

44 WAYS TO MANHOOD

*Breaking Old Habits and Building New Personalities
Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah*

أربع وأربعون طريقاً إلى الرجولة

Taymullah Abdur-Rahman



الهار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي



IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL



44 WAYS TO MANHOOD

- Title: *44 Ways to Manhood*
- Author: Taymullah Abdur-Rahman
- English Print Edition 1 (2018)
- Layout Design: IIPH
- Cover Design: Samo Press Group, Beirut

44 WAYS TO MANHOOD

*Breaking Old Habits and Building New
Personalities Based on the Qur'an and Sunnah*

٤٤ طریقاً إلى الرجولة

Taymullah Abdur-Rahman

الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHING HOUSE

Copyright © 2018 International Islamic Publishing House
King Fahd National Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Abdur-Rahman, Taymullah

44 Ways to Manhood. / Taymullah Abdur-Rahman. - Riyadh,
2018

128 pp ; 21 cm

1- Brotherhood in Islam
I- Taymullah Abdur-Rahman

2- Men's personal growth
II- Title

179.9 dc

Legal Deposit no. 1438/1008
ISBN Paperback: 978-603-501-317-8

All rights reserved for the Publisher. No part of this book may be produced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the Publisher.

The scanning, uploading and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the written permission of the Publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support is appreciated.

International Islamic Publishing House (IIPH)

P.O. Box 55195 Riyadh 11534, Saudi Arabia
E-mail: editorial@iiph.com — iiphsa@gmail.com
www.iiph.com

CONTENTS

Pronunciation and transliteration chart.....	9
Arabic honorific symbols used in this book	13
Hadith grade terms in this book	14
About the Word ' <i>Lord</i> '	15
Publisher's Note	16
Introduction.....	18
11 ESSENTIALS	23
1. Sincerity to Allah.....	25
1.1 Why is it important?.....	25
1.2 How does it work?	26
1.3 Benefits of sincerity	28
1.4 What if you lack sincerity?.....	29
2. Knowledge of monotheism	31
2.1 Why is it important?.....	31
2.2 How does it work?	34
2.3 Benefits of understanding Islamic monotheism	39
2.4 What if you lack this knowledge?	40
3. Consistent worship.....	41
3.1 Why is it important?.....	41
3.2 How does it work?	43
3.3 Benefits of consistent worship	44
3.4 What if you are not able to worship consistently?	45

4. Halal provision	46
4.1 Why is it important?	46
4.2 How does it work?	47
4.3 Benefits of halal provision	48
4.4 What if you lack halal provision?	48
5. A pious wife	49
5.1 Why is she important?	49
5.2 How does this work?	50
5.3 Benefits of having a pious wife	52
5.4 What if you lack a pious wife?	54
6. Obedient children	55
6.1 Why are they important?	55
6.2 How does this work?	55
6.3 Benefits of having obedient children	56
6.4 What happens if you do not have obedient children? .	58
7. A comfortable home	59
7.1 Why is it important?	59
7.2 How does it work?	59
7.3 Benefits of a comfortable home	60
7.4 What happens if you do not have a comfortable home?	61
8. Good hygiene	63
8.1 Why is it important?	63
8.2 How does it work?	63
8.3 Benefits of cleanliness	68
8.4 What if you lack good hygiene?	68
9. Excellent manners	70

9.1 Why are they important?	70
9.2 How does it work?	72
9.3 Benefits of good manners.....	74
9.4 What if you lack good manners?	75
10. Dependable transportation.....	76
10.1 Why is it important?.....	76
10.2 How does it work?	76
10.3 Benefits of a dependable means of transportation ..	78
10.4 What happens if you do not have dependable transportation?	80
11. Basic understanding of issues of <i>fiqh</i>	81
11.1 Why is it important?	81
11.2 How does it work?	83
11.3 Benefits of understanding the basics of <i>fiqh</i>	85
11.4 What if you lack a basic understanding of <i>fiqh</i> ?....	86
33 SUGGESTIONS.....	87
1. Memorize at least one line of Qur'an a week, both in Arabic and in your native language	87
2. Get in shape	88
3. Do not indulge in unhealthy foods.....	89
4. Grow your beard	89
5. Be tolerant	91
6. Tell the truth.....	93
7. Fulfil your promises and debts	94
8. Be brave.....	95
9. Keep a secret if entrusted.....	96
10. Be serious and noble	97

11. Be shy before Allah	99
12. Volunteer	100
13. Do not be loud	101
14. Practise your Arabic reading and writing	102
15. Do not stand with oppression and oppressors	103
16. Honour women	104
17. If a task is assigned to you, do it excellently	106
18. Give charity in secret	107
19. Abandon foul speech	107
20. Treat people equally	108
21. Save money for emergencies	109
22. Talk to your Lord	110
23. Strive to pray your five prayers in congregation	111
24. Respect leadership	111
25. Be a good guest and a good host	112
26. Take care of your family	113
27. Give gifts	114
28. Be mindful of excessive mixed-gender interaction	115
29. Cry in front of Allah	118
30. Fast	119
31. Never engage in backbiting or allow it in your presence	120
32. Remain silent, and do not brag	121
33. Do not eat, wear, drive, or live in anything too luxurious	122
Conclusion	123
Bibliography	125
Glossary of Islamic Terms	126

PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLITERATION CHART

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
إ—آ	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
ه	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	h
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	dh
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, buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap, halo</i> ; in the word Allah, it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men, simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net, ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
ه - ه - ه	/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
ؤ	long ‘u’, as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yard</i> and <i>mayo</i>	y
ئ	long ‘e’, as in <i>eat, 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
أُو، وَ	long 'o', as in <i>owe, boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw
أَيْ، يِ	long 'a', as in <i>aid, rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (tashkeel)

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
fatḥah	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 USED IN THIS BOOK

(ﷺ): *Subḥānahu wa Ta‘ālā* — Glorified and Exalted is He

(صلوات الله عليه و سلام): *Salla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* — Blessings and peace be upon him

(صلوة الله عليه): *‘Alayhi as-salām* — Peace be upon him

(رضي الله عنه): *Radiya Allāhu ‘anhu* — May Allah be pleased with him

(رضي الله عنها): *Radiya Allāhu ‘anhā* — May Allah be pleased with her

HADITH GRADE TERMS IN THIS BOOK

Sound: *saheeh*

Reliable: *hasan*

Weak: *da'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 and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His messengers and prophets, and upon his family, his Companions, and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

What comes to mind when one thinks about a Muslim man? A stiff and stern-looking individual, a friendly and social person, a father laughing and joking with his children, or a learned teacher sitting in his study with his nose in a book, glaring at anyone who dares to disturb him? Can he be a moderate combination of all these personalities, strong and masculine but still caring?

In this concise yet informative book, the author uses examples from the Sunnah to show Muslim men how to shoulder their responsibilities with strength and dignity. The author provides a framework for building one's manhood using 44 points which, if implemented correctly, will enable a man to lead a balanced life in terms of his domestic, social, economic, and religious responsibilities.

May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *âmeen*.

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

To my mother, Linda Sutton,
who taught me faith by her love
and manners through her actions.

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah (*Subḥānahu wa Ta’ālā* — Glorified and Exalted is He). We praise Him, and we seek His aid and His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Him from the evil of our inner selves and the evil of our actions. No one can misguide those whom Allah guides, and no one can guide those whom Allah misguides. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone without any partners. I also bear witness that Muhammad (*ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* — blessings and peace be upon him) is the last prophet and Allah’s Messenger.

Allah instructs us:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ مَا مَنَّوا أَتَقُولُوا اللَّهُ حَقٌّ تُقَالِهِ وَلَا تَمُونُ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ١٠٢)

«O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared, and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him].»

(*Āl ‘Imrān* 3: 102)¹

﴿يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَتَقُولُوْرِبَكُمُ اللَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَجَدَنَهُ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَ مِنْهَا رِجَالًا

كَثِيرًا وَسَاءَهُ وَأَتَقُولُوا اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَأَمَّ أُنَوْنِيهِ، وَالْأَرْحَامُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

(سورة النساء: ١)

«O humankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men

¹ The translations of the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an in this book are taken (with some changes to the text) from Saheeh International, *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*.

and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.»

(*an-Nisâ' 4: 1*)

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٥﴾ يُصْلِحُ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٦﴾﴾

(سورة الأحزاب: ٧١-٧٠)

«O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment.»

(*al-Ahzâb 33: 70-71*)

The best speech is in the Book of Allah (Qur'an), and the best guidance is Muhammad's guidance. The worst affairs are the innovated ones. Every innovation is akin to going astray, and every going astray leads to hellfire.

Islam came to protect five necessary things: one's religion, life, honour, wealth, and intellect. This small effort that you are holding in your hands focuses on the protection of one's honour. It is a short treatise on the nobility of a Muslim man's character according to what Allah (ﷻ) has revealed in his Book, and the way his Messenger (ﷺ) behaved in his daily life.

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أَشْوَأُ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكْرُ اللَّهِ كَبِيرًا﴾

(سورة الأحزاب: ٢١)

«There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.»

(*al-Ahzâb 33: 21*)

That said, we must be unequivocally clear that our goal to acquire a more Islamic personality has nothing to do with becoming more gruff or violent. Many people confuse the Islamic personality of men with sheer brutality. Perhaps this is due to an over-exposure to

the writings about ancient battles, in which violence is equated with bravery, and viciousness is put on a par with chivalry. However, one's willingness to be aggressive cannot be used to measure the extent of one's masculinity as per the Islamic guidelines. Muslims have never been a people of unrestrained brutality. Unfortunately, what we see today from the fringe minorities — who spread bloodshed in the name of Islam — happens due to their ignorance of the goals of Islam, as well as their general lack of concern for humanity. These traits are more in line with beasts than with humans.

We say that perhaps men do not grasp the reality of their situation, but Allah has distinguished truth from falsehood. It is incumbent upon every individual to learn and implement both the major and minor rulings of this religion. This is where true success lies. Allah mentions:

(سورة البقرة: ٥) ﴿أَوْلَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًىٰ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾
 «Those are upon [right] guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.» (al-Baqarah 2: 5)

Through many examples in the past, we can see how men preserved the Qur'an and Sunnah (the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad [ﷺ]) with every breath. These men were able to uphold the characteristics of true Islamic manhood under far worse circumstances than we will ever experience. On the day we stand before our Lord, the Most High, what excuse will we give for having deserted the characteristics of Islamic manhood?

It is our belief that when you save a child, you save a life; when you save a woman, you save a child; and when you save a man, you save an entire family. By giving children not just food, clothing and shelter, but also love, nurturing and encouragement, we allow them space to come into their own and to find the truth by which they will be guided throughout their entire lives. When children are abandoned and left to find their own bearings, we find them astray, delinquent, lost and discouraged.

Likewise, by helping a woman tap into her own resilience and strength, by supporting her in whatever she may need, one will ultimately be helping her children. We mention this particular point not because a woman has no other capabilities besides caring for children, but because we all know that the first one from whom children learn is their mother. The lessons she teaches her young children are carved into their hearts, and while those carved lessons may become covered by the muck and mire of adolescence, they will be unearthed again upon the advent of adulthood, when we return to the essential lessons we learned on the laps of our mothers.

Finally, because a man is expected to be a guiding compass for his household, anyone who assists him in finding his masculinity will have assisted his entire family. In most cases, it is he who sets the direction for his household. If at any time he decides to abandonment, his wife and children are left to navigate the rough seas of life on their own. This is not to insinuate that a mother and her children cannot succeed without a man, because we have witnessed quite the contrary. But without the help of her husband, the task is that much more difficult — not because men are better than women, but because women look for a husband who is a model of responsibility and chivalry. We find this to be a typical human trait in both Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The child is nurtured (primarily) by the mother; the wife is supported by her husband, and he is comforted by her. The family is the backbone of any society, and men who are not up to shouldering the responsibility of their families bring more harm than benefit to their households. We have seen hearts broken, women ruined, and children turned delinquent all because the father does not want to be held accountable for his actions or does not understand their ramifications.

With Allah's help, we have gathered 44 principles of manhood and broken them up into 11 prerequisites and 33 additional pieces of

advice. The reason for this bifurcation is because the further we are removed from the noble generation of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), the more we need very specific, detailed principles that are clearly prioritized for us. When we number and categorize these principles, there is no room for confusion or ambiguity.

Allah willing, as you read, you will find that these 33 action-items can only be accomplished after understanding and implementing the 11 prerequisites. This is not an attempt to re-shape Islam or to add new pillars to its perfect edifice; we only hope to classify and explain in modern terms what has already been manifested by the pious lives of noble men and women who lived before us.

These 44 points, when implemented completely, will safeguard a Muslim from everything which does not benefit him, his religion, and his hereafter — and Allah the Exalted knows best. They may seem very casual to a diligent worshipper, but to those of us who are not living in a completely Islamic society, and those who struggle just to stay within the bounds of what is permissible, these guidelines may bring benefit.

Allah mentions:

﴿وَهَذَا صِرَاطٌ رَّبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا قَدْ فَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِقَوْمٍ يَدْكُرُونَ﴾

(سورة الأنعام: ١٢٦)

﴿And this is the path of your Lord, [leading] straight. We have detailed the verses for a people who remember.﴾ (*al-An 'âm 6: 126*)

Taymullah Abdur-Rahman

11 ESSENTIALS

As men, we sometimes lose our way. This is a common trait of the son of Adam; he often forgets his ultimate goal. Life brings us many tests and trials, and along the way, we may become confused as to which path is best for us. Sometimes the tests are not as clear-cut as choosing belief over disbelief. If the tests were that lucid, none of us would lose our focus because the choice would be apparent. Instead, Allah the Almighty sends us subtle tests — for example, opportunities that may complement our talents but are not necessarily in line with our mission of entering paradise.

﴿إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُو هُمْ أَهْمَنُ عَمَالًا﴾

(سورة الكهف : ٧)

﴿Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed.﴾

(*al-Kahf* 18: 7)

Every talent you possess may not be a blessing. It may instead be a test from Allah, to see what you will do with it. In my years as a prison chaplain, I encountered men who were skilled at murdering others, men who had a knack for exploiting women, and men who knew the sciences of every crime conceivable. Because of a lack of moral consciousness, they simply did whatever they were good at, regardless of whether or not they harmed others. Their skills were like wild berries that are as yellow as bananas and as sweet as honey, and yet if you eat them you will die. From this example, we derive the lesson that not all things that are apparently harmless are good for you, and not all natural abilities bring benefit.

Therefore, keep in mind that while pursuing your provision, there is no justifiable reason for neglecting your wife or children, temporarily abandoning your *salâh* (formal prayers),² forsaking the mosque, or keeping the company of evil individuals in order to pursue wealth, power, or influence. In fact, it is not permissible for one to abandon the above obligations even for the purpose of seeking knowledge. Consider how much more despicable it would be to disregard these things for the insignificant bounties of this world!

﴿... وَمَا الْحِيَاةُ إِلَّا مَتْنَعٌ لِّلْفُرُودِ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ۱۸۵)

﴿...And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion?﴾ (آل 'Imrân 3: 185)

As a result of these subtle tests that threaten to make one slip into oblivion, it is important to distinguish between ‘need’ and ‘want’. This is because there are innumerable ways in which you may lose focus, whether it is through gaining a great job that pays extremely well but takes up too much of your time and puts you in compromising position concerning your religion, or through befriending good people who have bad habits.

What is the difference between the essentials you need and the extras you want?

- A need is something that assists in preserving your religion, life and/or family, without which your religious obligations or life would deteriorate, and your duties would become more difficult — if not impossible — to perform.
- A want is something that would make you personally content and happy. Usually it makes easier a duty that was already tolerable. Wants usually stem from desires.

² Wherever possible, Arabic terms have been translated into English. In cases where we have chosen to retain the Arabic, the transliterated word or phrase is shown in italics the first time it appears in the text; the term is also defined in the Glossary found at the end of this book. (Editor)

This book will first address 11 necessities by asking and answering four basic questions for each one:

1. Why is it important?
2. How does it work?
3. What are the benefits?
4. What if a man lacks this?

The following guidelines will borrow examples from the lives of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and those around him, for they were the epitome of faith. When we lose our way, the fastest way to get back on track is to remember our heroes, who demonstrate the highest ideals of what we would like to be. They represent living symbols of our aspirations. By remembering them, we remember our potential, and we refocus our efforts. The following 44 suggestions are intentionally built around the principles that governed the greatest heroes the world has ever seen. These people are none other than the prophets, along with those who were truthful to Allah, and those who sacrificed themselves to uphold the principles of monotheism. In these principles lie all the necessities we need to reach our goal.

1. Sincerity to Allah

1.1 Why is it important?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«This religion is *naseehah*... to Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger (ﷺ), to the leaders, and to the people.» (Muslim)³

³ 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)

The Arabic word *naṣeeḥah* is not easily translated into any other language. It has a vast meaning that is translated sometimes as ‘advice’, at other times as ‘sincerity’, and at yet other times as ‘well-wishing’. In this hadith (a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad [ﷺ]), though, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) specifies «*naṣeeḥah*... to Allah». If we look at the aforementioned meanings of *naṣeeḥah*, we notice a slight flaw when we apply them to Allah. Obviously we cannot give advice to Allah, and to wish Him well implies that He needs to be assisted. Therefore making *naṣeeḥah* to Allah, according to the scholars, can only mean being true and sincere to Him by perfectly fulfilling all of one’s obligatory duties.

Furthermore, if we take this meaning and apply it to those mentioned in the hadith, *naṣeeḥah* means being true and sincere in any effort we are required to exert, including servitude to Allah, applying the meanings of His Book, following the example of his Messenger (ﷺ), obeying those in authority, and offering sincere advice to our brothers and sisters in humanity.

We warn ourselves first, and then we remind the reader that any deed — big or small — which is not done solely for the pleasure of Allah is considered to be null and void. This conclusion is based on the statement of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ):

«Actions are driven by intentions, and a person will be rewarded according to his intention.» (Bukhari)

1.2 How does it work?

For any deed to be accepted by Allah, and rewarded in the hereafter, there are three prerequisites that must be in place:

1. The person performing the deed must be a Muslim.
2. The deed must be done in accordance with the Sunnah, without any additions or subtractions.
3. The deed must be done solely for Allah’s pleasure.

The principle under discussion here concerns the third point: that a deed's acceptance depends on whether it was done for the pleasure of Allah or for some other reason.

Sincerity to Allah is manifested when you cry in the dark — where no other human being can see you — out of fear of His wrath, or out of gratitude for His mercy.

Sincerity to Allah means to strive with all the resources that you have (in terms of your wealth, strength, and knowledge) in order to give the highest priority to his commands, regardless of the consequences you may face.

You cannot express your sincerity to Allah only by saying grateful words; you must demonstrate it by showing Him that you are grateful for His blessings upon you, by obeying what He commands you to do, and by staying away from what He prohibits.

