaviour of certain Muslims.
 - Similar to greed for possessions, we forget that we must account for all our spending and how wise the choices we made were.
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Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٢٧)

«For squanderers are the brothers of the devils. And Satan [the Devil] is ever ungrateful to his Lord.» (*al-Isrâ' 17: 27*)

﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٢٩)

«Do not keep your hand tied to your neck [like a miser], or stretch it forth to its utmost extent [like a squanderer], lest you become blameworthy and destitute.» (*al-Isrâ' 17: 29*)

Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Allah likes three things for you and dislikes three things for you. He likes you to worship Him, to not associate anything with Him, and that you are unified and not divided; and He dislikes for you gossip and begging and squandering wealth.» (Muslim)

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Allah has prohibited you from being undutiful to your mothers, burying your daughters alive, and neglecting paying the rights of others. And Allah dislikes for you to beg from people, engage in vain talk, or for you to ask persistently or to be extravagant.» (Muslim)

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah also related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«...Allah has hated for you ... To waste wealth (by extravagance with lack of wisdom and thinking)...» (Bukhari)

Khawlah al-Anṣāriyah (رضي الله عنها) narrated: I heard the Messenger (ﷺ)

say:

«Some people spend Allah's wealth (a Muslim's wealth) in an unjust manner; such people will be put in the (hell) fire on the Day of Resurrection.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about overspending

- Moderation in spending is the best form of spending all around.
- Overspending is something Allah clearly states that He dislikes. This means it is not a small thing.
- It is a form of injustice. We should not think that we are not accountable for our spending just because we made the money and think we have the right to it. It is a loan from Allah and no matter how much we feel we have made, will we be able to justify our spending on the Last Day?


Part 36: Pointing out other people's faults

Description and manifestations

Pointing out people's faults (and finding this entertaining) is, sadly, a commonly-accepted form of humour in many cultures. In some circles, it is considered to be amusing whilst in others, it is almost considered a form of moral superiority. We like to point out the mistakes of others because we feel we ourselves do not commit them and so it is all right to criticise others.

We do this directly in aggressive ways or indirectly through humour. Alternatively, we may even bring issues up at the most inappropriate moment, when the person is either unable to or does not want to pursue the problem. In such situations, we do not give the person making the mistake a chance to think about it in a safe, non-hostile situation.

Of course, we are told clearly in Islam to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong. When we enjoin good in a constructive and sensitive way it is beneficial for the individual. However (as indicated in the earlier-mentioned hadith), we are advised to do so in the best way and whilst the person is present but not in front of others. This is where we see the significance of sincerity in fulfilling this guidance. When it



comes to pointing out people's faults, it most often occurs in absentia, in spite of this advice.

Alternatively, when we do highlight problems face-to-face, we do so with great pleasure and without any acknowledgement of our own shortcomings. It is the enjoyment of the humiliation and satisfaction at the mistakes of others that makes this behaviour harmful. We seem at such times to be in complete ignorance of the fact that one day we may be in a similar position and make the same mistakes. This ignorance is perhaps what causes us to be condescending.

Unfortunately, when we point out people's faults in such unfortunate forms, we lose our rewards: not only does this approach have very little effect in changing the person who has been humiliated, but we will also suffer the punishment for the bad intention as well as the wrong deed. Either way, we have gravely misunderstood how to implement the action.

Related emotions

Arrogance, contempt, hatred, considering oneself (morally) superior, insecurity (due to a fear that the other person may have a better character than ourselves), and revenge.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"It is my moral and religious duty to do this." (The fact that I am treating it as a 'crime against humanity' is no issue. I must be severe when it comes to religious issues because I feel I alone am responsible for ensuring Islamic behaviour. Only my view is correct, so the manner in which I do it must stop them dead in their tracks [because this is actually about me and not the other person – or even Islam].)*

Again, it is the manner in which this is done that is vital; the Sunnah reminds us that there is an appropriate time and place which must be considered.

- *“The only way these people will learn is through public humiliation.” (Although I myself would prefer to be taught in a different manner.)*
- *“They deserve it. They are so ignorant!” (They are so quick to point out my mistakes, so let’s see how they like it.)*
- *“I know there are other people here, but if don’t say something now they will keep making the same mistake. It is my job to prevent them.” (I do enjoy people thinking that I am very pious and principled [although there are no principles in humiliating others].)*
- *“If I say it with a smile or as a joke, they won’t feel hurt.”*

They may feel belittled anyway. Take serious issues seriously; when we disguise them as a joke we insult people’s intelligence and we may be perceived as spiteful. It does not ensure that our message gets across.

Possible consequences

- We may end up humiliating the person in the way we highlight an issue of concern.
- The issue may not actually be important for us or for them at all, but a way for us to show off how pious we believe we are by highlighting such things.
- It is a mistake and not a criminal act punishable by prison. We ought to be careful how we respond and the degree of severity we employ in our reactions. When we are harsh, we may alienate a person who sincerely wants help and advice. This is not the way to enable others to listen to us and accept our counsel.
- It is likely that we will feel superior when we do this, which may lead us to start looking out for things that may not be there

to point out, thus creating a problem of our own for others to highlight.

- We may start to enjoy this, in which case there is a much more hostile intention. We may cause the person to persist in the mistake simply to take revenge for our behaviour towards them.
- We can influence people positively only if we behave positively. No one will respond to us if we ourselves are unpleasant to be around when dealing with such issues.

Possible impact on faith

- If our intention is to publicly shame the other person into changing their behaviour, we may lose their du'â's. There is no guarantee that we will get a reward, either, even if the person changes their behaviour.
- If the manner in which we raise the issue is against the model of the Sunnah, it is unlikely that we will motivate anyone to change. We are, in fact, more likely to put people off the faith as well as off us as a person if we wrongly use the name of Islamic behaviour to force people to change by degrading them. When people have an adverse reaction to the religion because of our behaviour, we will have to account for that.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾﴾
(سورة الجاثية: ١٥)

﴿Whoever does righteous deeds, it is to his own benefit and whoever does evil deeds, it is to his own detriment. Then to your Lord you will be brought back.﴾ (al-Jâthiyah 45: 15)

﴿بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَآ يَسَخَّرَ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِآلِ لُقَبٍ يُّسُّ الْإِلْتِمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيْمَانِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُم الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ١١)

﴿O you who believe, let not some men ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them; and let not some women ridicule others, for it may be that they are better than them. Do not speak ill of one another, and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. What a bad thing it is to be called an evildoer after having believed. And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the wrongdoers.﴾
(*al-Hujurat* 49: 11)

Abu Hurayrah related that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:
«Refrain from suspicion, as suspicion is the most evil of falsehood; and do not look for the faults of others and do not spy on each other and do not be jealous of each other and do not abandon each other. And, O worshippers of Allah, be brotherly.» (Muslim)

Be aware about pointing out other people's faults

- There is a time, a place, and a manner in which this should be done, if it needs to be done at all. If it does, and we are the best or only person to do it, we must consider our intentions before we act.