Note that it is easier to pray ṣalāh than to stay away from what is forbidden.

What does this mean? Ask yourself: How many people do you know who possess bad habits but still establish the prayer? Maybe you are one of those people; perhaps you come into the mosque and line up with the brothers for ṣalāh, but when you are finished, you leave and return to the worst types of deeds. Both good and bad people establish prayer, but only those who are sincere to Allah stay away from evil deeds. This is where your sincerity is measured: in finding a balance between producing the fruit of gratitude and staying away from what Allah has forbidden. Anything less than that is just a pretence of faith to yourself and other people.

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ مَاءَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ شَمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهُهُدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّانِدُونَ ﴾ (١٥) (سورة الحجّرات: ١٥)

﴿The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then doubt not, but strive with their properties and

their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful.»

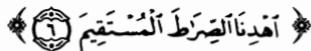
(*al-Hujurât* 49: 15)

1.3 Benefits of sincerity

If Muslims wish to attain Allah's reward and pleasure, they should perform beautiful deeds with only Allah in mind, without caring whether people's opinions favour them or not. If they do these beautiful deeds for anyone other than Allah, they will get their reward not from Allah but from the created thing that made them inclined towards those deeds. In reality, this so-called reward of praise or fame will surely pale in comparison to the delight and bounties that they may have received from Allah if they had purified their intention before performing the deed.

If Muslims are sincere to Allah, He will answer this supplication that we make to him at least seventeen times a day:⁴

(سورة الفاتحة: ٦)



(*al-Fâtihah* 1: 6)

﴿Guide us to the straight path.﴾

This is why Allah mentions:

(سورة العنكبوت: ٦٩)



﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاهُوا فِينَا لَهُمْ مُّثْبَلًا...﴾

﴿And those who strive for us — We will surely guide them to Our ways...﴾

(*al-'Ankaboot* 29: 69)

It is because of people's sincerity to their Lord that their family and property are protected and looked after even in their absence. This can be clearly understood from the story of Khidr and Prophet Moses ('*alayhi as-salâm* — peace be upon him) in the noble Qur'an, when Khidr explains to Moses:

⁴ *Soorat* (Chapter) *al-Fâtihah* (The Opening) is repeated in each unit of the *salâh*, and the five obligatory prayers have a total of seventeen units. (Editor)

﴿وَأَمَّا الْحِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغَلَمَيْنِ يَتَيَّمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَلِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشَدَّ هُمَاء وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ وَمَا فَعَلْنَا عَنْ أَمْرِيٍّ ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلٌ مَا لَرْتُ سَطْعَ عَلَيْهِ صَبَرَا﴾ (Surah al-Kahf: 82)

﴿And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience.﴾ (al-Kahf 18: 82)⁵

The benefit of sincerity is that a dead man is helped and assisted by his Lord regarding the wealth and children that he left behind in this world. This is one of the greatest favours from Allah to His loyal servants.

1.4 What if you lack sincerity?

If Muslims understand the principles of jurisprudence and yet lack sincerity, they are certainly losers. All deeds, whether spoken, performed, or intended, must be dedicated to Allah alone. Any other intention is foolish and demonstrates a gross misunderstanding of Allah's religion.

Only men who lack sincerity are unconcerned about whether or not they are truthful. They feel safe from Allah's wrath because of some aspect of hypocrisy in them. They believe they are truthful because they perform all the outward acts of obedience (such as prayer and fasting). This may be due to other people complimenting them on their

⁵ *Soorat al-Kahf* (The Cave) tells the story of Moses' journey with the wise man Khidr, from whom he wishes to gain knowledge. Before they set out, Khidr warns Moses to be patient and not to question him about his actions, but Moses is unable to stay quiet. Khidr then sends Moses away, but not before explaining the wisdom behind what he did. (Editor)

piety, or to the fact that they hold the title of *ustâdh* (teacher), imam (religious leader), *shaykh* (teacher or mentor) or *mufti* (an Islamic scholar who is qualified to deliver formal legal verdicts based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah).

Allah explains that:

﴿لَيْسَ الْبَرُّ أَن تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قَبْلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَ الْبَرُّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلِئَكَةَ وَالْكِتَبِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَمَائِي الْمَالِ عَلَى حِيمَهِ دَوِيَ الْفُرِيفِ وَالْيَتَمَّ وَالْمَسَكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّاَبِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الْصَّلَاةَ وَمَائِي الْزَّكُوَةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَاسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّ وَجِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُنَّقُونَ﴾

(Surah al-Baqarah: 177)

﴿Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives obligatory charity; [those who] fulfil their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.﴾ *(al-Baqarah 2: 177)*

Allah begins by negating the idea that piety lies in outward deeds alone: ﴿Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west﴾. Then he mentions the deeds of the heart: ﴿[true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day...﴾. Only the sincere ones completely fit this description. Those who lack any aspect of sincerity are in danger of being punished by their Lord, or at the very least, of gaining no reward for their efforts.

2. Knowledge of monotheism

2.1 Why is it important?

This is because many people do not comprehend the concept of Allah's Highness, and in turn, fall short of most, if not all, of their understanding of Islam.

This knowledge is not found only in books and lessons. This knowledge is not simply taught by a scholar to a student. By monotheism, we do not simply mean repeating bland principles and categories. We mention this because there are many students who learn all the rules, laws, tenets, and theories of monotheism, and yet the reality of Allah is lost on them. This is indicated by the lazy way they worship him, the gruff way they treat other people, and the way they behave with their families.

Knowledge of monotheism starts with books, but it is maintained and completed with actions. Monotheism does not mean simply uttering *lâ ilâha illâ Allâh* (there is none worthy of worship other than Allah). It means knowing what Allah commands and prohibits, understanding the ramifications of these commands and prohibitions in your life, submitting to them, and implementing them every single day until death overtakes you.

Many men believe that uttering the testimony of faith makes them qualify as good, and maybe even knowledgeable, Muslims. Allah debunks this myth in His Book when he mentions:

(سورة الزُّخْرُف: ٨٦) ﴿...إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

﴿...but only those who testify to the truth [can benefit], and they know.﴾ (az-Zukhruf 43: 86)

This statement leaves no doubt that it is essential for people to know the facts about Allah and His religion. This is the only way to know what their Lord commands them to do and what He prohibits them from. Only after they know the foundation of monotheism can they take the path ahead without swaying back and forth between

obedience and faith, on the one hand, and disobedience and apostasy, on the other.

Knowledge of monotheism is the first step towards true success and happiness. We have witnessed men who were raised as Muslims in the West during the 1970s and 1980s, when few sound Islamic books were translated into the English language, and there was a general lack of information about Islam. These men grew up loving Allah and doing the best that they could, but many fell prey to the world's snares and traps because they did not comprehend true monotheism.

We have witnessed individuals in the West (even some imams) who perform all the outward actions of Islam, yet because of a lack of deep knowledge about Allah, they fall short. They make statements about Allah, His Messenger (ﷺ), and the Muslims that a true Muslim should not dare utter. While we do not accuse them of disbelief, it is apparent that they lack knowledge of Islamic monotheism.

All these afflictions are due to a lack of complete understanding of why Muslims believe what they believe and do what they do. We cannot find any other reason why a man would blatantly rebel against the injunctions of his Lord except that this man is ignorant of the true nature of his Lord's Highness and Authority.

As the late Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) states, “Many people know the **hows** of Islam without knowing the **whys**.” As a result, we find brothers who know how to perform prayer but have never reflected on why they perform it in the first place. This leads to a dangerous state of mind that leaves a man’s faith vulnerable to changing circumstances. He may abandon obedience to Allah because of financial strain, love-related problems, or psychological issues, but all this can be solved by adhering to the meanings of Islamic monotheism.

It is said that only a blind man would commit a crime in the lobby of the police station. Allah’s sight, hearing, and power are over all of us.

(سورة الحديد: ٤)

﴿... وَهُوَ مَعْلُومٌ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ...﴾

﴿...and He is with you wherever you are...﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 4)

Allah is not physically present with any of His creation, but His power over us, and His knowledge of our every thought, movement, and even whisper, leaves the creation exposed to Him at all times.

Only a man who does not fully grasp the idea that his Lord is All-Seeing and All-Knowing would commit crimes against his own soul, whether out in the open or secretly in the dark. It makes no difference to Allah. Our teacher and imam, the late ‘Abdul-‘Azeez ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Bâz (may Allah have mercy on him) remarked, “Every sin committed by the son of Adam, whether major or minor, is done out of his ignorance about Who Allah is.”

Allah indicates:

(سورة التكاثر: ٥)

﴿كَلَّا لَتَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ﴾

﴿No! If you only knew with knowledge of certainty.﴾

(at-Takâthur 102: 5)

While participating in one of our consultative council meetings for the local mosque, one of our brothers — and we ask Allah to bless him with all good things — disapproved and objected when the imam began the meeting by advising everyone to follow the way of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in terms of his behaviour in such meetings. This brother smiled with annoyance, asking, “Why do we always have to mention him? Can’t we even have a business meeting without mentioning something about the Sunnah of Muhammad (ﷺ)?”

Believe it or not, this belligerent, arrogant attitude of our brother in Islam stemmed from a lack of knowledge about the oneness of his Lord. He did not understand that all things — major or minor, worldly or religious — lead back to the singularity of Allah. Nothing becomes truly fruitful unless it has some remnant of obedience, reverence, and appreciation of Allah in it. This is all due to the comprehension of the Lord’s uniqueness and its effect on the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of an individual.

2.2 How does it work?

Knowledge of Islamic monotheism is only gained through researching and understanding Allah's might and majesty, in the same way that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and his Companions (*rađiya Allāhu 'anhum* — may Allah be pleased with all of them) understood it.

An in-depth discussion of Islamic monotheism is beyond the scope of this book, but there are many beneficial books, written by great scholars from the past and present, that explain the correct understanding of this concept.

Allah mentions all the best and most important qualities of Islamic monotheism in the first chapter of the Qur'an, *Soorat al-Fâtiħah* (The Opening).

The most important aspect of Islam should always come first, and Allah mentions in the first verse:

(سورة الفاتحة: ١)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.﴾
(al-Fâtiħah 1: 1)

Allah teaches us the protocol for undertaking any affair by mentioning His greatest name and following it with two of His greatest attributes, namely beneficence and mercy for all of His creation. In this there is a great lesson, and an entire book can be written about this very phrase, which is the first verse in 113 (of 114) chapters of the Qur'an.

(سورة الفاتحة: ٢)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

﴿[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds.﴾
(al-Fâtiħah 1: 2)

Allah begins by mentioning His Lordship over all things; therefore, you and I should begin by acknowledging that He is certainly the one true Lord and Creator of all that exists.

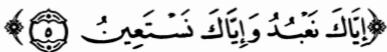
(سورة الفاتحة: ٤-٣)

رَبِّ الْجَمِيعِ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

﴿The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.﴾ (al-Fâtihah 1: 3-4)

Here Allah mentions three of His greatest names and attributes: *ar-Rahmân* (the Entirely Merciful), *ar-Raheem* (the Especially Merciful), and *al-Mâlik* (Sovereign of the Day of Recompense). The first two names benefit His creation constantly, while the third signifies that after all is said and done, all the affairs will return to Him when we die. After recognizing that He alone is the Lord, we should recognize that He has names and attributes that are unique, belonging only to Him. Describing Allah with qualities that are conjured up in one's mind does not befit His sovereignty and is thus inappropriate. Muslims need only to look into the Qur'an and the Hadith (the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad [ﷺ]) to learn about Allah's attributes.⁶

(سورة الفاتحة: ٥)



﴿It is You we worship and You we ask for help.﴾ (al-Fâtihah 1: 5)

Finally Allah establishes that because He is the Lord of all that exists, and because He possesses the most complete names and attributes, He alone is worthy of being worshipped. As His servants, Muslims should call upon Him for assistance and should worship Him alone, without using intermediaries or invoking anyone besides Him.

Understanding the following three points in detail is the foundation of Islam:

1. Allah's Lordship
2. Allah's names and attributes
3. Allah's position as the only One to be worshipped

The only way to truly know your Lord is to contemplate the way He defines Himself and His attributes in His Book. Reflect on the

⁶ Sakina Hirschfelder's *Who is Allah?*, published by IIPH, discusses belief in Allah and focuses individually on over 100 of Allah's revealed names and attributes.

characteristics of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as mentioned in the authentic hadiths. We read the Qur'an and authentic hadiths, and we agree with what we find in them about Allah's description. We do not make up our own descriptions, or twist the descriptions that Allah gives about Himself in order to rationalize what we do not understand in the Qur'an or hadiths.

Start first with the words of your Lord which leave no doubt, as Allah commands:

﴿وَلِلّٰهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْمُسَمَّىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يَتْجَدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (١٨٠) (سورة الأعراف) (al-A'râf 7: 180)

﴿And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practise deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing.﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 180)

The following examples may help to demonstrate the foundation of this principle.

Firstly, someone may ask, “Does Allah have a hand?”

You may think about it and say, “Of course not!”

But Allah mentions:

﴿فَالَّذِيلِيْسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدِيِّ ...﴾ (٧٥) (سورة ص) (Sâd 38: 75)

﴿[Allah] said: O Iblees, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My Hands...?﴾ (Sâd 38: 75)

The answer is yes. We know that Allah has two Hands because he mentions in the Qur'an that he has two Hands.

Secondly, you may find it ridiculous to believe that Allah has a face, but He states:

﴿... فَإِنَّمَا تُولُوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّٰهِ ...﴾ (١١٥) (سورة البقرة) (al-Baqarah 2: 115)

﴿...So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allah...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 115)

Therefore Allah does indeed have a Face.

Thirdly, you may find those who say, “Allah is everywhere,” but Allah mentions:

(سورة ط: ٥)

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ أَسْتَوَى﴾

﴿The Most Merciful [Who is] above the Throne established.﴾

(*Tâ Hâ* 20: 5)

From this, it is clear that Allah is not everywhere. He is above His Throne, neither resting nor sitting. He is above His Throne in a way that suits His majesty, and to continue to question **how** He is above His Throne is blasphemous.

If Allah were everywhere, then it could be inferred that He is also in places where people relieve themselves or in human waste and vomit. He is not everywhere. His knowledge and ability reaches every place, which is different than physically being everywhere. If He were resting or sitting, then this would imply that He gets tired or needs to sit.

All of this points to the fact that we will never know Allah through our minds. We cannot use our intellect to sift through His attributes and pick them apart. Sifting through things and analyzing them to find rulings is called *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). We do not use *fiqh* to understand Islamic monotheism, though; *fiqh* is used to understand, for instance, how to perform ablution or prayers. For Islamic monotheism, we simply accept things as Allah mentions them in the Qur'an. Is that not a safe option?

When you pick Allah's descriptions apart, you are insinuating that He had difficulty explaining Himself, and now you will help Him clarify things for the rest of us.

People pick Allah's descriptions apart by saying, for example, “If Allah has a Face and two Hands, then you are claiming He is a man! There must be a better explanation for these descriptions, and we should try to find those explanations. For instance, when Allah

mentions that He has a Hand, what He really means is that He has the ability!"

We do not dare say that Allah is human or that He resembles His creation in any way. Allah makes this clear when He mentions:

(سورة الإخلاص: ٤)

﴿ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُ كُفُواً أَحَدٌ ﴾

﴿Nor is there to Him any equivalent.﴾

(*al-Ikhlas* 112: 4)

Even though we know He has a Face and Hands, He clarifies that they are not like our faces and hands. They are suitable for Him Alone, and it is not permissible to try and explore what His Face and Hands look like or to use rationale or logic to understand them. We simply stop at the words He uses, and we do not attempt to explain them or interpret them to mean something different.

Knowing this fact about Allah has significant effects on your heart. You want to have a soft heart when you remember Allah. You do not want to make Him into something that you can imagine or picture in your mind, but at the same time you do not want to make Him into something so distant that your heart can never reach Him.

When you study Islamic monotheism and try to look for subtle ways in which it affects your life, you will become a whole new person. Your intellect will be strengthened, your personality will be fortified, your focus and behaviour will be different, and your standards will be raised higher in everything you do and with everyone you interact with.

Do not be fooled into believing that if you affirm that Allah has a Face and Hands, you are committing blasphemy. Affirming that He has Hands and a Face was the belief of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmân, ‘Ali, and all of the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) as well as the four imams of the Sunnah and the great contemporary scholars of today.

Some people eloquently argue about why Allah does not have a Face and Hands, but they do not realize that they are only contradicting

Allah and not us. One day they will have to meet their Lord and explain to Him that what He had said in the Qur'an was not sufficient for them.

2.3 Benefits of understanding Islamic monotheism

One of the benefits of understanding Islamic monotheism is that you strongly appreciate your Creator, and you learn about His expectations from you. This will in turn make it difficult for you to disobey Allah because you are aware of His power and might. As a result, you may gain a higher rank in paradise.

When this knowledge begins to enrich your heart, you will find that there is no choice except to obey Him. Knowledge of Islamic monotheism makes every task easier. Understanding the facts about Allah's oneness helps you put the brevity of your life in perspective. It will all be over soon. Someone will dig a hole in the ground and place your dead body in it. But when you believe in Islamic monotheism, you are comforted by the One Who never dies:

﴿... عَلِمَ الْغَيْبٍ وَالشَّهَدَةُ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾ (سورة الحشر: ٢٢)
 ...Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.» (al-Hashr 59: 22)

Allah has made a way out of every difficulty, through His lofty attributes:

﴿هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ الْسَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ
 الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشَرِّكُونَ﴾ (سورة الحشر: ٢٣)

«He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.» (al-Hashr 59: 23)

Ibn al-Qayyim states, “The slave should invoke Allah using every name that He possesses, in order to bring about the desired result.”

How can you be conceited or arrogant when you are not responsible even for your looks or your intelligence? If you think you are responsible, then try making all your children more beautiful and more intelligent than you. Next, shape all your family members and friends to possess the personalities and looks that you like best. You can never do this, and you know it. Yet Muslims look down upon those whom Allah has made less beautiful than them. Why do we look down on those who were not able to achieve what Allah allowed us to achieve? The reason is that we do not fully understand Islamic monotheism.

﴿ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصْوِرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحَسَنَةُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ عَنِ الْعِكْرِ ﴾
 (سورة الحشر: ٢٤)

﴿He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.﴾ (*al-Hashr 59: 24*)

Once he realizes that Allah is the sole Creator, how can a person be proud or vain about anything he has accomplished?

2.4 What if you lack this knowledge?

The results of lacking true knowledge of Islamic monotheism are confusion and disobedience.

Many Muslims have become confused about what they believe. They are not sure who their Lord is. They do not truly comprehend the reality of Islam, and they are easily misled by other deviant beliefs. Their confusion only leads to disobedience.

Moreover, if a person does not attempt to clarify these matters, his subsequent disobedience is wilful disobedience. As a result, sinning is easy for a person who is not aware of Islamic monotheism.

Islamic monotheism is the foundation for all Muslims, not just Muslim men. Ignorance is not an excuse when a person has many opportunities to learn about and reflect upon the words of his Lord.

This is why Allah commands His Messenger (ﷺ):

(سورة يوسف: ١٠٨) ﴿ قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ ... ﴾

﴿Say: This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight...﴾

(Yousuf 12: 108)

This insight is none other than the knowledge of Islamic monotheism. It is the lifeblood of a Muslim, and understanding it should mean more to us than our very lives.

In conclusion, lack of knowledge of Islamic monotheism leads to confusion and disobedience, which in turn lead to two catastrophes:

1. The threat of Allah's punishment in this life and/or the next life.
2. Apostasy.

May Allah protect us from both.

The third result of acquiring knowledge about Islamic monotheism is a good one, and it is explained in the subsequent section.

3. Consistent worship

3.1 Why is it important?

(سورة فصلت: ٣٠) ﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ أَسْتَقْنَمُوا تَنَزَّلُ عَنْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا ... ﴾

﴿Indeed, those who have said: Our Lord is Allah — and then remained on a right course, the angels will descend upon them [saying]: Do not fear and do not grieve...﴾ (Fussilât 41: 30)

The phrase **«on a right course»** has a very comprehensive meaning. In Arabic, it is *istaqâmu*, which means to remain firm in practising

Islam, to perform all the deeds that come along with belief, and to never waver until death overtakes you. Few men are able to accomplish this, and only Allah knows who they are.

Consistent worship does not slacken, either during times of ease and pleasure or during times of sorrow and pain. We have had the opportunity to analyze the statements of some Muslims who were convicted of armed robbery, selling drugs, and the like. Many of them attribute their downward spiral to one of two things: too much ease or too much hardship.

Too much ease causes ungratefulness and a lack of concern for the difference between good and bad. Ease can breed heedlessness in the heart if one is not careful to guard his prayers and modesty at all times.

This is because when a man feels free to fulfil his every whim and desire, he starts with what is halal (permitted according to Islamic law). He gets married... but over time, he might become bored with his wife and befriend another woman, who eventually becomes his mistress.

Another scenario that may occur if a man takes to fulfilling each and every one of his desires is that after he has gotten his life on track, with a good job and a decent car, he cannot stop visiting an old friend. These visits are a regular habit, even though his old friend remains in a state of ignorance. Soon this Muslim is sharing a drink or a cigarette with him.

Having a wife turns into having a mistress, which leads to a lifestyle of sneaking and lying. Likewise an old friend has a subtle influence on him, and one drink leads him back into the world of drug and alcohol abuse until he loses his wealth and soundness of mind. Then comes robbing and stealing.

After all that comes the inevitable... **humiliation**.

Humiliation from Allah is due to a lack of concern for the commands and prohibitions He has established. This humiliation may come in

the form of prison terms, homelessness, life-threatening diseases, being abandoned by one's wife and children, being ostracized by the Muslim community, and many other things.

As for too much hardship and how that can lead to crime, consider the reverse of the above process. A man starts out with loss of wealth and sound mind; consequently, he abandons worship in order to pursue a way out of his pain, namely through robbery and theft, which lead him to other vices.

A man must guard his *ṣalāh* like it is his life. In fact, it is his life... in the hereafter.

3.2 How does it work?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«The first deed for which a servant will be called to account on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayer. If it is complete, he will be successful and saved, but if it is defective, he will be unfortunate and a loser.» (Recorded by at-Tirmidhi and authenticated by al-Albâni)

A man must guard his prayer, establishing it in the mosque as much as he is able to. In addition, he must have good companions.

Let us define good companions.

Consider a man who is a former thief and addict. To him, 'good company' may be the presence of his old friends who have 'cleaned up' their lives from violence and treachery, and who now 'only' smoke marijuana and drink beer. He may view smoking and drinking as far lesser infractions than violent crime and destruction. However, a principle in Islam states that anything with the potential to lead one towards severe sin is considered to be just as lethal as that sin. A man who is trying to pull himself out of the muck and mire of ignorance must make clear choices that reflect his new attitude and lifestyle change.

Allah commands the believers:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا مَعَ الصَّدِيقِينَ ﴾ (١١٩) (سورة التوبة: ١١٩)

«O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true.» (at-Tawbah 9: 119)

Abu Hurayrah (*radiya Allâhu 'anhu* — may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«A man follows the religion of his friend, so be mindful of whom you befriend.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

What do you do when you go to the grocery store and select fruit or meat? You pick it up, smell it, turn it around in your hand, look at it, and then decide whether or not to purchase it. Why do you not do the same with your friends? You should examine their behaviour and their speech: what they say, how they say it, and when they say it. Look into their private affairs; are they in order? Can you benefit from their experience, or is their friendship a liability? Learn about their dreams and aspirations, and their plans for the future, because in this lies your future if you plan on befriending them. Choose your friends like you choose your fruit, and you will be far more selective.

Ibn al-Qayyim said, “I feel sorry for the one with a companion who does not benefit him in any way.”

You may come across many types of Muslims who seem very appealing, based on their dress and outward manners. When you examine their speech, though, you discover that it is full of backbiting, slander, foul talk, and meaningless chatter. Leave these people and find upright friends, or be content with yourself as company.

3.3 Benefits of consistent worship

«The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked: If you had a river outside your door, and you bathed in it five times a day, would there be any traces of dirt on you?

People replied: No.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Likewise the five prayers remove sins from the son of Adam.» (Bukhari)

﴿فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَهُمْ فَلَا يَنْهَاهُمْ فَإِنَّمَا أَنْذِرْنَا إِنَّمَا أَنْذِرْنَا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَعْصَمُوا يَدِهِمْ فَسَيِّدِ خَلْقِهِمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضَّلَ
وَهُدًى إِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٧٥)

﴿So those who believe in Allah and hold fast to Him — He will admit them to mercy from Himself and bounty and guide them to Himself on a straight path.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 175)

Paradise is the reward for consistent worship, by the mercy of Allah. All these admonitions are not worth much to the one who does not consider Paradise to be a realistic goal and the inevitable outcome of doing good. For those who practise what they believe, though, it will be true, Allah willing.

3.4 What if you are not able to worship consistently?

Before you can prosper in the world and in the hereafter, you must first recognize the source of your strengths and achievements. If you believe that this source is from something outside Islam (such as financial security or other people), then you will be left to those whom you put your trust in, and eventually you may abandon praying and seeking the pleasure of Allah. If you are blessed to recognize that the source is none other than Allah, then all the acts of worship (prayer, fasting, charity and the like) will be made easy for you, and Allah will love you for it. Ask yourself two questions:

1. What is the greatest crime anyone can commit before Allah?
2. Why was Satan kicked out of paradise and cursed forever?

The answer to the first question is **Polytheism**, which essentially means to associate a partner with Allah or to make something else equal to Him in your love, reverence, reliance, and obedience. Polytheism is the opposite of Islamic monotheism, and it is known as *shirk* in the Arabic language.

If polytheism is the greatest crime that anyone can commit against Allah, the answer to the second question seems obvious: Satan must have been kicked out of paradise because he engaged in polytheism.

Actually, this is incorrect; he never associated a partner in worship with Allah. He was kicked out of paradise and cursed forever because he missed one prostration. He refused to prostrate to Adam when his Lord commanded it, and because of his disobedience, he is the worst of creation. May Allah protect us from Satan's whispers!

We should take a lesson from this and understand the importance of obedience to Allah! If we do not, then any one of us can suffer the same fate as Satan. May Allah protect us from what earns His wrath!

A man who is weak in faith can never be trusted or respected. If he slacks in fulfilling his obligations to the One Who created him, how can he ever be loyal to another human being?

A person who prays on Friday, fornicates on Saturday, smokes and drinks on Sunday, and then fasts on Monday is a fool. He is among those about whom Allah mentions:

﴿... وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفَسَهُمْ يَظْلَمُونَ﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٤٠)
 ﴿...but it was they who were wronging themselves.﴾
 (al-'Ankaboot 29: 40)

4. Halal provision

4.1 Why is it important?

Allah commands:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيْبَتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانًا تَعْبُدُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧٢)

﴿O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship.﴾
 (al-Baqarah 2: 172)

Muslim men must break free from the concept that performing prohibited deeds for halal purposes is permissible.

This means that one cannot acquire forbidden income or any type of impermissible provisions — food, clothing or shelter — for the purpose of doing good with it. One of the fastest ways to have Allah abandon you is to gain your provision through impermissible means.

4.2 How does it work?

In order for the Muslim man to stay within the good grace of his Lord, he must understand that any provision acquired through ill-gotten means is not, and can never be, an option for him. As long as he thinks that after a certain point, obtaining provision by forbidden means is okay, he will always reach that point of no return, considering his only option to be what his Lord has made unlawful to him.

﴿ قُلْ أَرَيْتُم مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ بَعْضَهُ حَرَامًا وَحَلَّا قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُعِظِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾
﴿ أَذْنَكُمْ أَمْ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَقَرُونَ ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٥٩)

﴿ Say: Have you seen what Allah has sent down to you of provision, of which you have made [some] lawful and [some] unlawful? Say: Has Allah permitted you [to do so], or do you invent [something] about Allah? ﴾ (Yoonus 10: 59)

As quickly as Allah grants us His bounties and satisfies our most ardent physical desires, we just as quickly move on to additional wants and desires, forgetting all about the gifts He has just given us. These feelings of discontentment continue until Satan tricks us into falling into the sinful and prohibited in order for us to satisfy our greedy cravings for this world.

A man must be prepared to run a business, but he must also be ready to sweep the floor. He must be prepared to earn millions, but he must also be willing to work for pennies. He must be prepared to rule the world, but he must also accept ruling over his tiny household.

4.3 Benefits of halal provision

One of the numerous benefits of earning halal provision is that a man will feel truly content with whatever he earns, and Allah will most certainly make it enough for him.

It is said that the worst punishment is for a man to yearn for what has not been decreed for him. Abu Hurayrah (رض) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم) said:

«O Allah, make the provision of Muhammad's family sufficient to sustain life.» (Bukhari)

Halal provision in the form of a few dollars earned honestly is better than a mountain of precious jewels and gold earned by despicable means. To your Lord you will be returned, and He will inform you of what you used to do.

4.4 What if you lack halal provision?

Allah may never help a man who is surrounded by forbidden provisions. Abu Hurayrah (رض) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم) said: «A traveller comes to Allah with dusty clothing and messy hair, with his hands raised, saying: O Lord, O Lord.

How can his prayer be answered when his food is forbidden, his drink is forbidden, his clothing is forbidden, and his provision is forbidden?» (Muslim)

This hadith has a special meaning, which we should mention. The Messenger of Allah (صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم) relayed to us that there are certain times when a person's prayers will definitely be answered by Allah. These times are:

- When travelling
- When in dire need
- When raising his hands to supplicate
- When using the name, “*Yâ Rabb, Yâ Rabb* (O Lord, O Lord)”

The person in this hadith had all these characteristics, and yet Allah did not answer his prayer due to some defect in his provision.

Similarly, we find brothers going into businesses that are impermissible, eating food that is considered to be forbidden, and living negligent lifestyles in general. They indulge in doubtful means of earning, yet they expect a good life now and later. They may complain about not receiving Allah's help, but they never question themselves. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«I swear by Him in Whose Hand is my soul, a servant of Allah tosses a forbidden morsel into his stomach due to which no deed is accepted from him for 40 days.» (Recorded by at-Tabarâni)

Jabir (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:
«The flesh which has been grown from the forbidden will not enter paradise because the fire of hell is more worthy of it.» (Recorded by Ahmad)

5. A pious wife

5.1 Why is she important?

Marriage is the foundation of the entire world, and family is the nucleus of every community. Where there is no family, there is no means for one to progress.

'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ood (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«O young men! Those among you who can support a wife should marry because it restrains the eyes and preserves you from immorality.» (Muslim)

In general, marriage is obligatory on every Muslim man who has the means to marry. After marriage, a man will have either a negligent wife or a pious wife — so be careful whom you marry. Most people are neither purely negligent nor purely pious, but there are some

guidelines that we will discuss in order to determine which trait is most dominant.

5.2 How does this work?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Whoever marries has completed half of his religion. Let him fear Allah for the other half.» (Recorded by al-Bayhaqi)⁷

When a man marries, he no longer has the time to read as many books, or rest, or visit friends as compared to when he was a bachelor, because he now shoulders the responsibility of raising children and of providing food, clothing, and shelter for his wife and family.

It is said that a man who is not married should look into the face of someone who is, and there he will see everything he thought he was. As the saying goes, “A monkey cannot see his own tail,” meaning that a single adult male may consider himself to be the archetype of manhood, but until he marries, he does not realize all of the praiseworthy traits he is missing without a wife.

A single man can sleep anywhere: in a car or in a barn; in contrast, a married man has to find a place of warmth and comfort for his wife. Likewise a single man can eat anything, but a married man has to satisfy the particular tastes of his children. A single man can study whenever he likes, or he can rest; a married man must learn in order to teach his family. Broadly speaking, these things make a married man better than a single man.

Through these obvious examples, it becomes clear that life as a husband replaces the half of the religion that a man spent indulging in satisfying his own personal desires and whims.

After all of this, the worth of a righteous woman is made clear by the strain of responsibility on her husband’s back and by how she

⁷ Ibn Hajar graded this hadith weak, but according to al-Albâni, it is reliable based on corroborating reports.

helps to lighten or increase his load. If she in fact is a source of advice and comfort for him, then nothing on Earth can compare to her. On the other hand, if she fails to give her husband good advice, and she burdens him with additional requests when he is preoccupied with fulfilling the original requests, then theirs is a marriage that might not endure. A pious wife is a favour from Allah. She will be a cover for her husband, and he will be a cover for her.

It should be noted that when we say ‘a pious wife’, we do not mean ‘a personal slave’. Islam has nothing to do with suppressing the aspirations of women or oppressing women in general. A wife can be educated and employed in a halal environment, and still fulfil the requirements of piety. When we say ‘a pious wife’, we do not mean someone who is illiterate, poor, and passive. We only mean a wife who benefits her family due to her worship of Allah and her good character.

Many men are seen in shambles due to their single lifestyle. A man may need a strong woman who will advise him with good advice and remind him about his Lord. This is why it is so important to choose wisely when thinking of marriage, because this relationship outlasts all others except what is established by Allah.

In the sixth year after emigration, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took his Companions and went out for Hajj (the major pilgrimage), only to be confronted by the Quraysh (the dominant tribe in Makkah at the time of the Prophet’s mission), who were his enemies at the time. He struck a deal according to which he and his Companions were not allowed to make Hajj that year but instead had to turn around and return to Madinah. His Companions were infuriated and offended at the terms of the deal.

Right where they were (in the desert, in the valley of Hudaybiyah outside of Makkah), the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told them to perform the rituals necessary to release themselves from the state of consecration for Hajj. Three times, he told them to slaughter their

animals and to shave their heads, but none of his Companions did as he asked.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was perplexed. He did not know what to do in order to get them to obey his command. Did he seek the advice of Abu Bakr? No. Did he pray to his Lord to send down a verse admonishing his Companions? No. He turned to his wife, Umm Salamah (*radiya Allâhu 'anhâ* — may Allah be pleased with her), and asked her what he should do. She advised him to take the initiative by going out in front of the people and slaughtering his own animal and shaving his own head. He followed her advice, and it worked! After seeing him perform the rituals, all the Companions followed suit, thanks to the sound advice of Umm Salamah. (Bukhari)

You and I can derive a great lesson from this. While we scan the horizon for a piece of advice that will soothe our minds, the person right next to us may have the most precious words, if only we would listen.

When the Companions asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) whom he loved the most in the world, he replied:

«‘Â’ishah.» (Bukhari)

He put his wife before the likes of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and the rest of the Companions (ﷺ). He was teaching us, by example, the importance of cherishing the relationship of marriage, and he was demonstrating that it alone is the institution upon which nations are built.

5.3 Benefits of having a pious wife

If you are in doubt about the impact that a righteous woman has on the lives of the men in her life, consider the most successful women of the past.

Ibn ‘Abbâs (رضي الله عنهما) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The best women of paradise are Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid, Fâtimah bint Muhammad, Âsiyah bint Muzâhim (the wife of Pharaoh), and

Maryam bint ‘Imrân.» (Recorded by Aḥmad, and authenticated by al-Albâni)

- **Khadeejah (رضي الله عنها), the wife of the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وآله وسالم) :** This righteous woman single-handedly debunks the myth that a Muslim woman cannot be independent, educated, and wealthy. Khadeejah possessed all these qualities before and after the advent of Islam. Although she was a smart business woman, she is not recognized for this fact alone. What makes Khadeejah so special is the way she spent her wealth in the way of Islam, and how she never let her financial superiority affect her attitude towards her husband. Her wealth was used to support the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وآله وسالم) in inviting people to Islamic monotheism. In spite of being the wealthy one of the two, she remained loyal and supportive of her husband. She did not allow her wealth to distort her personality. She is the best example of a wealthy and dutiful wife who truly supported her husband.
- **Fâtimah (رضي الله عنها), the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وآله وسالم) and the wife of ‘Ali ibn Abi Tâlib (رضي الله عنهما):** Fâtimah was very young when she came to the aid and protection of her father when he was persecuted by his enemies. She was always there to comfort him and to carry out the duties of a righteous daughter. In addition to this great honour, she also became the wife of ‘Ali ibn Abi Tâlib. She was patient with her meagre lifestyle, and she took care of the household and children with diligence. She is a magnificent example of an obedient daughter and a patient wife.
- **Âsiyah, the foster mother of Moses and the wife of the Pharaoh:** This woman had the entire world, with all of its riches, at her feet. Yet this was not what made her successful; what led to her success was her rejection of this world's wealth because it meant sacrificing her belief in Allah and supporting her

husband, the Pharaoh, in falsehood. She endured great pain because she refused to sacrifice paradise for the comfort of this world. She is another excellent example of a steadfast and sincere wife who chose Allah over the evil ways of her husband.

- **Maryam, the mother of Jesus (ﷺ):** She was chosen as the mother of Prophet Jesus not due to her brains or business acumen, but because of her reliance upon Allah and her devout worship. She is the best example of a nurturing and pious mother who supported her son.

5.4 What if you lack a pious wife?

A man who is without a wife who helps him in the world and in striving for paradise is a man who is like a lost sheep on a cold windy night. Yes, you may find him with children and a family, but you will not find him happy, at the peak of productivity, or being his best self.

This is not to insinuate that a man's entire success is dependent on the companionship of a good wife, but we do say that it is *almost* true to insinuate that. When we look at the lives of most great men — men who changed the course of history, forged new paths and shaped modern thought — they were propelled forward by the women who stood next to them.

We don't find any man who has a wife who gives him stress, constant argumentation, who acts as an enemy to him in his own household, except that this man is sad, defeated, discouraged and distracted.