Part 37: Reminding others of your favours/charity to them

Description and manifestations

Helping others is, without question, incredibly rewarding. We are given some of this reward in this world and also hope that Allah (ﷻ) will be pleased with us and reward us in the hereafter. The joy of feeling useful to someone else, the significance of feeling needed by

someone, being relied upon, and the pleasure of seeing their happy expressions: all of these experiences only add to the act of giving and provide a beautiful reinforcement.

The challenge lies in what we expect in return. We are told that offering thanks to the one who helps us is an important act. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«He has not thanked Allah who has not thanked people.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by Ibn Mufliḥ)

Those of us who respect anything that comes from Allah (ﷻ), in whatever means it arrives, do not ignore the fact that it deserves a show of gratitude in simple and inexpensive words. Conversely, when we disregard the good someone does for us, we risk cutting our own rizq because of our ingratitude to that person; we assume it is acceptable to be ungrateful or fail to acknowledge the good someone has done for us. When we receive something from someone, we need to follow the advice of thanking the giver in order to not risk losing blessings from Allah.

Charity is manifest in many ways besides the monetary form. It exists in the favours we do, the help we offer, the time we give to talk and listen, the advice we give, the love we show, and the care and support we offer – even in wearing perfume to improve the smell around us and in smiling. Essential to all these is the intention to first please Allah, then please others. The response of others is a matter between themselves and Allah, but the reward is a guarantee for us, *in shâ' Allâh*, if our intentions and methods are correct.

Giving is usually a simple interaction between two people, but only when we share these ideas about the rules of giving and taking. Giving charity and pointing out all we have done for others and all we have sacrificed (irrespective of whether it was requested or not) becomes tempting when we feel the other person is ungrateful and that our efforts should have been acknowledged, pointed out, or

valued in some way. In an Islamic context, this is considered part of being miserly.

It is at this point that we need to stop and tell ourselves that just because someone does not show gratitude does not mean we will not be rewarded, nor does it mean their own ingratitude will not be questioned. The danger for us is that when we remind others of what we have done for them, we will undo our own good and may not be rewarded by Allah or acknowledged by the creation – so we will lose out doubly. This is even more so the case when we do favours to demonstrate how generous or superior we are in helping others. In such cases, the help was actually for our own benefit, not for other people.


Related emotions

Pride, arrogance, showing off, seeking praise and approval, and condescension.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“I am annoyed that you are not grateful, so I will remind you why you need to be.”*
- *“I need you to remember what I did.” (So you can tell everyone what a nice person I am.)*
- *“I won’t tell people she/he did that thing for me.” (But I will make sure they know how nice I am to them. [I don’t want people to think she/he is nicer than me.])*

Possible consequences

- People will stop accepting things from us, so we will lose out on a source of happiness in our lives.
 - We will be considered patronising. This can cause others to stay away from us when they are in need. In turn, this can add to the isolation we feel as we lose out on all the positivity that helping others brings with it.
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Possible impact on faith

- As we see from the verses below, we undo the good we have done, so our efforts are wasted and we shame ourselves before others and, most importantly, before Allah.
- We may end up being punished for showing off, which may be worse than if we never gave anything at all.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنْنًا وَلَا أَدَى لَهُمْ
 أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٦٤﴾ قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ
 وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتَّبِعُهَا أَذَىٰ وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٥﴾ يَتَّيِبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
 لَا يُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ
 وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا
 يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦٦﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ٢٦٤-٢٦٦)

﴿Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, and do not follow their spending with reminders of their generosity or hurtful words, for them their reward is with their Lord: they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. Kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by hurtful words. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Most Forbearing. O you who believe, do not nullify your acts of charity with reminders and hurtful words, like the one who spends his wealth to show off before people, but believes neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. His likeness is that of a smooth rock, on which there is a little soil; when heavy rain falls it leaves it completely bare. They will gain nothing from their efforts. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 262-264)

﴿يَمْنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمْنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَمَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَيْتُكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ
 إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ١٧)

﴿They think that they have done you a favour by embracing Islam. Say: Do not regard your embracing Islam as a favour to me. Rather it is Allah Who has done you a favour by guiding you to faith, if you are telling the truth [in your claim to be believers].﴾ (al-Hujurât 49: 17)

﴿وَلَا تَمَنَّوْا تَسْتَكْبِرُوا ﴿٦﴾ (سورة المذثر: ٦)

﴿Give not out of a desire for gain.﴾ (al-Muddath-thir 74: 6)

‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Amr narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«A Muslim is the one who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a muhâjir (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all that Allah has forbidden.» (Bukhari)

It was narrated from Abu Dharr:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: There are three to whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He look at them or praise them, and theirs will be a severe torment.

Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) repeated it three times, and (Abu Dharr) said: They are lost and doomed! Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: The one who lets his garment hang below his ankles, the one who reminds others of his favour, and the one who sells his product by means of false oaths.» (Muslim)

Be aware about reminding others of your favours/charity to them

- The charity we give is reduced in value because of our reminders.
- We show our own ill intent in doing this.
- The person who takes from us shows a sort of kindness to us, so in the future they may not accept our charity and we will have reduced our own benefit by our tongues.

Part 38: Seeking fame and popularity/Showing off

Description and manifestations

Showing off (*riyā'*) is something we all do to some extent. We all know the happiness we feel when we show off in front of friends and family when we have done something we are proud of and want to share the excitement we feel with those we love. Here we are free to be proud of ourselves, within limits. However, the boundaries easily become blurred when the humour and lightness and need for parental and family pride is overtaken by feelings of superiority and condescension. This negativity is the basis of a destructive habit, and the forms in which it is manifest includes:

- When we unnecessarily tell others what good we have done;
- When we make public our good works; and
- When we inform others for no valid reason of any success we have experienced.

Conversely, we may even trivialise or marginalise others' successes or even dismiss the good they do for us or others. We need to feel we are always on top.

Although this behaviour presents as overconfidence and arrogance, it is in fact a sign of our deep-seated insecurities; we seek prestige in the eyes of others and their approval. We do not find this value of ourselves within ourselves, so we project it outwards and expect it from others.

The destruction here is linked clearly to the act done to gain fame and popularity. In spite of what we think, such intentions become apparent and the weight of the action is drastically reduced to be only about the person themselves (as we see in the section on pointing out our favours to others).

Related emotions

Insecurity, jealousy, wanting praise and approval, ingratitude, and arrogance.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“I need everyone to see what a wonderful person I am.”
(Because I do not really like myself.)*
- *“I am afraid people will find out I am not very nice, so I need to divert attention away from my faults to my strengths.”*
- *“By proving myself to others, I can try to convince myself that I am an okay person.”*
- *“I fear you do not think much of me but will think well of me when you see this.”*
- *“I am a much nicer person than you are.”*

Possible consequences

- We are likely to be seen as arrogant and condescending rather than kind and generous. Our behaviour can have an effect on others that is opposite to what was intended.
- Eventually, no one will want to hear about our numerous successes, so we will have lost our audience and alienated ourselves from people.