In fact, keeping in mind how much Islam emphasizes the importance of marriage, we would still advise a man to remain single if he can't find a woman who possesses the qualities of patience, wisdom and gratitude or at least the potential to one day embody those characteristics.

6. Obedient children

6.1 Why are they important?

The best investment a man can leave behind in this world is good, pious offspring.

6.2 How does this work?

We see many examples of men who try to teach their children the knowledge of Islam but neglect to instil in them basic qualities such as good behaviour. Their children may be perfect at Qur'an memorization, but they will disrupt any study circle (where people are trying to learn about Islam) with their constant yelling, fighting, and causing mayhem.

Training children in manners starts at a very early age. We should not encourage them to make 'cute' gestures or to say things that compromise their Islamic identity. Of course, children need to release their energy and to play according to their level of intellect. While you should instil in them the correct Islamic belief, you should also allow them some free time to be themselves, play games, and do what children generally do. If you do not give them this time, they will fully utilize their liberty when they are older and more independent; they will then do whatever they were not allowed to do at a young age. At that point, you will be helpless to stop them.

It is said that the parents should play with their children until the age of seven, teach them for the next seven years, and after that, be their friend.

We must give our daughters love and attention in order to build their self-esteem very early in life. When they enter puberty, we must give them space and privacy. This will enable them to have an acute sense of modesty and honour later on in their lives. If they slip and make mistakes, as young girls do, we should be patient and kind to them. The world is cold enough without adding an insensitive father to it.

In addition, we must master the art of showing outward displays of affection to our boys, being careful not to overdo things to the point where they become spoiled. Likewise, we should not abandon kindness altogether, fearing that our boys will turn into ‘wimps’. After all, we are not trying to create gorillas or brutes. We only hope that our granting and withholding, disciplining and playing with, teaching and guiding them will nurture a balanced personality.

I once had the opportunity to attend the wedding ceremony of the daughter of one of the older men in the community, a man whom people consider to be pious and upright (and Allah knows his true condition). This shaykh had three sons, two of whom had completed the Qur'an. His three daughters were married, and they were all practising Muslims who wore the hijab (Islamic headscarf). During the wedding feast, I pulled the shaykh into a corner of the room and asked him, “Shaykh, please tell me: How did you raise these children of yours? What did you do?”

The shaykh did not reply verbally; instead he fixed his gaze upwards and cupped his hands as if to say, “I supplicated to Allah constantly.” This was sufficient advice for me, and now I pass his example on to you the readers, hoping that you pray for the guidance and safety of your children as often as you pray for your own forgiveness.

6.3 Benefits of having obedient children

If a man is a dutiful father, he will begin to see the fruits of his labour as he grows older. This will be apparent through the help and support his children give him in his advanced age. They will visit him, talk to him, comfort him, serve him food and drink, nurse him to health, and remind him about Allah and the good work he has done throughout his life.

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:
«There are three things that benefit a man in his grave.

1. Knowledge from him that continues to benefit people.

2. Charity he initiated that is ongoing.
3. A righteous child who prays for him.» (Muslim).

The benefits of obedient children are seen not only in this world but also after death, because your righteous children will pray for you when you cannot pray for yourself. Your righteous children will have their own offspring, who will in turn teach their children what you taught them. This will extend your reward through the generations until (Allah willing) one of your successors will be standing with and supporting the Mahdi before the end of time.⁸

Your righteous children will bear witness for you on the Day of Resurrection. A portion of the blessings of their good deeds will be deposited in your account, too, without reducing their reward.

It is essential that we do not let the world distract us from spending time with the ones who will pray for us when we cannot pray for ourselves: our children. We must teach them what needs to be taught about the essentials of Islam and life, encourage them to pursue careers of integrity, and make them aware of the ideal Muslim character. We should be keen to develop a relationship with our children based on fear of Allah and on the tenets of Islam.

This is why Prophet Abraham (ﷺ) made the following supplications:

(سورة إبراهيم: ٣٥)

﴿... وَاجْتَنِبِي وَبِقَنْ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ﴾



﴿...keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols.﴾

(Ibrâheem 14: 35)

(سورة إبراهيم: ٤٠)

﴿رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ... ﴾



⁸ Mahdi: *lit.* one who is guided. ‘The Mahdi’ refers to a descendant of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) who will appear on Earth before Jesus and before the antichrist. The Mahdi will rule for about seven years, during which time he will fill the world with justice and blessings of all kinds. Prophet Jesus will descend during the Mahdi’s reign, and he will pray behind the Mahdi. (Editor)

﴿My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and [many] from my descendants...﴾ (*Ibrâheem 14: 40*)

This is what we all wish for our children. Islam was sent to purify characters and rectify hearts. Do not teach them to hate people, because hate for one group of people or place grows into hate for other groups and places. Such hatred is destructive, and it is more harmful than a wildfire. Teach them to be fair and to hate injustice, but to be useful to other human beings and to love Allah.

Do not be the type of parent who only teaches his children politics or different ways to chase provision. If you do that, you will only leave them angry and emotional because of some worldly affair of government or finances. Instead, teach them how to establish a connection with Allah, and the rest will fall into place in the natural way intended by the Sunnah. This can only be accomplished by grooming them according to what Allah loves.

6.4 What happens if you do not have obedient children?

How many men have we seen in the misery of old age with no one to care for them because they failed to instil good character in their children? Here we are specifically referring to those parents who never instil Islamic values in their children. In all fairness, there are also cases when parents have done their best in raising their children according to Islam's teachings, and yet these children do not turn out to be a source of contentment or support for the parents in old age.

Children do not grow up to be obedient simply because a husband and wife feed and clothe them. Obedient children are trained, nurtured, and taught proper manners and upright behaviour by their parents.

If a man neglects this effort to teach them, it will backfire later. He may end up all alone... sitting in a rocking chair in a nursing home where the food is tasteless and he does not get along with the people around him. Even after he dies and is relieved of his miserable

loneliness in this world, he will find himself alone, with no prayers from good children to reach and benefit him in the depths of the grave.

Finally, if a man does not have good offspring due to his own laziness and negligence, he will lose out on assistance in this world and prayers in the next world. What an awful ending that is!

In retrospect, we learn from the story of Khiḍr and Moses (mentioned previously) that not all children will turn out to be righteous. All we can do is make an effort, but success comes from Allah.

7. A comfortable home

7.1 Why is it important?

The home is a place where a man retreats from worldly pressures, to find comfort and tranquillity. It is only behind the walls of his home that a man is truly a king — by Allah's permission.

(سورة النحل: ٨٠)

﴿وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ يُوتَقْتَمْ سَكَناً ...﴾

﴿And Allah has made for you from your homes a place of rest...﴾

(an-Nahl 16: 80)

7.2 How does it work?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) loved spaciousness in the house, and he considered it to be a part of a man's contentment in this life. He said: «Happiness has four elements: (among them) are a good wife and a spacious home.» (A sound hadith recorded by Ibn Hibbân)

We have already addressed the advantages of a good wife, and here we will discuss the benefits of living in a comfortable home.

«The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to pray: Our Lord, forgive me, make my house spacious, and bless my sustenance.

He was asked: O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), why do you supplicate with these words so often?

He replied: Is anything left out?» (A reliable hadith recorded by an-Nasâ'i)

To those who claim that Muslims should be poor and live in squalor, we say: Have you not heard about the likes of ‘Uthmân ibn ‘Affân, ‘Abdur-Rahmân ibn ‘Awf, Imam Abu Haneefah, ‘Abdullâh ibn Mubârak or Imam Mâlik? These men were among the best of humankind, yet they were rich and lived comfortably within their means. A Muslim does not have to starve and live in a run-down shack in order to prove his piety.

﴿قُلْ مَنْ حَرَمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الْأَكْبَرِ أَخْرَجَ لِعَيَادَةَ...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٣٢)



«Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants...?» (al-A'râf 7: 32)

‘Abdullâh ibn Mas‘ood narrated:

«The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Anyone who has an atom of pride in his heart will not enter the garden.

A man asked: What about the one who likes to wear a handsome robe and good shoes?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) replied: Certainly Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty.» (Muslim)

Imam Ahmâd said, “True asceticism is putting the world in your hand and not in your heart.”

We understand from this statement that a man is free to live comfortably as long as he does not let that comfort distract him or lead him astray from his duties. As long as he keeps his wealth in check, he will be the true ascetic.

7.3 Benefits of a comfortable home

When a man has a comfortable and spacious home, his mind remains clear, and he finds it easier to think. He will find it easier to be patient in times of hardship because he knows he will eventually be able to retreat from his current trials into his worldly home and garden.

Also, he will find it easier to maintain a consistent level of gratitude because his Lord has provided a good place for him to retreat with his family. His home will, in turn, bring ease to his marriage and happiness to his children.

Allah commands the believers:

﴿... وَإِنَّمَا تَخَافُونَ شُوْزَهْرَكَ فَعَظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجِرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ ...﴾
(سورة النساء: ٣٤)

﴿...But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance — [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed...﴾ (*an-Nisâ' 4: 34*)

This is not a negative statement from our Lord. How can it be when all men and women — Muslim and non-Muslim — have experienced arguments and tension with spouses to the extent that one may refuse to share the bed, sleeping instead on the couch or in another bedroom for the night?

That said, if a man has a spacious home, and a disagreement arises between him and his wife, he can leave her and spend the night in another room. This gives them both some time to think, reflect, and cool the anxiety.

Furthermore, children need space to run, jump, and play without the furniture and household appliances being in their way. A roomy home will allow them to play under the watchful eyes of their parents and in the safety of the house. Later in life, they will not mind spending time in the home when they are teenagers and more susceptible to the temptations that come with that age.

Keeping a clean, neat home is pleasing to Allah, and this should be the aim of Muslims in all their endeavours.

7.4 What happens if you do not have a comfortable home?

If a man's home is cluttered and shabby, and he cannot stretch his legs and soothe his mind, this will make his house a place of discomfort

and unease. Ultimately, a man's behaviour is affected by his living conditions, and poor living space may make some men grumpy and irritable all the time.

Furthermore, a home that lacks comfort will cause the marriage to be strained, and it is not unheard of for it to lead to divorce.

Many brothers refuse to get decent jobs and insist on being self-employed, selling trinkets or doing part-time side work which barely makes any profit. They expect their wives to be content with living in the basement of someone else's house with all the children.

Under these circumstances, some women are forced to cook elaborate meals on a hot pot with no stove. They are constrained to bathing their children in the bathroom sink. Ultimately, they become bitter, and the marriage inevitably suffers.

These wives may hate cooking in a tiny kitchen, even though they are not even obligated to cook. They may be ashamed of the sitting area, and in turn not invite their friends to their place. They will complain to their husbands, and rightfully so. The husbands will naturally be frustrated because they are unable to improve the condition of their family.

However, if a man works hard and uses all his resources to provide for his family as best he can, he cannot be blamed for having a small home. Allah has decreed for each of us a level that we can neither surpass nor fall short of, no matter what we do.

We do not judge the quality of a man by the size of his house. If we used that criterion, the house of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would be considered the most modest. We only hope that every man works to his capacity until he reaches the level that Allah has decided for him, and we pray that his wife and children remain patient with whatever Allah has decreed. But he must work, and he cannot use the divine decree as an excuse to not try to earn good money.

8. Good hygiene

8.1 Why is it important?

Allah loves cleanliness and purity, and a Muslim's first aim should be to always do what pleases Him.

﴿...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٢)

«...Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.» (al-Baqarah 2: 222)

Allah also praised certain people for their love of cleanliness. He mentions:

﴿...لَمْ سِجِّدْ أَسْسَسَ عَلَى الصَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ﴾

(سورة التوبه: ١٠٨) ﴿أَن يَنْظَهُرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهِّرِينَ﴾

«...A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves.» (at-Tawbah 9: 108)

8.2 How does it work?

Abu Mâlik al-Ash'ari (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وسلم) said:

«Purification is half of faith.» (Muslim)

Whenever the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وسلم) proclaims something to be half or a large portion of something else, it means that this thing is considered to be important in Islam. For instance, the Prophet (صلوات الله عليه وسلم) said:

«Marriage is half of religion.» (Recorded by al-Hâkim; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

Anas ibn Mâlik narrated that the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وسلم) said: «Joseph had been given half of beauty.» (Muslim)

'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ood reported that the Messenger of Allah (صلوات الله عليه وسلم) said:

«I hope that you will constitute half of the inhabitants of paradise.» (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:
 «...*Soorat al-Ikhlas* (Purity of Faith) is equivalent to one-third of the Qur'an.» (Muslim)

Since the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said that cleanliness and purification constitute half of faith, their importance cannot be overstated.

We know that faith, along with speech and actions, comprises one's belief. A man must be keen to act upon his faith in all spheres, by fulfilling the five pillars of Islam as well as by making sure his body is perfectly clean, his clothing is free from stench, his breath is odour-free, and his hair is well kept.

'Abdullâh ibn 'Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Your body has a right upon you.» (Bukhari)

These rights include what Abu Hurayrah reported in the following hadith from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ):

«Natural disposition is in five acts: Circumcision, shaving the pubes, cutting the nails, plucking the hair under the armpits, and clipping the moustache.» (Muslim)

This is because after you have purified your soul from polytheism, your appearance should reflect your inner cleansing.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was very attentive to oral hygiene, at a time when many so-called civilized people in the world were not concerned even with bathing regularly. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Were it not for the fact that I do not want to make things too hard for my nation, I would have commanded them to use the tooth stick at every time of prayer.» (Bukhari)

Consequently, the first thing he did when he entered his home was clean his teeth, and then he kissed his wife.

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Every Muslim should bathe once every seven days, when he should wash his head and all of his body.»⁹ (Muslim)

This was a man who lived over 1,400 years ago. It was a difficult task for them to find water (since Makkah was in a desert) and take a bath in those ancient times, yet he ordered Muslims to take baths often. What can possibly be our excuse? We can run bath water or take a shower with just the turn of a knob.

Still, many men line up in prayer with a foul smell emanating from their armpits. Many have feet that smell bad when they remove their shoes for ablution. Some men have such a horrible problem with bad breath that even when they recite the prayers silently, others can smell the odour coming from their mouths. Are these issues out of their control, or do they indicate a man's level of faith, as well as his care and concern for his Lord?

We have a dear older brother who converted 30 years ago and has worked hard to encourage his daughters, who visit him during their college breaks, to embrace Islam. He was very sad when he invited them to the Friday prayer and they were left with a bad impression because, as they put it, "The entire place smells like stinking feet."

Allah is the One Who guides, but we all must do our best to represent Islam in its truest form. This includes not only major issues like condemning violence and terrorism, but also minor ones like making sure that we smell good and that the houses of Allah have a nice scent. Neither type of issue can be neglected. All this is part and parcel of knowing the truth and adhering to it.

How can one be negligent towards his body when he has a wife to lie with — a wife who will inevitably suffer due to his

⁹ Men (and women) are also required to take ritual full baths (or showers) after having sexual relations. (Editor)

carelessness? He has a daughter to hug, and she will have to endure his embarrassing smell. He has brothers to stand with in prayer, and they will have to be patient and risk losing concentration because of his unhygienic habits.

In fact, the older one gets, the wiser and cleaner he should become. Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: «Whoever has hair should honour it.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood, and authenticated by al-Albâni)

Caring about your hair means keeping it neat and well-groomed. This includes not only the hair on the head and the beard, but also the hair that grows on the private parts, because the Prophet of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did not specify what kind of hair.

‘Atâ’ ibn Yasâr reported that a man came to the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) when he was in the mosque. This man had uncombed hair and an untidy beard. The Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) pointed to him as if ordering him to fix his hair and beard. The man did so and then returned. After that, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

«Is this not better than one of you coming with his hair uncombed, as if he were a devil?» (Recorded by Mâlik, and graded *mursal* by al-Albâni)¹⁰

This narration is evidence against those who go out in public with wrinkled clothing and unkempt hair. They believe this is part of piety, but the reality is far from that. No one likes a dirty person, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. When people see him, he thinks they are whispering, “Wow! He must be very religious. He doesn’t even care enough about his appearance to groom himself.”

In truth, they are saying, “Look at this fool. He thinks he is pleasing Allah by looking like this, but we are not impressed, and neither is Allah.”

¹⁰ *mursal*: a ‘loose’ hadith with a broken link in its chain of narration at the level of a Companion; reported by someone from the generation after the Companions as if it had been heard directly from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)

Our outward appearance always conveys our beliefs, whether we realize it or not. If you want to be known as a sports fan, you will wear baseball hats, basketball jerseys, and sneakers, and people will know what your priorities are. Likewise, you send a mixed message when you do not take time to look clean, neat, and nice-smelling yet you claim to possess the most superior belief system.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was so keen on cleanliness that he commanded people to wash their hands when they wake up, before they do anything else. He explained that:

«No one knows what their hands have touched while they were sleeping.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) also said:

«Whoever has eaten garlic or onion should keep away from our mosque and stay at home.» (Bukhari)

Glory be to Allah! Congregational prayers are the most important aspect of a Muslim man's life, and yet the Prophet (ﷺ) commanded one to stay home if he had eaten these two smelly foods.

This tells us two very important things:

- Coming to the mosque while your breath smells bad is close to prohibited. It disturbs other people, displeases Allah, and sends the angels fleeing from your presence.
- If the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade people from coming to the mosque because they had eaten something which, although permissible, causes offense, what about those who line up for prayer and smell like cigarettes, which are prohibited? They come to the mosque reeking of evidence of disobedience to their Lord, disturbing people around them. Is there any reward in that? We wonder...

All these issues and more show us that being clean and neat in Islam is certainly half of faith.

8.3 Benefits of cleanliness

Cleanliness is a prerequisite to beautification and worship. Allah commands:

﴿يَبْنِيَّ إِلَيْكُمْ أَدَمَ مُذْوَأْزِيَّتُكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ...﴾
 (سورة الأعراف: ٣١)

«O children of Adam, take your adornment at every place of worship...» (al-A'râf 7: 31)

Good hygiene increases a man's self-esteem and makes him well-liked and respected. Not only does being clean help a man become more appealing in the eyes of others, but it also strengthens friendships and creates strong ties between people.

Whoever is clean and makes an effort to appear clean will be known to people — by Allah's grace — as a neat and organized person. This will build their confidence in him. For this reason, a clean man is trusted to handle food, lead prayers, and give advice. Likewise, he finds it easy to retain employment, and he develops many beneficial relationships.

Do people hire, trust, or seek advice from dirty folks? Of course not! Do people hire, trust, and seek advice from anyone other than those who appear clean, neat, and well put together, whether they are dark-skinned, fair-skinned, or brown-skinned? The answer is no! Only those who appear competent are perceived as such.

Furthermore, being clean and taking care of one's appearance as much as possible is one of the attributes of the prophets, all of whom were good-looking. This attribute makes it easier to invite people to Islam because people listen to and accept truth more readily from a man who has a pleasing look.