Possible impact on faith

- We undo the good we have done, so we lose a reward rather than gain it.
- In the eyes of Allah (ﷻ), our action may be invalidated by the fact that the focus was not on Allah but on ourselves. So we waste our time and effort only to have no reward and perhaps even a punishment for the bad intention.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَدَىٰ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٦٤﴾ قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتَّبِعُهَا أَذَىٰ وَاللَّهُ عَنِّي حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٥﴾ يَتَّيِبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦٦﴾﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ٢٦٢-٢٦٤)

﴿Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, and do not follow their spending with reminders of their generosity or hurtful words, for them their reward is with their Lord: they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. Kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by hurtful words. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Most Forbearing. O you who believe, do not nullify your acts of charity with reminders and hurtful words, like the one who spends his wealth to show off before people, but believes neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. His likeness is that of a smooth rock, on which there is a little soil; when heavy rain falls it leaves it completely bare. They will gain nothing from their efforts. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 262-264)

﴿إِنْ بُدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُم مِّنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٢٧١)

﴿If you disclose [acts of] charity, it is good, but if you conceal them, and give it [charity] to the poor, that is better for you, and He will

absolve you of some of your bad deeds. And Allah is well aware of all that you do. ﴿ (al-Baqarah 2: 271)

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَمَنْ يَكُنِ الشَّيْطَانُ لَهُ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا ﴿٣٨﴾ (سورة النساء: ٣٨)

﴿And those who spend their wealth to show off to people, but do not believe in Allah and the Last Day. If anyone has Satan as a companion, what an evil companion he is! ﴿ (an-Nisā' 4: 38)

﴿إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَدِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَدِيعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كَسَالَى
رِءَاءِ وَنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾ مُدْبِدِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا
إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٢-١٤٣)

﴿The hypocrites seek to outwit Allah but it is He Who outwits them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up reluctantly, only to be seen by people, and they remember Allah only a little. Wavering in between, belonging neither to these nor those. For those whom Allah has caused to go astray, you will never find a way [to guide them]. ﴿ (an-Nisā' 4: 142-143)

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٥﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ﴿٦﴾
وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٧﴾ (سورة الماعون: ٤-٧)

﴿So woe to those who pray but are heedless regarding their prayer, those who make a show of piety yet withhold small kindnesses. ﴿ (al-Mā'oon 107: 4-7)

Abu Hurayrah narrated:

«Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was asked: What is the best deed?

He replied: To believe in Allah and His Messenger.

The questioner then asked: What is next (in goodness)?

He replied: To participate in jihad in Allah's cause.

The questioner again asked: What is next (in goodness)?

He replied: To perform *Hajj mabroor*:» (Bukhari and Muslim)¹

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «There will appear some people among you whose *ṣalāh* will make you look down upon yours, and whose fasting will make you look down upon yours, and whose good deeds will make you look down upon yours, but they will recite the Qur'an and it will not exceed their throats (they will not act on it). They will go out of Islam as an arrow goes through game, whereupon the archer would examine the arrowhead but would see nothing, and look at the unfeathered part of the arrow but see nothing, and look at the arrow feathers but see nothing, and finally he expects to find something on the lower part of the arrow.» (Bukhari)

Tareef Abi Tameemah (Jundab) said that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«If anyone does a good deed in order to show off, Allah will expose his intentions on the Day of Resurrection (before the people) and if anyone puts the people into difficulties, Allah will put him into difficulties on the Day of Resurrection...» (Bukhari)

Be aware about seeking fame and popularity/showing off

- The intention becomes obvious at some point and the weight of the good act is reduced by our own behaviour.
- The consequence of our fame may not be as beneficial as we had hoped.
- We should not assume that by showing off, the actions of others who do not show off are seen as any less than ours. Indeed, they are likely to be seen as better.

¹ *Hajj mabroor*: pilgrimage which is accepted by Allah and is performed with the intention of seeking Allah's pleasure only and not to show off, without committing any sin and in accordance with the legal ways of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Part 39: Sleeping too much

Description and manifestations

As with overeating, the effects of excessive sleep on our health and on our social activities and etiquette are often ignored. Its manifestation is self-explanatory: sleeping when we do not need to, when we have things to do, when others need us, and simply because we are bored. (Again, this excludes ill health or health conditions known to cause excessive sleep.) Sleeping too much for no good reason is an addictive habit – the more sleep we get, the more we want to; and the more we want to, the less attentive we are to other responsibilities of life because we are just too tired to do them! If it is not part of a health issue, sleeping too much is destructive in how it affects other areas of our lives and those of other people. Life is so precious that on the Last Day, when we will need all our good deeds, we will regret the hours we spent sleeping in excess of our needs. Unnecessary sleep keeps us from doing anything, let alone good deeds, and therefore leads us only to loss and regret.


Related emotions

Laziness and sluggishness when trying to be active.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“I am tired.” (Actually I am not; I just want to have a lie-in [again].)*

This is accepted if it is occasional, but often we simply give in to the habit of sleeping the day away and thus cause inconvenience to others with delays in our activities and theirs.

- *“There is nothing else to do.” (I cannot be bothered to find something. [Activity should magically come to me, not me to it.])*
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Possible consequences

- Health problems brought on by lack of movement.
- People will start to get on with their lives without us because they will tire of our lack of effort and being let down by us because of this excuse.
- It can even cause disruption to those people who live with us if they cannot live comfortably or with ease for fear of disturbing our sleep. In this, it is another self-centred behaviour.

Possible impact on faith

- We are going against the descriptions of how we are to use the day and the night. In this way, we reject the natural plan that Allah has set for us. Clearly, no good will result in such a lifestyle.
- We may miss out on our obligatory acts, such as prayer, and our social obligations to family, friends, neighbours, and society.
- We are not fulfilling our body's rights over us to value it. We will be questioned about how too much sleep contributed to any ill health we suffered.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتٍ ۖ فَحَوْنًا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوا
فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۗ ...﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ١٢)

﴿We have made the night and the day as two [of Our] signs. We obscured the sign of the night with darkness and gave light to the sign of the day, so that you might seek the bounty of your Lord and know the number of the years and the reckoning of time...﴾ (*al-Isrā'* 17: 12)

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِیَاسًا وَالتَّوَمَّ سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا ﴾ ﴿٤٧﴾

(سورة الفرقان: ٤٧)

﴿It is He Who has made the night a covering for you, and sleep for rest; and He has made the day for rising [and going out and about, seeking one's livelihood].﴾ (al-Furqân 25: 47)

﴿ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٥﴾ ءَأَخْذِينَ مَا ءَأَنَّهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ رِزْقًا ﴿١٦﴾ كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَبِالْآسْعَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَعْفِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ ﴾

(سورة الذاريات: ١٥-١٨)

﴿Verily, the righteous will be amidst gardens and springs, receiving what their Lord will bestow upon them, because before that they had been doers of good. They used to sleep but little at night, and before dawn, they would seek forgiveness.﴾ (adh-Dhâriyât 51: 15-18)

﴿ وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا ﴿٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِیَاسًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا ﴿١١﴾ ﴾ (سورة

النبا: ٩-١١)

﴿And made your sleep for rest, and made the night a covering, and made the day for earning a livelihood.﴾ (an-Naba' 78: 9-11)

Be aware about oversleeping

- The times for sleeping are part of the natural plan given by Allah. If we do not follow them, we disrupt our lives unnecessarily.
- We ought to use our time doing good or at least fulfilling our basic obligations. There is no reward in sleeping, except in cases where we are giving our body its right by resting during the day or due to illness. In these cases, our body has a right over us, but we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that sleeping too much is acceptable.