8.4 What if you lack good hygiene?

If prayer is the key to paradise, purification is the key to prayer. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Allah does not accept prayer without purification.» (Muslim)

The first disadvantage of lacking good hygiene is that Allah may reject your salah. Is any admonition needed after this?

Ibn 'Abbâs reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) passed by two graves and said:

«These two people are being punished in their graves for what seems to be a minor thing, but it is certainly very serious. One did not clean himself properly from urine, and one used to carry tales about people (to make enmity between friends).» (Bukhari)

A man who chooses to remain unclean can look forward to being tormented in his grave if Allah wills. A man who is careless about cleanliness will be hard-pressed to find a pious wife. He is likely to find a spouse like him.

If a man does not look clean and smell clean, it will be difficult for him to find a job. We know plenty of men who do not take the time to brush their teeth or iron the wrinkles out of their clothes. Some of these men loiter around the mosque, angry and bitter because no one will give them financial help and they cannot find a suitable job. We advised them to tidy up, giving them grooming tips straight from the Sunnah. Some of these men took our advice; now they have decent jobs and are gaining more respect every day. The others, who refused to change, are still viewed with contempt by those who know them.

It is said that a first impression cannot be made a second time. A man must be cautious to not neglect cleaning his teeth, hair, or clothes due to his apparent piety. We are not advising you to take time grooming yourself like a rock star. When we look into the life of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), we find someone who was pious, patient, humble, and simple in his lifestyle, and yet we find him brushing his teeth, combing his hair, and wearing nice clothes daily.

We mention this aspect of the Messenger of Allah's life because some of our brothers misunderstand the Sunnah, and as a result, they always have a disagreeable smell emanating from their armpits,

mouth, and body in general. A man may think that toothpaste is a reprehensible innovation, that deodorant is contrary to the Sunnah, or that wearing nice clothes is extravagance. We advise him that none of these things are innovations, and as long as they do not hinder him from worship or add anything to the Sunnah, they are not only permissible but encouraged — due to the good results they bring.

9. Excellent manners

9.1 Why are they important?

Abu ad-Dardâ' (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: «On the Day of Resurrection, nothing will be heavier on the scale of the believer than good manners ...» (A reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

The Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said:

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

How many men have we seen who are so knowledgeable that they are practically human encyclopaedias, yet they behave like hungry lions ready to bite the head off of every layperson who may not be aware of some of the tenets of Islam?

These men quote hadiths to establish their arguments against their Muslim brothers. They recite the Qur'an to humiliate any man who differs from them, and they never speak a good word unless they are mentioning themselves.

Many of these men believe that good manners should be practised only with the Muslims who follow their particular brand of Islam, and not with humanity in general. This is a type of falsehood and a clear proof of ignorance.

«Asmâ' reported that she asked the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): My mother, who hates Islam, has come to visit me. Should I treat her well?»

He replied: Yes.» (Bukhari)

We learn a couple of important lessons from this narration:

- Non-Muslim relatives should be treated with respect, even if they dislike your religion.
- If the non-Muslim who hates Islam is supposed to be treated kindly, how should we treat the general body of Muslims who believe in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) and worship daily?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Allah loves gentleness in every matter.» (Bukhari)

Concerning knowledge, we know the story of one of our pious predecessors who was teaching his students. He overheard them speaking about who amongst the scholars had knowledge and who did not. Upon hearing the name of a particular man, one of the students replied, "He has no knowledge." The teacher interrupted and remarked, "Yes, but he has the **fruit** of knowledge [which is action]."

This story is supported by a narration of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) who said:

«Righteousness is in good character...» (Muslim)

This is because this religion is nothing more than monotheism, worship, and good manners. One may think he has knowledge, but if he is unreasonable with the people, he has nothing. Allah explains:

﴿يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتَى خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَرُ إِلَّا أُولَوَالْأَلْبَابِ﴾
﴿سورة البقرة: ٢٦٩﴾

«He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of understanding.» *(al-Baqarah 2: 269)*

Just because someone has knowledge does not mean that he has been granted wisdom. Anyone can gain knowledge by reading books, but it takes a special person for Allah to give him the gift of understanding.

For a man to understand one hadith correctly and to apply it is better for him than memorizing one thousand hadiths and misunderstanding them. The word ‘fiqh’, which we use so carelessly, must be given its due in the realm of jurisprudence. It is a comprehensive word with several layers of meaning, one of which is to understand and apply knowledge in an appropriate way at the appropriate time upon the appropriate object with the appropriate intention. This can be summed up as having good manners.

This is why it is recommended to spend time in the company of scholars. They have the kind of personality and manners that cannot be found in books. Many men gain large amounts of knowledge from books, yet they remain inept and impolite in their social interactions. Perfection cannot be reached until the information gained from books is complemented with gentleness, kind behaviour, and tactful communication. Only the favoured ones are given these qualities.

Conversely, if a man cannot speak eloquently, and he has limited ability to memorize large amounts of information, this does not mean that Allah has not granted him wisdom and manners. Due to his obedience to Allah, and his excellent interaction with the people, he may be raised as the true scholar while a person who can memorize knowledge perfectly is debased on the Day of Judgement.

9.2 How does it work?

The proof of this is in the examples of Abu Jahl and Bilâl (رضي الله عنهما).

Abu Jahl was known as a great and knowledgeable man of Quraysh. His original name was Abu Ḥakm (father of wisdom), and only after he rejected Islam was he called Abu Jahl (father of ignorance). His knowledge ultimately did not benefit him because he lacked the good judgement and humility to accept the truth when it was right in front of him.

In contrast, Bilâl ibn Rabâḥ was the Ethiopian slave of one of the men of Quraysh. He had no rights and no inherent honour, due to the

racism that existed in the pre-Islamic era. Once he accepted Islam and became known for his good manners, he became one of the Messenger of Allah's most trusted Companions and the caller to prayer.

The way Allah judges people is quite different from the way we weigh people's (perceived) qualities. Allah's judgement is based on justice, whereas our judgements about people are based on our opinions. Our Prophet (ﷺ) had the best manners of all the people; he exemplified the best character and lofty manners.

Anas (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to repeat his statements three times so that the meaning was fully understood. Whenever he came to a gathering of people, he greeted them by repeating the greetings of peace three times. (Bukhari)

This shows the care and concern that the Prophet (ﷺ) had for his Companions (رضي الله عنهم). He remained patient with them while teaching a lesson, to the point of repeating his words over and over until they understood clearly what he meant. This is in stark contrast to the behaviour of some professors and imams today. When asked to repeat their words, some of them become irritated or fearful that their teaching style is not effective enough. Certainly with knowledge comes humility.

Al-Miqdâd reported:

«We used to reserve for the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) his share of the milk. He would come at night and offer greetings in a manner as to not disturb those (who were) asleep.» (Muslim)

Glory be to Allah! Our learned men could learn so much from this behaviour. Some of our community leaders spend the night performing voluntary prayers and then barge into quiet rooms where people are asleep; they proceed to turn on the lights, talk loudly, and make fun of the fact that others are sleeping. It seems that they want to let people know that they are the leaders and the ones in control.

«Anas reported: I served the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) for ten years. During that time, he never once said to me as much as *uff* (meaning he did not express his annoyance) if I did something wrong.

If I failed at doing something, he never asked me: Why did you not do it?

If I did something wrong, he never asked me: Why did you do it?» (Bukhari)

This shows the depth of the Prophet's understanding of human psychology. He was keen to respect people's limitations, and he never responded selfishly. Instead he either ignored the incompetence or did the task himself. He never refused to give anything when he was asked for it. Also, he was modest enough to greet the young and old alike.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«He who does not show mercy to our young or esteem for our elders is not one of us.» (Recorded by Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi, and authenticated by al-Albani)

He did not insult people or call them by anything other than their names.

9.3 Benefits of good manners

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«The most beloved people to Allah are those with the best manners.» (Recorded by at-Tabarani, and authenticated by al-Albani)

The above narration points to the greatest honour that any servant could ask for... being beloved by his Lord. If Allah loves you, who can go against you? This hadith is the source from which other hadiths branch out. Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«When Allah loves a servant, he calls (the angel) Gabriel (ﷺ) and says: I love So-and-so; you should also love him.

Then Gabriel begins to love him, and he makes an announcement in the heaven saying: Allah loves So-and-so; you should also love him. The inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) also begin to love him, and honour is conferred upon him on the earth.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

When a Muslim does what Allah loves (in this case, displays good manners), Allah shows him affection, causing Gabriel and the other angels to express their affection for him, and causing the people on Earth to honour and love him.

Is this not what every man yearns for? Or does he prefer to show off his knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith for his own personal pleasure, until a time comes when people plug their ears and turn away as soon as they spot him? He will never be able to invite people to Islam this way.

Moreover, behaving in an excellent manner earns a reward equal to the reward of those who constantly worship Allah. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«If one has good manners, he may attain the same level of merit as those who spend their nights in prayer.» (Bukhari)

It is also an easy way to attain paradise. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«What is most likely to send people to paradise? Being conscious of Allah and good manners.» (Bukhari)

9.4 What if you lack good manners?

If a man lacks basic courtesy, he will generally end up being lonely and friendless. His deeds may be completely rejected by Allah, or perhaps some will be accepted and others rejected due to the harshness that accompanied them (and Allah knows best what He will accept or reject).

People hate to see a man who is known for his dreadful manners and inability to get along with other people. If you behave in this

way, it will only cause your children to be afraid of you, your wife to frown at you behind your back, and your friends to backbite and slander you. Finally it may cause your Lord to dislike you, and who could withstand that?

10. Dependable transportation

10.1 Why is it important?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«There are three elements of happiness and three elements of misery.

The elements of happiness are:

- A righteous wife who pleases you when you see her, and when you are absent you feel you can trust her with regard to herself and your wealth.
- A house that is spacious and has plenty of amenities.
- A compliant riding beast that helps you keep up with your companions.

The elements of misery are:

- A wife who upsets you when you see her; she keeps attacking you verbally. In your absence, you do not feel that you can trust her with regard to herself and your wealth.
- A house with few amenities.
- A stubborn riding beast — if you whip it, you get tired, and if you do not whip it, it does not help you keep up with your companions.» (Recorded by al-Hâkim, and authenticated by al-Albâni)

10.2 How does it work?

You may think that dependable transportation is among the secondary issues in life — after your religion, health, and wealth. But ask

yourself, “How will I get the blessing of my religion, the bounties of my health, and the provision from my wealth if I cannot easily get to the mosque or the hospital or my job?”

A reliable means of transportation is essential in this day and age. Have you seen a man who is without one? Allah mentions:

﴿وَالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ كُلَّهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النَّفَّالِكَ وَالْأَنْعَمِ مَا تَرَكُونَ ﴾ لِسَتْوَادٌ
عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذَكَّرُوا بِعَمَّةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا أَسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ سَهْرٌ
لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كَنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ ﴾ ١٢ - ١٣﴾ (سورة الزُّخْرُفः)

﴿And Who created the species, all of them, and has made for you of ships and animals those which you mount. That you may settle yourselves upon their backs and then remember the favour of your Lord when you have settled upon them and say: Exalted is He who has subjected this to us, and we could not have [otherwise] subdued it.﴾ (az-Zukhruf 43: 12-13)

Your Lord knows about the hard times people face without a means of transportation. In the era of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), people rode donkeys, camels, and horses. Allah mentions that He is pleased with them and that what is awaiting them in paradise will be greater because of their efforts.

In our era — which will never be equal to theirs in terms of the quality of the people — we have cars, airplanes, motorcycles, boats, trains, and bikes. If Allah has promised the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions better means of transport than camels and donkeys in paradise, and we have luxurious vehicles they could never have imagined, one can only wonder what awaits these pious early Companions in the gardens of paradise.

(سورة الرعد: ٣)

﴿...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَتَّائِيْتَ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

﴿...Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.﴾

(ar-Ra'd 13: 3)

This example shows Allah's mercy for us, even though we are not among the best Muslims. This is because we live at a time closer to the Day of Judgement.

In most cases today, even a poor man usually has a friend who has a car and can offer him a ride. A homeless man can catch a bus, in which he can find warmth and a comfortable seat.

If a man has his own personal vehicle, which he can choose to drive anywhere and at any time or place, he should be grateful.

Allah mentions:

﴿وَلِهُ الْجَوَارُ الْمُنْشَأُتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَمِ ﴾
 فِي أَيِّ مَا لَاءَ رِئَةٌ كَمَا تَكَبَّلَ بَانٍ ﴿٢٥﴾
 سورة الرحمن: (٢٤-٢٥)

﴿And to Him belong the ships [with sails] elevated in the sea like mountains. So which of the favours of your Lord would you deny?﴾

(*ar-Rahmân 55: 24-25*)

10.3 Benefits of a dependable means of transportation

In some societies, one of the signs that a boy has reached manhood is his obtaining his own vehicle. By the same token, one of the signs that a man still has some remnants of boyhood is his dependence on others to pick him up from and drop him off at different places. Of course, he may be undergoing a hardship like financial loss or health issues, which may prevent him from obtaining a vehicle or a driving licence. If this is not the case, and he is calling others for a ride even though he has the physical, mental and financial ability to drive himself, this indicates negligence and immaturity.¹¹

¹¹ This section addresses those who live in societies where cars are needed to maintain a normal lifestyle. It should be noted that in other societies, not every man is expected to have a car; in those cases, he should have access to a dependable form of transportation that is in accordance with the customs and expectations of the society. (Editor)

With a dependable vehicle comes respect. Any man who shows responsibility in servicing a car will be looked upon with ample regard. This is because most people understand what it takes to keep a car in good condition. It is not something that everyone can do.

Likewise, one of the prerequisites for getting married is having a car. Although it is not obligatory, it does assist on many levels.

Of course, a trustworthy vehicle assists in many obvious ways. You can safely transport your family in seclusion, away from the hassle of public transport. You can have intimate conversations with your spouse that cannot be overheard by the public. You can transport laundry and many other things in the boot (trunk). You can even travel long distances at a moment's notice, without the slightest inconvenience.

Beyond those obvious benefits are the subtle, perhaps more meaningful, benefits that a reliable car brings. Your wife and children will look at you with pride, and it will create a feeling of chivalry and manhood in you. In case you doubt this, think about how you would feel if you were not able to transport your family because you did not have a vehicle; you would feel pretty embarrassed.

A man with a car is able to do favours for others, and this leads to blessings from the Lord. He may offer people rides as well as helping them to perform tasks that they might otherwise have been unable to perform. This is all due to Allah's blessings upon this person.

Moreover, a man who has a personal vehicle can respond swiftly in emergency situations. He can transport his family to the emergency room without having to wait for an ambulance or for someone else to come pick up him and his family. He can attend the mosque as often as possible. He can make it to his job in a timely manner, and he can enjoy his free time by visiting family and friends.

These things may seem minor, but any man who has shouldered responsibility knows that having dependable transportation is essential for peace of mind and ease in all affairs.

10.4 What happens if you do not have dependable transportation?

If a man has a car that continues to break down and give him difficulties, this may be worse than having no vehicle at all. This is because an old beat-up car, like the «stubborn riding beast» that the Prophet (ﷺ) referred to, is a constant source of embarrassment and inconvenience for its owner. This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «It does not help you keep up with your companions.»

In addition to delivering you to your appointments in a timely manner, a vehicle is supposed to ease your social standing among your peers. If you cannot keep your appointments or participate in their activities, you will feel like a loser.

That said, we do not advocate that you spend your entire savings to purchase a luxury vehicle just to ‘show off’. But keep in mind that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) himself rode a red camel: the best and most highly regarded among riding beasts. He was the most pious and ascetic among people, and yet he chose to ride a strong and sturdy beast. Likewise, strong and sturdy — and not opulent and luxurious — should be your choice.

How many men have we heard saying, “Brother, can you pick me and my family up so that we can come to the dinner too?” A man’s position of strength becomes compromised when he does not have a dependable vehicle. His wife may begin to resent him, or even worse, she may begin to look at his friend with admiration due to his seemingly responsible and competent position as compared to her husband’s dependent one. We have witnessed this and even stranger things than this. May Allah protect us from humiliation and harm.

When help is needed, no one calls on a man who has no conveyance. No one feels relieved at the sight of a man stumbling up the street with all his belongings in both hands. Finally, a man

without a dependable car is rarely put in a position to be useful. For this reason, he rarely receives thanks for anything; he often is the one doing the thanking.

11. Basic understanding of issues of *fiqh*

11.1 Why is it important?

How many friendships have been torn apart due to misunderstanding the simple issues related to the daily application of the Sunnah? Allah mentions:

﴿وَإِنَّهُمْ بِيَسْتَرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَمَا أَخْتَلَفُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ فَيَقُولُونَ
يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْلُقُونَ﴾ (٤٥)

(Surah al-Jâtiyah: 17)

﴿And we gave them clear proofs of the matter [of religion]. And they did not differ except after knowledge had come to them — out of jealous animosity between themselves. Indeed your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ.﴾ (al-Jâtiyah 45: 17)

Today some of the Muslims with whom we come into contact (in our homeland in the West) completely misunderstand, or deliberately ignore, the abundance of permissible differences allowed by Allah, the Judge. This has led to a perverse labelling of good Muslims as deviant or, even worse, as ‘off the straight path’.

We have watched men travel to study religion in faraway lands only to return with a more harsh and critical attitude than ever. I have personally spent time with the likes of Shaykh Waṣī Allāh ‘Abbâs, who is a teacher in the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, and Shaykh ‘Abdur-Rahmân al-Ajlân, President of the Sharia Court in Qaseem in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and never once did I hear a word of partisanship from their mouths. These scholars have their positions

and their proofs, but they do not label as deviant those who follow other positions and proofs.

The scholars have earned the right to utter the words, “That is not the correct position.” They may use these words concerning various issues of worship and the like, but if scholars express their opinion with these words, they certainly do not mean that every other position leads to the hellfire. Neither you nor I have the license to expound on the meaning of the scholars’ words such that we claim that people are ‘removed from the straight path’.

In 2006, while I studied briefly with Shaykh ‘Abdullâh ‘Abdur-Rahmân, one of the teachers of Uṣool ad-Deen at the University of Madinah, he mentioned the method and intention of inviting people to Islam and urging them to correct their belief and application. He said, “A product will never sell if you are harsh. Only good manners will sell a product. The ones you are calling should feel good and feel that you are concerned about them.”

Sadly, what we see today are brothers abandoning other Muslim brothers because of minor issues of fiqh. We do not advocate one particular school or another from the four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence. We only advocate tolerance for one another in matters where tolerance is obligatory.

These harsh brothers we are referring to have confused matters of creed with matters of fiqh. If someone claiming to be a Muslim has done an act of worship that is clear polytheism — such as making supplication to a dead person — there is no difference of opinion on this matter. However, if a man is seen placing his hands below his navel while praying, it is not the place of a layman to allege that he is outside the fold of Islam or to label him as a deviant. Rulings about where to put one’s hands in ṣalâh, slight differences in performing ablution, and many other issues vary according to the Ḥanafi, Mâlikî, Shâfi‘î, and Ḥanbali jurists.