Part 40: Stubbornness (against doing the right thing)

Description and manifestations

We all have the tendency to be stubborn, whether because we have been harmed by someone or because we believe our position to be the correct one and feel under pressure to change. It can be a strengthening quality in times when we stand for the truth, and this aids us in our struggle for justice. The destructive side of it is when what we define or understand as the truth is other than the definition Allah gives. We become stubborn in matters that are not right, which causes problems for ourselves and also affects the lives of others.

This quality comes in forms such as:

- Refusing to help others because we do not like them (rather than because we are unable to);
- Not accepting good works or words;
- Not showing gratitude;
- Not accepting when we are wrong;
- Blaming the other party rather than reflecting on our mistakes; and
- Refusing to consider another person's viewpoint.

The core commonality here is a refusal to shift our position when the facts or divine guidance suggest otherwise. In this, we see a high degree of arrogance.

This behaviour is illogical and unhealthy. It is usually caused by very negative feelings, possibly as a result of unpleasant/distressful experiences (from this we can see how our unhealthy behaviour towards someone can stop them from doing good). This commonly occurs when people have been hurt, let down, or devalued after making a lot of effort and they feel it has yielded no benefit, but

only pain. It is usually a sign of emotional exhaustion at being let down and may result in a more deep-seated resistance towards helping anyone. It helps keep people who have harmed us (and therefore painful experiences) at a distance, and it becomes a great challenge when it comes to motivating ourselves to change this behaviour. It remains, of course, destructive for obvious reasons.

If one is stubborn out of revenge or arrogance, then it is perhaps even more destructive to that person, since it is part of a general deterioration of good character.


Related emotions

Anger, disappointment, resentment (at being let down and not valued), unhappiness, pessimism, arrogance, contempt, revenge, and superiority (if done intentionally to hurt someone).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“Why should I help them? They never help me!”*
- *“They don’t deserve help. They should suffer as I did.”*
- *“See how powerful I am? I could help you but I won’t. I expect you to beg/ask me.” (I do not need to offer – after all, it is you who needs the help, not me.)*
- *“You can’t force me. I am in control of what I do.” (I think I am in control of you as well.)*

Possible consequences

- We are likely to attract only the support of people who will take us away from good principles because we are so successful at holding on to our dubious ideas. This makes it even harder to change the habit.
 - People will not share their ideas with us. As a result, we may miss out on learning new and beneficial things as we close the doors of knowledge.
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- Such attitudes will certainly cause people to avoid us in both personal and public settings such as work. This will cause us to miss out on opportunities, as we will be seen as disruptive and difficult to work with as part of a team.

Possible impact on faith

- When we defend the wrong rather than the right, we reject the verse which tells us:

﴿وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٠٤)

﴿Let there arise from among you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones who will be successful.﴾ (*Al 'Imrân* 3: 104)

- and numerous other verses that echo this command. This is the core implementation of our faith, so if we do not do this we may undermine our faith by representing the opposite of what is commanded by Allah (ﷻ).
- It is this exact habit which doomed Iblees. He refused to bow down to Âdam (ﷺ), thinking his view was correct and that he did not need to obey Allah. He persisted in this view and was cast out of heaven; and so began sin. Do we really want to share the quality that caused him to come into being as Satan?

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٣٤)

﴿And [remember] when We said to the angels: Prostrate before Âdam, and they [all] prostrated except Iblees; he refused and was arrogant; he was one of the disbelievers.﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 34)

﴿ وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾
 (سورة النور: ٢٢)

﴿Let not those among you who are people of virtue and wealth swear to cease giving [aid] to their kinsfolk, the needy and those who have migrated in Allah's cause. Rather let them pardon and overlook. Do you not like for Allah to forgive you? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ (an-Noor 24: 22)

Anas reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«There is never any stubbornness (roughness) in anything but it makes it ugly. Indeed, Allah is kind and loves mildness.» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albāni)

Hārithah ibn Wahb al-Khuzā'i reported that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«May I tell you of the people of paradise? Every weak and poor obscure person who the people look down upon, but if he takes an oath to do something, his oath is fulfilled by Allah. And may I inform you of the people of the hellfire? They are all those violent, arrogant, and stubborn people.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about stubbornness (against doing the right thing)

- Stubbornness against doing good is the reason behind the downfall of Iblees. We must consider this when we are being stubborn against something good and see what we have in common with him.
- Being stubborn against doing good can lead to the destruction of our entire character.

Part 41: Talking too much

Description and manifestations

We have a misconception that if we talk a lot, it implies that we have important things to say and that it is a sign of our great knowledge and intellect. This is not always the case.

Excessive talking is manifest when:

- We talk unnecessarily and to an extreme and do not allow others enough opportunity to voice their opinions or to disagree;
- When we talk without being aware or caring who is listening (or not);
- When we simply enjoy the sound of our own voices.

We do not, in many cases, consider content. Sometimes we are so charmed by a speaker that we simply enjoy the sound of their voice and either ignore or become absorbed in their (perhaps even wrong) ideas. It may even be the case that we ourselves are the speaker we are so fascinated by!

The reasons behind excessive talking vary. Oftentimes it is related to not feeling heard or being lonely, in which case we try to accommodate this rather than resolve the problems we are facing. Alternatively, we may just feel we are more popular when we talk and gain confidence in the platform that talking gives us. We see the world as our pulpit to sermonise at will because of our own need to speak and be heard.

Related emotions

Lack of self-control (when one cannot stop talking), insecurity, and feelings of inferiority leading us to over-explain/talk too much.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“When I talk, people listen.” (So it must mean I impress them. [I feel insecure, so I must talk more to keep up the good feeling.]*
- *“I am important, therefore I can talk for as long as I want.”*
- *“I love talking, even it means I am talking nonsense.” (I can't help it. [No one listens to me at home, so I may as well enjoy the attention.]*
- *“As long as someone is listening or doesn't tell me to be quiet, I will keep going.” (No one listens to me at home and although my sharing this here will make no difference in my life, I feel I am allowed to express my views for a change. [Sadly, I am so filled with negativity that all I have to say is critical of everyone around me.]*

Possible consequences

- If we talk too much because we are unhappy or feel unheard, we should reflect on why others do not listen to us. We should try to solve that issue rather than create a bad habit which may serve to alienate us even more from others.
- Eventually people will stop listening or talk over us. Our talkativeness may lead others to consider us invisible background noise which should be ignored. This is a very unhealthy situation for both parties.
- Sometimes when we talk excessively people lose the message, as we may speak with such speed that we become incomprehensible.

Possible impact on faith

- We should not think that always talking about Islam is excused. It is not the Sunnah to do so, and even talking too much about faith can alienate us from others. The Prophet (ﷺ) would
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choose times for talking about Islam that were suitable and convenient. The Companions appreciated that he allowed them time and space for other things.

- Talking too much can lead us to say things that displease Allah, as the habit does not tend to connect content with speech. Consequently, when we do have good things to share and advise others with, no one wants to listen and we miss out on the reward for this.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۗ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾
(سورة النساء: ١١٤)

﴿There is no good in much of their private conversations, except for one who enjoins charity and good deeds, or seeks to bring about reconciliation between people. For the one who does that, seeking the pleasure of Allah, We will give him an immense reward.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 114)

﴿وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّا الشَّيْطَانُ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا﴾
(سورة الإسراء: ٥٣)

﴿Tell My slaves that they should say what is best, for Satan sows discord among them. Verily, Satan is to man an avowed enemy.﴾ (al-Isrā' 17: 53)

﴿وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِّن صَوْتِكَ ۚ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ﴾
(سورة لقمان: ١٩)

﴿Be moderate in your gait and lower your voice; verily the most hideous of sounds is the voice [braying] of the donkey.﴾ (Luqmān 31: 19)

Abu Wâ'il said:

«'Ammâr delivered a *khutbah* (Friday sermon) and was concise and eloquent, so when he came down (from the *minbar* [an elevated pulpit for delivering the Friday *khutbah*]), we asked: O Abul-Yaqdhân, you have been so eloquent and concise. Why do you not lengthen your speech?

He said: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: The length of a man's prayer and the brevity of his speech are signs of knowledge. Lengthen your prayer and shorten your speech, for concise speech influences the heart.» (Muslim)

'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ood related:

«Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Perished are those who are excessive in their words and deeds.

He repeated it three times.» (Muslim)


Ibn 'Umar reported:

«In the time of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), two men came from the east. They were speakers or sermonisers. They stood up, spoke, and sat down. Thâbit ibn Qays, the *khateeb* (orator or speaker) for Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), then got up and spoke. The people were amazed at their speech.

Then Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) stood up and delivered a sermon. He said: O people! Say what you have to say, because to go on, prolonging speech and adding a word against another, is from the devil.

He then said: Some eloquence is sorcery (that attracts the hearts of people).» (Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*; graded sound by al-Albâni)

«One day, when a man got up and spoke at length, 'Amr ibn al-'Âṣ said: If he had been moderate, it would have been better for him. I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: I think (or I have been commanded) that I should be brief in what I say, for brevity is better.» (Abu Dâwood; graded reliable by al-Albâni)



Sahl ibn Sa'd related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«If anyone promises me to protect (the chastity of) what is between his two jaws (the tongue) and what is between his two legs (his private parts), I will promise him paradise.» (Bukhari)

Jābir said that he heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say:

«A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand Muslims are safe.» (Bukhari)

It was reported from 'Urwah that 'Ā'ishah said:

«When Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) spoke, one could count his words if he wished to.» (Abu Dāwood; graded sound by al-Albāni)

Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«One says a word without thinking much about it and he falls down to somewhere far away, between the east and the west of hell.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Be aware about talking too much

- We should not assume that talking a lot means what we are saying is correct (or vice versa).
- When we talk for too long, we should not assume that others are still listening.
- It is not considered good behaviour; rather, it is described as a bad one.
- If we want people to remember what we have said, it is better to be precise and concise.
- Content is important no matter how much or how little we speak. We may lose track of content when we talk too much.

Part 42: Violating the privacy of others


Description and manifestations

This behaviour is related to nosiness and engaging in pointless questions as well as disregarding the rights people have to their privacy over and above culturally – and personally-accepted norms. Overtly, it is rooted in asking questions which we have no need to know the answers to regarding decisions other people have made in their lives. Practically, it is exhibited when:

- We physically invade the private spaces of others, searching their houses when we visit and expecting to be shown the details of how they live;
- We interfere in their private time with family members who have a right over their time, whilst knowing that the time we are taking from them is an invasion, thus causing disruption in those relationships;
- We question indirectly about the same matters and then go on to present the said people with our view on what we have investigated concerning them and their lives.

As we see in the Sunnah, issues of privacy existed between husband and wife even though we often assume there is no barrier between the married couple. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) even advised his followers not to return home suddenly or surreptitiously. We see, then, that each individual has rights to privacy no matter who they are.

Too often, we breach privacy because it is considered acceptable within a given culture to do such a thing, even though the perpetrator knows it is wrong from an Islamic perspective. We see this habit as an inherent aspect of many Muslim communities. We think that something that is probably not our business is part of our brotherhood and that this allows us to overstep those boundaries; it clearly does not. We feel that other people are obliged to answer our inquisitive



questions and a refusal to participate often results in our taking great offence. We do not take offence at our own wrong behaviour when we ask things which we have no right to ask, yet we get very offended if anyone dares to ask us any question that we do not wish to answer.

The reason is often a failure to occupy our time in a productive and healthy manner, no matter what our explanation to ourselves is. Invasion of privacy leads to not only the destruction of relationships – which is a primary and secondary consequence of this behaviour – but also to people living lives cut off from others to avoid falling victim to this habit. Instead of expanding any sense of community and solidarity, it disbands it.

Related emotions

Selfishness, nosiness, abusing the rights of others, abusing our position (if we feel as a relative or friend we deserve an answer, even though it is not our right), estrangement (when people avoid us for being invasive), annoyance, and anger (about the invasion of privacy).

Related thoughts and justifications

- *“Oh, come on! We are family! These barriers don't exist between us.”*
- *“They are my family! Don't try to break us up.” (I know that maintaining ties of kinship is significant in Islam, so I will use this to keep you quiet, even though what I am doing is wrong and my relationship with you has its own boundaries.)*
- *“I am older than you and have a right (to interfere).” (I am pretending I am totally ignorant this is not allowed in Islam.)*
- *“I cannot accept a refusal because I see that as a rejection of me personally.” (I will not allow others to reject me, even if they have a right to do so.)*
- *“Gosh! I was only asking! What's your problem?” (Mine is that I am nosy [but I cannot see or admit this].)*

Possible consequences

- People will avoid us and if we do not take their hint we may be told in more absolute terms that we are a nuisance. Then we will have no one but ourselves to blame.
- We will be considered nosy and interfering, and this is not a good image for others to hold about us. It may result in our character being smeared because of our own actions.
- It demonstrates a distinct lack of basic courtesy towards others and makes us appear ignorant regarding a very obvious matter.
- We are likely to cause problems between family members if our invasion is of a practical nature. This will eventually lead us to not being welcomed into other people's homes.