11.2 How does it work?

If a man understands the basics of jurisprudence, he will find himself lenient and flexible in matters where correcting another person might result in greater harm.

Fiqh is vast. The layman who reads a Qur'an verse or a hadith, and then comes up with a ruling or an explanation on his own has done something wrong.

Most of us do not possess the tools needed to investigate a narration in order to derive a ruling from it. In order to derive one meaning out of several possible meanings of a primary text, one must be a *mujtahid*: a scholar who is deeply learned in the Arabic language, and then in the Qur'an and Hadith and more, such that he is aware of the different opinions of contemporary as well as classical scholars, and is able to derive his own opinions from the text. This takes years upon years of acquiring knowledge from the scholars, not from reading isolated narrations.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«May Allah give life to the servant who listens to my speech, memorizes it, and transmits it. There are some people who carry knowledge but are void of its understanding. There are some who carry this knowledge to those who understand it better than them.»
 (Recorded by Ibn Mâjah, and authenticated by al-Albâni)

Some of the main reasons for different opinions in fiqh among the great thinkers and educated scholars are the varying methods of analysis and deduction, the use of weak hadiths as supplemental proof by some scholars, the choosing of one hadith over another that seems to contradict it, and many other factors.

For example, Allah mentions:

﴿وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَرِيَضُنَّ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ تَلَكَّشَةٌ قَرْوَعٌ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٨)

﴿Divorced women remain in waiting for three *quroo'* ...﴾

(*al-Baqarah* 2: 228)

First, do you know what a *quroo'* is? If you said it means three months of menstrual cycles, are you aware of the difference of opinion among the jurists? Do you know that in Arabic the word *quroo'* could mean *hayd* (monthly period) or *tuhr* (purification time between the periods)?

If the first opinion is taken — that *quroo'* means *hayd* — this implies that a woman should wait for three menstrual cycles to occur before she is officially divorced. If the second opinion is adopted — that *quroo'* means *tuhr* — this implies that a woman should wait for three periods of purification between her menstrual cycles.

In short, the first opinion would result in the ruling that the woman is divorced at the beginning of her third period, while the second opinion would result in the ruling that the woman is divorced after her third period ends (when she is purified). The four schools differ in their rulings concerning this issue. Are you willing to call someone a deviant because he adopts a ruling contrary to yours?

How will you or I be able to extract this opinion from the Qur'an without the help of jurists?

Let every man worry about himself; that is enough of a struggle. One Ramadan, I prayed the special communal night prayers in the mosque. After two units, the brother standing next to me asked if he could have a word with me. He took me to the side and said, "I noticed in the prayer that you held your hands this way, and you only raised your hands when saying 'Allah is the Greatest' this many times, and when you recited the Islamic testimony of faith, you did this with your finger instead of that."

My question to him was, "When did you worship Allah during all this monitoring of my prayer?"

All this was due to his lack of understanding the vastness of fiqh, not due to my negligence or praying incorrectly.

You would do well to gain a basic understanding of the different rulings and opinions. It does not matter if you follow one particular scholar or a group of them; what matters is how you react to those who differ with you.

11.3 Benefits of understanding the basics of *fiqh*

Knowledge is power. As you begin to grasp the very fundamental principles of jurisprudence, your intellect is bound to expand. How many times have we learned something new about the world or about ourselves and then cringed at the thought of our former intellectual position or behaviour concerning that issue?

One of the benefits of knowing the basics of fiqh is that you will keep silent most of the time. Many believe that the more knowledge one gains, the more vocal he becomes. In reality, the opposite is true. Take a look at the loudest, most opinionated person in the mosque and ask yourself: Is he the most knowledgeable person there? He is most likely to be one of the ignorant ones.

One of the virtues of remaining silent is that people will actively seek your opinion. This is a strange phenomenon, but it has proved to be true in many cases. Perhaps this is due to the dignity that accompanies silence, which may inadvertently draw people to the one who is quiet. When this occurs, and the questioner has an inquiry regarding the opinion of a particular scholar or regarding what you may know about a Qur'anic verse or a hadith, you will be able to enjoin good and perhaps resolve an issue between the disputing parties. This will bring about love from Allah and from the people.

11.4 What if you lack a basic understanding of *fiqh*?

If you do not understand different opinions, then the joke will be on you. You will leave the mosque frustrated because you think that all the men inside are making ablution and praying incorrectly. Moreover, you will frustrate your brothers in Islam by badgering, hounding, and harassing them constantly to do things your way.

You will constantly show your lack of study and your inability to appreciate knowledge. You cannot just listen to a lecture where a teacher or scholar gives his opinion on the correct way to make ablution, and then go to the mosque and attempt to correct everyone you see doing something different. The scholars do not recommend this, nor is it their aim to bring division. They state the position that they believe is the strongest, without negating the other valid positions. You cannot go further than that.

This concludes the list of what I deem to be the essentials for every Muslim man striving to prepare for both of his lives (in this life and in the hereafter). The following are 33 pieces of advice to improve your life.

33 SUGGESTIONS

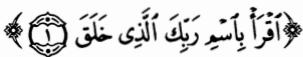
If you are able to fulfil any or all of the 11 prerequisites described above, then I advise you to also consider the following 33 suggestions.

1. Memorize at least one line of Qur'an a week, both in Arabic and in your native language

If you cannot find time to reflect over the words of your Creator, there is no need to continue reading any further, because this point is the foundation of every subsequent point. The Qur'an is the first door to manhood. There is no way around it, no window to crawl through, no back entrance, and no shortcut.

Allah commands:

(سورة العلق: ١)



﴿Recite in the name of your Lord Who created﴾ (al-'Alaq 96: 1)

How many men have we seen who entered the fold of Islam thirty years ago, and who insist on leading the prayer because of their seniority — although their recitation never goes beyond the three *Quls* (the last three chapters of the Qur'an, which all begin with *Qul* and are all very short: *al-Ikhlas*, *al-Falaq*, and *an-Nâs*)? How many times have these three *Quls* been butchered and disrespected due to the lack of knowledge such people have about the proper rules of recitation?

Take care to sit with, or at the very least consult, a qualified Qur'an reciter so that he may correct every line you commit to memory. Do

not neglect this habit of memorization, because the Qur'an runs away from those who neglect it. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Retain and safeguard the noble Qur'an. By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, it escapes sooner from memory than a camel does from the ropes that tie it.» (Bukhari)

2. Get in shape

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«There are two blessings which many people lose: health and free time.» (Bukhari)

Fitness is the key to good health. Memorizing the Qur'an will keep your mind in tune with the reality of this life. Your job in this world is to apply it, invite people to it, and defend it. This second point will help you become a well-rounded individual and will physically strengthen you for that task. Do not become so enveloped in learning that you neglect physical fitness. How many men have we seen who excel in one intellectual genre of life while functioning at less than their full physical potential?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«The strong believer is better and more loved by Allah than the weak believer, and in both of them is good.» (Muslim)

Perhaps Muslims are not aware that keeping their bodies in a fair condition is obligatory. Negligence due to lack of time or value is no excuse. Structure your day so that you can benefit from fifty push-ups or a ten-minute jog.

The righteous predecessors had no need for such activities due to their excessive travelling on foot, tending to their animals and farms, and being groomed under extreme conditions. We have been raised in an age where we sit at desks answering phones, typing on keyboards, and scribbling on paper all day long.

Every Muslim should undergo a yearly physical check-up. After this, he should jog or take part in some form of physical activity such as running, weight-training or calisthenics.

3. Do not indulge in unhealthy foods

A man should remain distant from what harms him. This includes eating too much of sweets, candies, and what is commonly known as ‘junk food’. A person takes on the characteristics of what he puts into his body. Foods high in sugar and fat only add to the ailments that every man will naturally suffer from as he advances in age. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was fond of sweets, but it should be noted that his sweets consisted of pure honey and other items of an organic nature.

As for buying fancy foods and clothing, ‘Umar used to say, “I can participate in your luxurious ways, but I fear that my reward in the hereafter will be reduced.”

Allah commands:

(سورة طه: ٨١) ﴿كُلُّا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَعْلُوْفَأَفِيهِ ...﴾
 ﴿Eat from the good things with which We have provided you, and do not transgress [or oppress others] therein...﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 81)

4. Grow your beard

This is the practice of all true men of God. If you can grow it, show it, for this is part and parcel of establishing your Muslim identity in the world. The definition of how long or thick the beard should be varies among the four schools of thought, but none of them deems it permissible to shave it off. Even if you are able to grow only wisps of hair, grow them and display what Allah has decreed for you.

You will hear some men claim, “Growing the beard is just a sunnah (recommended act).” They are trying to prove that a sunnah

is something optional and thus not that important. The reality is very different.

Growing the beard is what is known as a *fi'l amr* (a direct command), as we understand from the principles of fiqh and grammar apparent in the Messenger of Allah's saying:

«Trim your moustaches, and let your beards grow.» (Bukhari)

There is no option in this matter for those who believe in Allah and his Messenger (ﷺ).

Claiming that something in Islam is ‘just a sunnah’ is an insult to the Sunnah itself. The Sunnah is the lifeblood of Islam. It is not something to be downplayed or undermined by using logic or rationale. Some men do not understand that the word sunnah and what it stands for are synonymous with salvation. We cannot dismiss something as ‘**just a sunnah**’ when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) commanded:

«Follow my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Stick to it relentlessly.» (A reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

This means that the Sunnah is the key to Allah’s love and forgiveness. Allah commands:

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾
 (سورة آل عمران: ٣١)



«Say [O Muhammad]: If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.» (*ât Imrân 3: 31*)

It is not befitting for a Muslim man to hear a command from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and then stubbornly disobey it. Even worse, usually when one commits a sin, it has a beginning and an end, whereas shaving the beard is a continuous sin because the sinner’s face remains clean-shaven until his hair begins to grow back.

Besides this, not growing a beard shows a lack of confidence in Islam, as well as a blatant disregard for the rule of Allah, the Most

High. It displays one's ignorance of the reality of Islam, and it renders a person humiliated in the circles of people who have knowledge of Islam.

Finally, if you refuse to grow a beard because of someone else's resistance to it, then that person has a negative influence on you. Anyone who claims to love you should appreciate your beard (which is a sign of masculinity). Otherwise, this deficiency in his or her understanding of Islam will eventually manifest itself in other ways that will harm and offend you. The moment you allow someone to influence you in a negative manner regarding your religion is the moment you have begun to lose in this life and the next.

5. Be tolerant

Nothing is worse than a man whose enthusiasm for his religion has turned him into a bigot. We believe in Allah and his Messenger (ﷺ), but we must understand how to get along with people who hold beliefs that are different from ours.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«I have not been sent to lay a curse upon men but to be a blessing to them.» (Muslim)

If we are to take his life as an example for ourselves, what message should we send to others? Should we be so intolerant and disrespectful that they are made to feel uncomfortable in our presence? This type of behaviour is the antithesis of what Islam stands for. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) once said:

«A true believer is one with whom others feel secure.» (Bukhari)

Being tolerant of other beliefs does not mean that you are somehow compromising yours. Do not think that your patience with other traditions and faiths is equivalent to diminishing the quality of who you are or what you stand for.

Islam was never meant to be a faith of intolerance. Just look into the authentic books on Islamic history, as well as the history of the secular world, and you will discover a wealth of examples that will make you think twice about how contemporary Muslims should approach people, societies, and ideas belonging to different faiths and cultures. Whatever bigotry we see today from these small fringe groups who claim to hold the flag of Islam is due to an inferiority complex. These people who preach hatred and viciousness against people of other faiths have attempted to overcompensate for their own shortcomings by trying to appear chivalrous and brave. However, chivalry comes from gentleness, and bravery comes from doing what is right without fearing blame.

Allah mentions:

(سورة الأنبياء: ١٠٧)

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِلنَّاسِ﴾ ﴿٢١﴾

﴿And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as a mercy to the worlds.﴾ *(al-Anbiyâ' 21: 107)*

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

«I swear by God, he is not a believer. By God, he is not a believer. By God, he is not a believer. The one whose neighbours are not secure from him (is not a believer).» *(Bukhari)*

The family living across the street from you must be secure. The community you live in must be secure, and the country you reside in must be secure. These are your neighbours, brother.

Once, when the Prophet (ﷺ) was sitting in Madinah with his Companions, a funeral procession passed by. When he saw it, he stood up out of respect. One of his Companions remarked that the deceased was a Jew. The Prophet replied:

«Was he not a human being?» *(Muslim)*

This is the life we aspire to emulate. This is the intellectual position we aspire to take. Most of the ancient scholars who authored many

of the great books we read today were travellers and merchants who interacted with people of different faiths every day.

Do not be an ignoramus. Go outside, brother. Go see the world. Meet people and learn how life really works. You will not find a literal interpretation of life in books. You must explore in order to understand. The best fiqh (comprehension) comes from experience. The best experiences come from good intentions. Your gratitude to Allah must show in the manner in which you treat others. If not, then what kind of Islam are you practising?

6. Tell the truth

Tell the truth always. Cowards lie because they fear what the truth might bring.

Allah commands the believers:

﴿تَبَّأْلِهُ الَّذِينَ إِمَانُوا أَنْقَلَوْا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا فَوْلَادُ سَدِيلَكَ﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: ٧٠)

«O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.» (al-Ahzâb 33: 70)

Many have been witnesses to a man who considers himself to be clever by lying to receive praise, a worldly benefit, or a woman. What a pathetic person! A child whose mind is between adolescence and manhood may think it cunning to say what will bring him pleasure or spare him pain, but a man knows better.

How many men claiming to be the toughest, the strongest, and the leaders live their lives based on delusions? They are men who fabricate elaborate incidents that never occurred and who find themselves being dishonest even about the smallest of issues. What is so courageous about lying?

It is said that one should beware of anyone who lies about something minor, because he will definitely lie about everything else.

A liar has no right to be respected, honoured, trusted, or helped. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«A person keeps on telling the truth until he is recorded among the truthful, and he keeps on lying until he is recorded among the liars.» (Bukhari)

7. Fulfil your promises and debts

Allah commands the believers:

(﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُهُودِ...﴾ (١) سورة المائدة: ١)

«O you who have believed, fulfil [all] contracts...» (al-Mâ'idah 5: 1)

Never promise to do something that you do not have the ability to do or that you know you will not do. This is the fastest way to lose respect.

If you borrow money or anything of value from somebody, always record this loan in writing in the presence of two male witnesses. Be hasty in repaying that debt according to the agreement. If you reach the due date and are not able to fulfil the terms of the contract, be honest. There is no shame in asking for more time to repay a debt. Not answering your phones, or ignoring the doorbell, when being pursued by those whom you owe will only exacerbate your situation.

It is said that if you let a man borrow \$20, and he then ducks and hides from you in order to avoid repaying that debt, you just paid \$20 to keep a liar and thief out of your life.

Likewise, if you promise to be somewhere at a particular time, be there. If, for some unforeseen reason, you cannot make it, call and inform the concerned parties that you will need to cancel and/or reschedule. Your integrity will never be lost if you behave this way.

﴿لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِالْغَيْرِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ إِمَّا كَسْبَتُ قُلُوبُكُمْ ...﴾ (١١٥) سورة البقرة: ٢٢٥)

﴿Allah does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He imposes blame upon you for what your hearts have earned...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 225)

8. Be brave

Do not freeze in times of danger. When you wake up in the morning, expect the best, but be prepared for the worse. Always try your best to sincerely avoid confrontations, and be the first one to apologize if necessary. A Muslim man carries himself in a certain balanced way, such that he is never the aggressor but neither is he a coward.

There are many brave souls throughout the history of the world — Muslim and non-Muslim — who have demonstrated that some principles are more important than life itself. While peace and civilized discourse are the standard, there is a point where being passive can actually harm yourself or your loved ones.

Do not be governed by your ego when confronting harm or danger. Use the best resources that Islam has allowed in order to avoid trouble.

Know — may Allah protect you and your family — that being brave has more to do with being willing to put yourself in harm's way in the name of justice than it has to do with inflicting harm on others. Always obey the law, and never take matters into your own hands. Bravery does not mean being careless and reckless. Standing up for truth and justice at any cost is bravery. Allah instructs His Messenger (ﷺ):

﴿قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعُكُمُ الْفَرَارُ إِنْ فَرَّتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوْ أَلْقَيْلَا﴾
(سورة الأحزاب: ١٦)

﴿Say [O Muhammad]: Never will fleeing benefit you if you should flee from death or killing; and then [if you did], you would not be given enjoyment [of life] except for a little.﴾ (al-Ahzâb 33: 16)

This religion is bravery. It was kindled and supported by courageous people. Since then, it has been preserved and protected by brave

people, many of whom have perished in the process. It is not for anyone to choose his moment of truth; Allah alone chooses it, and we can only respond appropriately.

Your self-esteem and honour will take a blow each time you avoid your responsibilities. Do not measure your life beyond what Allah has planned for you, whether you fear poverty or loss of reputation. Eventually, one day you will wake up to what will be the last day of your life. Even after years of running, you will meet what you tried to avoid.

Since you know this as a fact, live with *taqwâ*, be brave, and put your trust in Allah with every step you take.¹²

9. Keep a secret if entrusted

If someone says, “Do not tell anyone,” then do not tell anyone. That said, this point needs some clarification.

This does not include keeping the secret of those who come to you and confess that they have harmed or will harm an individual or a group of people. We mention this because there is no keeping quiet about terrorists or those who disrupt society and harm innocent lives. You should know that Allah does not accept this secret being kept. It is not a betrayal of Islam for you to alert your imam and local law enforcement agencies; it is actually your Islamic obligation to do so. Allah commands:

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ إِمَّا تُؤْمِنُوا كُوْنُوا قَوَّمِينَ بِالْقُسْطِ شَهَدَاهُ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَلَدَيْنَ وَالْأَقْرَبَيْنَ إِنْ يَكُنْ عَيْنَيْأَوْ فَقِيرَأَ فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَشْيِعُوا الْمَوْىَ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَأْتُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ حَسِيدًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٣٥) 

¹² *Taqwâ* is literally a shield; in this context, its meaning is to fear Allah by shielding oneself from sin.

«O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.» *(an-Nisâ' 4: 135)*

With the exception of terrorist plots, if someone trusts you enough to confide in you about his personal affair, or he holds you in enough esteem to seek your advice, do not betray him. Be mindful not to take on the characteristics of a two-faced person by spreading the personal business of others.