Possible impact on faith

- We are likely to be alienated from people at large and may not be invited to events that have many blessings for us (were we to attend). This is because people will feel we come only to enquire into the private lives of others.
- If our invasion of privacy causes problems for family members, we will be accountable for any hostility or separation that has resulted from our invasion. Remember, other people clearly have a right to not answer their front door, so we cannot feel aggrieved by this permission given to us all by Allah.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّىٰ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا ۗ هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾﴾

(سورة النور: ٢٧-٢٨)

﴿O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own until you have asked permission and greeted their occupants; that is better for you, so that you may pay heed. If you do not find anyone therein, do not enter them until you are given permission. If you are told to go back, then go back; that is more proper for you. And Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (an-Noor 24: 27-28)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِيَسْتَفْتِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ... ﴾ (سورة النور: ٥٨)

﴿O you who believe, let any slaves you may own, and those among you who have not yet reached puberty, ask permission [to enter] at three times: before fajr prayer, when you have undressed [in order to rest] at midday and after 'ishâ' prayer; these are three times of privacy for you...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 58)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ نَظِيرِينَ إِنَّهُ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَسِينِينَ لِجَدِيبٍ إِنْ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَجِىءَ مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَجِىءَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ... ﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: ٥٣)

﴿O you who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are given permission [and are invited] to come for a meal; and do not enter in hopes of getting a meal and waiting for it to be prepared. But if you are invited, then enter, and when you have eaten, then disperse, without lingering for conversation. Such [behaviour] causes annoyance to the Prophet; he is too shy to ask you to leave, but Allah is not too shy [to tell you] the truth...﴾ (al-Ahẓāb 33: 53)

﴿... وَلَا يَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا... ﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ١٢)

﴿...And do not spy or backbite each other...﴾ (al-Hujurât 49: 12)

'Abdullâh ibn 'Amr narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«A Muslim is the one who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a muhājir (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all that Allah has forbidden.» (Bukhari)

Abu Shurayḥ al-Ka‘bi (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should serve his guest generously. The guest’s reward is to be provided with a superior type of food for a night and a day, and a guest is to be entertained with food for three days. Whatever is offered beyond that is regarded as charity. It is not lawful for a guest to stay with his host for such a long period that it puts him in a difficult position.» (Bukhari)

In part of a longer hadith, Abu Hurayrah related that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«...Do not estrange mutual relations and do not intervene into the transaction which is likely to be settled with another person.» (Muslim)

Sahl ibn Sa‘d as-Sâ‘idi said:

«A man spied through a hole into the house of Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) when the Prophet (ﷺ) was combing his hair with an iron comb. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: If I had known you were spying, I would have stabbed your eyes with it (the comb). Indeed, the command to take permission to enter has been enjoined because of that, and one should not spy on others.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«If anyone spies into your house without permission and you throw a stone at him and put out his eye, there is no blame on you.» (Muslim)

Be aware about violating the privacy of others

- Islam has set specific limits on all areas of our private lives, and it is our job to be aware of not only our own rights of privacy but also those of others.
-

- It is not allowed for people to force themselves into the home of anyone without permission. If we go against this, we behave in a highly ignorant fashion and reject Allah's command simply to satisfy our own desires.
- Just because someone is family does not mean they do not have a right to privacy.

Part 43: Wrongfully using the name of Allah or Islam to justify one's wrong actions (under a definition of piety not supported by the Qur'an and Sunnah)

Description and manifestations

We often see people using the name of Islam to justify their actions, claiming that their means to an end is an acceptable way to defend the religion or Allah (ﷻ). They say, "We are not lying **about** Allah, we are lying **for** Allah." It is, without doubt, the height of ignorance to commit a wrong/haram act in the name of Allah. It is far from a defence; rather, it is an insult and a lie against Him. This is seen most clearly when Muslims commit atrocities in the name of Allah – so we see that this is a significant issue that is not limited to social interaction; it can lead to destruction on a major scale where it is not acknowledged or considered a sin. This is, therefore, one of the most serious of destructive behaviours.

Similarly, exploiting a random sunnah act to ensure our actions appear to be based on religion – when, in fact, they are not or they are taken out of context – is a more subtle form of wrongfully using the name of Islam for a prohibited or disliked act. We may feel Allah would agree with our stance and allow us to do such a thing, but we

deceive ourselves in the worst possible manner and insult both Allah and Islam. Although it is wrong to do so, people will always judge a belief by its followers.


Similarly, some people rely on weak or fabricated hadiths to justify their position. They do so in the belief that responsibility for the degree of accuracy lies with the author of the book they read them in, not on themselves for repeating them. Alternatively, people will reject hadiths that question their stance by commenting, "I have never read this anywhere"; this suggests that if they have not seen a certain hadith themselves, it cannot exist.

If those who call themselves Muslims misrepresent Allah's religion or the words of His Messenger (ﷺ) on the earth, then of course they have no one but themselves to blame. We will face the destruction of this behaviour not only in this worldly life by the creation who believe the negative view we present – as well as fellow Muslims whose anger we incur because of our misrepresentation – but also the wrath of Allah, the Almighty, in the hereafter. Either way, there will never be peace for us.

Related emotions

Ignorance, arrogance, pride, forcing people to do what we want, feeling weak in our arguments and thus utilising this 'method' to make them agree/do as we wish, and abuse of one's power and position.

Related thoughts and justifications

- *"Allah is All-Forgiving. He won't mind."*
 - *"I will do whatever it takes to make Islam look good."
(Forgetting that Islam is complete and does not need deceit or even our actions at all.)*
 - *"Allah knows what I am trying to do here. I am sure it must be allowed." (I have no evidence for this, just the feeling that I want to do this and need an excuse.)*
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- *“Well, it is based on a hadith, so it means I speak the truth.” (I am ignoring the fact that I have not checked if it is valid, weak, or fabricated [because that’s the author’s fault, not mine].)*
- *“I love this right.” (Actually, I found out about it only a few minutes ago, as I needed reinforcement for my position [but so long as it means I can do what I want, I can use its strength to benefit me].)*

Ideally, the reference to actual commands should come at the point of intention, not at the point of action.

Possible consequences

- This behaviour involves exploiting something good to do something bad. This will result in people hating us and all that we claim to fight for. We are unlikely to be supported by any good community and only by other people who support us in doing something very dangerous.
- People are unlikely to listen to us either in the present or the future, so we close many doors of good opportunities and blessings.
- Alternatively, people may simply consider us imbalanced and give us no time whatsoever. So our cause will not be successful since no one will care what it is.

Possible impact on faith

- This act alone may nullify our faith, so it is something we should always seek refuge from and not even consider coming close to.
- We misrepresent the religion of Islam and in doing so may alienate others from it. Rather than gaining any reward for helping another person come to Islam, we will be held accountable for people rejecting it because of our behaviour.

If people left the religion because of us, we are highly unlikely to be forgiven.

- The level of destruction goes from this world to the next. Whole communities can be destroyed by our influence over them in perpetrating such harmful beliefs. It is a very dangerous behaviour indeed.

Alternative thoughts and considerations from our Internal Islamic Guides

﴿يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَلًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٦٨-١٦٩)

﴿O humankind, eat whatever is lawful and good on earth, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, for he is to you an avowed enemy. He only commands you to do evil and shameful deeds, and to say concerning Allah that of which you have no knowledge.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 168-169)

﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٤﴾ لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٤-٢٢٥)

﴿Do not allow your oaths in Allah's name to hinder you from doing righteous deeds, guarding [against evil] and making peace between people, for Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Allah will not call you to account for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will call you to account for that which is intended in your hearts; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 224-225)

﴿أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ يَقْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَيْدَ وَكَفَى بِهِ إِثْمًا مُبِينًا ﴿٥٠﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ٥٠)

﴿Look how they fabricate lies against Allah! This in itself is a flagrant sin.﴾ (an-Nisā' 4: 50)

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٣٣)

﴿Say: My Lord has only forbidden shameful deeds, whether [committed] openly or in secret, sin, unjustified aggression, ascribing partners to Allah for which He has not sent down any authority, and saying concerning Allah that of which you have no knowledge.﴾ (al-A'raf 7: 33)

﴿وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أُولَئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾﴾ (سورة هود: ١٨)

﴿Who does greater evil than he who fabricates lies against Allah? Such people will be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses will say: These are the ones who lied about their Lord. Indeed, the curse of Allah is upon the evildoers.﴾ (Hood 11: 18)

﴿وَأِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ وَإِذَا لَا تَخَذُوكَ خَلِيلًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَوْلَا أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكُنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾ إِذَا لَأَذَقْنَاكَ ضَعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضَعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٧٥-٧٣)

﴿Verily, they were about to tempt you away from that which We have revealed to you [O Muhammad], so that you would fabricate something else and attribute it to Us; then they would have taken you as a close friend. Had We not kept you steadfast, you would nearly have inclined towards them a little. In that case, We would have made you taste a double punishment in this life, and a double punishment after death. Then you would have found none to help you against Us.﴾ (al-Isrā' 17: 73-75)

﴿ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴾ (سورة الزُّمَر: ٦٠)

﴿On the Day of Resurrection you will see those who fabricated lies against Allah, their faces darkened. Is there not in hell an abode for the arrogant?﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 60)

Az-Zubayr said that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«He who tells a lie about me intentionally should take his seat in the hellfire.» (Bukhari)

Be aware about wrongfully using Islam or Allah's name

- Allah needs nothing from us, especially not to falsify His names, attributes, commands, and prohibitions.
- Allah clearly prohibits this and states straightforwardly that His curse is upon such people, so consider this when making excuses. The curse of Allah is unimaginable in its effects on our lives in this world and the next; it must not be considered trivial.
- The punishment may be by people in this worldly life, but it will be by Allah Himself in the hereafter. So do not commit this destructive behaviour under the illusion that you will be forgiven. Consider Who Allah is, what He has done for you, and what your behaviour has been towards Him.



SECTION FOUR:
RE-FOCUSING AND REFLECTING



CHAPTER 10

WHERE TO NEXT?

*B*ehavioural change is no easy matter. Aside from the ease with which certain behaviours become habitual, we are forced to simultaneously battle with various 'personal distress' elements (as described throughout the text). These relate to each specific behaviour and allow the destructive action to be maintained. They act as our 'defences' against further harm and pain; they protect us from other people's destructive behaviour by offering us an equally destructive response and so provide a buffer against change. This helps, of course, because it is always easier not to make the effort to change. However, this sometimes leads us to force others to change instead of ourselves, which results in a whole new set of problems.

The irony is that, as clinicians, our experience with patients tells us that oftentimes the effort it takes to change is less than the distress we experience in exhibiting and living with a destructive behaviour itself. Yet the destructive behaviour seems integral to our survival and we do not see the internal breakdown in ourselves. The unhappiness we feel is absorbed by rational explanations and justifications; we see from the examples in this text that these beliefs can be equally as convincing as they are misleading, and the 'hidden' thoughts related to them may be buried well below our consciousness. With the challenges of daily life to juggle, we simply do not have the interest or energy to explore them. Eventually, we feel our destructive behaviour and related thinking is healthy and normal, perhaps even a show of emotional strength.

Yet with all these excuses and justifications, life feels like too much hard work.

Why?

Changing destructive behaviours can be challenging. It is a continual process of review, reflection, and change. Such is the struggle against the ego, and therein lies the reason its reward is so great: it is an ongoing jihad. The benefits are not for the individual alone. Its effects can be widespread – beyond our own lives – but only if we all seek to develop awareness within ourselves and work towards change.

If we look to the seerah of our role models, we can see how much was achieved by the Companions alone because their determination to meet the challenge of character change was accompanied by following the law and order that Islam brought into their lives. They, too, could have made the same excuses we make: our families, our culture, our pride, our habits, and so on; the difference is that they did not use them. In truth, they were allowed (technically) the greatest excuse because this was the first formalisation of Islam as a religion, yet they were exemplary in their attitude towards changing themselves and their entire lifestyles. This cannot really be the case for us; we who, as an Ummah, have had over 1400 years to get used to the idea of Islam and all it tells/requires of us regarding good character: yet we still have our excuses ready.

The developments made by the unique Qur'anic generation (ﷺ) and some of the following generations have remained unsurpassed and in many ways remain the cornerstones of all societies even today. Can we say the same of ourselves now? It seems that apart from the reformers who serve, by the will of Allah, as reminders of these people and their ways and, through their own great abilities, encourage us to return to this early model of good character, we have never seen their like since. We always consider the reformers to be 'other people', but in changing ourselves, we may very well find that we are one of them

in a smaller way and that any effort we make can effect a positive difference. We do not want to strive, though, so we leave it – and success in this world and the next – to others.

Scholars tell us that there are more Muslims in the world today than in the history of Islam, yet our progress in the world in so many fields does not compare to those few early generations whose successes are being built upon even today.

Why?

It is because our actions do not reflect Islam and what it means to be Muslim.

Rectifying this begins with each of us ‘living’ Islam and being a true Muslim as our own personal responsibility: not being responsible for but having a responsibility to. This process begins within ourselves.

We know that we can never achieve perfection; if we could, there would be no need for forgiveness – and we are told that Allah (ﷻ) loves to forgive.

Abu Ayyoob Khâlid ibn Zayd (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«Were you not to commit sins, Allah would create people who would commit sins and ask for forgiveness and He would forgive them.» (Muslim)

Part of being human is that we are prone to mistakes. Perfection is not the goal; rather, the command is to strive towards goodness and strive to complete one’s faith. But our focus is elsewhere.

Thawbân (رضي الله عنه), one of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and a freed slave, related:

«Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: The nations are about to call each other and set upon you, just as diners set upon food.

It was asked: Will it be because of our small number that day?

The Prophet (ﷺ) answered: Rather, on that day you will be many, but you will be like foam: like the foam on the ocean. And Allah will

remove the fear of you from the hearts of your enemies and will throw *wahn* (weakness) into your hearts.

Someone then asked: O Messenger of Allah! What is *wahn*?

He replied: Love of the world and hatred for death.» (Abu Dâwood; graded sound by al-Albâni)

Truly, if we were to remind ourselves of death and the permanence of our afterlife in comparison with this worldly life, we would live very different lives indeed.

This work is simply a reminder and an encouragement to us all to attempt, *in shâ' Allâh*, to return to basic guidance surrounding good character; to remind us to build strong personal foundations upon which all our other actions follow; to take our responsibilities seriously; and to do our best to uphold what we learn in practice. As Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was reported to have said, “The true scholars bear the fruit of knowledge.”