It is said that tale-carrying spreads when people become bored with worshipping Allah. If you find yourself indulging in this spiritual disease, know that when it afflicts a person it replaces something from his religion.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will hide the sins of anyone who hid the sins of another Muslim (in this world).» (Bukhari)

It is said that whoever carries a tale to you will also carry a tale about you.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«These two people are being punished in their graves for what seems to be a minor thing, but it is certainly very serious. One did not clean himself properly from urine, and one used to carry tales about people (to make enmity between friends).» (Bukhari)

10. Be serious and noble

When you laugh, never laugh so hard that you show the inside of your mouth, fall on the ground, or hang on to the person next to you. Always control your amusement so that you are not viewed as either extreme: a total clown or a complete grouch.

In retrospect, there is nothing so amusing that it would cause a man to keel over with his jaws hanging open and tonsils showing, rolling around on the ground like a dog and howling like a hyena. There has never been and never will be anything so funny as to make a man abandon his dignity.

You may find yourself caught in the moment with your friends, swept away by over-excitement and exaggeration, but do not let the behaviour of a few fools in the crowd turn you into a buffoon as well. Be conscious of your dignity at all times. You will never see a person who is considered to be intelligent behave like this.

While interacting with the scholars, I noticed that they have personalities that carry deep layers of seriousness. Although their mannerisms were serious, they did not let their sobriety prevent them from a smile or even a chuckle. However, I learned from watching them that a smile or a chuckle should be within the proper context. A man who comes into your presence and simply laughs loudly for no reason, or who finds everything to be a joke, is quickly labelled as silly.

Smiling and giving a hearty chuckle is good; it was the way of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Do not be so ill-mannered that your peers scorn you because of your gruff personality. Always remain light-hearted and good-natured. You will find that most of the time when you laugh in the company of others, you do so not because the joke was so funny but out of politeness and social pressure.

A person who always tells jokes is forever stranded in the dismal land of idle play. He thinks that he has a charming personality and charisma, but in reality, his company is considered to be vulgar and unpleasant.

In addition, never put your hands on another person out of jest, unless it is a mutual and conscious decision on both your parts and in an appropriate environment, so as not to embarrass yourself or your brother. There are men who grab arms, grapple necks, scoop legs, and lift bodies in the name of fun. How would you feel if someone

snuck up on you from behind and put you in a headlock? Do not do this to others, and make it clear that you have no tolerance for this being done to you.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) wrestled and allowed his Companions to wrestle, but this was when the environment and time was appropriate: as a sport, not as a form of horsing around. He once said:

«If you knew what I know, you would laugh less and cry more.»
(Bukhari)

11. Be shy before Allah

Try your best to avoid watching movies and looking at images and scenes that displease Allah. Avoid shameful places like bars and nightclubs. Never put yourself in a place where you would not like the angels of death to find you.

Be aware of your surroundings. You may find yourself tempted to attend a gathering of sin due to the fact that a long-lost relative will attend it, or out of fear that your absence will send the wrong signal. Keep in mind that modesty is a part of faith, and wicked images, people, and places tear away the veil of modesty placed between you and your Lord.

The angels who guard you and your deeds are shy to be in the presence of such depravity. These noble watchers are sensitive to what pleases Allah. If you want them to greet you at the moment of death with the phrase, “We were your friends in the life of the world, and we are your friends now,” then take the appropriate steps.

If you ever had a personal liking for explicit entertainment, it should decrease eventually as your masculinity grows, until it disappears from your heart completely. This may take some time. Allah is patient with those who try to do what is right despite their weakness in wavering. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«A servant committed a sin and said: O Lord, forgive me.

Allah said: My servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for them.

The he sinned again and said: O Lord, forgive me.

Allah said: My servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for them.

Then he sinned again and said: O Lord, forgive me.

Allah said: My servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for them. Do what you wish, for I have forgiven you.» (Muslim)

This hadith gives one hope for Allah's mercy, but it is not an encouragement to commit sin. The hadith expresses hope for a sincere servant who is weak after trying to be strong over and over again. This person who seeks forgiveness from his Lord for sinning out of human weakness — while being upright in other areas of his life and performing the pillars of Islam — may be forgiven for his weakness.

Remember: it is better to be weak and recognize that something is a sin than to use that weakness to justify why something is suddenly permissible. Allah commands:

﴿... وَلَا تَقْرِبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ... ﴾

(الأنعام: ١٥١)

﴿...And do not approach immoralities — what is apparent of them and what is concealed...﴾ (*al-An'âm 6: 151*)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«If you have no shame, then do as you please.» (Bukhari)

12. Volunteer

Nothing brings one respect and honour like volunteering does. Help Muslims and non-Muslims in any good effort, no matter how

difficult the task may be. This type of behaviour builds camaraderie. In addition, try to do favours for people, because this is a constructive use of your time and helps in making friends. Do not be stingy with your strength, time, or property. Always strive to do deeds sincerely for the pleasure of Allah, Who commands:

(سورة المائدۃ: ۲)

﴿... وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِرْبَادِ وَالْقَوْمَيْنِ ...﴾

﴿...And cooperate in righteousness and piety...﴾ (*al-Mâ''idah* 5: 2)

It is said that the one who considers himself to be clever because he slips away from helping others has in reality been a recipient of Allah's wrath, and He the Most High has kept his slave from doing any good and receiving any reward.

Volunteering does not always have to involve signing up for a formal programme. It could simply mean volunteering to shovel the snow from an elderly neighbour's driveway. The effort of a Muslim man should always be to please his Lord by improving his environment, and the way to do this is by serving the people, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

13. Do not be loud

Never argue or scream. Always strive to speak in a polite tone, with civility, even in highly strained situations. Never allow anyone to make you emotional. Allah mentions:

(سورة لقمان: ۱۹)

﴿... إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتَ لِصَوْتِ الْحَمَّارِ ﴾

﴿...indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys.﴾

(Luqmân 31: 19)

Consider most of the world leaders. Even on the brink of a war, they remain calm and articulate in the face of what threatens to rock their nations with loss of lives and property. Never do they shout or become emotional, even if the enemies are advancing towards their borders.

«Anas ibn Mâlik said: I was walking with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) when he was wearing a Yemeni cloak with a rough collar. A Bedouin grabbed him aggressively. I looked at the side of his neck and saw the marks on his neck from the edge of his collar.

The Bedouin said: O Muhammad! Give me some money that Allah has given you!

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) turned to the Bedouin, smiled, and ordered for him to be given some wealth.» (Bukhari)

Did the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) yell at the man and say, “Do you know who I am?” No. He understood the nature of the one he was interacting with, and he honoured his request without diminishing his personal integrity with screams and shouts.

The fastest way to make a man powerless when he initiates a confrontation with you is to get him to lose his temper. Those present — if they have any sense — will consider him to be mindless. Shouting and making a fuss never resolve any conflict.

Interrupting others, becoming overly animated when making a point, and even whispering in an inappropriate setting can take away a man’s intellectual value faster than bullets take lives.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Do not become angry.» (Bukhari)

He did not mean that being angry is a sin; he meant that one should not react to that anger. To lose control shows weakness and fear. Always be willing to forgive, and be the first to apologize.

14. Practise your Arabic reading and writing

Take your time and pace yourself, but do not neglect the language of the Qur'an. If you only learn *alif* and *bâ'* (the first two letters of the

Arabic alphabet), and you die before learning *tâ'*, perhaps Allah will reward you for the entire alphabet.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Whoever stumbles through the Qur'an will receive a double reward.»
(Muslim)

Wherever you travel in the Muslim world, you will feel as if you are missing out on something if you do not know the Arabic language. You will always be one step away from understanding the true meaning of the Qur'an. You will not be able to unlock the treasures of meanings behind the words of your Lord. You will not acquire complete knowledge without the comprehensive language of Islam.

You will remain dependent on the translated language and its inadequacies. You will make do with reading the translation and quoting from Allah's Book using a language other than what was intended.

How can such a man's admonishments and warnings be taken seriously?

15. Do not stand with oppression and oppressors

Do not defend your brother if he is wrong. In order to help him, advise him where he went wrong instead of supporting his oppression. Allah commands:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُوْنُوا قَوَّمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ...﴾

(سورة المائدة: ٨)

«O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice...» *(al-Mâ'idah 5: 8)*

Never get too close to a friend you like or too distant from someone you dislike. Keep enough space to remain neutral so that no one is surprised at your opinion and they know they will hear the truth if they come to you.

Some men consider it blasphemous for a close friend to express an opinion contrary to theirs in public. This is due to a lack of maturity and understanding of the human dynamic. You do not owe anyone anything when it comes to siding with the truth. Be aloof from such relationships; otherwise you will always be called on to defend some weak, one-sided argument just because you and its defender are so-called ‘friends’. There has never been that much friendship in the world to make a man abandon the truth only to take refuge with his ‘friend’ in a house of lies.

If you find yourself always calling on others to support you, whether you are wrong or right, and you become resentful and angry towards the ones who disagree with you, be ashamed and repent.

«The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Help your brother, whether he is the oppressed or the oppressor.

After hearing this, people asked: How do we help him if he is the oppressor?

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Advise him (to correct his wrong).» (Bukhari)

16. Honour women

Be honourable and affectionate with your wife, mother, and daughters. Do not abuse them physically (or in any way), and speak kindly to them in all circumstances. You are a man, and men are careful to honour females due to the qualities that Allah has blessed them with.

When interacting with their wives, some Muslim men forget that they are dealing with complete human beings. Your Lord did not intend to short-change women when He created the woman we call

Eve. He entrusted us men to be good leaders and protectors for them. He gave the woman an intellect that can surpass that of a man, and her emotions and unique patience are the foundations of her praiseworthy qualities. As men, we must not only accept these traits but also honour them in their proper context.

In many cases, her love for her family may take precedence over her logic. This should not be viewed as a flaw; it is this same love and patience that enable her to care for you with all of your shortcomings.

If your wife is of average beauty, make her feel above average by complimenting her. She will appreciate this and love you dearly for it. If she is above average in beauty, turn your attention to her character, and distinguish between the beauty of skin and the beauty of heart. This will bring balance to your relationship.

If she becomes upset with you, she has the right to vent her feelings and express herself without recourse. After all, are you beyond reproach when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions had wives who talked to them assertively? Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: «The best of you are those who are best to their families. I am the best to my family.» (Recorded and authenticated by at-Tirmidhi)

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbâs and 'Abdullâh ibn Mas'ood: Allah created Eve from Adam's rib while he was asleep. When he awoke, he asked: Who are you?

She replied: A woman.

He asked her again: What are you created for?

She replied: So that you could seek comfort in me.¹³

This is the fundamental relationship between a man and a woman. Do not look for more, and do not expect her to maintain an exalted standard of character while you are a sinful husband. Enjoin upon her what is good, be a good example yourself, and then remain patient.

¹³ Ibn Katheer, *Stories of the Prophets*.

If she is a practising Muslim woman — who prays, fasts, and generally takes care of her family — your marriage should only improve with time, as both of you grow and mature together.

While you treat her as your equal, there should be an understanding that you are the head of your household. How many of us have seen the miserable existence of a man who is controlled by his wife? A woman who is not protected and honoured by a righteous man is not truly happy until she is. Anyone who argues the contrary is either a weak man or a weak woman who has never experienced a strong one.

Refrain from discussing the business of other brothers with her and from discussing her business with other brothers. Doing so could spark feelings of infatuation and/or curiosity in both her and your brothers.

If you and your wife run into an issue that you cannot solve alone, seek counsel from older and wise men, not from the young and emotional ones.

17. If a task is assigned to you, do it excellently

Your work will reflect who you are. Allah mentions:

﴿وَيَلِلْمُطَفِّفِينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَكَلُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَشْتَوِفُونَ وَإِذَا كَأْلُوهُمْ أَوْ رَزَّوْهُمْ ۝﴾
 (سورة المطففين: ٣) ﴿٢﴾

﴿Woe to those who give less [than due], who, when they take a measure from people, take in full, but if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss.﴾ *(al-Mutaffifeen 83: 1-3)*

Never short-change any party with whom you have made an agreement of work. Always fulfil your end of the bargain. If you are asked to sweep a floor or clean a bathroom, do it with efficiency.

Many men think it beneath them to do such work, but performing such tasks is in fact a sign of humbleness and gratitude to Allah. The prophets of Allah were all shepherds at some time during their lives,

and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) built his house with his own hands. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) served his family, did chores around the house, and even sewed his own clothes.

18. Give charity in secret

If you have only two dollars, place fifty cents into the mosque's charity box. Allah is watching you, and He knows your effort.

The worst thing you can do is to be a thief to yourself. When a man gains wealth by his Lord's permission, and then he refuses to purify it by sharing it with others, the amount that he thinks he has saved is in reality stolen from him. In this way, he steals his good deeds from himself.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Give charity such that the left hand does not know what the right hand has given.» (Bukhari)

19. Abandon foul speech

Do not curse, swear, or use the slang of uneducated people. Speak in a dignified manner, and be clear, for the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Whoever imitates a people is from them.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood, and graded authentic by Ibn Hibbân)

Today we find that the standard language in youth culture has become 'slang'. Even major corporations have adopted the illiterate sayings and grammatically improper speech of the youth in order to sell their products. This is so widespread that a man from one region may not even understand someone from a region just a few hours away, despite the fact that they both claim to speak the same language.

Satan has made our foul speech fashionable — to the extent that one feels ashamed to speak properly for fear of being ridiculed or labelled as pompous.

Do not fret. Be amongst those who can be in any circle of men and speak in an upright and dignified way. Make it a common practice to use terms of clarity and expressions that are not hidden behind slang and curse words. Be sure to call people by their names.

Do not exaggerate with your vocabulary and pronunciation in order to impress people. Adopt a middle path: neither overly eager to prove your education nor lax in your approach to communication.

20. Treat people equally

Never greet a man while looking the other way, and be sure to shake hands. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) always turned his chest in front of the one to whom he was speaking. When meeting people, he looked at them and smiled. Everyone held the same rank in his view.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Spread the greetings of peace.» (Muslim)

If we were to make an exception to this rule, it would be to greet women according to the rules of modesty and chivalry. Although it is permissible to make eye contact upon meeting a woman, and this is good social etiquette, we do not recommend that you gaze at her face for a long period, for this would make her uncomfortable. Out of respect for her femininity and womanhood, we recommend that you do not shake hands with her. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «I do not shake hands with unfamiliar women.» (Recorded by Ibn Mâjah, and authenticated by al-Albâni)

Some men go out of their way to show all their teeth when greeting those with wealth and status. However, when the same men are greeted by the janitors and truck drivers of the society, they return their greetings with gloomy looks and faint nods; they mumble the greetings of peace. This is not just.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to greet everyone, regardless of status, with such genuine concern that even men with whom he

did not have close ties assumed that they were the most beloved to him.

When he failed to do this one time, Allah admonished him:

﴿أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَىٰ ۚ فَإِنَّ لَهُ تَصَدِّيٌ ۗ وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَا يَرَكُ ۚ ۷﴾
 ﴿وَمَمَّا مِنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ ۚ ۸﴾
 ﴿وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ ۚ فَإِنَّ عَنَّهُ نَلَهٌ ۚ ۹﴾
 ﴿كَلَّا إِنَّهَا نَذِكْرٌ ۚ ۱۰﴾
 ﴿ۖ ۱۱﴾ (سورة عبس: ۵-۱۱)

﴿As for he who thinks himself without need, to him you give attention, and not upon you [is any blame] if he will not be purified. But as for he who came to you striving [for knowledge] while he fears [Allah], from him you are distracted. No! Indeed, these verses are a reminder;﴾

(‘Abasa 80: 5-11)

21. Save money for emergencies

A funeral contribution, a broken-down car, a brother in need! Save with the intention of donating to the first cause possible. Even if it is only ten dollars every month, put it aside and forget about it.

Allah mentions:

(سورة البقرة: ۳)

﴿... وَمَمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُعْقِلُونَ ۚ ۲﴾

﴿...and spend out of what We have provided for them.﴾

(al-Baqarah 2: 3)

Do not save so much wealth that it becomes absurdly abundant. Save enough to afford to travel for Hajj or to facilitate the expenses for your own funeral services, whichever comes first.

It is said that responsibility only rests on the backs of men, meaning that a man is expected to possess some sort of benefit to contribute in times of need. When a mother gives birth to a son, and he reaches the age of maturity, he either becomes a liability or an asset. If the responsibility placed on your back becomes such a burden that you must unload a little of it onto the shoulders of your mother, and a little of it onto the shoulders of your sisters and your aunts, then you have probably become a liability.

This is not to say that a man is not allowed to struggle or to take some help from his loved ones, but we are trying to emphasize the expectations that Allah has placed on you as an asset to your family. Even if you have only a modest job, always find a way to save a few pennies for another day.

22. Talk to your Lord

Supplication is the foundation of worship and a weapon for the Muslim. Call on Allah all the time: when walking, sitting, standing, lying down, alone, in a crowd, and whenever you are inspired.

It is an amazing thing when you run into a Muslim who has been away from the mosque for a long time, and he says, “I know I haven’t been at the mosque. I’ve been going through a lot of problems, and I’m busy trying to work them out.”

How could a man be so blinded to the fact that the only way out of those problems is coming to the place he has been avoiding? His only solution is to resort to the One who can bring ease and comfort.

Today the disease of labelling people has become so widespread that if a man takes some time after salah to perform the legislated *dhikr Allāh* (remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him), he is in danger of being labelled a deviant. Some individuals consider dhikr Allāh to be a borderline innovation. Nothing can be further from the truth. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«By Allah, I seek forgiveness from and repent to Him more than seventy times a day.» (Bukhari)

Does this sound like a man who never made dhikr? Remembering Allah with the tongue as well as within the heart is a form of therapy.

(سورة الرعد: ٢٨)



﴿... أَلَا يَذْكُرِ اللَّهَ تَقْلِيْنَ الْقُلُوبُ﴾

«...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah, hearts are assured.»

(*ar-Ra'd* 13: 28)

It is said that supplication is a sharp sword that does not always cut. If the one wielding it is weak in his faith, he will not be able to use it effectively. On the other hand, if the one wielding it has a strong connection with his Lord, he can cut through mountains with one stroke. Allah directs us:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِنُو بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ...﴾
 (سورة البقرة: ١٥٣) 
 ﴿O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer...﴾
 (al-Baqarah 2: 153)

23. Strive to pray your five prayers in congregation

If you have time, travel to the mosque. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times more meritorious than prayer performed alone.» (Bukhari)

Do not stand outside the mosque or loiter in corners. Always take benefit from the mosque. Do not be like the ignoramus who comes to the restaurant attached to the mosque, eats, hears the call to prayer, and leaves. What a destitute soul he is! He fills his stomach while his soul is in much greater need of being fed!

Do not be like those who use the mosque as a social club, only attending at times when they know it will be crowded with their friends. Also, do not be the one who dislikes the imam for no apparent reason so he prefers to stay in his home and pray the prayer of women.