The removal of destructive behaviours from our characters helps set the background for the moral discipline and order we need, sent by the Creator Himself. It provides us with the emotional focus (Allah’s pleasure) and strength that we all need to develop ourselves and our lives for the better.

Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
«Riches do not come from abundance of wealth and possessions, but true richness is contentment of the soul.» (Bukhari)

Surely, in seeking to live in the best manner by utilising divine guidance as the only true guidance with the most benefit to ourselves, we may indeed be on the path to purifying ourselves, *in shâ' Allâh*, and in this lies the peace we all desire.

And Allah (ﷻ) knows best.



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GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS¹

<i>abu</i> (or <i>abi</i>)	أَبُو، أَبِي	father (of)
<i>alḥamdulillāh</i>	الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ	all praise is for Allah
<i>āmeen</i>	آمِينَ	O Allah, accept our invocation; amen
<i>Anṣār</i>	الْأَنْصَار	'helpers': the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah
<i>banu</i> (or <i>bani</i>)	بَنُو، بَنِي	<i>lit.</i> 'children (of)'; <i>usu.</i> referring to a tribe that claims a common ancestor
<i>dhikr Allāh</i>	ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ	remembrance of Allah; specifically, remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him
<i>du'ā'</i>	الدُّعَاءُ	supplication; invocation
<i>fajr</i>	الْفَجْر	dawn; the obligatory prayer at that time
<i>fiṭrah</i>	الْفِطْرَةَ	the natural inclination (of humans) instilled by Allah

¹ The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (that is, is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

Hadith (<i>Hadeeth</i>)	الْحَدِيثُ	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
hadith (<i>hadeeth</i>)	حَدِيثٌ	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
<i>hadith qudsi</i>	حَدِيثٌ قُدْسِيٌّ	'sacred hadith'; a hadith communicated to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) by Allah, but that is not part of the Qur'an
Hajj (<i>Hajj</i>)	الْحَجُّ	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Kaaba in Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his or her lifetime
halal (<i>halâl</i>)	حَلَالٌ	permitted according to Islamic law
<i>haq</i>	الْحَقُّ	truth, right, reality
haram (<i>harâm</i>)	حَرَامٌ	forbidden according to Islamic law
<i>hasan</i>	حَسَنٌ	a grade of hadith: acceptable or reliable
<i>hayâ'</i>	الْحَيَاءُ	modesty, bashfulness, shyness, moral conscience and self-respect
hijab (<i>hijâb</i>)	الْحِجَابُ	dress code ordained by Allah for believing women
<i>Iblees</i>	إِبْلِيسُ	another name for Satan in Arabic
<i>in shâ' Allâh</i>	إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ	God willing
<i>'ishâ'</i>	الْعِشَاءُ	late evening or nightfall; the obligatory prayer at that time

<i>Jibreel</i>	جِبْرِيل	the Arabic name for Gabriel (جبرائيل), the archangel who transmitted the verses of the Qur'an and other communications from Allah (الله) to Prophet Muhammad (محمد)
<i>jihād (jihād)</i>	الْجِهَاد	struggle or striving (in Allah's cause)
<i>khuṭbah</i>	الْخُطْبَة	sermon or speech; specifically, the sermon given during the Friday congregational prayer
<i>lā ilāha illā Allāh</i>	لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ	the Islamic testimony of faith: 'there is none worthy of worship other than Allah'
<i>mā shâ' Allāh</i>	مَا شَاءَ اللهُ	<i>lit.</i> '[It is] what Allah wanted'; an expression of appreciation for something someone has done or for a praiseworthy characteristic
<i>maḥram</i>	مَحْرَم	a degree of consanguinity precluding marriage; a man whom a woman may not marry due to the close blood or marriage relationship, e.g., her father, brother, son, uncle, or father-in-law
<i>makrooh</i>	مَكْرُوه	disliked
<i>minbar</i>	الْمِنْبَر	a raised pulpit in a mosque, from which sermons are presented. The pulpit in a mosque is different from that of a church in that it is basically a raised platform at the top of a set of steps, and it usually has a railing for the imam or speaker to lean on. This is why one can speak of 'sitting on the pulpit', and 'ascending the pulpit'

<i>mubâh</i>	مُبَاح	actions that are morally neutral; they are neither forbidden nor recommended, and there is no reward or punishment for the act in itself
<i>Muhâjiroon</i> (or <i>Muhâjireen</i>)	المُهَاجِرُونَ	<i>lit.</i> 'emigrants' of any kind; used in Islamic discourse to refer to people who emigrate to safeguard their religion, specifically the Muslims who migrated with Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madinah
<i>mustahabb</i>	مُسْتَحَبَّ	<i>lit.</i> 'encouraged'; righteous deeds that are not obligatory but encouraged in the religious texts; the one who does them will be rewarded, but the one who does not do them does not incur sin and will not be punished
<i>nafl</i> (pl. <i>nawâfil</i>)	نَفْل	supererogatory acts and deeds; one who performs them is rewarded, but one who neglects them is not punished
<i>nafs</i>	النَّفْس	inner soul or self
Ramadan (<i>Ramaḍân</i>)	رَمَضَانَ	the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting and the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed
<i>ribâ</i>	رِبَا	usury; charging interest on debt
<i>ṣadaqah</i>	صَدَقَةٌ	voluntary charity; in the Qur'an and Hadith, the word is often used to refer to zakat
<i>ṣaheeh</i>	صَحِيح	a grade of hadith: sound or authentic

<i>ṣalât</i> or <i>ṣalâh</i>	الصَّلَاةُ	formal prayer: a combination of physical postures, Qur'an recitation and supplication
<i>seerah</i>	السِّيَرَة	biography, <i>esp.</i> of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)
Sharia (<i>Sharee'ah</i>)	الشَّرِيعَة	Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah
<i>shar'î</i>	شَرْعِيّ	of or pertaining to Sharia; Islamic
<i>shirk</i>	الشِّرْكَ	associating partners with Allah
<i>subhân Allâh</i>	سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ	glory be to Allah
Sunnah	السُّنَّةُ	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
<i>sunnah</i>	سُنَّةٌ	acts that are recommended but not mandatory; one who performs them is rewarded, but one who neglects them is not punished
<i>tâghoot</i>	الطَّاغُوتُ	idols; everything evil that is worshipped
<i>taqwâ</i>	التَّقْوَى	fearful awareness of Allah; being mindful of Allah; pious dedication; being careful not to transgress the bounds set by Allah
<i>tawâf</i>	الطَّوَافُ	circumambulation of the Kaaba
<i>tawakkul</i>	التَّوَكُّلُ	surrender to the divine will; trusting in and relying on Allah while striving to do one's best

<i>tawḥeed</i>	التَّوْحِيدَ	the Oneness of Allah: the knowledge that He alone deserves to be worshipped and that He has no partners
<i>wuḍoo'</i>	وُضُوءَ	minor ablution required before praying or touching the Qur'an
<i>zakat</i> (or <i>zakâh</i>)	الزَّكَاةَ	obligatory charity: an 'alms tax' on wealth that is paid by Muslims and distributed to others who qualify as recipients



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