24. Respect leadership

Respect your imam and your brothers; respect the laws of your country and all positions of authority. Advise the leadership in private and not in public. Follow the rules of your organization and never become a renegade. Allah commands us:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا طَعِمُوكُمُ الرَّسُولُ وَأَوْفُوا لِلأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ...﴾ (٥٩)

(سورة النساء: ٥٩)

﴿O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 59)

Many men complain of a lack of unity and brotherhood, yet they are the very cause of that deficit. This is due either to a disregard for the imam's rank and position, or to the men's yearning for it themselves.

The easy task is to criticize the leader for his apparent lack of knowledge or action; it is a much more difficult and noble task to roll up your sleeves, advise him with words of sincerity, and acknowledge that he often works without any appreciation. Most people choose the first route.

It is said that if you want to criticize a ruler, you can find seventy faults — but if you were to take his place, you would find one thousand faults in yourself.

No man can ever be a good general if he is not an excellent foot soldier first.

‘Ali ibn Abi Tâlib (رضي الله عنه) was once accused of being a leader who could not contain the wars and confusion that broke out during his reign. He replied, “This is because Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmân had followers like me during their reign, but in my time, I have followers like you.”

25. Be a good guest and a good host

Eat at other people's homes when invited, and invite good Muslims to your home. Be a courteous guest, and never be too impatient for the food to be served.

It is said that you can tell the character of people from the way they behave around food. How many men lose their composure when the

lamb or chicken is served? Or become agitated when the food seems to be running low before they receive their portion?

Keep in mind that whether you receive the largest leg of lamb or the leftover scraps and broth, it will all be digested and excreted in the same manner. Remain patient and calm; what was meant for you will reach you.

Be a good host, and always lay out the food. Try not to ask, “Do you want such-and-such?” Just set it out. Many people are shy to ask for more, so it is better to make the food available and have your guests comfortably eat their fill.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should honour his guest.» (Bukhari)

When you arrive at the home of your host, do not keep looking around at the furniture and décor of the house. Keep your eyes restrained lest you see something not meant for you. Never enter without permission. Do not follow the host around the house; stay put until they tell you where to go.

You will often be invited for dinner at someone’s house at least once, but a second invitation will come only if you showed courtesy and good manners the first time.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Let only the righteous eat your food.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it reliable)

26. Take care of your family

Be careful not to spend every waking minute with your friends. Spend time with your children, and give your wife personal quality time. This will please her and make your children love you. Allah mentions about the husband and wife:

﴿ وَمِنْ أَيْنِتُهُ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوْدَةً وَرَحْمَةً ... ﴾ (٢١) (سورة الروم: ٢١)

«And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...» (ar-Room 30: 21)

No man is so tough that he cannot get on his knees and ‘play horsey’ for the children’s amusement. How many men parade around with smiles and grins for their superiors in their places of employment but act like ogres at home?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to race with ‘Â’ishah, and take her out to see the sights. Are you better than he was? Are you tougher than he was? Are you more serious than he was? Do you fear Allah more than he did?

He said that playing with your wife is not amongst the things considered to be wasting time, but rather it is healthy.¹⁴

A man once bragged that he had never kissed any of his children, and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) remarked:

«What can I do for you if Allah did not place mercy in your heart?» (Muslim)

Reserve the ‘tough guy’ routine for the outside world. In the company of your family, you should sometimes be like a teddy bear. This is what balances true manliness: when a man knows what is appropriate and at what time.

27. Give gifts

Give gifts. Even if you give your brother a pair of gloves or a new pen, it softens the heart. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

¹⁴ The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Any act devoid of the remembrance of Allah is void except four: shooting, training a horse, playing with one’s family and swimming.» (Recorded by al-Bayhaqi and at-Tabarâni with a good chain of narrators)

«Give gifts to one another, and you will love one another.» (Bukhari)

We have witnessed men who, when complimented about an item of clothing they are wearing, immediately take it off and give it to the person who gave the compliment. We have also seen men who have perfected the art of receiving; they love to receive gifts but never think about giving gifts to others.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«The upper hand is better than the lower hand.» (Muslim)

Giving gifts is a way to show affection to people you love, as well as to show gratitude to Allah for the bounties He has granted you. If one gives for the sake of his Lord, his reputation becomes exalted, and any mention of him brings genuine happiness to people who have been recipients of his generosity.

28. Be mindful of excessive mixed-gender interaction

Islam is the religion of balance and moderation. We do not accept the accusation that the Qur'an oppresses women or that Islam itself is chauvinistic, but Allah has put certain rules in place to protect both men and women. How many extramarital affairs have occurred after one of the spouses became too close to a family friend? Unfortunately, as human beings we know this all too well. Yet when Allah commands us to protect ourselves from such an outcome, Islam is accused of being restrictive. There are some Muslims who strive to be the model of liberalism and even criticize their Lord with regard to His principles.

Despite such unfounded and illogical criticism, we advise you to keep yourself separate from women in social settings as much as is reasonable. Likewise, advise your wife to remain separate from the men, and remind her that if she has to speak to them, she should speak in a neutral manner without making her voice sound appealing.

Do not be among those who kiss their wives passionately in public when greeting them or parting from them. This was not the way of the righteous people who came before us. It is the way of those who seek to expose private matters between the couples for all to see. Today it is the way of movie stars, musicians, and generally ‘free-spirits’.

Do not encourage your wife to get involved with each and every activity that occurs in the community. All Muslims should have some community engagement. There are women who run girls’ book groups, charity efforts, and other noble causes.

When there is an all-male or a majority-male effort, though, your wife should not be involved. Some Muslims believe that it goes against human intellect to discourage their wives or husbands from frequent and blatant interaction with the opposite sex, but we say it is the opposite of that. It is because of our intellect that we do not indulge in such behaviour.

When Nobel Prize winner Tawakkul Karman, a Muslim woman, was asked about her hijab by journalists who thought it was not in line with her level of intellect and education, she replied:

Man in the early times was almost naked, and as his intellect evolved he started wearing clothes. What I am today and what I’m wearing represents the highest level of thought and civilization that man has achieved and is not regressive. It’s the removal of clothes again that is regressive, back to ancient times.¹⁵

The same is true for interaction between sexes. In places where Allah’s word is not used to make laws, women are passed around as sex objects. We cannot claim that this exploitation of women was exclusive to ancient times when we are witnesses to this behaviour every day. We as Muslim men believe that the women we love —

¹⁵ “Tawakkul Karman — First Arab Woman and Youngest Nobel Peace Laureate — in Hijab!” accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.hautehijab.com/blogs/hijab-fashion/4966602-tawakkul-karman-first-arab-woman-and-youngest-nobel-peace-laureate-in-hijab>.

our mothers, daughters, aunts, and wives — deserve to be given the utmost preferential treatment with regard to their status and sanctity. They deserve to be respected based on their personalities and intellect and not based on the shape of their bodies. We also believe that the path to depravity, while not exclusively restricted to mixing, always begins with glances, nods and flirts. Just as we respect the right of other societies and social constructs to adopt certain manners and principles, we expect the same respect for ours.

Allah commands:

﴿وَقُلْ لِلّٰهُمَّ إِنَّمَا يَنْهَا الصَّابِرَاتُ...﴾

(سورة النور: ٣١)

﴿And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts...﴾ *(an-Noor 24: 31)*

The idea of radical feminism has swept the world to such an extent that if a man encourages the members of his household to be modest, then he is criticized for being a tyrant. I heard a different opinion from a young Muslim student-leader at Harvard University (where I serve as imam), who is the president of the Muslim Student Association and who wears the hijab. During an Islamic study circle, we were discussing the topic of feminism, and she explained that she believes feminism is built into Islam and inseparable from it:

Islam gave women their natural right to educate themselves, and be entrepreneurs, and edify their femininity — one thousand years before the rest of the world's women were considered equal to men or even human. And while some women define feminism as the right to be able to walk down the street in public without a bra or a shirt, they are actually allowing themselves to be defined by the male construct of what it means to be a female, which is to have a bosom. They fall right into a patriarchal trap by perpetuating exactly what they're trying to work against. If they were Muslim, they would have been able to see that.

A responsible man discourages such behaviour; he is modest himself, and he encourages modesty in his wife since his children will emulate her behaviour, taking it as an example of how a Muslim woman should behave with the society at large.

﴿... فَالصَّابِرَاتُ قَنِيتُ حَفِظَتِ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ...﴾
 (سورة النساء: ٣٤)

﴿...So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard...﴾

(an-Nisâ' 4: 34)

In the same vein, if you become involved with excessive social interaction with women, you will find yourself addicted to it. You will become someone who does not attend the mosque or any other place unless your clothes are neat, clean, and pressed, and your beard oiled and groomed — because sisters may be in attendance.

We should not forget that you, O noble Muslim brother, must also observe modesty and stay away from excessive informal interaction with members of the opposite gender, just as your wife should. Allah commands:

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْضُوُا مِنْ أَنْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزَكَنَ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَيْرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ﴾
 (سورة النور: ٣٠)

﴿Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do.﴾

(an-Noor 24: 30)

29. Cry in front of Allah

Try to cry when you hear the Qur'an or when you attend a funeral. Do not be afraid to shed tears for Allah, for this is a sign of manliness and awareness of Allah.

How many men claiming to adhere to the methodology of the righteous predecessors attend funerals with full-blown cheerfulness?

When meeting to pray the funeral prayer, they make small talk, smile, and hug their long-lost friends. After the body is lowered in the ground, you can find them on the side telling amusing stories of trips to Hajj and recent quotes from Shaykh So-and-so.

Where is the remorse and fear of death?

It is said that one should cry at the sight of the body being lowered into the grave: 50 percent for the deceased and 50 percent for oneself.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«Among those shaded by Allah's Throne on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who, in solitude, shed a tear for the sake of Allah.» (Bukhari)

Allah mentions:

﴿... نَقْشِرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلَيْنُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ...﴾
(سورة الزمر: ٢٣)

﴿...The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah...﴾
(az-Zumar 39: 23)

30. Fast

Try to fast at least three days every month. This will teach you self-discipline and make you more appreciative of Allah's blessings on you.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا كُمْ تَفَعُونَ﴾
(سورة البقرة: ١٨٣)

﴿O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you, that you may become righteous﴾
(al-Baqarah 2: 183)

For many people, food has become a form of medication, taking the place of contemplation and reflection. When faced with a dilemma,

people stuff their faces; while enjoying a moment of happiness, people stuff their faces; after the completion of something important, people stuff their faces; when faced with sadness, people stuff their faces; when they are bored, people stuff their faces. They even stuff their faces while they are attending classes to seek knowledge.

We have heard that some men, when invited to listen to a lecture from a prominent scholar, reply by asking, “Is there going to be food there?”

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

«A few morsels that keep his back upright are sufficient for him (son of Adam).» (Recorded and authenticated by at-Tirmidhi)

31. Never engage in backbiting or allow it in your presence

Backbiting exposes a fragile character and cultivates a jealous personality. The one who does it is ignorant, and the one who listens to it is weak. Allah commands:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِحَمْلَةٍ فَنَصْبُحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا كَفَلْتُمْ تَنْدِمِينَ﴾
(سورة الحجّرات: ٦)

﴿O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.﴾ (al-Hujurât 49: 6)

Reputations have been destroyed, lives have been ruined, and privacy has been invaded through this illegal speech.

Stay far away from having conversations with people who are known to spread gossip and trouble. Learn how to avoid this type of friendship. In addition, make it a point to keep casual conversations brief with the people who are known to openly criticize others.

This disease is one of the most dangerous and widespread illnesses in the Muslim population. Never take part in it or allow it to be done

in your presence. Warn the person cordially about the harms in it, and remind him to fear Allah.

32. Remain silent, and do not brag

Do not reveal what you have, what you know, or how smart your children are with silly stories that only you are concerned about. People will avoid you. If you remain quiet without being shy or afraid to talk, people will respect you.

Do not be the kind of person who forces their children to recite Soorat al-Fâtihah at every given moment. Being anxious to display your children's accomplishments to people is an open invitation for you and your child to be afflicted with the 'evil eye'.

﴿أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعْبٌ وَهُوَ وَزِينَةٌ وَنَفَّاثَةٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ﴾
 (سورة الحديد: ٢٠) ﴿٥٦﴾ ... وَالْأَوْلَادُ

﴿Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children...﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 20)

Avoid the mundane tactic of narrating a long, drawn-out story that only serves to give away details of what kind of furniture you have in your house, how many important people you know, or how much money you earn. Intelligent people can see right through this pathetic smokescreen.

The one who makes these lame attempts at attracting praise will be avoided by pious people and entertained by foolish ones.

Do not be someone who uses the Qur'an like a baseball bat, beating people over the head with admonishment at every moment just to demonstrate your level of knowledge. Likewise, do not pull abstract hadiths out of your hat when the situation does not warrant it. This only diminishes your sincerity to Allah and threatens to ruin your afterlife.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:
 «Pride is looking down on people.» (Muslim)

33. Do not eat, wear, drive, or live in anything too luxurious

You should be moderate in all your affairs. To live like the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would be nearly impossible, but to live like the Pharaoh would be foolhardy. Allah indicates:

(سورة الإسراء: ٢٧) ﴿إِنَّ الْمُبَدِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ ...﴾
 «Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils...» (*al-Isrâ' 17: 27*)

Some men believe that living in the West requires that they keep up with the luxuries of society. They constantly change their attire according to the latest fashion, and spend large amounts of money wearing colourful, tight clothing so they can ‘fit in’. Or they waste money on frivolous technology just to have the latest computers, phones, and tablets. We have witnessed many foreigners journey to the West from developing countries and live in the lap of luxury — wearing fancy clothes, eating fancy food, and meeting fancy friends — while their families are starving back home in their countries.

Once, when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and a few of his Companions indulged in some meat, dates, and bread, he began to cry and said:

«We will be questioned about this meal on the Day of Resurrection.» (Bukhari)

If this was true in his time, then what questioning is in store for us? Be moderate with food, clothing, and decoration also. If you do not do so, then you, your wife, and your children will become spoiled and pompous, and this leads to ungratefulness to Allah.

Even the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) lived a lifestyle that would have been considered moderate for his time. Live yours moderately, according to the customs of your time.

CONCLUSION

*T*hese are the 44 ways to manhood (11 prerequisites and 33 guidelines). It will not be easy to start implementing them.

When we look at the events in the lives of those pious men who lived before us, we do not see lessons in how to lead a romantic life. We do not see parties, fancy clothing, fun and games, vacations to exotic places, and personalities that betray Allah's Book. What we see is restraint, modesty, and a yearning for the life of paradise.

Today we are faced with the dilemma of being expected to live up to the same standard set by the pious predecessors, while being surrounded by depravity and lewdness. Then again, the reward for our restraint and modesty will be greater because of the severely dysfunctional environment in which we are commanded to implement them. We do not believe that Allah made a mistake when He placed us wherever we reside. We believe that His decree is perfect, and while we are here, we must incorporate and spread the light of truth. This light cannot be found in books, nor can it be told with stories. Instead this light is only proven with sincere actions that reflect an inner state that is filled with faith.

In every era, Allah sent some people who would fulfil his promise. When monotheism had been lost, he sent a man named Muhammad ibn 'Abdullâh (ﷺ) to purify the belief of the entire earth. Allah gave him Companions who had hearts the size of mountains, because they were to support him in this effort — men like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmân, 'Ali and the rest of the noble Companions (رضي الله عنهم).

When the Messenger of Allah's words needed to be recorded, Allah sent people whose minds were like today's best computers; they were

people like Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj, Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, an-Nasā'i, and the rest of the collectors of Hadith.

When those narrations needed to be understood, Allah sent a different category of people who were able to dissect and understand the meanings of those narrations. These were individuals like Imam ash-Shāfi'i, Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and the rest of the great jurists.

As recently as twenty years ago, when those words and meanings needed to be given a modern context to prepare Muslims of the 21st century for the path ahead, Allah sent the revivers of the Sunnah; they were men like 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Bâz, Muhammad ibn Ṣâliḥ al-'Uthaymeen, and the rest of the righteous scholars.

Today the narrations have been recorded, the meanings have been understood, and the words have been given a modern context. Now Allah has sent the likes of men like you and I to follow them. In His infinite mercy, He has given us hearts strong enough to carry out this task. In His infinite wisdom, He has delegated to us the responsibility to beautify ourselves with the highest standards of Islam, for all to see.

Allah has placed the legacy of Islam in the hands of men like us, O noble reader. Do not break the chain of faith that has been passed down from Gabriel, to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), to his Companions, and now to you.

Understand the pure Islamic monotheism and move forward, rectifying yourself with the qualities we mentioned above. Pray for your salvation and the salvation of this community.

We ask Allah, the Exalted, to allow us to apply these attributes to ourselves so that we may increase our obedience to him, call others to the truth with our character and attitude, and appear more beautiful in His sight.

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon his noble Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ), his family, his Companions, and all those who follow the straight path.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hirschfelder, Sakina. *Who is Allah?* Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2006.
- Ibn Katheer, Ismâ‘eel. *Stories of the Prophets*. Translated by H. Maqbool. Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2006.
- Saheeh International. *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*. Jeddah: Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1997.

GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS*

<i>abu</i> (or <i>abi</i>)	أبو، أبي	father (of)
<i>angel</i>	ملاك	A being made of light who is totally obedient to Allah and has no free will. Allah has assigned some angels specific tasks, like those who record our good and bad deeds, the Angel of Death, the guardians of hell, etc.
<i>dhikr Allāh</i>	ذكر الله	remembrance of Allah; specifically, remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him
<i>fiqh</i>	فقه	Islamic jurisprudence; understanding or interpreting Islamic law
<i>Hadith</i> (<i>hadeeth</i>)	حدث	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
<i>hadith</i> (<i>hadeeth</i>)	حدث	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers

* 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 (i.e., 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.

Hajj (<i>hajj</i>)	حج	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>)	حلال	permitted according to Islamic law
hijab (<i>hijâb</i>)	حجاب	veil ordained by Allah for believing women
imam (<i>imâm</i>)	إمام	religious leader
mujtahid	مُجتهد	a scholar who uses his or her knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunnah to derive rulings on matters not specifically mentioned in either source of Islamic law
<i>mursal</i>	مرسل	a category of hadith: a 'loose' hadith with a broken link in its chain of narration at the level of a Companion; reported by someone from the generation after the Companions as if it had been heard directly from the Prophet ﷺ
Quraysh	قريش	the dominant tribe in Makkah at the time of the Prophet's mission; their society was based on polytheism
<i>salâh</i>	صلاة	formal prayer: a combination of physical postures, Qur'an recitation and supplication
<i>shaykh</i>	شيخ	teacher; mentor; scholar
<i>soorah</i> or <i>soorat</i>	سورة	chapter of the Qur'an

Sunnah	سُنَّةٌ	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
sunnah	سُنَّةٌ	acts that are recommended but not mandatory; one who performs them is rewarded, but one who neglects them is not punished
taqwâ	الْتَّقْوَى	fearful awareness of Allah; being mindful of Allah; pious dedication; being careful not to transgress the bounds set by Allah
ustâdh	أَسْتَاذٌ	teacher, professor; also used as a title of respect

